

February 2014

# SPIRITUAL PERSPECTIVES

AN ISKCON COMMUNICATIONS PUBLICATION  
For Friends and Followers of Mukunda Goswami

## A No Brainer

by Radha devi dasi



<http://bit.ly/MBHria>

*Chickens are marketed as “free range” and “cruelty free” to promote a more humane meat industry*

Vegetarianism’s principles of compassion and ethical eating may be taking hold in the modern consciousness but that doesn’t mean people are ready to give up the meat on their plates. In fact, we can expect *Maya* to instigate the use of modern technology in promoting new ways of raising meat for the “enlightened” consumer.

People in North America and Europe have become more aware of the evils of meat eating. The evidence is in and most people accept that meat eating is associated with higher rates of disease and that factory farming is a serious source of environmental pollution. Enough consumers are aware of the suffering animals undergo in factory farms that some sellers are now marketing their free range meat products as “cruelty free.”

While this new consciousness has not put a stop to meat eating, it has convinced some to eat less meat. Public school districts, private universities, city and county governments, and some business groups have adopted “meat-less Mondays” to promote the idea of abstaining from meat at least part of the time. University researchers are developing meat products derived from animal cells rather than traditional procreation.

But the very push to promote meat free meals and laboratory grown meat stems from the realization that most people will not give up meat eating entirely. Despite ample evidence of the personal and environmental costs of

consuming dead flesh, people are generally not willing to give up eating animals.

Another tactic has been to make the public aware of the tremendous suffering that animals go through as they are prepared for grocery stores and restaurants. Animal rights activists have exposed the hideous physical tortures inflicted on all food animals as a consequence of factory farming. We are all more aware of the pain and suffering of cows deprived of their calves, chickens that never get to walk or see the sun, and animals in slaughterhouses.

One might expect the natural result of such information to be a surge in vegetarianism. However, that would be to ignore the strong hold *Maya* can have on human intelligence. One recent proposal typifies the lengths to which we will go to continue our chosen sense gratification.

Royal College of Art student André Ford’s Centre for Unconscious Farming is a grim affair, made of a massive steel frame that would contain up to 1,000 chickens. In it the birds are completely immobilized—their feet are removed (to save space), and the birds receive food, water and oxygen through an intricate network of tubes. In order to eliminate the suffering that chickens would face under such conditions, Ford proposes that the birds’ cerebral cortex be removed. The chickens would spend their lives in a coma.

In defending his proposal, Ford explicitly states the reason why removing the chickens’ brains is a solution to the problem of cruelty in factory farming – people will not give up their demand for cheap meat. Ford is not the first to propose extreme measures in light of our unrelenting demand. Agribusiness “philosopher” Paul Thompson has suggested breeding blind broilers, since studies show that they respond better to the stress of packed sheds.

The real issue here is a spiritual one – when our consciousness is materially conditioned, we are unconcerned with the suffering our particular attachment to sense gratification may cause. Material solutions like blinding or lobotomizing the suffering entities do not address the deeper issue of our tainted consciousness.

Thus, in promoting trends like vegetarianism or ideals like compassion we can get side tracked into strange and dark solutions like brainless chickens. Without a method to purify our consciousness and a means to overcome our attachment to sense gratification, this world will remain a place of suffering for millions of creatures.

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# Book Distribution Set For Another 20% Increase in 2013

By Madhava Smullen, *ISKCON News*, December 12, 2013  
<http://bit.ly/1hUl6Yn>

The distribution of ISKCON Founder Srila Prabhupada's spiritual books has seen a major resurgence in North America in recent years.

Inspired by the positive signs of increase he saw in 2010 and 2011, veteran book distributor and "Sankirtan Strategist" Vaisesika Das attended the January 2012 Temple Presidents' meeting in Dallas, Texas with a mission: he suggested that ISKCON North America distribute books as one team with one common goal.

For 2012, he proposed that this goal be to increase book distribution nationwide by twenty per cent, which would be calculated by remittance to Srila Prabhupada's publishers the Bhaktivedanta Book Trust (BBT).

The temple presidents unanimously agreed. And with a clear goal, a sense of purpose was born amongst many ISKCON communities across North America. Throughout the year, devotees vigorously applied strategies Vaisesika had recommended.

By the end of 2012, ISKCON North America not only reached but surpassed its goal, with an incredible twenty-five per cent increase. Combined, devotees sold 825,075 books and collected \$1,127,879, compared to 714,334 books and \$903,613 in 2011.

This year, in 2013, ISKCON North America is shooting for another twenty per cent increase, which would result in end-of-year remittance to the BBT of \$1,353,455.

So far, it's looking good, although Vaisesika says that "everything will be decided" during the December book distribution marathon.

Of course, devotees have been working hard throughout the year, applying Vaisesika's strategies and coming up with their own ingenious ways of distributing books.

In Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, devotees introduced coupons for free small books at their Rathayatra Festival, which encouraged many people to take one small book and buy a big book, too.

In Denver, Colorado, devotees recently set up a training center for brahmacharis where the celibate monks are trained not only in scripture and temple etiquette, but also in book distribution. Part of this involves going out on the streets to distribute books daily — resulting in a major increase in distribution.

In Gainesville, Florida, the Krishna House next to the University of Florida has been encouraging its residents to distribute books. In New Goloka, North Carolina, devotees recently started an organized "sankirtan" party which is going strong. And in Laguna Beach, California, where book distribution rose 1,000% in 2011 and another 33% in 2012, they're aiming for an increase of at least another 20% in 2013.

Meanwhile perennial stalwarts Los Angeles and ISKCON Silicon Valley continue to set examples for others. And Rupanuga Vedic College's Traveling Sankirtan Party, based in Kansas, is still one of the biggest book distribution successes in North America.

Other notable communities include Toronto, Washington DC, San Diego, Baltimore, Chicago, and Boston. Then there's the Motel Gita project, which is steadily increasing. Operating nationwide, it ships as many as 20,000 *Bhagavad-gitas* at a time and places them in hotels and motels across the country.

Meanwhile, making sure that all of these communities' ideas don't remain isolated, members of the North American Sankirtan Leaders' Team (NASLT) meet monthly by conference call to share best practices.

"We actively work on developing tools that everyone can share across North America to increase book distribution," says Vaisesika.

One of the broadly shared ideas that has worked well at temples across the continent is that



<http://bit.ly/1hUl6Yn>

Vaisesika Das (with shaved head) and a group of book distributors

Continued on page 3

<http://bit.ly/1hU6Yn>



### Distributing books in Silicon Valley

of distributing books at events. Devotees sign up as active participants at special events in their cities, rent a space and use it to present books to the public.

To keep devotees inspired about distributing books, Vaisesika travels around the continent from his base at ISKCON Silicon Valley. In fact, he visited no less than fourteen different temples last year.

Vaisesika first visits those temple communities who are most interested in increasing their book distribution. He starts working with each one over the phone a month prior to his visit. Upon his arrival, he holds a book distribution seminar on Friday evening, a practical training session on Saturday morning, and then a Monthly Sankirtan Festival (MSF) on Saturday afternoon that usually involves a large amount of devotees. Recently in Chicago, for instance, ninety-two devotees participated in an MSF.

“The hardest part is troop movement -- moving so many devotees from one place to another takes a lot of planning,” Vaisesika says.

Of course, his motto, “encourage the heck out of everyone,” makes things a little easier. And Vaisesika tells everyone that there’s no expectation: once they get to their spot and touch the pavement, they’re done for the day, and everything after that is extra.

“Once devotees do go out and see for themselves that people everywhere are craving spiritual knowledge, they get their own impetus,” Vaisesika says. “They feel for themselves that book distribution is connected to the internal potency of the Lord. That’s why I always say the hardest part of sankirtan is going out — because once you’re out there you don’t want to come back!”

Devotees across North America will become even more absorbed in book distribution than usual this month, as they try to reach this year’s planned twenty per cent increase during the “Prabhupada Marathon.”

Some specific strategies will be used to distribute more books in December. For example, devotees will frequent downtown shopping areas, which are particularly popular during the holiday season. And as *Gita Jayanti*, the day the *Bhagavad-gita* was spoken 5,000 years ago, falls on December 12<sup>th</sup>, December will be promoted as *Gita Jayanti Month*.

“Devotees will go door to door to both homes and businesses, and show people a clip from a CBS interview we did about the Motel Gita project,” says Vaisesika. “We’ll then tell them that we’re doing a special drive to sponsor a certain number of *Bhagavad-gitas* by the end of *Gita Jayanti Month*. Instead of selling one *Bhagavad-gita* at a time, we’ll get people to sponsor full cases of *Bhagavad-gitas* for \$108 each. And they’ll be placed in motels and other locations.”

With this year’s efforts looking set to have a positive outcome, Vaisesika is already thinking about next year’s goals. This time, rather than another percentage increase, he plans to focus on more qualitative goals.

“We’re going to innovate on the goals so that they don’t become stale or rote,” he says. “We’ll look at a variety of goals that will be fresh and will stimulate the minds of devotees nationwide, so that it doesn’t just feel like we’re pushing for numbers every year.”

<http://bit.ly/1hU6Yn>



### Distributing books in San Francisco’s Haight Ashbury

# Our One Misunderstanding About God

By Neale Donald Walsch, *The Huffington Post*, January 17, 2014  
<http://huff.to/MmajeR>

Might this be a fine stretch of eternity during which to declare that there is clearly something we don't fully understand about God, the understanding of which would change everything?

To put it more dramatically, is it possible that unless we enlarge and expand our primitive ideas about God and about life in the decades just ahead, we may find that we have backed ourselves into a corner, from which there is no escape?

*Conversations with God* told us that humanity nearly rendered itself extinct once before. Barely enough of us survived to regenerate the species and start over. Are we at this same turning point again? Have we arrived once more at the intersection where theology meets cosmology meets sociology meets pathology?

Right now we are still embracing a Separation Theology. That is, a way of looking at God that insists that we are "over here" and God is "over there."

The problem with a Separation Theology is that it produces a Separation Cosmology. That is, a way of looking at all of life that says that everything is separate from everything else.

And a Separation Cosmology produces a Separation Psychology. That is, a psychological viewpoint that says that I am over here and you are over there.

And a Separation Psychology produces a Separation Sociology. That is, a way of socializing

with each other that encourages the entire human society to act as separate entities serving their own separate interests.

And a Separation Sociology produces a Separation Pathology. That is, pathological behaviors of self-destruction, engaged in individually and collectively, and producing suffering, conflict, violence, and death by our own hands -- as evidenced everywhere on our planet throughout human history.

Only when our Separation Theology is replaced by a Oneness Theology will our pathology be healed. We have been differentiated from God, but not separated from God, even as your fingers are differentiated but not separated from your hand. We must come to understand that all of life is one. This is the first step. It is the jumping-off point. It is the beginning of the end of how things now are. It is the start of a new creation, of a new tomorrow. It is the New Cultural Story of Humanity.

Oneness is not a characteristic of life. Life is a characteristic of oneness. This is what we have not understood about our existence on the earth, the understanding of which would change everything. Life is the expression of oneness Itself. God is the expression of Life Itself. God and life are one. You are a part of Life. You do not and cannot stand outside of it. Therefore you are a part of God.

It is a circle. It cannot be broken.

## Vedic Cosmology: Integrating God and Physics

By Mauricio Garrido, Ph.D., *The Huffington Post*, January 17, 2014  
<http://huff.to/1n235Iv>

In 2012, CERN, the European Organization for Nuclear Research, called for a debate between scientists, philosophers and theologians to find common ground between science and religion over how the universe began. Even though the explanations found in the texts of the world's spiritual traditions are admittedly not exhaustive in the details referring to the origin of the universe, they do outline key concepts thereof which are important to the development of the philosophy for spiritual development that they present. The Vedic cosmology of ancient India is



*Globe of Science and Innovation at CERN*

*Continued on page 5*



<http://bit.ly/MmazzdW>

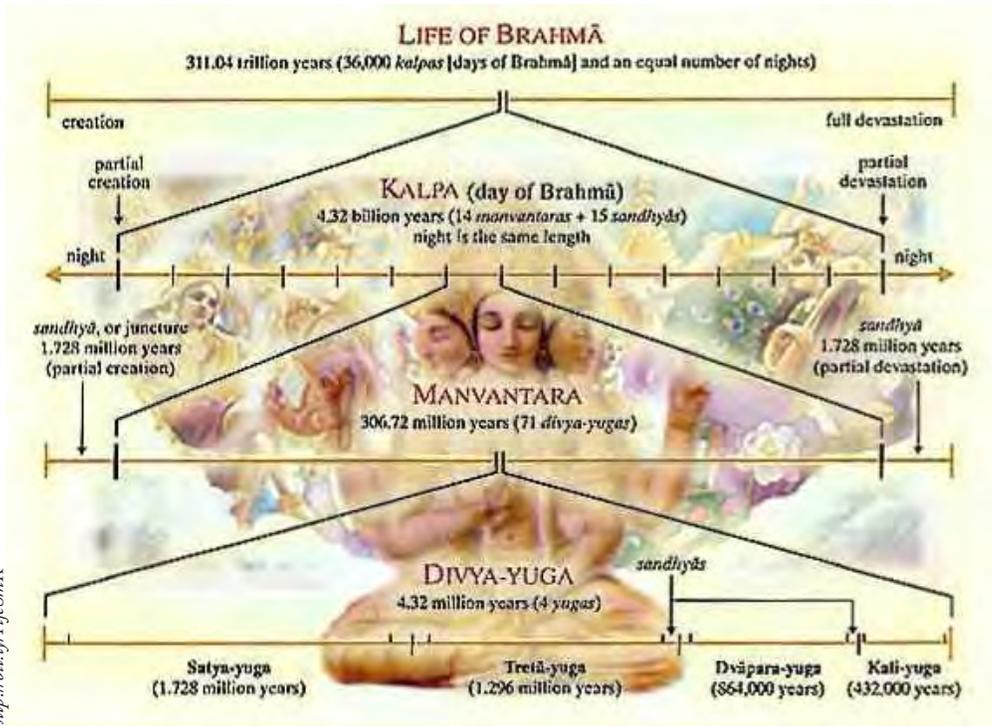
*Deity of Nataraj at CERN, parallelling the movements or “dance” of subatomic particles*

incredibly rich and has many points of tangency with modern cosmology, which may help in the construction of that common ground between science and religion that CERN is looking for.

One of the strongest points of tension that often comes up in cosmology between science and religion is the age of the universe. Some interpretations of the *Bible* calculate it to be about 6,000 years old, while the most recent calculation according to the Lambda-CDM concordance model is 13.8 billion years. The Vedic literatures see the

manifestation and eventual destruction of the universe, like most events in nature, as a periodic occurrence and give it in trillions of years. In fact, they talk about an expansion of the universe after its inception and an eventual contraction at the end of its lifespan, in line with modern cosmology’s concepts of inflation and/or dark energy. Ideas regarding a cyclic behavior of the universe have also been proposed by prominent physicists like Sir Roger Penrose and Paul Steinhardt.

Vedic cosmology also states that within the lifespan of the universe, there are periodic partial devastations of the universe. The time elapsed since the last one is on the order of billions of years, which roughly corresponds to the age of the universe calculated by cosmologists. In between the partial devastations, there are time periods called ages. The current age we live in, the Age of Kali, began about 5,000 years ago, which is roughly in line with (or equivalent to) the *Bible’s* estimates of the age of the universe. We can thus begin to see the potentiality of Vedic cosmology in creating a bridge between science and religion: The apparent contradiction



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

*Cycles of time according to the Vedas*

*Continued on page 6*

regarding the age of the universe can be regarded as simply calculations of different important periods in the history of the universe.

Another big point of discussion is the process of creation itself. The process described in the *Bible*, despite being in a sequential order of increasing complexity, seems to involve spontaneous creation, by God's will, of objects and beings. That spontaneous creation would be in opposition to the gradual and piecemeal development of suns, planets and life described by astrophysics and evolutionary biology. The Vedic literatures also involve spontaneous creation of complex forms, but it includes an interesting gradual development of basic elements with which the complex forms are later created. These basic elements are said to manifest themselves one from the other in a succession going from the subtlest (*pradhana*) to the grossest (earth/structure).

Within the Vedic view, as in the unification theories of particle physics, there is an undifferentiated form of material energy (or field, in modern jargon), called *pradhana*, that is the source of all other forms of energy. It is interesting to note that one of the intermediate elements in the succession is material space, viewed not as a background on which everything happens but as an active substance that can be manipulated and from which grosser elements are derived. This is in line with general relativity, where space is seen as an agent that can be deformed by the presence of mass-energy. Likewise, physicists like John Wheeler, and more recently Christopher Isham, have attempted, in the theory of geometrodynamics, to define all matter in terms of perturbations in the fabric of space.

Thus, even though spontaneous creation of complex forms is still an issue of discussion, there is a very fertile ground for research of the basic component elements with which they are created and the successive manifestation of these elements. Not only that, but according to the Vedas, our universe (which is one of an infinite number of material universes within the vaster expanse of the spiritual worlds) is encapsulated by concentric regions made up of successive material elements that isolate us from the other universes. This concept of multiple universes and possible tests to infer their existence have been studied and classified by several physicists like Max Tegmark and Brian Greene.

Regarding the discussion on spontaneous complex forms, one may begin to explore it seeing the gradual creation of basic elements as a painter preparing his canvas and paints, and the spontaneous creation of complex forms as the elaborate painting itself coming into being, not gradually like the paints and canvas but directly from the painter's design.

From the conclusions of the CERN meeting in 2012, there is much work to be done translating between the languages of science and religion. As we have briefly seen, the Vedic literatures offer amazing avenues for research in science and a broader understanding in religion. Further studies into the matter using the Vedic view may prove fruitful not only in the attenuation of the conflict between the two fields of knowledge but in the development of a scientific understanding of the process of self-realization (in other words, finding out who we really are), which is the ultimate aim of both.

## Stolen Indian statue on display in National Gallery of Australia

By Helen Davidson, *The Guardian*, December 18, 2013  
<http://bit.ly/Mmb0oH>

The National Gallery of Australia (NGA) is continuing to display a \$5 million statue of a dancing Shiva, despite it being identified as a stolen artifact that came from a temple in India in 2006.

The 900-year-old Shiva Nataraja statue was identified by a New York court as being one of two bronze statues looted from the Sivan temple in the Ariyalur district of India and sold through the office of the art dealer Subhash Kapoor, News Corp Australia reported.



*The National Gallery of Australia*

*Continued on page 7*



<http://bit.ly/1jgk8au>

*Shiva Temple located in the Ariyalur district, Tamil Nadu, India*

Kapoor is being held in India, accused of masterminding a network of antique looting valued at about \$100 million.

This month Kapoor's office manager, Adam Freedman, pleaded guilty in New York Supreme Court, admitting to creating fake documents and arranging shipping of a number of artworks – including a “\$5 million Shiva for Australia” – he knew had been stolen from around Asia and the Pacific.

An 11th-century bronze statue was removed from display by the Asian Civilizations Museum in Singapore after they learned it was stolen from the temple.

The Art Gallery of New South Wales, after discovering one of the six antiquities bought from Kapoor were also stolen, listed all items

bought from Kapoor for easy identification by claimants.

The NGA has launched legal proceedings against Kapoor. The gallery has purchased 14 items from him in the past.

It also said it was in talks with the Indian high commission “to discuss avenues or restitution.” Under international treaties stolen artifacts must be returned.

Before it was established in November that Shiva Nataraja had been stolen, the NGA said that should it be confirmed it would consider itself a “victim of fraud”.

An NGA spokeswoman would not comment but did confirm that the statue remains on display.

**Please send your  
Thoughts, Opinions, Questions,  
Comments, Concerns to:  
[feedback@mukundagoswami.org](mailto:feedback@mukundagoswami.org)**

# Personal Message...



Dear Friends,

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

There is some precedent for my request to all initiates to read. Śrila Prabhupāda sent a memo — dated November 24, 1968 — to all temples. At that time, Śrila Prabhupāda was the only guru in ISKCON, therefore this directive was meant for all initiated devotees. It reads as follows:

*In addition to chanting our 16 rounds daily, we must all read at least one chapter of the Bhagavad-gītā. Read one chapter on one day and then go on to the next chapter the next day. In this way, after 18 days we will have completed one reading. After four or five such complete readings we will know Bhagavad-gītā as it is and our questions and doubts will be answered. We are printing these books not for money but so that all devotees will read and understand them.*

In December of 1996 I wrote an article for the *ISKCON World Review* newspaper, an excerpt from that article follows:

Śrila Prabhupāda's books contribute to the world's philosophical and theological body of knowledge; they enrich the literary heritage of the planet; they provide academics with a reference point to understand the true nature of the Vedic way; they bring personal fulfillment and satisfaction; they help convince us that ultimate knowledge dwells within the hearts and minds of the great sages; they act as an instruction manual by which one can live successfully in the material world; they present solutions to contemporary problems; they fulfill the desire of spiritual predecessors to spread the message of love of God; they provide an alternative to materialism; they clearly explain the nature the material existence; they answer the most probing philosophical questions, such as "who am I?", "who is God?", "what is time, nature, and destiny?", and "where I am going?"

Also a devotee name Acintya Caitanya dasa, lecturing in the ISKCON Mayapura temple on August 18, 2013, said, "[the] ability to cooperate comes from ...dedication of being surrendered to Prabhupada's books."

So, to sum up, I've always had a powerful love of the philosophy contained in Śrila Prabhupāda's books. I myself do a lot of reading of those books each day. To me that reading is as important as chanting 16 rounds and following the four regulative principles. Maybe that's why I've requested my followers to read daily.

I beg to remain

Your servant,

*Mukunda Goswami*  
Mukunda Goswami

For lectures go to: <http://mukundagoswami.org/lectures>

