



# Spiritual Perspectives

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

## The Myth of Economic Growth

By Radha devi dasi



Our modern world is premised on the assumptions that economic growth solves problems. Expanding economies make people richer, and study after study shows that the wealthier lead happier, healthier lives. In advocating plain living and high thinking, Srila Prabhupada challenged this paradigm.

Yet in recent years, accumulating evidence suggests that rising incomes and personal well-being are linked in the opposite way. It seems that economic growth actually kills people. Ironically, as we jettison spiritual development in favor of material happiness, we can actually sabotage even that temporary goal.

The *Washington Post* recently reported on work by Christopher Ruhm, an economics professor at the University of Virginia. Professor Ruhm noted that when the American economy is on an upswing, people suffer more medical problems and die faster; when the economy falters, people tend to live longer. In the western part of the world, we reached a tipping point, where increased development reduced our lifespans in the 1900s.

One culprit, researchers say, is pollution from factory output. Pollution is a major culprit in increased mortality rates. Once an economy has shifted from agriculture to industry, higher emissions from industrial activity lead to worse health and shorter lives.

As *Vaishnavas*, we know that our intelligence can be clouded by *maya*. Only Krishna is power-

ful enough to overcome the material energy and the illusions it generates. The myth of economic growth is one example of how our material conditioning causes us to choose the worst outcomes for ourselves. Politicians offer us unlimited economic growth and we see ourselves rich and happy. On an individual basis many of us find that

ever increasing consumption makes us less happy. There is plenty of evidence that spiritual practice helps combat the modern epidemic of depression, stress and anxiety. Now, the evidence shows that health and life expectancy go down when economic growth rises past a certain point.

Without spiritual leadership, modern culture fosters ever increasing production and consumption. In fact, human happiness depends on putting spiritual pursuits into the equation. Without a spiritual component in our society we will be ever more short-lived, quarrelsome, unlucky and above all, always disturbed.



# Scientists Claim Saraswati Did Exist

By Prithviraj Singh, *The Hindustan Times*, September 29, 2016

<http://bit.ly/2e2WF3d>



*Mythical Saraswati*

Scientists at the Dehradun-based Wadia Institute of Himalayan Geology (WIHG) have debunked established belief that Saraswati river is just a 5,000-year-old myth.

They claimed to have found after extensive research that the river did exist during ancient times, but got buried because of tectonic changes in the Himalayas.

The mythical Saraswati forms the Hindu holy triumvirate along with the Ganga and Yamuna,

and the hypothetical confluence of these three rivers in Allahabad is the source of humanity's biggest gathering every 12 years during the Kumbha Mela.

The scientists said that the Saraswati flowed from its origin at Adi Badri in the Shivalik range of Haryana's Yamunanagar to its meeting point with the Chautang river in the plains. This is the course the river followed when it flowed in the Vedic era.

## Russia: Anti-Sharing Beliefs Law First Use

By Victoria Arnold, *Forum 18*, August 24, 2016

<http://bit.ly/2eAOYxa>

A Hare Krishna adherent has become the first person to be charged under Russia's new law restricting sharing beliefs. Anti-extremism police in the North Caucasus republic of Karachai-Cherkessiya arrested 19-year-old Vadim Sibiryev on July 28 on suspicion of violating the Religion Law by handing out religious literature in the street. But a judge acquitted Sibiryev on August 15, when his lawyer successfully argued that his actions did not fit the law's definition of "missionary" activity.

On July 20, only two days before Sibiryev's alleged "offence," amendments to the Religion Law and Administrative Code had come into force restricting the sharing of religious beliefs in public

and introducing heavy financial penalties for those who violate these restrictions. Had he been convicted, Sibiryev could have received a fine of up to 50,000 Roubles.

A fine of 50,000 Roubles (6,400 Norwegian Kroner, 690 Euros, or 780 US Dollars) represents about six weeks average wages for those working in that area.

So far, no other religious associations have reported similar cases involving their members. Council of Churches Baptists confirmed to *Forum 18* on August 20 that none of their adherents have been prosecuted under the law restricting sharing beliefs.

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There have been many violations of freedom of religion or belief in Russia in recent years — especially against Muslims who read the works of the theologian Said Nursi, and Jehovah’s Witnesses in general — through the use of anti-“extremism” laws.

In 2012, prosecutors in Tomsk tried to ban *The Bhagavad-gita As It Is*, a key text for Hare Krishna devotees, as “extremist.” The attempt failed after a public outcry both locally and in India.

The attempted prosecution of Sibiriyev brought a mixed reaction from lawyers and human rights activists. In an August 7 piece on her own website, published before the verdict was issued, lawyer Inna Zagrebina remarked that, even with a positive outcome, the case does not bode well for future application of the amendment, as it demonstrated the “low threshold of legal and religious knowledge of police officers in the regions.”

Noting that Sibiriyev had told the police that he was not an official representative of a religious association (a key provision of the amendment) and had insisted on his right to legal defence, Zagrebina also pointed out that individuals need

to educate themselves in the law to protect themselves from possible prosecution.

The amendment’s definition of “missionary” activity “is such that it can be interpreted as anything,” Sibiriyev’s lawyer Mikhail Frolov commented to the *Vedomosti* newspaper on August 15. He added, however, that the court had taken an informed decision and expressed hope that judicial practice would continue to respect individuals’ rights.

Human rights activist Pavel Chikov also observed to *Vedomosti* that the Judge in Sibiriyev’s case, Viyneger Dzhankyofov, “was probably not prepared to set a precedent.” The decision is a “good signal,” he continued, “which demonstrates the irrationality of the amendments. The first case of application [of the law] has caused a conflict between opposite interpretations of the rules by police and courts. This means that from the very first instance of application, a foundation has been laid for a subsequent challenge of the law.”



<http://bit.ly/2eAOYxa>

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# ISKCON Hungary Organizes Interfaith FFL on UN World Food Day

By ISKCON News Staff, *ISKCON News*, October 16, 2016  
<http://bit.ly/2e37aU4>



*People of different faiths gave out 1,600 plates of hot lunch and tons of dry food*

On October 16<sup>th</sup> the United Nations and the world celebrated World Food Day. In their communications the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) emphasizes: "Climate is changing. Food and agriculture must, too." And they urge everyone: "Let's adapt agriculture to climate change to build the Zero Hunger Generation."

According to Vladimir Rakhmanin, the European regional director of FAO, "while we have enough food to feed the entire human population, there are still millions out there starving. The problem is, he says, is not the quantity of the food we produce, it is the unbalance in distribution."

Rakhmanin also pointed out the importance of adapting the agriculture to the effects of climate change, by switching to sustainable, local agriculture.

With its organic farm Krishna Valley, ISKCON Hungary has been one of the most well known champions of sustainability

in Europe. To respond to the appeal of the UN FAO about the balanced distribution of food, on Sunday October 16<sup>th</sup>, ISKCON Hungary organized a major free food distribution event to the needy in Budapest.



*Hare Krishnas, Muslims, Jews and Buddhists worked together to help the needy on World Food Day*

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## 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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Volunteers distributed 1,600 plates of hot lunch, and gave out tons of dry food, including pasta, flour, vegetable oil, rice and other items from which families can cook for weeks.

The special feature of the charity event was that at this time, people from other religious communities have also joined the Krishna devotees in their effort to help the poor. Dozens of Hungarian Muslim, Jewish, and Buddhist

volunteers contributed money, food and time to make the World Food Day free food distribution program in Budapest a great success.

People on the receiving end not only appreciated the food and kind words they got from people of different faiths during the food distribution, but also the good example they witnessed in their way of cooperation, and their acting upon shared values.

## \$3 Krishna Lunches Hit Spot

By Luke Tumaru, [www.Dandavats.com](http://www.Dandavats.com), October 21, 2016  
<http://bit.ly/2eW7vqI>

University of Otago – Dunedin, Otago, New Zealand

After moving to Dunedin to retire, Jane Beecroft soon found herself with more on her plate than she first anticipated.

“I came here hoping to take it easy.

“Then I started teaching vegetarian cooking; soon enough word got out and it turned into the lunches.”

This year marks the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Hare Krishna vegetarian lunches on campus at the University of Otago, an initiative started by Ms Beecroft in 1997.

On a busy day more than 300 students could arrive for a meal in the space of two hours.

The \$3 main courses are served four days a week, Monday to Thursday, with Wednesday’s fresh bread and soup a favourite.

Ms Beecroft, who has been a Hare Krishna for more than 35 years, said she and her team tried to create an environment that felt like a home away from home.

“That’s what I want it to be. We get a lot of international students here, so they’re away from their families. If we can create a place where they feel loved and cared for then that’s really great.”

“It’s so joyous — you can see it in the exchanges we have with the students.”

Law student Max Gunn said he had been coming to the lunches for years to get his vegetarian fix.

“It’s got such a community vibe. I’m a big fan of their samosas.”

After finishing their meals, which can include dessert for a dollar extra, students wash and dry their own dishes.

Third-year medicine student Reuben Cane said he dropped in for a feed at least once a week, and he was not the only one in his house.

“One of my flatmates comes pretty much every day. The food’s so cheap but so good.”

“Jane always puts a smile on your dial.”

Ms Beecroft said she loved every second of her 20 years of service, and hoped for 20 more.

“If I took my last breath handing over a plate of food to a happy student then that would be a good way to go, I reckon.”

The numbers

- 500,000: meals served since 1997
  - 250: approximate number of students fed daily
  - 150: samosas handed out daily
  - 20kg: rice dished out daily
- Source: <https://goo.gl/VjbDdy>



Photo: Gerard O'Brien

*Student Max Gunn receives a plateful of vegetarian goodness from Hare Krishna Jane Beecroft, who is celebrating 20 years of serving vegetarian lunches on campus at the University of Otago*

# Personal Message...



Dear Friends,

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

Srila Prabhupada was a fighting *sadhu*. Some years ago, a photograph of him appeared in *Newsweek* magazine. In it, he was pointing the index finger of his right hand, and making a somewhat stern facial expression. He was wearing a pink-colored jacket. The extended caption described his fighting spirit. The photograph was reminiscent of a caricature of “Uncle Sam” (the U.S. government) as an old white-bearded fellow with a red, white and blue top hat depicted in a popular government poster during World War II that carried the slogan, “Uncle Sam Wants You.”

Most of the time, Srila Prabhupada exhibited the softness that one expects of a holy man. However, on rare occasions he was fiery.

When the British government tried to ban the annual Ratha-yatra festival in 1974, he severely chastised devotees for seemingly accepting this ruling. He appeared angrily critical not only of the British government, but also of individual devotees who had left active service.

During the campaign to save Bhaktivedanta Manor from a local planning order that would disable public worship in that building, the Manor devotees hosted a drama, showing that they were willing to dispute such a negative fiat. A somewhat popular guru and his followers attended the performance but left abruptly before the drama ended, saying later that their untimely departure occurred because ISKCON was blatantly exhibiting a non-Hindu tradition of passive resistance.

The devotees, who ultimately won the 10-year battle, were following in the footsteps of their *Param-guru*, Srila Prabhupada, who would have taken on the officials for what amounted to a declaration that prayer and worship were illegal.

In a few other similar instances Srila Prabhupada showed himself in this “fighting mode.” He is on record for saying, that if you deal with a clever person, you have to be twice as clever. In lectures he told us that when Britain ruled India, the British “patted” Gandhi. They could live with passive resistance. However, he continued, when Subash Chandra Bose created the Indian National Army they were willing to live off the land. When the Indian National Army (INA) presented a militant and violently revolutionary spirit, the UK decided to grant India independence in 1947.

It was partially the fighting spirit that endeared early devotees to Srila Prabhupada. He was not one to take abuse sitting down.

I beg to remain,  
your servant,

*Mukunda Goswami*

Mukunda Goswami

