



SPIRITUAL PERSPECTIVES

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

Is There a Limit?

By Radha devi dasi



<http://bit.ly/1MFqXy4>

Abortion has been a topic of discussion on the world stage recently. Interest was sparked by recent findings in the death of a woman in Ireland and the plight of a pregnant ten-year-old girl in Paraguay.

While ISKCON unofficially opposes abortion* and many other religious institutions forbid the practice, it remains a method of birth control in many countries. Srila Prabhupada condemned abortion in no uncertain terms, calling it a sign of Kali-yuga. The *Srimad Bhagavatam* and other Vedic texts compare abortion to killing a brahman or a cow – the most sinful of activities. Yet abortion remains a common practice around the world, including India.

Proponents of abortion argue that it protects women's health and prevents the birth of unwanted children. And even those who oppose abortion often support limited exceptions to any ban on the practice. In cases of rape and where the mother's life is at risk, many people would permit abortion.

One case where the lack of abortion caused the mother's death is particularly troubling because the child in her womb could not have survived to take birth. The case of Savita Halappanavar documented what a recent report described as "a cascade of mistakes" including officials' refusal to remove the fetus until its heart stopped beating. That took four days. By then, the report found, the woman's

sepsis from a ruptured uterus already had reached lethal levels.

When Halappanavar, a 31-year-old Indian dentist living in the western city of Galway, was hospitalized for back pain 17 weeks into her pregnancy, doctors realized she was miscarrying and the fetus could not survive. Despite these findings, they refused to give her the abortion she asked for, even though she was at risk of death.

Another case strikes a different note, forcing officials to weigh the needs of two different children against each other. A ten-year-old rape victim in Paraguay has been denied an abortion despite her mother's requests. Having been raped by her stepfather, the child now faces a full term pregnancy. The risk of maternal mortality is highest for girls under 15 and

complications of pregnancy are the leading cause of death among adolescent girls in developing countries.

These cases test the limits of opposition to abortion. Similar cases are often cited as reasons why abortion should sometimes be permitted. On the other hand, there is no other situation in which one would suggest solving a problem by killing a child. For example, the parents of some children faced with terminal illness have produced additional children in the hope of giving birth to an organ donor. But there is no country that would permit a procedure likely to kill the second child in order to save the life of the first child.

When weighing the rights of the unborn against those already born, modern society seems to permit giving the rights of the unborn less weight. The words of Srila Prabhupada and the *Srimad Bhagavatam* make it clear that killing an unborn child is just as cruel as killing any other child.

ISKCON's Governing Body Authority (the GBC) has not passed a resolution or made a law about this global issue, although the Srimad-Bhagavatam 9.9.31 (verse and Srila Prabhupada's purport) and other scriptures condemn abortion.

A carefully worded statement ("official position paper by the ISKCON GBC") about fetal termination, intimating that only in highly exceptional cases can the human fetus be aborted, may be forthcoming. — Ed.

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50th Anniversary Website Launched

By ISKCON 50 Global Office, *ISKCON News*, on May 28, 2015

<http://bit.ly/1Bi7O5W>

As the 50th Anniversary rapidly approaches, the ISKCON 50 Global Office launched their website today which went live at www.ISKCON50.org from 00:01 hrs GMT on 28th May.

The website will be the hub for all communications, resources and news about the 50th Anniversary which will be celebrated in 75 countries across 600 cities from August 2015 to December 2016.

“The website is an important resource for our worldwide celebrations,” explained Romapada Dasa, the International Coordinator for the 50th Anniversary. “It will feature the latest announcements, list key events, provide branding and marketing resources, link up to our special projects and become the hub for all our communications. We urge devotees all over the world to visit the site and check how they can participate and get involved.”

Nitya Kishora Devi Dasi who heads the Graphics and Design Department at ISKCON 50 and oversaw the development of the website said, “One of the key purposes of the website is to encourage devotees and supporters all over the world to get more involved at a personal level. Please therefore sign up for our regular updates by visiting the website so that we can keep you regularly informed and involved. A very useful

feature of the website will be our resources section from where you can access ideas, resources and templates that can help you organize your own local festivals for the 50th.”

The 50th Anniversary is expected to kickstart officially with the Jaladuta Commemoration Events which mark the departure of Srila Prabhupada on 13th August 1965 and his arrival at Boston in September 1965. Celebrations are planned in Kolkata, Colombo, Cochin and Boston to mark his epic journey.

Other global events being planned include signature VIP dinners to commemorate ISKCON’s incorporation and major cultural events, conferences and international festivals that feature music, yoga, food, cow protection, sustainable development and ancient sciences. Other key features of the 50th include a color magazine, a special film and an international exhibition that will tell the story of ISKCON’s achievements in the last 50 years.

“We believe the website will become a major resource to help devotees organize celebrations that have the maximum impact,” concluded Anuttama Dasa, GBC Minister for Communications, who is a member of the ISKCON 50 International Executive Committee. “Please visit us and share your ideas. We want every devotee of ISKCON to get involved in the celebrations so that we can

motivate each other and feel inspired to serve Srila Prabhupada more and more.”

Website:

www.ISKCON50.org

For more information,

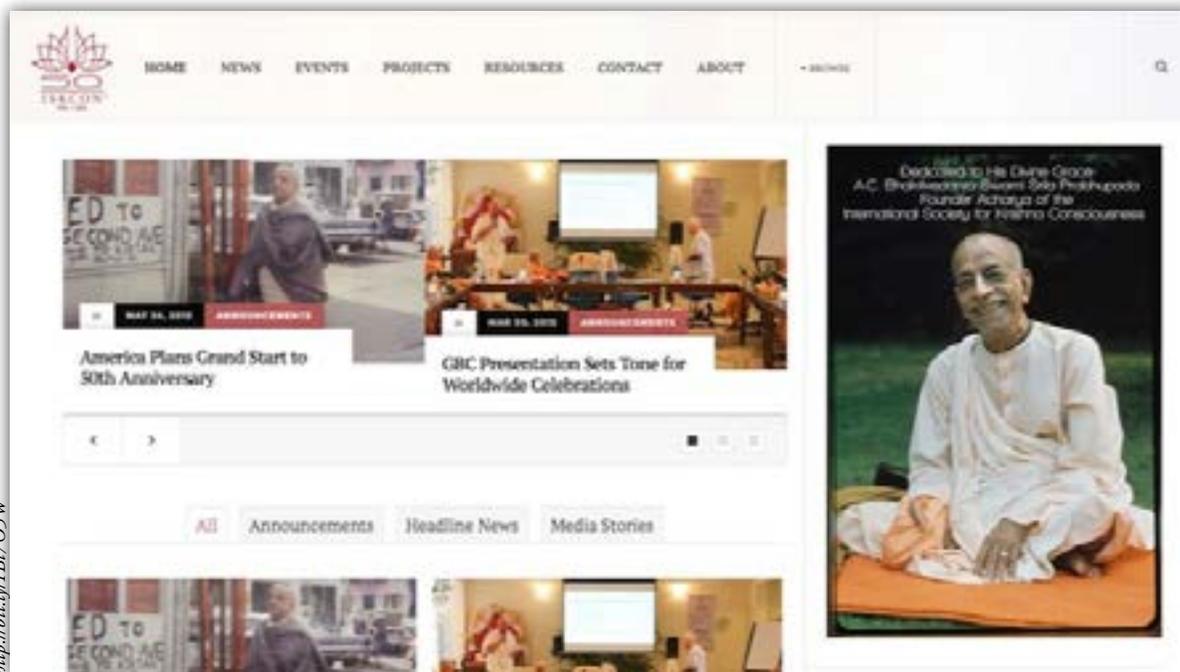
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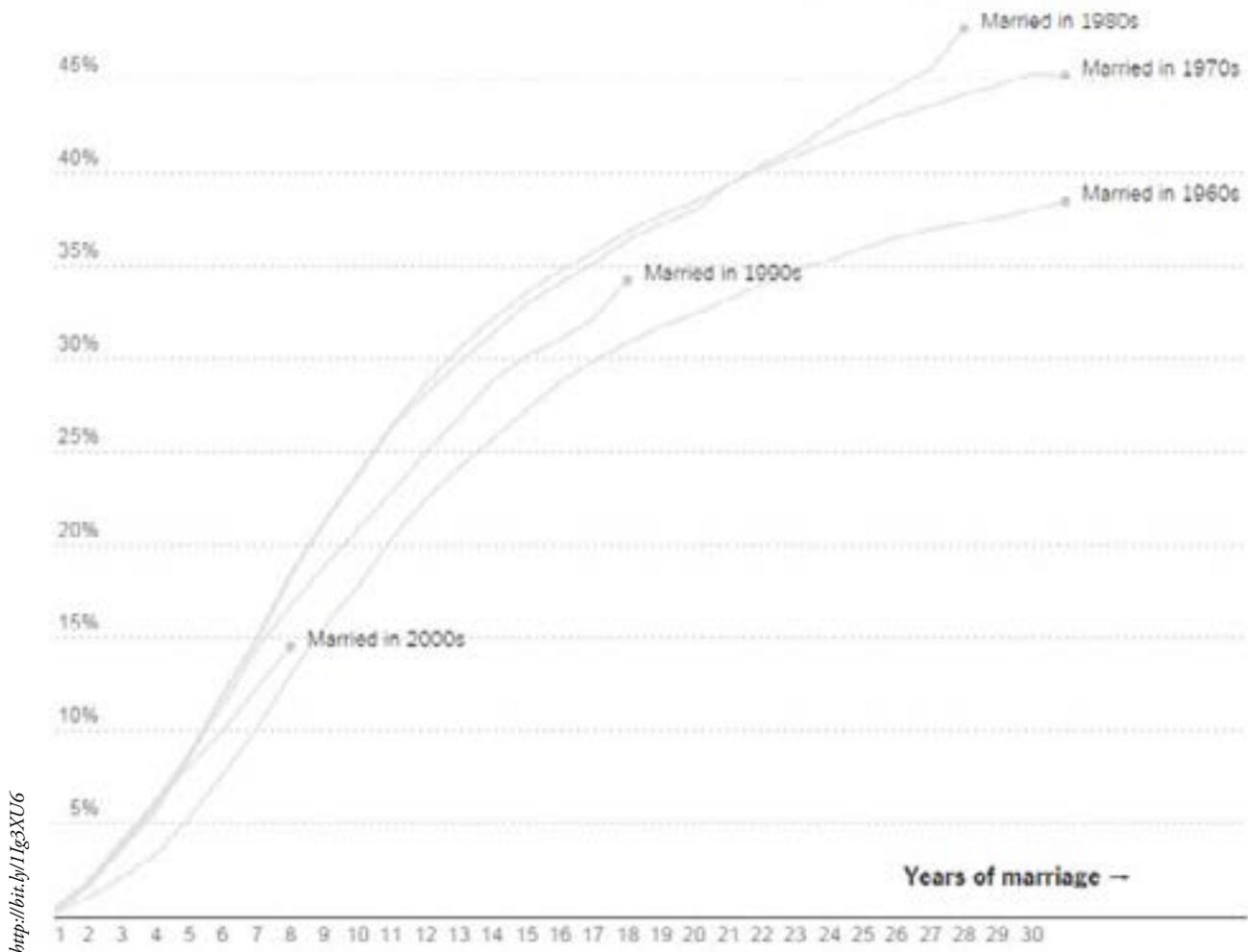
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The homepage of the ISKCON50 website

The Divorce Surge Is Over, but the Myth Lives On

By Claire Cain Miller, *NyTimes*, on December 2, 2014
<http://nyti.ms/1pPi8wH>



Cumulative share of marriages ending in divorce

Divorce rates increased in the 1970s and 1980s, but in the last 20 years they have dropped.

When Gwyneth Paltrow and Chris Martin “consciously uncoupled” this year, *ABC News* said it was the latest example of the out-of-control divorce rate, “50 percent and climbing.”

When *Fox News* anchors were recently lamenting high poverty levels, one of them blamed the fact that “the divorce rate is going up.”

And when *Bravo* introduced its divorce reality show, “Untying the Knot,” this summer, an executive at the network called it “a way to look at a situation that 50 percent of married couples unfortunately end up in.”

But here is the thing: It is no longer true that the divorce rate is rising, or that half of all marriages end in divorce. It has not been for some time. Even though social scientists have tried to

debunk those myths, somehow the conventional wisdom has held. Despite hand-wringing about the institution of marriage, marriages in this country are stronger today than they have been in a long time.

The divorce rate peaked in the 1970s and early 1980s and has been declining for the three decades since.

About 70 percent of marriages that began in the 1990’s reached their 15th anniversary (excluding those in which a spouse died), up from about 65 percent of those that began in the 1970’s and 1980’s. Those who married in the 2000’s are so far divorcing at even lower rates. If current trends continue, nearly two-thirds of marriages will never involve a divorce, according to data

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from Justin Wolfers, a University of Michigan economist (who also contributes to *The Upshot*).

There are many reasons for the drop in divorce, including later marriages, birth control and the rise of so-called love marriages. These same forces have helped reduce the divorce rate in parts of Europe, too. Much of the trend has to do with changing gender roles — whom the feminist revolution helped and whom it left behind.

“Two-thirds of divorces are initiated by women,” said William Doherty, a marriage therapist and professor of family social science at the University of Minnesota, “so when you’re talking about changes in divorce rates, in many ways you’re talking about changes in women’s expectations.”

The marriage trends aren’t entirely happy ones. They also happen to be a force behind rising economic and social inequality, because the decline in divorce is concentrated among people with college degrees.

For the less educated, divorce rates are closer to those of the peak divorce years.

Of college-educated people who married in the early 2000’s, only about 11 percent divorced by their seventh anniversary, the last year for which data is available. Among people without college degrees, 17 percent were divorced, according to Mr. Wolfers.

Working-class families often have more traditional notions about male breadwinners than do the college-educated — yet economic changes

have left many of the men in these families struggling to find work. As a result, many wait to achieve a level of stability that never comes and thus never marry, while others split up during tough economic times.

“As the middle of our labor market has eroded, the ability of high school-educated Americans to build a firm economic foundation for a marriage has been greatly reduced,” said Andrew Cherlin, a sociologist and author of *Labor’s Love Lost: The Rise and Fall of the Working-Class Family in America*. “Better-educated Americans have found a new marriage model in which both spouses work and they build a strong economic foundation for their marriage.”

Some of the decline in divorce clearly stems from the fact that fewer people are getting married — and some of the biggest declines in marriage have come among groups at risk of divorce. But it also seems to be the case that marriages have gotten more stable, as people are marrying later.

Ultimately, a long view is likely to show that the rapid rise in divorce during the 1970’s and early 1980’s was an anomaly. It occurred at the same time as a new feminist movement, which caused social and economic upheaval. Today, society has adapted, and the divorce rate has declined again.

Harvard Neurosurgeon Confirms The Afterlife Exists

By Steven Bancarz, www.spiritscienceandmetaphysics.com, December 13, 2014
<http://bit.ly/1wSXzDf>

Do we have a soul? Is there life after death? The afterlife is something that has been experienced by countless people since recorded history who have returned to tell their tales, with the most noteworthy account experienced firsthand by Harvard trained brain neurosurgeon of 25 years, Dr. Eben Alexander. This is not just another after-life account that can be written off as a hallucination. Before we look at exactly how his experience of the afterlife defies all scientific explanation, let’s explore his account a little bit.

Before his experience, he did not believe in the existence of a nonphysical spirit. Trained in a western medical school and surrounded by medical colleagues who are deeply invested in the material-

ist view of the universe, he thought that the idea of a soul was outlandish. Like most “skeptics,” he believed stories of the afterlife to be hallucinations or products of the human imagination.

Dr. Alexander changed his mind after he was in a coma for seven days caused by severe bacterial meningitis.

During his coma he experienced a vivid journey into what he knew to be the afterlife, visiting both heavenly and not so heavenly realms.

After returning to his body and experiencing a miraculous healing against all odds, he went on to write the *NY Times* #1 best selling book “*Proof of Heaven*.” What Dr. Alexander confirms is that our life here is just a test to help our souls evolve

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

and grow, and that the way we succeed in doing so is to proceed with love and compassion. Here are just a few other notable points he made:

- The experience of the afterlife was so “real” and expansive that the experience of living as a human on Earth seemed like an artificial dream by comparison.

- The fabric of the afterlife was pure LOVE. Love dominated the afterlife to such a huge degree that the overall presence of evil was infinitesimally small. If you wish to know the Universe, know Love.

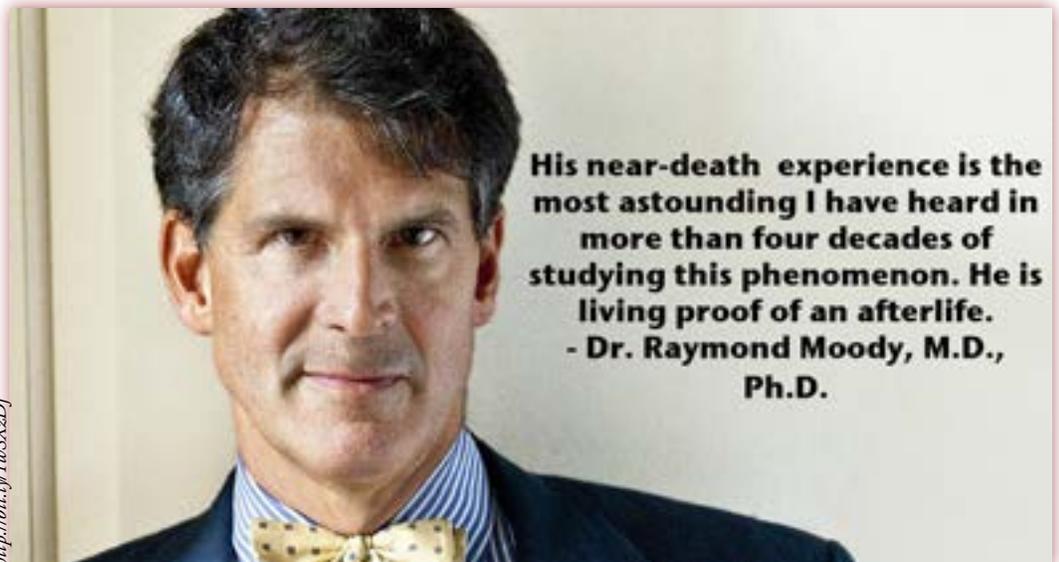
- In the afterlife, all communication was telepathic. There was no need for spoken words, nor even any separation between the self and everything else happening around you. All the questions you asked in your mind were immediately answered to you telepathically as well.

When asked what he wants everyone to know about the spiritual realm, he always answers saying that you are precious and infinitely loved more than you can possibly imagine. You are always safe. You are

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

never alone. The unconditional and perfect Love of God neglects not one soul.

“Love is, without a doubt, the basis of everything. Not some abstract, hard to fathom kind of love but the day to day kind that everyone knows the kind of love we feel when we look at our spouse and our children, or even our animals. In its purest and most powerful form, this love is not jealous or selfish, but unconditional. This is the reality of realities, the incomprehensibly glorious truth of truths that lives and breathes at the core of everything that exists or will ever exist, and no remotely accurate understanding of who and what we are can be achieved by anyone who does not know it, and embody it in all of their actions.”



His near-death experience is the most astounding I have heard in more than four decades of studying this phenomenon. He is living proof of an afterlife.
- Dr. Raymond Moody, M.D., Ph.D.

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

Now let's talk credibility for a minute. What makes this experience so much more significant than another Near Death Experience (NDE) account? Eben's neocortex was completely nonfunctional during the time of his coma due to his severe bacterial meningitis, so there is no scientific account for why

he experienced this. In fact, he gives refutations to nine different possible scientific explanations for his experience in his book.

Exploring Naturalistic Explanations

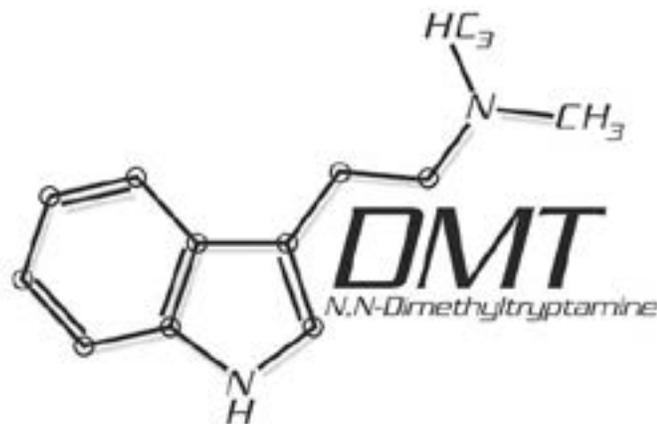
Let's take a look at five potential explanations he outlines in Appendix B of "Proof of Heaven." Some of his explanations would make no sense to us as laymen untrained in neuroscientific terminology, so here are the most common explanations he refutes, all of which are taken verbatim from his book:

1. A primitive brain stem program to ease terminal pain and suffering ("evolutionary argument" – possibly as a remnant of feigned death strategies from lower mammals). This did not explain the robust, richly interactive nature of the recollections.

2. The distorted recall of memories from deeper parts of the limbic system (for example, the lateral amygdala) that have enough overlying brain to be relatively protected from the meningitic inflammation, which occurs mainly at the brain's surface. This did not explain the robust, richly interactive nature of the recollections.

3. DMT dump. DMT, a naturally occurring serotonin agonist causes vivid hallucinations and a dreamlike state. I am personally familiar with drug experiences related to serotonin agonist/antago-

nists (LSD) from my teen years in the early 70's. I have had no personal experience with DMT but have seen patients under its influence. The rich ultra-reality would still require fairly intact auditory and visual neocortex as target regions in which to generate such a rich audiovisual experience as I had in a coma. Prolonged coma due to bacterial meningitis had badly damaged my neocortex, which is where all of the serotonin from the raphe nuclei in my brainstem (or DMT, a serotonin agonist) would have had effects on visual/auditory experiences. But my cortex was off, and the DMT would have no place in the brain to act.



Molecular Structure of Dimethyltryptamine

4. A reboot phenomenon – a random dump of bizarre disjointed memories due to old memories in the damaged neocortex, which might occur on restarting the cortex into consciousness after a prolonged systemwide failure, as in my diffuse meningitis. Especially given the intricacies of my elaborate recollections, this seems most unlikely.

5. Unusual memory generation through an archaic visual pathway through the midbrain, prominently used in birds but only rarely identifiable in humans. It can be demonstrated in humans who are cortically blind, due to occipital cortex. It provided no clue as to the ultra reality I witnessed and failed to explain the auditory visual interleaving.

Dr. Alexander's NDE account stands as the most credible account of all time, and coming from his materialistic scientific background, we have good reason to believe that he really did have a vivid encounter with something beyond this world.

China to Set Up First Yoga College

By IndoAsian News Service, *indianexpress.com*, on May 22, 2015

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

The first yoga college in China is to be set up at the Yunnan University of Nationalities, a media report said on Tuesday.

The college is expected to spread Indian culture in China and plans to begin student admissions in September, *China Daily* reported.

During Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to China from May 14 to 16, the Yunnan University of Nationalities and the

Indian Council for Cultural Relations signed a cooperation memorandum for the yoga college on May 15.

The memorandum was listed in the China-India joint statement.

The yoga college will invite yoga masters from India to preside over courses at different levels of difficulty. Other than yoga practice, there are also courses on Indian culture and philosophy.



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

Please send us your feedback
feedback@mukundagoswami.org

Personal Message...



Dear Friends,

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

In chapter twenty-four of *Caitanya-Caritamṛta, Madhya-līla*, starting with verse 330 Lord Caitanya gave instructions to Sanatana Goswami to write “a directory of activities of Vaisnavas.” Srila Prabhupada gave elaborate purports to many of these verses.

What follows is an excerpt from those instructions:

“In your book, there should be characteristics of the bona fide guru and the bona fide disciple. Then, before accepting a spiritual master, one can be assured of the spiritual master’s position. Similarly, the spiritual master can also be assured of the disciple’s position. The Supreme Personality of Godhead, Krishna, should be described as the worshipable object, and you should consider the *bija-mantra* for the worship of Krishna, Rama or any other expansion of the Supreme Personality of Godhead.”

Purport: In the *Padma Purana*, the characteristics of the guru, the bona fide spiritual master, have been described:

*mahā-bhāgavata-śreṣṭho brāhmaṇo vai gurur nṛṇām
sarveṣām eva lokānām asau pūjyo yathā hariḥ
mahā-kula-prasūto 'pi sarva-yajñeṣu dīkṣitaḥ
sahasra-śākhādhyāyī ca na guruḥ syād avaiṣṇavaḥ*

The guru must be situated on the topmost platform of devotional service. There are three classes of devotees, and the guru must be accepted from the topmost class. The first-class devotee is the spiritual master for all kinds of people. It is said *gurur nṛnam*. The word *nṛnam* means “of all human beings.” The guru is not limited to a particular group. It is stated in the *Upadesamṛta* of Rupa Goswami that a guru is a *goswami*, a controller of the senses and the mind. Such a guru can accept disciples from all over the world. *Prithivīm sa sisyat*. This is the test of the guru.

In India there are many so-called gurus, and they are limited to a certain district or province. They do not even travel about India, yet they declare themselves to be *jagad-guru*, gurus of the whole world. Such cheating gurus should not be accepted. Anyone can see how the bona fide spiritual master accepts disciples from all over the world. The guru is a qualified brahmana; therefore he knows *Brahman* and *Parabrahman*. He thus devotes his life for the service of *Parabrahman*. The bona fide spiritual master who accepts disciples from all over the world is also worshiped all over the world because of his qualities. *Lokanam asau pūjyo yathā hariḥ*: the people of the world worship him just as they worship the Supreme Personality of Godhead. All these honors are offered to him because he strictly follows the brahminical principles and teaches these principles to his disciples...”

Your servant,

Mukunda Goswami

Mukunda Goswami

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

