



Spiritual Perspectives

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

November 2021

Holy War

By Radha devi dasi

Recent news has been filled with descriptions of the carnage caused by terrorists in Bangladesh. In mid-October of 2021, religious extremists began a two-day long attack on the Hindu minority there. Homes, businesses and temples were looted and destroyed. Our own ISKCON family is affected by the assault on our temple in Choumoni in which two devotees were killed, one remains hospitalized and many more were injured or made homeless.

The attacks followed a false allegation that Hindus had placed a Quran on a deity altar. Unfortunately, this recent attack is not unique. Religious extremists around the world are daily using religion as a pretext for murder, rape, arson and robbery. The Taliban uses public beheadings to enforce their religious codes. Muslims in India have been killed after false allegations of selling beef. In the United States, religious rhetoric justifies violence against people protesting for racial equality, practicing Judaism, or “looking like a terrorist.” This misuse of faith is what drove John Lennon to sing of a world with no religion in his infamous song, Imagine.

Of course, as religious practitioners, we are quick to note that these horrific attacks spring from a misuse of religious teachings. Our own faith tradition calls for us to be compassionate and respectful of all living entities just as other faiths enjoin their followers to practice mercy, love and tolerance. How can these teachings be twisted to justify such evil?

This process of twisting religious teachings does not begin with the terrorists who use murderous violence to punish those who follow other spiritual paths. It begins with social attitudes that allow us to justify cruelty when it is directed at those who are different from us in ways we don't like. It begins with political and social rhetoric that glorifies cruelty to the “unbeliever,” whether that term means someone from a different faith or simply anyone who sees the world differently than we do.

When former U.S. President Trump described Mexican immigrants as murderers and rapists, he was furthering a narrative that allowed his administration to take children, separate them from their parents with no plan to reunify them, and put them at risk of physical and sexual assault. The government agents who

carried out Trump's policies would never have treated American children in the same way. But cruelty to children became possible when those children were reclassified as “Mexicans” rather than human beings.

It is even easier for people of faith to “otherize” people. Islam directs its followers to protect and advance their faith through “jihad” or holy war. Despite Jesus' clear instructions on turning the other cheek, Christian leaders have justified war and violence as valid means to promote Christianity. Our Vaishnava faith explicitly states that violence can be used in Krishna's service. After all, Krishna instructs Arjuna to “fight for the sake of fighting” in *Bhagavad-gita*.

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<https://bit.ly/3b9oICU>

The Supreme Person, Krishna, with his disciple, Arjuna, on the battlefield

What religious fundamentalists miss is the fact that “holy war” is not the only activity people of faith should undertake. In addition to violence, we are also called to see the commonalities we share with all other people. As Christ said, “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.” Our own scriptures teach us to see every living being with “equal vision” based on the knowledge that we are all part and parcel of the Supreme Person.

All people are members of the same family, united by our relationship to Krishna. All of our actions must be based on

this understanding. Those who follow other faiths, or no faith at all, are not fundamentally different from ourselves. Srila Prabhupada taught us that violence may have its place in serving Krishna. Unless we can truly see others with “equal vision,” however, we will continue to see religion used to justify the unjustifiable. Srila Rupa Goswami described real religion as “taste for the Holy Name, service to the Vaishnavas, and kindness to all living entities.” Kindness, then, is essential to devotional service. Violence is not.

Global Kirtan Protest for Bangladesh - Recap

By: Radhapriya Chawla, *ISKCON Toronto Communications*, October 24, 2021

<https://bit.ly/2Y2ffjZ>



<https://bit.ly/2Y2ffjZ>

#globalkirtanprotest, Kolkata, India

Yesterday, Saturday, October 23rd, the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) members around the world along with the wider community came together to raise awareness and to demand protection and justice from the Bangladesh government for the religious minorities that are suffering atrocities and violence including attacks on temples, homes, property, and people.

More than 100 ISKCON-organized events took place across the globe and thousands participated in this momentous international event of participants peacefully chanting while holding signs pleading for protection and justice for minority groups, including all Hindus, in Bangladesh. National media, such as the *Times of India* and CBC, covered many of the events. Members of ISKCON, the wider Hindu community, and other supporters came out to protest the attacks currently occurring in Bangladesh.

“The fact that thousands of devotees and friends turned out for these kirtan protests around the world shows how important religious freedom and the protection of minorities is for ISKCON. We pray the Bangladeshi government hears our calls for help by stepping up to protect their minorities and bring the perpetrators of the recent attacks to justice,” said Anuttama dasa, ISKCON’s Minister of Communications.

The Global Kirtan Protest began yesterday in Australia and New Zealand with devotees marching down major streets chanting the maha-mantra—Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare; Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare. Protests and rallies continued around the globe through Asia, Africa, Europe, and ended in North America.

In India, demonstrations and candlelight vigils took place in Bangalore, Vrindavan, Ahmedabad, Pune, Kolkata,

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Dehradun, Mayapur, Goa, and Delhi. Dignitaries and special guests including Jayapataka Swami spoke about how minorities in Bangladesh are living in perpetual fear and need protection and advocacy. Due to COVID restrictions in India, most of the protests were under 100 people with only a few having around 300 participants. The biggest event was a joint event held in Siliguri (with other Hindu groups) at ISKCON's headquarters in Mayapur.

And protests did not stop there. Places like Buenos Aires, Argentina; Durban, South Africa; Maitighar, Nepal; and Mauritius all gathered in unity to protest for justice.

In the United States, ISKCON teamed up with the wider Hindu community and chanted in front of significant landmarks. For example, in New York, the devotees chanted in Times Square, and in Washington, D.C., chanting took place in front of the White House. From East to West, ISKCON US

temples including those in Dallas, New Vrindavan, Naperville, Sacramento, and Philadelphia were actively participating.

In Canada, peaceful protests took place from coast to coast, from Vancouver and Winnipeg to Montreal and Halifax. In Canada's capital, Ottawa, devotees chanted in front of the Parliament Building, and in Toronto, over 500 devotees and community members came together in front of Old City Hall.

Europe was also an epicenter for numerous kirtan protest events from Finland to Italy. In London, England over 500 devotees and supporters gathered, chanted, and danced on both sides of the street in front of the Bangladesh High Commission.

ISKCON hopes that these Global Kirtan Protest events will help persuade the Bangladesh government to vigorously prosecute and punish the criminals behind the recent attacks, to end the violence against minorities, and to bring peace for all citizens no matter their religious beliefs or practices.



From the top left clockwise : #globalkirtanprotest, Durban, South Africa, #globalkirtanprotest, Sydney, Australia, #globalkirtanprotest Florence, Italy, #globalkirtanprotest, Kolkata, India

ISKCON Dominican Republic Starts Campaign for New Gaura Nitai Temple

By: Madhava Smullen, *ISKCON News*, October 23, 2021

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

Devotees in Santo Domingo, the capital of Caribbean island nation the Dominican Republic, have launched a fundraising campaign to build a new temple for Sri Sri Gaura Nitai.

ISKCON was established in the Dominican Republic nearly 50 years ago, and Gaura Nitai have been the presiding Deities in Santo Domingo ever since. But the current temple is a leased three-bedroom house, located across a bridge in the Eastern part of the capital, making it less accessible; so the community has long desired a new home for Their Lordships.

Now, with new energy flowing, devotees headed by temple president Kishora Gauranga Das have decided to make a real effort to collect donations internationally and make their dream a reality.

“Srla Prabhupada said that Deities should be installed in Their own property,” says Ekendra Das, who is heading up the fundraising campaign with several others. “And what’s more, the community is growing, as are our plans. We think that if we have a properly established temple, in a more central location, our efforts will be more lasting, and everybody will feel more committed.”



A computer-generated image of the planned new temple in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic

Donations have started coming in from Puerto Rico, Peru, and the United States for the new temple, which is set to cost \$700,000. The custom-built Mandir has already been designed, and will include a beautiful temple room for Sri Sri Gaura Nitai and Srla Prabhupada, men’s and women’s ashram accommodations, a large kitchen for prasadam preparation, a new Govinda’s restaurant, a gift store, a library for Krishna conscious literature, and a video room to screen spiritual videos.

Devotees hope to have it built within two years at the latest; dependent, of course, on donations.

ISKCON of the Dominican Republic already has a number of current outreach efforts that will continue on at the new temple. Although a small island, the country holds two *Ratha-yatra* festivals per year – one in Santo Domingo, and one in Santiago, its second largest city. Devotees also distribute prasadam to those in need once a week, go on *Harinama* at least once a month, and have a program in which they donate Srla Prabhupada’s books to public and college libraries. There are also weekly Sunday feasts, and daily Zoom classes by learned speakers for Spanish-speakers around the world.

Future plans for the new temple include the new Govinda’s restaurant; a radio station which will broadcast devotional music, lectures and interviews; and the creation of the Conciencia Feliz (“Happy Consciousness”) Foundation,



(left to right) Mukunda Madhava Das, Yogavit Das, and Shyam Krishna Gopal Das donate a Srimad-Bhagavatam set to faculty at Pontificia Universidad Católica Madre y Maestra, a university in Santiago



Ratha-yatra in Santo Domingo, pre-Covid

which will support further distribution of *prasadam* and Prabhupada's books.

"I think every day there's more and more of a need for Krishna Consciousness in society, and the Dominican Republic is no different," says Ekendra.

After nearly fifty years, he explains, devotees are very excited about the prospect of a new temple. "We're looking forward to the moment when we open our doors for the first time, welcome all the devotees, and give Sri Sri Gaura Nitai a new permanent home," he says. "And that excitement is not only amongst devotees in the Dominican Republic – devotees in other countries

like Puerto Rico, Peru, Argentina, and the United States also feel our enthusiasm, and share it with us."

To help build the new temple in the Dominican Republic, please donate via PayPal or bank transfer here:

<https://ISKCONsd.com/>

ISKCON Official Report on Bangladesh Attacks

By: Jagatguru Gauranga das and Naru Gopal das, *ISKCON News*, October 17, 2021
<https://bit.ly/3nKVG8O>

"On 13 October 2021, radical extremists began strategic, coordinated attacks on Hindu minorities in Bangladesh. The attacks continued until 15 October 2021, with innumerable homes, shops, *puja* pandals, and temples being looted, burned, and destroyed. There are currently 6 to 10 fatalities reported in various media outlets, while many more people have sustained injuries or been hospitalized.

"It is with a heavy heart that we inform you that our ISKCON Sri Sri Radha Krishna, Gaura Nityananda Jiu Temple in Choumoni was part of these attacks and that two devotees, Pranta Chandra das (whose dead body was found in a pond the next day) and Jatan Chandra Saha, were murdered during these attacks. Another devotee, Nimai Chandra das, remains hospitalized in a critical condition. All residential devotees were physically attacked and have sustained injuries.

"The destruction began in Nanuyar Dighi, in the district of Cumilla, after false rumors of Hindus disrespecting the Holy Qur'an were used to instigate and recruit extremists, and continued to spread throughout 15 districts, namely: Comilla, Chandpur, Lakhimpur, Gajipur, Kurigram, Moulabi Bazaar,

Babijang, Sheylet, Bhalo, Noakhali, Chattagram, Cox's-Bazar, Chapainabgang, Muncigang, and Fheni.

"This is not the first time in Bangladesh where false rumours were spread and used to brutally attack or murder Hindu minorities.

"On Thursday, 14 October 2021, the Honourable Prime Minister declared that the culprits would receive exemplary punishment. However, the Government did not take visible steps to stop further destruction. The ISKCON Choumoni temple devotees had also pleaded with local police to provide protection, but these requests were ignored.

"Seizing this gross neglect of duty from the authorities, approximately 500 Muslim radical extremists continued their attacks the following day.

"The attack on our ISKCON Choumoni temple took place on 15 October 2021 around 3 p.m. in broad daylight. During this ruthless attack, which was conducted in two phases, the *Ratha* of Lord Jagannath, deities of Srila Prabhupada, spiritual books, vehicles, and other temple property/paraphernalia were burned, destroyed, and looted.

“On the same day, the Kali Mandir, Rama Thakur Mandir, Lokanath Mandir, GM Sen Hall of Chattagram, along with many other houses, shops, and institutions of Hindu minorities were also destroyed.

“The culprits behind these attacks have shamelessly and openly declared their actions on social media, repeatedly carrying out such atrocities again and again. Therefore, the Government should take immediate steps to set exemplary, severe punishment and not permit Muslim radical extremists to perform such atrocities, which bring shame upon the respected society of Bangladesh in the eyes of the world.

“We offer our sincere prayers and condolences to the families of those who have lost their lives and livelihoods in such violent and painful circumstances.”



Remains of Bangladesh ISKCON Temple Gift Shop

Tallahassee Krishna House Resurrected After Nearly Closing Its Doors

By: Madhava Smullen, *ISKCON News*, October 23, 2021

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

Faced with challenges such as a seriously deteriorating building and a pandemic, the Krishna House in Tallahassee, Florida recently came close to closing its doors for good. But the efforts of dedicated devotees brought it back from the brink, and the project is now steadily reaching out to students at Florida State University (FSU) with Krishna Lunch and other regular programs.

ISKCON of Tallahassee was first established by early Prabhupada disciples Brahmananda and Gargamuni around 1970, and the current Krishna House was first purchased in 1986. The lunch program began over 20 years ago on a small scale, and gradually developed into a regular effort. Most recently the Krishna House had been run by Brajananda Das, who devotedly nurtured the morning program, Krishna Lunch and other outreach.

When Covid hit in March 2020, however, and FSU stopped on-campus learning and all in-person programs including Krishna Lunch at the beginning of the pandemic, the Krishna House was left without its main source of income.

On top of that, the building was in catastrophic disrepair. The roof was leaking, termite infestation had caused severe damage, the foundation had developed major cracks, and the house's front corners were sinking into the ground due to accumulated rain runoff. There were also maintenance issues with the bathrooms, kitchen, floors, plumbing, and electric. An inspector told devotees that repairs would cost \$100,000 or more

and would not be worth it, as the total value of the property at the time was less than \$150,000 and there was \$50,000 left to pay on the mortgage.

In July 2020, a meeting was called with the property trustees, GBC, temple president and Ramiya Das, a longtime member of the board of directors. It was decided that the devotees should relocate, and the building should be sold. Immediately, all the devotees started moving out.

Days later, Ramiya, who had retired from his full-time job as a computer programmer in 2008 to dedicate his time to preaching, called the GBC back, asking if he could make one more attempt to save the Krishna House.

Getting the go-ahead, Ramiya found contractors to start the repairs step by step. To get the foundation fixed, he took out a credit card himself and put \$15,000 on it. Next, he had a contractor replace the roof, and asked a D.C.-based couple who were former Tallahassee congregation members to make a ten-minute video for a Gofundme page. The couple went far above and beyond, immediately put a check in the mail for \$10,000 to pay for the whole roof. Meanwhile a Cincinnati couple who had come to Krishna consciousness through ISKCON Tallahassee paid the balance on the foundation repairs.

Next, two-by-fours in the substructure and roof that had been eaten through by termites and turned to dust were replaced. The deity kitchen, apartment kitchen, and bathrooms had to be completely remodeled, work was done on the plumb-

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ing and electrical systems, and all the floors were redone. Cracks in the side of the building that could have led to collapsing walls were fixed. The commercial stove, which only had one working burner, was replaced. New gutters were put up to route drainage away from the building. The front porch – a raised concrete slab which had cracked all the way through in several places – was fixed and repainted. The total cost of all the repairs was \$70,000, all raised through donations from kind supporters who responded to Ramiya's requests for help.

"At the advice of ISKCON Communications Director Anuttama Prabhu, we prayed every day, 'My dear Lord Chaitanya and Lord Nityananda, please close the doors we should not go through, open the doors you wish us to go through, and give us the strength and determination to go through them,'" says Ramiya. "And I think it worked!"

Towards the end of the renovations, husband and wife Kaliya Damana Das and Janesvari Dasi, who had previously run preaching centers in Arcata, Northern California, and Boulder, Colorado, moved to Tallahassee with their son Gopal to serve as co-managers of the Krishna House.

"They repainted the outside of the building, did some final repairs, and painted inside," Ramiya says. "And now the place looks beautiful – a first class, very inviting facility."

Working with FSU to meet their requirements, Krishna Lunch was restarted in September 2021 in the cafeteria on campus where it was previously based. Kaliya Damana and Janesvari's 19-year-old son Gopal, who learned quantity cooking while in Mayapur Gurukula, began serving as the head chef. The team has been learning the ropes and gradually rebuilding interest, while reinstating the Krishna House's regular income source.

Krishna Lunch is now served from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Monday to Friday, distributing vegan meals with 70% organic ingredients to about 50 to 100 people per day. Following Gainesville Krishna House's formula, there's rice, salad with almond dressing, and a different entrée every day – including BBQ tofu and mac 'n' cheese, Thai coconut curry, vegetable curry with kofta balls, four

bean chili and corn chips, and lentil stew with veggies. Dessert is halava in a variety of incredible flavors – peanut butter chocolate, banana cream, pumpkin spice, pineapple coconut, and caramelized French Vanilla.

"Diners have told us it's some of the best *prasadam* they've ever had," Kaliya Damana says.

The official Bhakti Yoga club has also been reinstated, which will help devotees to reach out to more of FSU's 42,000 students. Meanwhile a number of programs are held at the Krishna House, just two blocks away from FSU. These include a condensed morning program with *japa* and *Bhagavatam* class; a Tuesday spiritual movie night; a Wednesday Feast with kirtan, discussion and *prasadam*; a Thursday *Bhagavad-gita* discussion group; and a Friday night *Harinama*. There's also a once a week sit-down kirtan and book table on campus, and weekend canoe *japa* retreats down a local river.

Some 10 to 25 students attend these programs, with happy, enthusiastic responses. Several have taken to daily chanting, and have learned how to lead kirtan. Accommodation is being arranged in the apartments next door for those who wish to participate in morning programs on a regular basis.

It's an uplifting rebirth for the Tallahassee Krishna House after a challenging time – and the future looks hopeful.

Devotees who wish to live next door to the Tallahassee Krishna House and assist with the project may contact Kaliya Damana Das at kmayell@gmail.com.

SPIRITUAL PERSPECTIVES

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From top left clockwise : The beautifully renovated Tallahassee Krishna House, New wood floors were installed while some were repainted, Sri Sri Gaura Nitai at the Krishna House, Janesvari Dasi's Organic Superfood Smoothie Bar at Krishna Lunch

Personal Message



Dear Friends,

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

The *sastras* tell us that one of the four miseries of material life is *jara* or old age.

Old age is like being sick all the time – nausea, creaking bones, unhealed sores (abrasions, contusions, bonebreaks, cracks, dislocations and the like), slow movement, and, as Srila Prabhupada has written, loose skin and loose teeth. And then there's pain – always there. It's a question of tolerance. Disease for the young is temporary, but for the old it is continuous.

And then there's being unwanted. As Srila Prabhupada said in a lecture, nobody cares for old people. This is especially true in the US, where often the old are conveniently tucked away into retirement homes, houses for the elderly, “managed living” facilities, and “Golden Years” retreats. Youthful energy – that of rock musicians, ball players, and movie stars – is idolized. Girlie magazines and websites exploit the young until they're too old to be in the realm of “tantalizing.” The old and elderly tend to be put out to pasture to masticate quietly and pass time filling in crossword puzzles or watching TV.

Old people are generally not sought after for their “wisdom of the years.”

And the seniors of the world tend to be jaded, family-attached, opinionated and cynical towards just about everything. They tend to be pessimistic and find little pleasure in the things younger people often revel in – like music, art, sports, fast cars, natural scenery, the beauty of nature, and personal beauty.

A Krishna conscious person, however, regardless of age, sees a bright future ahead, a place where all liquid is nectar, all paces a dance and all words part of a song. Such people don't see death as the end but as a transition to a better existence.

They, like Prabhupada, are not worn down by old age in a material way, but look to the future with an eye to real pleasure, transcendental happiness, and the ever-young presence of a liberated soul.

Hare Krishna.

Your friend,

Mukunda Goswami

Mukunda Goswami

