



# Spiritual Perspectives

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

## Playing God

By Radha devi dasi

Science is rapidly approaching the ability to change the design of human beings. Last month, a group in China announced it was the first to successfully edit the genome of a human embryo.

The breakthrough at Sun Yat-sen University in Guangdong, China, showed that errors in the DNA that led to a particular blood disorder could be successfully corrected in non-viable embryos. The procedure worked in seven of 86 embryos and is the latest development in a rapidly developing field of science. Although clinical applications are a distant prospect, the debate over genetic engineering of humans has already begun.

Dr. Tony Perry, University of Bath, a pioneer in cloning, argues that huge advances in the past two years mean “designer babies” are no longer H.G. Wells territory. Other leading scientists and bioethicists say it is time for a serious public debate on the issue.

Dr. Perry told a BBC interviewer: “My view is this is such a wonderful opportunity to remove horrible diseases that it would be unethical not to explore it. I think it is a sin of omission, if you have a method where you can prevent someone suffering and you don’t take that opportunity then it is wrong, it is unethical.”

Others, including conservative religious groups such as the Church of Latter Day Saints, argue that it is unethical to interfere with an embryo or the body assigned to one by God.

According to the *Srimad Bhagavatam*, however, such technology was available to ancient sages. In the Ninth Canto of *Srimad Bhagavatam*, Sukadeva Goswami describes how King Sudyumna became a woman. A child of Vaivasvata Muni, Sudyumna was originally born as

a daughter named Ila by the desire of Vaivasvata Muni’s wife. At the request of Manu, the great

sage Vasishta transformed Ila into a beautiful young man named Sudyumna. Later, Sudyumna received a benediction from Lord Siva that allowed him to live one month as a man and one month as a woman.

Because the body one has at conception (and at birth) is a temporary vehicle, its characteristics are not part of our eternal identity.

As the *Srimad Bhagavatam* describes, saintly persons can arrange for something as fundamental as gender identity to fluctuate within one lifetime. Genetic engineering for sex, height, intelligence and other traits is similar to the changes that Siva and Vasistha Muni made to Sudyumna’s body.

On the other hand, giving great sages the power to make changes is one thing. Allowing scientists untrained in spiritual wisdom the same opportunity is likely a recipe for disaster. Even without genetic engineering, we have seen the desire for sons over daughters lead to infanticide and gender imbalance in China and rural India. Furthermore, the technology does not have a 100% success rate, leading to the possibility that embryos will be destroyed if they fail to meet certain specifications. Allowing our current social, political and scientific leaders the power to make such decisions seems dangerous. The real question here is not whether the technology should be used, but who should have the power to use it. Until we have a class of sages in our society, this is one tool we ought to leave on the shelf.



*Budha (not to be confused with Buddha) and his consort Ila*



*DNA strand*

# Boston Honors Srila Prabhupada by Raising Indian Flag Over City Hall

By Madhava Smullen, *ISKCON NEWS*, September 18, 2015

<http://bit.ly/1Fv8ZRF>

On Thursday, September 17<sup>th</sup>, at 10:00am, Boston City Hall raised the Indian flag in honor of ISKCON Founder-Acharya Srila Prabhupada.

It was on the same day fifty years ago in 1965, that Prabhupada arrived in Boston's Commonwealth Pier on the steamship Jaladuta with his message of God consciousness.

This is the first time the City of Boston has ever honored India by raising its flag.

The Mayor of Boston also issued a proclamation for the occasion which read "I, Martin J. Walsh, Mayor of the City of Boston, do hereby proclaim September 17, 2015 as His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada Day in the City of Boston."

Julie Burros, Chief of Arts and Culture for the City of Boston was the guest of honor at the

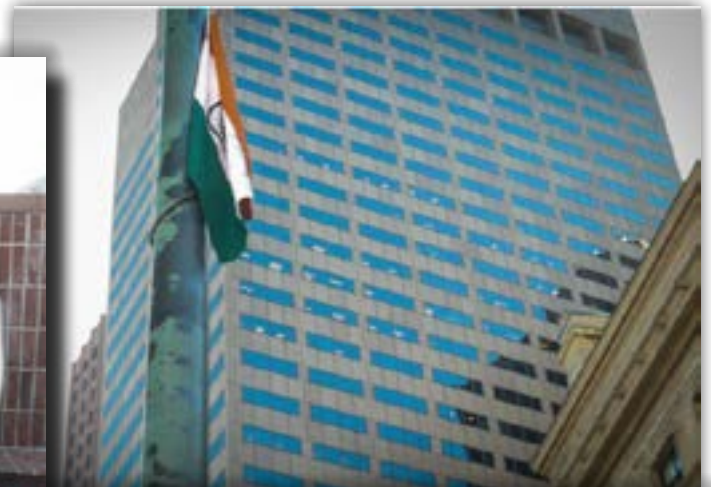
event. The Nepal Consul General of New England also spoke, thanking ISKCON for its continuing humanitarian work following the earthquake there.

Fifty years on from Srila Prabhupada's historic Boston arrival, his International Society for Krishna Consciousness has hundreds of temples, farms, eco-villages, restaurants, and educational institutions around the world. ISKCON has over 75,000 initiated devotees, and approximately seven million worshippers attend its centers annually.

"This was a unique opportunity to confirm that ISKCON is a key thread in the fabric of spiritual traditions that are now imbedded in the ever-changing cultural landscape of America," said event organizer Amit Dixit.



*Above: Honorees and special guests of the flag ceremony*



*Right: Indian flag raised above Boston City Hall*

We Would Appreciate Your Feedback  
Please Send Your Response To :

[feedback@mukundagoswami.org](mailto:feedback@mukundagoswami.org)

# Sarasota Krishna House Provides Spiritual Oasis

By Madhava Smullen, *ISKCON NEWS*, September 18, 2015  
<http://bit.ly/1LxyyTj>



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

*Shashvata Das and Rachel, the husband and wife team behind the Sarasota Krishna House*

A Sarasota, Florida family have opened up their home to provide a Krishna conscious oasis for devotees and newcomers in their city, which is three hours' drive from the nearest ISKCON temples in Alachua and Miami.

"People can make the drive on festival days," says mother of four Rachel Ward. "But we wanted to give them the temple experience of seeing deities, associating with other devotees, and sharing prasadam and kirtan on a weekly basis."

Her husband Shashvata Das, a bass player initiated last year by Bhaktimarga Swami, says they were inspired by Kalindi Dasi and Jaya Das in Colorado, who run the Boulder Krishna House from their home.

Shashvata and Rachel's weekly programs run from 6:30 to 9:30 on Sunday evenings, starting out with kirtan, and an ice-breaker in which attendees introduce themselves and talk about how they heard about Krishna.

Everyone then takes turns reading a verse from *Bhagavad-gita As It Is*, which the group is working its way through. Next, it will move on to *Nectar of Instruction*, *Nectar of Devotion*, and *Sri Isopanisad*.

Finally there is prasadam, and then a lively kirtan, in which many of the musicians in the local community come with their guitars, bass guitars, mridangas, kartals, and harmoniums. Occasionally, when there are special guests like

recent speakers Bhaktimarga Swami and Ramiya Das from Alachua, the program is held at a nearby yoga studio.

Attending are anywhere from half a dozen to twenty people from various backgrounds and locations such as Sarasota and other towns Bradenton, Venice and even as far as Tampa.

Some are yoga enthusiasts who attend monthly performances at local yoga studios by the Cheryl Chafee kirtan band, which Shashvata and Rachel both play in. Some are curious newcomers who find out about the program by word of mouth and have never heard of Krishna before. And others are devotees starved for spiritual association.

"One devotee who had just recently moved from Dallas to nearby Bradenton found us on Facebook, and was so happy to be able to take her children to offer candles to Lord Damodar during Kartik month," says Rachel. "Another is mother Maharani, an elderly Prabhupada disciple who missed temple life."

The program changes lives. One devotee who was initiated in 1985, but had since left, began chanting Hare Krishna on his beads again as a result of attending. Eva, a newcomer, is moved to tears when reading the *Bhagavad-gita*, and she and her husband are now familiar with the maha-mantra.

The program also creates community. Regular newcomer Mary, for instance, brought her six-month old son Talon for a Vedic grain ceremony, in which the child traditionally chooses between spiritual books, money, and other items. "He chose the *Bhagavad-gita*, which was really cool," says Shashvata.

Attendees are grateful to the point of tears for the Sarasota Krishna House. When Rachel and

*Continued on page 4*

Shashvata recently had to put their program on hiatus due to an illness in the family, their regulars would constantly call and knock on their door, asking them when they were starting it up again.

For their part, the family is always enthusiastic about the program, handing out maha-mantra cards on the beach and at the local farmer's market, and talking about it whenever they can.

"On Janmastami, my eight-year old daughter went out to the Sarasota Farmer's Market and

distributed the cookbook *Higher Taste*," says Shashvata. "We just get out there and try and spread the Holy Name. We would like to see this house busting at the seams every week!"

In the future, he and his wife say, they would love to see similar "Krishna Houses" springing up all over the nation, providing an essential service to people who live far away from any temple.

## Epic 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Prabhupada's Journey to the U.S. Draws 35,000 People From 125 Countries

By Madhava Smullen, *ISKCON NEWS*, August 20, 2015  
<http://bit.ly/1PODORC>

From August 13<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> a massive event in Kolkata — celebrating the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Srila Prabhupada's journey to the U.S. — drew 35,000 people, including representatives of 125 countries and many prominent politicians and VIPs.

All were coming to pay their respects to the great spiritual teacher, who left his home alone at age 69, braved two heart-attacks during a month-long voyage on the cargo ship *Jaladuta*, and struggled with little help in one of the roughest parts of New York City for nearly a year before establishing ISKCON on July 13, 1966.

All this not to search for wealth and the American dream like most immigrants, but to deliver the message of love of God his guru Srila

Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati had requested him to bring to the Western world.

Today, his International Society for Krishna Consciousness has hundreds of temples, farms, eco-villages, restaurants, and educational institutions around the world, over 75,000 initiated devotees, and approximately seven million worshippers who attend its centers annually.

Commemorating Prabhupada's achievements, the flags of 125 countries flew from the ceiling of the cavernous Netaji Indoor Stadium in Kolkata during the main 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary event on August 13<sup>th</sup>, the date on which he set sail.

Below them, the stage was designed by Bengali film producer Shrikant Mohta to look like



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

Devotees from 125 countries chant Harinama at Victoria Memorial on Indian Independence Day



http://bit.ly/1PODORC

*A sculpture of Srila Prabhupada leaving Kolkata and arriving at Boston Harbor is unveiled at the event*

the Jaladuta, with its portholes, railings, sails and even the water of the sea with blue flashing lights.

The August 13<sup>th</sup> festivities were split into morning and evening sessions, for ISKCON devotee and local Kolkata audiences.

Early in the morning 100 buses began transporting attendees, and from 8:00am to 1:00pm, the stadium was stuffed with an audience of devotees and friends from various Indian cities and countries around the world. With 3,000 people more than the stadium's 15,000 capacity attending, many packed the stairwells and walkways.

The program was full of talks in praise of Prabhupada and his achievements. Bhakti Charu Swami, Jayapataka Swami, Radhanath Swami and Bhakti Purusottama Swami all spoke about the austerities Srila Prabhupada went through for us.

Meanwhile Srila Prabhupada's son Vrindavan Chandra De — reportedly the only still living person who was present at Prabhupada's departure to the U.S. — recalled seeing his father off from Kolkata's Khidirpur Dock with a jar of coconut laddhus from his sister (Prabhupada's daughter) Bhakti-lata.

He remembered Srila Prabhupada being so renounced that he even gave him the forty rupees he had left, "because it wouldn't be any use to him in America." Prabhupada asked his son to give his best wishes to his family, and requested them to pray for his safe journey. Then, as the ship's bell sounded its departure, Vrindavan Chandra shed tears

http://bit.ly/1PODORC

and prostrated himself in obeisance before his father.

The morning program also included bhajans by the Mayapur Chandras, kirtan by Lokanath Swami, and a tribute song for Srila Prabhupada by the young women of the Mayapur International School. A highlight was a forty-minute drama by India's Got Talent winners Prince Dance Group, of Srila Prabhupada's life story from childhood to his journey on the Jaladuta.

The evening session, from 3:00pm till 9:00pm again drew so many people eager to honor Srila Prabhupada — this time local Kolkatans — that thousands had to be turned away from the gate.

In his speech, Governor of West Bengal Shri Keshari Nath Tripathi praised Srila Prabhupada. And prominent politician Kiran Bedi both spoke and live Tweeted from the event to her 5.1 million Twitter followers, saying, "Very sacred day in Kolkata — ISKCON celebrating 50 yrs of Prabhupada's journey," and calling the event one of "energy, togetherness and devotion."

U.S. Congresswoman Tulasi Gabbard — a Krishna devotee — also gave a moving speech via video feed. "A person who is unable to bear another's distress is called compassionate," she said, quoting Rupa Goswami. "It was this compassion that drove Srila Prabhupada to attempt something so brave and so daring, to deliver the message of Lord Chaitanya and the holy name to all of mankind." She added, "[we] would all be lost orphans were it not for his compassion and mercy."



*Ekalavya Das performs 'Jadi Prabhupada Na Hoito' with a huge group of young dancers and singers*

*Continued on page 6*

Meanwhile ISKCON devotee representatives from 106 different countries broke the world record for a yoga lesson by the most nationalities, performing yoga postures like padmasana (lotus position) while chanting Srila Prabhupada's Pranam mantra and the Hare Krishna mantra.

Devotee representatives from 105 countries then set a new world record for a choir consisting of the most nationalities, by singing the Bengali song Sri Guru Charana Padma in praise of Srila Prabhupada.

“flash mob” dance performance by 650 students from Kolkata schools to the song “Gopinath,” ending in the dancers forming the word “Krsna” with their bodies.

On August 14<sup>th</sup>, hundreds of devotees were taken by bus on a tour of key places in Srila Prabhupada's life. The group included the 125 representatives of ISKCON from 125 different countries who had been flown in by ISKCON Kolkata – many of whom had been members of ISKCON for decades but had never before been able to afford the trip to India.

The stops on the tour included 1 Ulta Danga Junction Road, where Prabhupada met his spiritual master for the first time; the Radha Govindaji Mandir at Bara Bazaar, where Srila Prabhupada held his own Ratha-yatra festival at five years old; the house at 151 Mahatma Gandhi Road where he grew up, and the place on Tollygunge Road where he was born in 1896.

Finally, devotees visited Khidirpur Dock, where Srila Prabhupada left for the U.S. fifty years ago. “The devotees all bowed down, and were feeling very emotional by that time,” says organizer and ISKCON Kolkata manager Radharaman Das.

On August 15<sup>th</sup>—Indian Independence Day—600 devotees, including the representatives from 125 countries each carrying their country's flag, chanted Harinam Sankirtan from ISKCON Kolkata to the Victoria Memorial, where they continued chanting from 10:00am till 1:30pm.

On August 16<sup>th</sup> and the evenings of the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup>, devotees gathered at ISKCON Kolkata for cultural performances and talks on Srila Prabhupada's life by his senior disciples.

“The atmosphere at this festival was surcharged with love and devotion,” says Radharaman. “When all the devotees from around the world left to return home, they were crying tears of gratitude for Srila Prabhupada.”

The Kolkata celebration of Prabhupada's journey on the Jaladuta is of course only kicking off the worldwide celebrations of ISKCON's 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, which will continue with events throughout the year ending on July 13, 2016, the date of the society's official registration in 1966.

“We at ISKCON know that all of us have been saved by Srila Prabhupada's mercy,” says Radharaman. “So all these events are about sharing the good fortune we have received with others.”



*Bhakti Charu Swami and Radhanath Swami hold up ISKCON's Guinness World Record for most nationalities in a yoga lesson*

A Guinness Book of World Records judge, Pravin Patel, was present and officially awarded ISKCON certificates confirming the records.

Later in the evening, a specially commissioned sculpture, designed by Russian devotee Madan Mohan Das and made by Ukrainian artist Volodymyr Zhuravel was unveiled. Made from bronze, the beautifully detailed piece splits into two parts. One, depicting Srila Prabhupada boarding the Jaladuta in Kolkata, is currently being kept at ISKCON Kolkata and will be installed in a park near Khidirpur Dock. The other, showing Prabhupada alighting from the ship in Boston, will be installed in a public park near Boston Harbor.

Other highlights of the evening included a joyful performance of Jayaptaka Swami's song “Jadi Prabhupada Na Hoito” by Ekalavya Das with a huge group of young dancers and singers, and a

# New Zealand: Dignitaries Praise Srila Prabhupada

By Kalasamvara Das, *www.Dandavats.com*, September 21, 2015  
<http://bit.ly/1L7cT5B>

ISKCON Auckland, New Zealand: Dignitaries from the US Consulate, Human Rights Commission, National Party, Labour Party, and New Zealand Police took time out to spend the day at the Hare Krishna Temple as part of the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Srila Prabhupada. They all spoke very nicely appreciating ISKCON's contribution to society, garlanded Srila Prabhupada, performed the bathing ceremony of Srila Prabhupada and enjoyed a wonderful feast.

After the program at the temple and spending time with the devotees they had nothing but high praise.

Video of the program honoring Srila Prabhupada can be seen by following the links below:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QjNiW9to1aY>  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FtcA\\_ASWIPo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FtcA_ASWIPo)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?t=1&v=26mXlPyDs-8>  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=taQ8W5skfqq>  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ISq1FQAYttg>  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n0NQumAxdU>



*Dignitaries glorify Srila Prabhupada in Auckland, New Zealand*

## SPIRITUAL PERSPECTIVES

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# Personal

# Message...



Dear Friends,

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

The 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of ISKCON's existence (first incorporated in New York on July 13, 1966) is less than one year away.

Devotees around the world are gearing up to celebrate the anniversary in many ways.

The global coordinator for this event is Romapada Prabhu, born in India, and for some time an employee of the Hinduja family, said to be one of the world's wealthiest families.

Recently Romapada Prabhu sent out a recommendation letter to all temples so that they can prepare for the milestone celebration, sometimes called the "Golden Jubilee" of ISKCON.

His suggestions, which you may know about, include this information: Srila Prabhupada wrote the first poem, 'Prayer to the Lotus feet of Krishna' on September 13, 1965 on board the Jaladuta, and the second one, 'Markine Bhagavata Dharma' while the Jaladuta was docked at Boston Harbor on September 18, 1965. While writing about the first poem, Srila Prabhupada mentions in his diary: "Today I have disclosed my mind to my companion Lord Sri Krishna. There is a Bengali poem made by me today in this connection."

To observe the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of these two poems, temples can do the following:

- Announce the anniversary of the poem on the days 13<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> of September at Mangala Aratrika
- Sing the song or recite the lyrics in your local language before or after *Srimad Bhagavatam* class
- Have a special morning class explaining the purport of the song on each of the two days
- If possible, have a special evening program inviting members of the congregation to join in singing the song or reciting its lyrics, and have another class with senior devotees sharing their realizations

Also of interest is to play in the temples or privately, wherever possible, the video renditions of this song. The video sound tracks are by His Holiness Indradyumna and His Holiness Bhakti Charu Maharaja. They can be found on YouTube by clicking on the following links:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CxjzdIxCaY4> and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EbvSfndHtr4>.

Both are inspiring and worth watching.

You can get the lyrics in English by clicking on the link:

<http://www.prabhupada.de/Books/lectures/pttlfok.html>

I would encourage all devotees to observe the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary occasion in as grand a way as possible. It would be a great tragedy if 2016 passes unnoticed. Please do your best.

Your servant,

*Mukunda Goswami*

Mukunda Goswami

