



Spiritual Perspectives

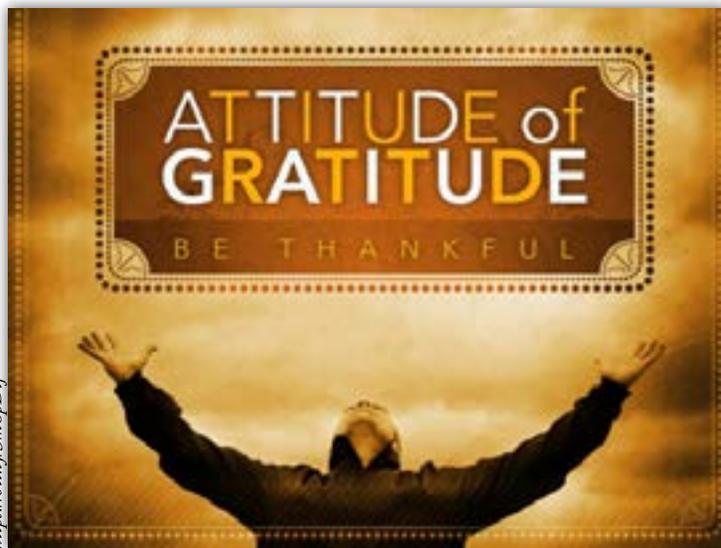
Seeing the World through Spiritual Eyes
For Friends and Followers of Mukunda Goswami

October 2021

Gratitude in Hard Times

By Radha devi dasi

Countless books have been written on the “power of gratitude” and the importance of counting your blessings, but gratitude can be harder to come by in the midst of a global pandemic. Yet there is a clear link between gratitude and happiness. A recent study found that even during those terrifying early months of the pandemic, those who reported feeling more grateful also reported being happier. Gratitude can be a healing force. Indeed, a number of positive mental-health outcomes are linked to a regular gratitude practice, such as reduced lifetime risk for depression, anxiety, and substance-abuse disorders.



<https://bit.ly/3m8pDij>

How can we be grateful for natural disasters and pandemic illness? Gratitude has to go beyond counting our blessings and cultivating positive feelings to benefit us. Refusing to look at life’s darkness and avoiding uncomfortable experiences can actually be detrimental to mental health; it is ultimately denial of reality. As the gratitude researcher Robert Emmons of UC Davis writes, “To deny that life has its share of disappointments, frustrations, losses, hurts, setbacks, and sadness would be unrealistic and untenable. Life is suffering. No amount of positive thinking exercises will change this truth.”

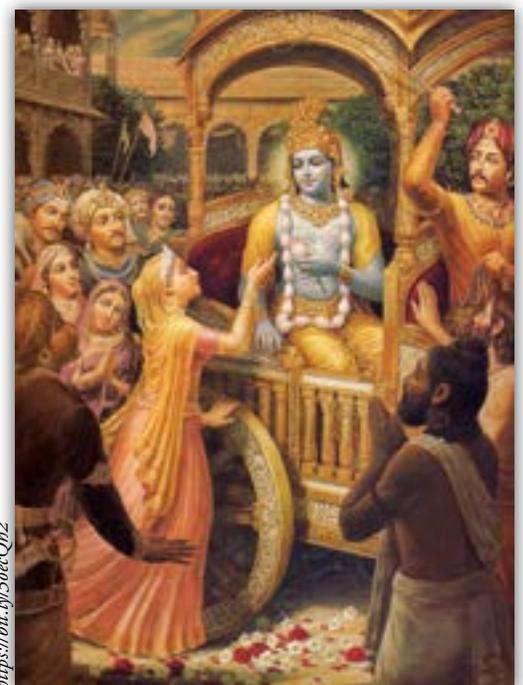
In order for gratitude to work its magic, it must be integrated into a larger world view that gives meaning to the miseries we undergo. Krishna Himself advises us that it is fruitless to try to avoid unhappiness. Srila Prabhupada, in comparing the material world to the Atlantic Ocean, pointed out the futility of trying to “calm the waves.” In fact, the challenges we face are designed to force us to examine who we really are and what our true purpose is.

Researchers who study “post-traumatic growth” have found that people can grow in many ways from difficult times—including having a greater appreciation of one’s life and relationships, as well as increased compassion, altruism, purpose, utilization of personal strengths, spiritual development, and creativity.

Importantly, it’s not the traumatic event itself that leads to growth (no one is thankful for Covid-19), but rather how the event is processed, the changes in worldview that result

from the event, and the active search for meaning that people

undertake during and after it. As Queen Kunti points out in her famous prayers, difficulties can help us cultivate a more Krishna conscious frame of mind. If we see each challenge as a gentle nudge to open our eyes and see the truth, it makes sense to be thankful for hard times.



<https://bit.ly/3oecQj2>

Prayers of Queen Kunti

Baltimore's "Hunger-Free Zone" Ensures No One in Ten-Mile Radius Goes Hungry

By Madhava Smullen, *ISKCON News*, September 11, 2021
<https://bit.ly/3m4DLZR>

"We have to see that nobody goes hungry within a 10-mile radius," Srila Prabhupada said during the Gaura Purnima Festival in Mayapur in 1973. Inspired by this statement, volunteers for the non-profit organization Hunger-Free Zone are ensuring that no one within ten miles of their kitchen in Baltimore goes hungry. It's a much-needed service, as the city has the highest poverty rate in Maryland, 131.5% above the state's poverty line.



The Hunger Free Zone food truck

Headed up by Baltimore temple president Nila Madhava Das and devotees from the Baltimore temple, the food truck project has been in the works for some time, and launched three months ago. Devotees like cooks Siddhaswarup Das and Panchatattva Das, communications and IT support manager Shyamrup Das, Sampradaya Das, and Executive Chef Sankirtan Yajna Das are among those behind the effort.

The team distributes 200 piping hot vegan meals a day, six days a week, and has so far served over 16,000 meals to the needy in Baltimore. Every day, volunteers cook from around 10:30 am until 1:00 pm in a state-of-the-art kitchen. At 2:00 pm Sankirtan Yajna, who has been doing *prasadam* distribution for over 20 years, arrives from his day job and heads out with the Hunger-Free Zone truck to a number of designated spots, to reach those in need.

"Some people are impoverished because they have no jobs or low income," Sankirtan explains. "There are over 319 apart-

ment complexes where the residents make less than \$30,000 a year. So we go to some of them. We also go to senior citizen homes; to the homeless; to recovery homes, where people are trying to get over addiction; and to the streets where people who are impoverished congregate."

Hunger Free Zone ensures plenty of variety, with 17 different international menus offering different types of rice, subji, beans, pasta dishes, and the ever-popular halava for dessert.

"Everyone, young and old, loves halava!" Sankirtan Yajna says. "We make many different flavors – peach, mandarin orange, raisin apple, banana ... When we give people the raisin apple, they say, 'Oh, it's apple pie without the crust!' Or when we give them peach halava, they say, 'It's peach cobbler!'"

According to Sankirtan Yajna, people couldn't believe it when they first saw the Hunger-Free Zone food truck, and were told that its hot delicious cuisine was actually free.

"Wherever we go, people are all just so happy," he says. "They start saying, 'I'm telling you now, this is the best I've ever had!' Or 'What have you got today? I want some of those sweet grits!'"

Sankirtan Yajna also notes that while the people Hunger Free Zone serves may be materially impoverished, they are certainly not spiritually impoverished.

"When you're giving prasadam out to a line of 15 people, at least 13 say, 'God bless you,' or 'Oh, you're doing God's work,' or 'This is so



Sankirtan Yajna Das distributes prasadam

Continued on page 3



<https://bit.ly/3m4DLZR>

Krishna Prasad Das and Panchatattva Das cooking in Hunger Free Zone's state-of-the-art kitchen

Some people, after seeing Srila Prabhupada's smiling face on the side of the truck, and asking Sankirtan who he is, request to read about Prabhupada, and take some of his books home.

Sankirtan Yajna continues to be driven by his desire to feed



<https://bit.ly/3m4DLZR>

Sampradaya Das packing prasadam

amazing – the Lord's surely gonna take care of you," he points out.

Many are struck by the unique quality of *prasadam*, and after eating it for several weeks will ask questions like, "This is the most amazing food! Who are you? How do you do this?"

"I say, 'There's a secret ingredient,'" Sankirtan Yajna explains. "I look around like I'm not allowed to talk about it. Then I say, 'It's L-O-V-E for the Lord.' And they go, 'What! I've gotta have more of that!'"

people, and ultimately to carry out Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu and Srila Prabhupada's desire. He quotes Srila Prabhupada's purport to *Sri Caitanya-charitamrita*, Antya-lila 1.32: "By rendering a little service, even by eating *prasada*, not to speak of chanting and dancing, everyone could be promoted to Vaikunthaloka."

Looking to the future, Sankirtan hopes to get enough funding from supporters for Hunger-Free Zone to be able to distribute 500 meals a day.

"More support means more impact," he says. "And that means more *prasadam*, more food going to the people that need it."

For more information and to support Hunger Free Zone, please visit: <http://hunger-freezone.org/>



<https://bit.ly/3m4DLZR>

The Hunger-Free Zone food truck pulls up to a senior citizens' home in Downtown Baltimore



Head chef Siddhaswarup Das

Lord Mayor of the City of London Presents Queen's Award to Food For All

By Madhava Smullen, *ISKCON News*, September 18, 2021

<https://bit.ly/2XX4waN>



<https://bit.ly/2XX4waN>

Food For All volunteers at the Mansion House with William Russell, Mayor of the City of London

On September 9th, team members of the Food For All charity were invited to meet with the Lord Mayor of the City of London William Russell, at his official residence the Mansion House, to receive the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service. Equivalent to an MBE, the QAVS is the highest award given to local voluntary groups in the UK.

Food For All volunteers were told back in June that they would receive the accolade for "preparing and sharing free, hot, nutritious meals with those who would otherwise go hungry." The *prasadam* distribution non-profit has delivered about 1.5 million meals to those in need during the Covid-19 pandemic. According to Director Parasurama Das, it's the only group in Hertfordshire, and the only group in the City of London to receive the QAVS this year.

A group of sixteen was invited to the Mansion House for the honor. Along with Parasurama Das there were several Food For All managers, volunteers from the devotee community and the greater local community, and financial supporters from rock bands and banking institutions.

The group was welcomed by the Lord Mayor, and received a private tour of the historic Mansion House building. Food For All was then presented with a personal signed letter from the Queen of England as well as a large glass award for services during the pandemic, and 100 badges for the charity's many volunteers.

Food For All also made "Certificates of Appreciation" for each volunteer, recognizing their contribution, with the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service logo, as well as copies of the Queen's letter. "Many of our volunteers are refugees, and a letter like this can help them get employment," explains Parasurama.



<https://bit.ly/2XX4waN>

Lord Mayor William Russell presents Food For All Director Parasurama Das with the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service

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Parasurama Das, who is originally from Ireland, began feeding the homeless in London in 1988, and registered “Food For All” as a charity in 1996. The organization prepares *prasadam* at its purpose-built kitchens Krishna’s Castle in Holborn, London, and The Jagannath Kitchen in Watford. In addition it has fourteen small centers around the UK, from Reading to Bristol, and from Glasgow in Scotland to Canterbury in Wales.

As well as devotees, volunteers include many people from the greater local community, such as students and businesspeople. Food For All is funded primarily with the support of many rock band members, and its President is Chrissie Hynde of The Pretenders. The charity also receives some government support.

Volunteers deliver meal boxes containing rice, subji and a pakora, along with fruits, cakes, and parcels of groceries to

homeless shelters, refugees, the elderly, schools, and various communities in need of meals. By Valentine’s Day this year, Food For All had distributed 1 million meals during the pandemic; volunteers now estimate they’ve distributed about 1.5 million. At one point, the charity was distributing about five and a half thousand meals a day.

In March 2022, if safety permits, Food For All volunteers are set to attend a garden party with the Queen.

“Srila Prabhupada desired that governments would recognize the value of devotional service, how it transforms people, and how we could transform the country for the better,” Parasurama comments.

Guyana’s President Dr. Irfaan Ali Honors Srila Prabhupada with a Visit to Hare Krishna Study Centre in Cummings Lodge

By Kalyana Giriraja das, *ISKCON News*, September 11, 2021
<https://bit.ly/3kJfcSP>

The celebrations in Guyana that marked the 125th birth anniversary of A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Srila Prabhupada were attended by many guests of honor. Srila Prabhupada, who passed away in 1977, founded the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON), also known in as the Hare Krishna Movement. The festival spanned five days - from 27 to 31 August 2021, with the Guyanese President’s visit and reception on August 29 being the highlight of the diverse program of celebrations.

During the event, President Dr. Irfaan Ali delivered the keynote address and he spoke about about freedoms. According to the President, it is important that everyone abides by the tenets of freedom and fundamental rights.

The President added that the same efforts that Guyanese are making to preserve their spiritual beliefs should also be used to promote the unification of the country. He pointed out that Guyanese must understand society is governed by certain principles and values, and must therefore commit to ensuring that these are never broken.



Guyana’s President Dr. Irfaan Ali

“In Guyana, we have freedom of religion, which is guaranteed as a fundamental right in our Constitution,” added Anil Nandlall, Guyana’s Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs. “And we must not take that freedom for granted.” Some speakers had referred to what is happening in other parts of the world where wars are still being fought and people are dying for their right to practice their religion. Nandlall pointed out, “The right to practice one’s religious beliefs. That is what we have in Guyana and that is what we must preserve.”

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List of Participants:

In addition to President Dr. Ali, active and former members of government and representatives of Guyanese society accepted ISKCON's invitation

Donald Ramotar (former President of Guyana 2011-2015). Anil Nandlall (Attorney General and Minister for Legal Affairs; Hugh Todd (Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation), Charles Ramson Jr. (Minister of Culture, Youth and Sport, Kwame McCoy (Minister in the Office of the Prime Minister; Dr. KJ Srinivasa (High Commissioner of India to Guyana); Brian Hall (Representative of the Ambassador of the United States of America); Professor Paloma Mohamed-Martin (Vice-Chancellor of the University of Guyana); Professor Gomathiyaganam Subramanian (Director of the University of Guyana - Berbice Campus); Dr. Viola Rowe (Principal of the of the Cyril Potter College for Education). Reverend Ronald McGarrell (Chairman of the Interfaith Organisation, Pravinchandra Dave, (Chairman of the Board of Demerara Bank Ltd) other prominent members of Guyanese society.

The Festival Was Widely Reported in the Guyanese Media

Preparations for the multi-day festival took more than a month. In a particularly elaborate book for the *Vyasa-puja* for Srila Prabhupada, entitled "An Offering of Eternal Love and Gratitude," Guyana's devotees collected their thoughts on the

125th anniversary of ISKCON Founder-Acaryas' appearance day. Participating in the festival's programs were among others Guru Prasad Swami, Sesa Prabhu, Mahatma Prabhu, Bhakti Marg Swami as well as Virabahu Prabhu, the GBC of ISKCON Guyana.

"It was special for us – that despite the current pandemic season – that all these prominent members of Guyana's society were able to gather all in one place to honor our Srila Prabhupada."

For everyone at the Hare Krishna Study Centre of ISKCON of Guyana, it was a special pleasure to prepare for this festival. Prabhupadadeva Dasa summarizes: The devotees worked tirelessly for a month in advance and during the celebrations to make it a success. The mood of the festival was to bring as many people as possible to the venue to hear Srila Prabhupada's name and learn about his invaluable work.

Links to the media coverage:

[Official Office of the President](#)

[Guyana's News Room](#)

[Guyana Times: "I will spend every ounce of energy to unite this country" – President Ali](#)

[Guyana Times: Government Committed to Protecting Religious Freedom of Citizens](#)

Her Grace Krsnanandini Dasi: Life & Legacy Documentary

By Vaishnavi Ministry NA, *ISKCON News*, August 11, 2021

<https://bit.ly/3zMcss0>

Documentary Film Project Proposal

The film project's purpose is to pay tribute to Krsnanandini Dasi by presenting her inspiring life and the impact she made on her family, spiritual community, and society at large.

Your donations will help us to preserve Krsnanandini Dasi's life and legacy with a documentary that depicts Krsnanandini Dasi's journey and impact based on interviews with herself, with additionally recorded events and family gatherings, as well as interviews with family members and people who were impacted by her life. Language: English with the option of subtitles in different languages. Distribution: worldwide through streaming services, ISKCON-organizations, and educational institutions.

Director's Credentials

Krishna-lila dasi (Krisztina Danka, Ph.D.) is a religious and literary studies scholar, an activist, cultural diplomat and filmmaker. She possesses a Ph.D. in Comparative Literary Studies and Vaishnava Aesthetics from the University of Budapest, Hungary, a Certificate in Screenwriting from New York

University, and a Certificate in Documentary Film Producing from the New York Film Academy.

As a college lecturer she taught Vaishnava Literature and Media Communications for 15 years and Visual Arts and Design for 4 years.

She is the writer-producer of over 40 feature documentaries, short films and videos, author of three books, and dozens of articles. Her films related to bhakti-culture, environmental concerns, human rights, religious and minority issues, and interfaith dialogue, have been broadcast on several international television channels. Her works include the feature documentaries "The Joy of Devotion," "The Stolen River," and "Nature's I.Q." (See more info, and links to films below.)

Her films have received 14 awards, including the American Religion Communications Council's DeRose-Hinkhouse Memorial Award in Chicago, IL, for her "The Joy of Devotion" film; the top 'Best in Show' Award at the Cinema Verde International Environmental Films & Arts Festival in Gainesville, FL; 'The Best Green Film' Award at the LIFFT India Cinefest in Mumbai, India, and an 'Award

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of Recognition' at the prestigious Impact DOCS Award Competition in California for her "The Stolen River" film.

For her services in the International Society for Krishna-consciousness, in 2016, Krishna-lila received the 'ISKCON Europe Excellence Award' from the European GBC. For her achievement in presenting the bhakti-culture through film-making, in 2017, in Mayapur, she was given the 'Lifetime Achievements' Nityananda Award.

For a full list of Krishna-lila's films visit: <https://www.karunaproductions.com>

Organized by: Vaishnavi Ministry North America

Vaishnavi Ministry NA aims to uphold Srila Prabhupada's legacy in relation to Vaishnavis,

honoring Krsnanandini Devi's life and service aligns with our mission to facilitate the Vaishnavi voice in diverse aspects of devotional life and inspire women who are inquisitive about bhakti. We know generations to come will benefit from this association with a wonderful devotee of Sri Krishna and disciple of Srila Prabhupada through this film.

To Support

For information on how to support this project and donate please visit:

<https://gofund.me/c12bc5b4>

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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<https://bit.ly/3zMc5s0>



Vaishnavi Ministry NA is organizing a [gofundme fundraiser](https://gofund.me/c12bc5b4) to benefit [The Dasi-Ziyad Family Institute](#) and help fund the production of this film

Please Send Your Feedback To:
feedback@mukundagoswami.org

Personal Message



Dear Friends,

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

These are two instructive excerpts from a book by Purnacandra Goswami:

Srila Prabhupāda had integrated the principle of freedom and love in his practical dealings. Here is one such example from His Holiness Mukunda Goswami: I was talking with Srila Prabhupāda when another devotee brought in a tall glass of tea. I accepted it, but Prabhupāda said, “Why are you drinking this tea?” He used a semi-reprimanding tone. I replied that I was taking it because a devotee had offered it to me. Prabhupāda said that tea is for taking if you have a cold; it is not to be taken otherwise. I was holding the glass of tea in my hand, and instead of just putting it down I looked at Prabhupāda and said, “Then I shouldn’t take it?” I was thinking that it really wasn’t so serious and that unless Prabhupāda really insisted, I could go ahead and take it anyway.

The story of Bhaktin Alexandra is an example that illustrates the necessity of freedom and trust in the arena of bhakti. She was one of my brightest students while I was teaching *bhakti-shastras* in England. After serving at Bhaktivedanta Manor for some years, she was invited to New York by a friend. Upon her arrival, the resident sannyasi asked her what service she would like to do. She was dumbfounded and didn’t know what to reply. He suggested that she give it some thought. Later she had the answer: she wanted to train new recruits in philosophy. It was a revelation for her.

She had never been encouraged to think about what she desired to do. Her new authority then asked if she was prepared to begin, and she replied that she needed to study *Sri Isopanisad* in order to complete her training since she had left before finishing the *bhakti-shastra* course. “How would you get that done?” he asked. She said that she must return to England. Therefore, she flew back to London to finish her studies. I was happy to see her, but I was also surprised that she had not thought about her creative talents for teaching until she had crossed the Atlantic and was asked, “What do you want to do for guru and Krsna?” The desire to teach was suppressed within her until someone trusted her and gave her freedom. Her bhakti arose with her freedom.

Your servant,

Mukunda Goswami

