



June 2014

# SPIRITUAL PERSPECTIVES

AN ISKCON COMMUNICATIONS PUBLICATION  
For Friends and Followers of Mukunda Goswami

## Happiness

By Radha devi dasi

Few people in this modern world actually achieve long term happiness. One reason we have so much trouble is that we don't understand happiness. Psychologists note that most of us equate happiness with undisturbed sense pleasure. We keep trying to increase pleasurable activities and avoid disturbances that interfere with our pleasure.

This approach to happiness is instinctual, deriving from our earliest experiences, when intense emotional states of pleasure and gratification are inevitably interrupted, evoking equally intense states of rage or anxiety. We respond by trying to preserve the pleasurable states and eliminate the others. Even as adults we rarely come to terms with the fact that, on the material plane, good and bad are two sides of the same coin, those pleasures we seek to prolong are also the source of our misery.

Srila Prabhupada describes this dilemma with crystal clarity in his commentary on the *Srimad Bhagavatam*. In the purport to Canto 1, Chapter 2, Verse 6, he writes, "Material existence is temporary, illusory and full of miseries. There is no happiness at all. There is just the futile attempt to get rid of the miseries, and temporary cessation of misery is falsely called happiness."

Unfortunately, this idea that happiness equals unrestricted sense pleasure is deeply ingrained in modern culture. Not only does it distract from our attempts to gain lasting happiness, it is also at the core of most human conflict. Noted psychological writer, Mark Epstein, author of *The Trauma of Everyday Life*, describes this connection. In the group psyche, as in the individual, there is tremendous fear of instability. Once having achieved a degree of independence, power, control, or success, we will do almost anything to maintain it, even if that means inflicting pain upon other people, other cultures, or the world.

The failure of this pleasure based approach to happiness has become obvious as more people find that material advancement leaves them dissatisfied, leading psychologists to develop a new field - positive psychology. This field is the scientific study of the strengths and virtues that enable individuals and communities to thrive.

Martin Seligman one of the leaders in positive psychology describes happiness as having three parts: pleasure, engagement, and meaning. All three are necessary, he writes,



<http://bit.ly/1kBJ3f4>

but engagement (using our talents) and meaning (having a higher purpose) are more important than simple pleasure.

Living a life based on Krishna conscious principles gives us a life that will provide not only access to the transcendent bliss of the spiritual world, but these three elements are necessary for material happiness. A Vaisnava's life is replete with sense pleasure, albeit, sense pleasure dovetailed in Krishna's service. From tasty prasadam, to heavenly incense and flowers, to the gorgeous sounds of kirtan, every act of worship engages our senses in a completely fulfilling way.

Furthermore, we are encouraged to engage our talents in Krishna's service. Whatever you do, Krishna asks us, do it for Me. As a ksatriya Arjuna was enjoined to fight for Krishna and we are also encouraged to serve Krishna according to our natures.

Finally, a Vaisnava's life has the highest possible meaning. When we strive to serve guru and Krishna, we act not only for our own welfare, but for the highest welfare of everyone around us. As Srila Prabhupada often said, Krishna consciousness is the best form of social welfare work.

Taking up the process of transforming our material consciousness into Krishna consciousness is not a pie in the sky, long term bet on some future paradise. It is a common sense, practical step that will improve our temporary, material situation and catapult us into the spiritual dimension.



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**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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# Spiritual Practice May Protect Your Brain From Depression: How to be Consistent

By Mike Bundrant, [www.naturalnews.com](http://www.naturalnews.com), February 17, 2014  
<http://bit.ly/1h9CNHg>



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

A new study published by JAMA Psychiatry suggests that participating in regular spiritual and religious practice may help protect against depression. Researchers believe this may be due to a thickening of the brain cortex that occurs with regular meditation or other religious and spiritual practices.

More research is necessary; however preliminary results of MRIs performed on 103 adults at varying risk for depression have shown a correlation between a thickening of the brain cortex and the personal importance of religious and spiritual practices.

Furthermore, the regions of the brain that experienced a thickening of the cortex occurred in the same regions of the brain where people at high risk for depression usually experience thinning.

These results suggest that spiritual and religious practice may protect against the occurrence of major depression by counteracting the cortical thinning that usually occurs with the disorder. This study is the first to have investigated the correlation in this way.

Previous studies have shown a 90 percent decrease in the occurrence of major depression in adults who placed a high value on religious and spiritual practices and whose parents also suffered from depression. This suggests that maintaining a regular spiritual or religious practice (regardless of church attendance) may protect against major depression, particularly in individuals who are at a high familial risk.

### **The key to successful spiritual practice**

The key is consistency. Whether you practice focused prayer, meditation, Tai Chi or another form of mindfulness, you need to do it consistently over a period of time before you get the long-term results.

In some ways spiritual practice may be like losing weight by maintaining a healthy diet. In the early stages, you might struggle and achieve little results. Over weeks and months, however, you begin to notice a significant difference. Dieting for a day or two doesn't work. Practicing spirituality for a day or two is not much different.

### **Consistency counts**

Like eating healthy food, most spiritual practices are pretty simple. Express your thoughts and feelings to God. Gently chant a mantra. Move your body in a certain way. Do it for 15-20 minutes. Done! Do it every day for a year and notice the profound results. When consistency and patience prevail, you will experience that developing a healthy, mature, peaceful mind takes time and is more than worth the effort.

## A New Temple for London!

By Murli Manohara dasa, [www.dandavats.com](http://www.dandavats.com), May 14, 2014  
<http://bit.ly/1oVPdVY>

Dear Friends and Well Wishers,

You have no doubt heard about our campaign to collect 10,000 names to assist in requesting land in Regents Park for a new temple for the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON).

Following the launch of the campaign in November 2013, so far we have approximately 2,500 signatures. Although the collection of signatures has not been happening as fast as anticipated, we are working hard to encourage all

friends and well-wishers of ISKCON to take part. You will also be interested to know that we have recently formed a New Temple Committee which is meeting regularly to discuss all issues regarding building a beautiful new temple for Sri Sri Radha-Londonisvara and Their growing community of devotees.

Our bold request to acquire land in Regents Park is in pursuit of Srila Prabhupada's instructions to his disciples when he was personally present in

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



Regent Park North West London

London, but we are also taking into consideration that Srila Prabhupada was very pragmatic in his plans to spread Krishna Consciousness. In this regard, Srila Prabhupada also requested his disciples to consider other locations in London for a temple should a location in Regents Park not be available. Our New Temple Committee is thus also pursuing this same mood.

If the request for land in Regents Park is not accepted we will seek support for a new temple for Sri Sri Radha-Londonisvara in central London.

Your servant,  
Murli Manohara dasa  
On behalf of the New Temple Committee

## European Religious Leaders Consult on Societies in Transition

By Contributor of *WCC Weekly Newsletter*, May 16, 2014  
<http://bit.ly/1maPnLL>

Leaders of historic faith communities across Europe have gathered in Geneva to consider the role of inter-religious dialogue and cooperation in addressing social divisions and opportunities. On May 13<sup>th</sup>, the conference focused on a round-table symposium addressing the theme “Societies in Transition.”

The round-table event at the annual meeting of the European Council of Religious Leaders (ECRL) was supported this year by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and hosted by the World Council of Churches (WCC). The keynote address was given by Rev. Dr. Olav Fykse Tveit, general secretary of the WCC.

Tveit spoke on the spirituality of “pilgrimage” as people of goodwill band together to pursue justice and peace. He reflected on visits he made earlier this year to Iran and, this month, to South Sudan. “Pilgrims and those they encounter on the journey make mutual commitments”, he said, “commitments of hospitality, time, resources, respect, trust and openness in listening to one another.”

For religious leaders, said Tveit, pilgrimage also involves accompaniment. As an example, he spoke of those South Sudanese church

leaders who are now in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia to support the peace process for their country, and to engage with the leadership of opposing factions in seeking the way to reconciliation.

“This collaboration is not simply a gesture of convenience,” he continued, “it is rather a recognition that the shared journey binds us together.” In this act of accompaniment, the religious leaders are embracing their role as peacemakers.

“We are called to do holy work together – for justice and peace,” Tveit advised the ECRL annual meeting. “Therefore, we need to be able to move together.”



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

The participants of the European Council of Religious Leaders' conference

Continued on page 4

ECRL is one of the regional councils that make up the network Religions for Peace-International, a multi-religious coalition advancing action for peace, and coordinates its efforts with such organizations as the European Women of Faith Network, the European Interfaith Youth Network and national inter-religious organizations in 14 European countries.

Among other presenters at the Geneva symposium were ECRL moderator Thomas Wipf of the Federation of Swiss Protestant Churches, pre-

siding bishop Helga Haugland Byfuglien of the Church of Norway, professor Silvio Ferrari of the University of Milan in Italy, Ariane Hentsch of the Geneva Interfaith Forum, as well as speakers from the Swiss federal department of foreign affairs, the European Commission, the OSCE and religious communities representing the Roman Catholic and Orthodox traditions of Christianity, Judaism, Islam, the Hindu Forum of Europe and the International Society for Krishna Consciousness.

## Eating Legumes Improves Cardiovascular Health

By David Gutierrez, *Natural News*, April 23, 2014  
<http://bit.ly/1kCYWxx>

Just a single serving of legumes a day can significantly improve cholesterol levels and lower your risk of cardiovascular disease, according to a study conducted by researchers from St. Michael's Hospital in Canada and published in the *Canadian Medical Association Journal* on April 7<sup>th</sup>.

"Legumes are generally considered healthy, but there [are no guidelines] about their intake from public policy officials," lead author Dr. John Sievenpiper said.

### Eat local, eat healthy

Legumes, also known as pulses, are a family of plants that includes beans, lentils and peas. Researchers reviewed the results of 26 prior studies on the connection between legumes and heart health, including a total of 1,037 people. All of the studies were randomized, controlled trials. The researchers found that eating just one three-quarter-cup serving of legumes per day reduced LDL ("bad") cholesterol levels by 5 percent,



*Different types of lentils, often prepared into soup*

which could lead to a 5 or 6 percent reduction in cardiovascular disease risk.

LDL levels decreased more in men than in women. Although the researchers could not explain this effect, they noted that, on average, men are known to have higher cholesterol levels and to eat poorer diets than women. They speculated that, because of these factors, men might respond more strongly to an improvement in their diets.

The researchers further noted that some participants did report objectionable effects to legume consumption, such as bloating, gas, constipation or diarrhea. These symptoms tended to reduce and disappear over time, however.

The studies were not designed to explain the beneficial effects of legumes, but the researchers noted that pulses often play the same role in a meal that would otherwise be played by animal



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

*Researchers found that eating just one three-quarter-cup serving of legumes per day reduced LDL ("bad") cholesterol levels by 5 percent*

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protein, animal fat or trans fats. As such, pulses may be displacing less healthy foods as well as providing a benefit on their own.

“We have a lot of room in our diets for increasing our pulse intake to derive the cardiovascular benefits,” Dr. Sievenpiper said.

“Pulses already play a role in many traditional cuisines, including Mediterranean and South Asian. As an added bonus, they’re inexpensive. Since many pulses are grown in North America, it’s also an opportunity to buy and eat locally and support our farmers.”

## Hospital Imprisoned Devoted Spiritual Author by Claiming her Prayers are a Sign of Mental Illness

By L.J. Devon, *Natural News*, March 14, 2014  
<http://bit.ly/1gxbro5>

A devout 56-year-old woman was held captive in a psych ward for nearly five days after a strange series of event cascaded before her.

The woman, who seeks to remain anonymous, is a self-published author who enjoys writing on spiritual topics. She was taking part in a 15-day spiritual fast at the time. By the 15<sup>th</sup> day of going without food and drinking only water, the woman began to feel delirious. On the last day of her fast, parked at a Cleveland, OH, BP gas station, the woman grew faint and called her mother for assistance.

### Simple emergency room visit turns into a psych ward lockdown

The anonymous woman was promptly escorted to the emergency room of St. Vincent’s Charity Medical Center, where she was cared for primarily by Dr. Brar.

After taking blood tests, Dr. Brar determined that the woman had low sodium, potassium and electrolyte levels, due to the fast. The woman, conscious again, recovered from her woozy state. As she recovered, she prayed audibly and read from the *Bible*.

After observing the woman’s fervent behavior, Dr. Brar then allegedly diagnosed the woman with bipolar disorder. The complaint states that the woman was diagnosed with “bipolar disorder with psychotic features.”

### Woman’s prayers were classified as sign of mental instability

The woman, clinging to her spiritual beliefs in a time of need, realized that St. Vincent’s staff had classified her religious devotion as evidence of mental instability. The woman later clarified that Dr. Brar and staff members classified her audible prayers and *Bible* reading as “religious preoccupation”—evidence of a mental illness.

This distorted, concocted diagnosis proves that many hospital staff members themselves need to be psychologically evaluated. The “mental illness” label can apparently be used as a weapon, to justify imprisoning people who don’t think or believe according to what’s “normal.”

### Woman refuses psychotic medication; hospital goes to court to force her

After being improperly and disdainfully diagnosed for her prayers, the woman was then admitted to the psychiatric ward of the hospital. For nearly five days, she was instructed to take psychotropic medications for her “mental illness.” When the woman refused the drugs, the hospital staff grew stubborn and police-like. The staff tried to control the woman further by having her “involuntarily committed” through a court order.

The imprisoned woman later reported that Dr. Brar refused to let her leave the hospital where she was “held for nearly five days of observation.” She claims that the hospital officially “instituted an ac-



<http://bit.ly/1gxbro5>

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tion in the Cuyahoga County Probate Court seeking her continued involuntary detention,” but it never materialized.

### **Woman now suing the St. Vincent Charity Medical Center for unlawful imprisonment**

After being detained in the hospital for nearly five days, the woman was relieved to find out that Dr. Brar’s affidavit to the court was incomplete and a misrepresentation of her situation. The court stated that the captive woman was free to go and that she had complied with obligations under Ohio law. She was then discharged from the hospital.

Now the 56-year-old woman has filed suit against Dr. Brar and St. Vincent Charity Medical Center, seeking punitive damages for false imprisonment and violation of her patient rights.

### **“Mental illness” label now being applied liberally to people who don’t fit the norm**

It seems that “mental illness” has become a broad term in modern-day society, applied liberally as a means to segregate those who don’t think or act within the boundaries of what is considered normal or socially acceptable. It is easy for medical professionals to respond to people they don’t like or understand by detaining them and force-feeding them psychotropic medications. This behavior coming from hospital staff is disturbing and alarming.

How might psychotropic medications be used as social control weapons -- silencers for people’s minds, thoughts, prayers and beliefs? How might the “mental illness” label be applied to kidnap or imprison people just to force a bizarre level of conformity?

## **America’s Less Religious: Study Puts Some Blame On The Internet**

By Elise Hu, *NPR*, April 21, 2014

<http://n.pr/1kXVmgO>



<http://n.pr/1kXVmgO>

America is less religious than ever before. The number of Americans who reported no religious affiliation has been growing rapidly, doubling since 1990. That kind of rapid change matches another societal trend — growth in Internet use. The percentage of Americans who say they used the Internet went from nearly zero in 1990 to 87 percent this year. Now, a detailed data analysis finds the two trends aren’t just related, but that wider Internet use may actually be leading us to lose our religion.

Knowing that correlation doesn’t necessarily mean causation, computer scientist Allen Downey, who teaches at Massachusetts’ Olin College of

Engineering, set out to further analyze religious disaffiliation.

His statistical analysis asked which variables were factors in our religious disaffiliation, and to what degree. The model found a causal relationship among three factors — a drop in religious upbringing, an increase in college-level education and the increase in Internet use — that together explain about 50 percent of the drop in religious



<http://bit.ly/1kD4t7b>

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affiliation. Of those, increased Internet use alone can account for about 20 percent of the decline.

The technique Downey used to establish causality is a form of statistical modeling called logistic regression, which lets you look at multiple variables and find which ones are predictive. Downey ran a regression controlling for all the other possible explanations of the religious affiliation drop (like income, home region) and wound up with notably strong associations among the three factors of upbringing, education and Internet use.

The *MIT Technology Review* dives deeper:

“There is another possibility, of course: that a third unidentified factor causes both increased

Internet use and religious disaffiliation. But Downey discounts this possibility. ...”

“If this third factor exists, it must have specific characteristics. It would have to be something new that was increasing in prevalence during the 1990s and 2000s, just like the Internet. ‘It is hard to imagine what that factor might be,’ says Downey.

“That leaves him in little doubt that his conclusion is reasonable. ‘Internet use decreases the chance of religious affiliation,’ he says.”

The responses to his conclusion have ranged, Downey tells NPR, from “Well, duh,” to outright dismissal.

“So far I haven’t seen anything that is a serious contradiction,” Downey says. And he reminds us that while the three factors of education, upbringing and the Internet can explain only half the drop in religious affiliation, no single factors explain the other 50 percent of the drop.

“So the challenge now is, great, show me the data to prove other associations,” Downey says.

As for what this drop means for the future, Downey predicts the most likely changes between now and 2040 are that the percentage of people without a religious preference reaches 25 percent. More predictions based on his data analysis are on Downey’s blog.



Photo: /bit.ly/1kMafmK

*Buddhist monks using online programs to study their religious practice*

**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.

A controversy has arisen in ISKCON. Different points of view about how one should go about spreading Krishna consciousness are at the essence of this debate.

Such differing approaches manifested as early as 1967. I wrote about this in the book, *Miracle on Second Avenue* as follows: “. . . The New York crowd [devotees] thought we [the San Francisco devotees] were too liberal, too far-out. They were sceptical about our hanging out with alternatives, our kirtans with the hippies in the park and our musical ventures.” In a sense this has been a “conservatives” versus the “liberals” polemic. Shortly after the Mantra-rock Dance at the Avalon Ballroom in San Francisco, which occurred on January 29, 1967, a New York devotee phoned. From his conversation, I could detect that the devotees in that area, who had heard about the Avalon event, thought that the San Francisco devotees had acted impetuously and that they were too radical.

Some feel it is necessary and valuable to preach with guitars and to employ hatha-yoga techniques and to adapt various counter-cultural philosophies – that this approach best raises the largest number of people to the platform of Krishna consciousness. This method generally includes the proliferation of Hare Krishna restaurants and the principles of vegetarianism and spiritual progress through devotee contact, singing of the Maha-mantra in innovative and entertaining melodies and preaching in non-devotional clothing (at least for men).

Others feel that speaking Sanskrit slokas, explaining core values of Krishna consciousness, telling all comers about Caitanya Mahaprabhu’s fundamental recommendations, elucidating on how Krishna manifests His original form in installed Deities, pointing out that Krishna and His name and His prasad are non-different and suggesting that His Divine Grace’s books constitute the highest and best truth – that this type of preaching is the way forward.

On the “liberal” side, Srila Prabhupada was advocating opening restaurants as early as 1965. In a letter to Sally Agarwal, he wrote, “. . . I am suggesting why don’t you start a restaurant here in New York? . . .” (November 13, 1965). And again on November 19, 1965, he wrote, “My dear daughter Sally. . . I proposed for starting the restaurant. . .

It’s seems to me that the two camps will be discussing this issue for many years. This apparently is the way of all institutions. Hare Krishna.

Your servant,

*Mukunda Goswami*  
Mukunda Goswami



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