



Spiritual Perspectives

September 2018

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

Impossible Meat

By Radha devi dasi

This summer, the American food industry opened another door in its search for “better food.” The FDA approved “Impossible Burger,” a plant based burger that uses genetically modified yeast. The engineered yeast produces soy leghemoglobin, a protein that occurs naturally in the roots of soy plants. Through this modification, the yeast produces a vegetarian version of heme, the metallic-tasting substance you also find in your blood and muscle, making this product taste, look and “bleed” like meat.

This product has substantial promise in its ability to replace the environmental destruction and the suffering of sentient creatures associated with the present meat industry. At the same time, it will further artificially modify our food chain and is part of an increasing reliance on substantially processed food products.

As consumers struggle to keep up, the USFDA is also trying to make sense of the evolving nature of food. The Impossible Burger is the product of just one meat-engineering strategy. Other

companies are growing meat “meat,” not plant “meat,” in the lab from small samples of animal cells. And in that field, the FDA is being more proactive. Earlier this month it convened a public meeting about lab-grown meat, which turned into semantic bickering about what meat even is.

Missouri, fearing for the economic health of its meat industry, has already passed a law requiring that anything labeled “meat” must have been “harvested from livestock or poultry.” While the law is already being challenged in court, meat producers are intent on keeping the field clear of competition.

These new products and the backlash against them spring, at least in part, from the interplay of two forces. First, consumers want to enjoy their senses through various tastes, and are not willing to limit themselves

to naturally occurring, sustainable and cruelty free foods. Second, the goal of profit making is equal to or greater than the goal of protecting human and environmental safety among government agencies and industry leaders.

Modern consumers are well aware that current meat production practices contribute substantially to water and air pollution, land pollution, and catastrophe inducing climate change. Despite this knowledge, meat consumption rates continue to grow worldwide. In the absence of sense control, there is demand for alternative meat products that can replace factory farmed meat.

However, the introduction of additional highly processed, genetically modified food products creates new problems. Recognizing the risks of GMOs, many European nations have banned such products. No studies have found genetically modified foods to be harmful, but many concerned citizens and scientists believe there have not been sufficient longitudinal (making observations over a substantial period of time) nor clinical studies on the effects of GMOs on human health. GMOs are essentially a grand experiment with our collective health and the environment.

We can and should applaud any effort that reduces the number of slaughtered animals. At the same time, we should see these artificial solutions for what they are – more refined attempts at sense gratification.

A better solution, restricting our senses to natural foods that are acceptable to Krishna, takes spiritual realization and purification. Hats off to the scientists and investors looking for ethical ways to meet market demand, but as representatives of Srila Prabhupada, we still have work to do.



MADE FROM PLANTS!

Impossible Foods, a Silicon Valley-based food tech startup, launched its lab grown “bleeding burger” made entirely from plants © Impossible Foods



Image of cattle herd by the Agricultural Research Service

<https://bit.ly/2xr9u5V>

<https://bit.ly/2XO2u8D>

Heartfelt Chanting

By Sacinandana Swami, www.dandavats.com, September 1, 2018
<https://bit.ly/2QC2Bjd>

Have you heard kirtana leaders say “Chant from the heart!”? What do they mean by this?

We have three hearts: the physical pump, the emotional heart and the spiritual heart. Whenever we want to align ourselves to the chanting of the Holy Name we refer to the third heart, the heart in which we experience spiritual feelings. For instance, when you read the *Srimad-Bhagavatam* or chant, have you noticed that you feel relieved? You feel as though you are above the clouds? This is a reaction in the spiritual heart.

There is a very thin threshold between the material and spiritual reality and it goes right through your heart. If you learn to cross that border, you will find yourself in the spiritual reality. Why? Because this is where you and the Lord reside; the Lord is right there in your heart with your “self.” And the moment you turn to Him, He brings you to the divine space, the spiritual reality and you experience a veiled beginning of spiritual life. These experiences are completely different from any other experiences you have had in this world.

We should chant the Holy Name from this spiritual heart, the deepest place, with everything we’ve got, begging the divine couple for service. To help us understand this point, Srila Rupa Gosvami has written “Just as young men desire young ladies and young ladies desire young men, my dear Lord, may my mind be attracted to You.”

This prayer shows that we should take our strongest emotions and direct them towards the Lord. The strongest emotions in this world are the feelings between young men and women. When they meet and when it is not only dictated by lust, there is a feeling of “together we could do more than by being alone.” Good couples experience this. It is not a physical feeling – it comes from a much deeper place. Monks experience a similar feeling when they meet a good friend. This type of feeling is not philosophical or conceptual, it is

spontaneous and real. These are the types of deep feelings we want to offer to Krishna. That is why we say “Chant with your heart!” It means: from a deeper place.

The Lord was with you before birth, He went through the birth channel with you, He accompanied and protected you during your childhood and He will be there with you when you lie on your deathbed. He always travels with you. It is a very close relationship and a devotee wants to offer the same intimacy back to Krishna by chanting with feelings from an activated spiritual heart. Some feeling must be there, my dear devotees. Feelings are those things we don’t want to speak about that drive us no matter if we acknowledge it or not – and they must be placed in Krishna’s service. Krishna is your *prana-bandhu*, your best friend. That is what He says in the *Gita* (*Bhagavad-gita* 5.29). The *Bhagavatam* (4.29.51) takes up this point of thinking of the Lord with feeling and says that someone who understands that Krishna is the best friend loses his fear of material existence and becomes a spiritual master. Being a guru means to understand that Krishna is our best friend.

Thus, it is crucial to chant with feelings, my dear devotees. Remember the words of Srila Prabhupada who said we must chant like a child crying for its mother. Then the Lord will hear us and respond. He tells Arjuna: “When a devotee comes before My deity and dances with tears in his eyes, I am purchased. I am not purchased by anyone else.”



Krishna speaks to his friend and devotee Arjuna

Devotee Company Serves Out “Pure Bliss” to 500 Stores in the U.S.

By: Madhava Smullen, *ISKCON News*, August 31, 2018
<https://bit.ly/2OrjLyG>



<https://bit.ly/2OrjLyG>

Jaya Govardhana Das is in Bliss as he finds another prasadam customer. Meanwhile, Haridas Thakur slides out a new tray of granola

Many devotees dream of one day having a career that doubles as devotional service. Jaya Govardhana and Haridas Thakur of growing U.S. healthy snack company “Pure Bliss Organics” have done just that.

The two met when Jaya Govardhana, then feeling burnt out in his job as a traveling salesman, visited Haridas Thakur’s restaurant The Higher Taste in Tallahassee, Florida.

Striking up a friendship due to their shared love of prasadam, they purchased their friend Lilasuka Dasi’s fledgeling granola business in 2005, renamed it, and relocated it to Atlanta, Georgia.

“Prasadam has always been a big part of my life and my Krishna consciousness,” says Jaya Govardhana. “One of my main services in ISKCON over the years was cooking, and my spiritual master Jayapataka Swami would always encourage me in it.”

Haridas Thakur likewise was encouraged in prasadam distribution by his guru Hridayananda Das Goswami, and sees it as one of the most powerful ways to reach people and begin their spiritual life.

Now they get to do that – Pure Bliss Organics distributes roughly a million servings a year of their unique brand of Krishna prasadam. They also donate a trail mix for the thrice weekly *Harinama* in Atlanta, and serve devotees by providing discounts on their products to traveling *sankirtan* parties and the Sadhu Sanga Kirtan Retreat.

All gluten-free and certified organic, their granolas include three no-sugar types sweetened with

date paste, two grain-free with half the carbs, and one high-protein. Granola flavors include banana, cashew butter, peanut butter vanilla, maple cranberry, and carrot cake.

Pure Bliss also offers seven different energy bars such as acai coconut, lemon cranberry, white chocolate raspberry, and chocolate sun butter, as well as their extremely popular energy bites with the same flavors. Finally their gourmet nut mixes include

coconut honey almonds, sesame honey cashews, and maple cinnamon mixed nuts.

All these are made on-



<https://bit.ly/2OrjLyG>

White Chocolate raspberry granola site at their 5,200 square-foot kitchen/warehouse in Marietta, a suburb of Atlanta. There a longtime staff of devotees start work at six o’clock every morning, using automated mixers and huge rack ovens to bake about 1,000 lbs of food every day. A high standard of cleanliness is kept in the kitchen, and no food is tasted before it is offered.

Every batch, meanwhile, is offered to home Gaura Nitai Deities by Chitrabirya Das, a pujari at the ISKCON Atlanta temple.

After being packaged, the products are sent out for sale to nearly 500 stores throughout the U.S. Among them are regional branches of major chains like Wholefoods, Kroegers, and Sprouts, as well as large co-ops like Ozark Natural Foods in Arkansas, and stores like New Leaf in California. Locally in the Atlanta area Pure Bliss Organics are sold at around 100 coffee shops, smoothie shops, neighborhood grocery stores, and farmers’ markets.

“At the farmers’ markets, we can get to know our customers personally,” says Jaya Govardhana. “So we know that a lot of people have raised their kids on prasadam. And there’s a lot of loyalty. People really get hooked on prasadam and praise it like anything, remarking that there’s nothing

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on the market that compares to how it tastes and how it makes them feel. That's very inspiring – especially as we know the purification of the heart that's caused by eating prasadam cooked and offered by devotees.”

Pure Bliss prasadam is also sold in gift stores at half a dozen of the biggest hotels in downtown Atlanta. And because they like to support locally made organic food, chefs prepare dishes with it and give Pure Bliss name recognition in their menus.

Spreading further afield, Pure Bliss Organics have also begun creating products for other startup companies.

Although it has grown steadily over the years, Pure Bliss is still considered a small company. But lately, Jaya Govardhana and Haridas Thakur have started a push to expand more rapidly, hiring national sales reps and going after bigger accounts and clients. They hope to grow from 500 stores to 2,000, to one day 20,000.

For other devotees who share their dream, they advise, “Pray to Krishna – He always reciprocates as long as he sees your determination and desire.” And they add,

“Don't be afraid to go beyond the devotee world to get what you need to make your business successful, whether it's professional organizations, or business training.”

The results, they assure us, are deeply fulfilling.

“I feel connected with Krishna and my spiritual master through this work,” says Haridas Thakur.

And Jaya Govardhana concludes, “When you put your head on the pillow at night, you know what you're doing is benefitting the world and helping many people in their spiritual life.”



The Pure Bliss team outside their factory in Atlanta

Cleaning the Heart: The Life of a Traveling Kirtaniya

By: Madhava Smullen, *ISKCON News*, August 31, 2018

<https://bit.ly/2xpRH7z>



Madhava immersed in the Holy Name at Sadhu Sanga Retreat

“Let's go clean the toilets,” said Aindra Das, head of Krishna Balarama Mandir's 24-Hour Kirtan Mandali in Vrindavana. “It will clean your

heart. And when your heart is clean, you can actually chant Hare Krishna.”

Eighteen-year-old Madhava Naidoo was taken aback. He was a hotshot mridanga player. He was in the 24 Hour Kirtan. Why should he do something so menial? “No way,” he retorted. “I've never cleaned toilets before in my life.”

Five minutes later, he saw Aindra walk by in his gamcha and gloves, carrying cleaning fluid and a scrubbing brush. The sight of this legendary kirtan leader and Prabhupada disciple willing to do such a humble task gave Madhava pause.

He ran to catch up with him.

For the next four hours, they cleaned toilets together. “It was one of the most enlivening

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and beautiful experiences I've ever had," Madhava recalls. "I felt my heart being cleansed – it felt so light. After that we had a wonderful connection in kirtan."

Born and raised by devotee parents in Mauritius, Madhava had been playing mridanga since he was five years old and always took shelter of kirtan even through difficult teenage years. But it was his stint in Vrindavana under Aindra, from 1992 to 1998, that truly taught him the purpose and mood of kirtan.

"As well as the need for humility, Aindra Prabhu taught me that kirtan is not a performance," he says. "It's about chanting for Krishna's pleasure only."

After six years in the 24-Hour Kirtan, during which he played mridanga on famous albums like Vrindavana Mellows – Madhava returned to Mauritius to get married. During their emotional goodbyes, Aindra gave him the instruction he would carry with him throughout his life: "Wherever you go, chant Hare Krishna, even if you have to sing to the four walls."

Back home, Madhava felt a little lost, working for some time with his dad as a land surveyor and then studying interior design. After he moved to England and his wife Radhika Dasi invited him to do bhajans at the temple, however, things began to change. Their Sunday afternoon slot went from nearly empty to packing out the temple room. Sivarama Swami and others began calling, inviting him to do kirtan throughout Europe. Madhava was back on track with his true calling.

But he still had to make a living. Moving to Switzerland in 2000, he spent ten very hardworking years as a carpenter.

"From 7am to 5pm, Monday to Friday, I would go to work," he says. "After work on Friday, I'd take a shower, and have a bite to eat. Then I'd jump on a plane to England or Hungary to do kirtan over the weekend. On Monday, it would start all over again."

In 2010, Aindra Das passed away. His last words to Madhava, just a day before he departed, were "Keep chanting, and don't just do it in the same places. Go to new places and start this kirtan culture everywhere."



On Vrindavana Parikrama with Indradyumna Swami

Madhava was distraught. Not only had he lost his friend and spiritual mentor, but he could not see any possible way that he could carry out Aindra's instructions – he had just lost his job.

The next day, the pious Gujarati family who had financially supported Aindra contacted him. They had heard that Madhava had been trained by the great *kirtaniya*. On the spot, they offered to pay his mortgage and a percentage of his bills if he agreed to travel and do kirtan full-time.

Ever since, Madhava has been on a whirlwind kirtan adventure with his invaluable core team of his wife Radhika and mridanga player Vrindavana Kirtan Das.

Their year is almost non-stop travel. Two of their biggest events are in Eastern Europe: the Bhakti Sangam festival in Ukraine draws over 8,000 devotees for five days of ecstatic kirtan. The Woodstock music festival in Poland, now called Pol'and'Rock, draws a million youth, and ISKCON's huge kirtan tent is constantly packed and overflowing.

"The kirtan starts at 4pm, and my nonstop shift runs from 11pm to 3 or 4 in the morning," says Madhava. "It's amazing. We have a *maha-mantra* backdrop onstage, and the way the young people look at it, it's like they're falling in love for the first time. Some people are holding their hearts, some are crying. They close their eyes, and when the rhythm picks up, they chant and dance. Some of them have been coming for many years, and don't attend any other music shows – they just come straight to the Hare Krishna tent to be in kirtan."

In the U.S., Madhava attends the Sadhu Sanga festival in North Carolina, which draws over two thousand devotees and yoga practitioners. He also spends three weeks in New York

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Madhava with his wife Radhika, his spiritual support and the core of his team

every June, supporting the dedicated *Harinama* ashrama in their daily chanting on the streets.

This year, Madhava and his team visited two countries for the first time. In the Philippines, they did kirtan for a retreat that brought yoga practitioners to the beautiful Vraja Eco-Village. In Hong Kong, they held a kirtan workshop at the ISKCON temple, as well as programs at yoga studios and universities. Along with Chinese people, many Westerners attended.

Some kept in touch. “One lady friended me on Facebook and now she’s going to fly from Spain, where she’s living, to Amsterdam for one day just to attend one of our kirtans,” Madhava says.

Currently, Madhava is on a month-long tour of South America, doing kirtans at ISKCON temples, yoga studios and retreats around Ecuador, Peru, Chile and Panama from August 20th till September 19th.

After that he’ll do a whole month of kirtan in Vrindavana, India during Kartik (October 23rd– November 21st), at the MVT apartments in the day, at Krishna Balarama Mandir at night, and also during *parikramas* with Indradyumna Swami.

Next year is already filling up – the team is offering their Kirtan Forever Retreat in 2019 from October 3rd to 7th in Govardhana Eco-Village, Mumbai. Open to both devotees and new people, it will include talks on the philosophy of kirtan and bhakti yoga, kartal and mridanga workshops, kirtans and yoga classes.

As if that isn’t enough, Madhava and his team have begun offering mini outreach programs at yoga studios, as well as one-day retreats. With music workshops and cooking demonstrations,

the retreats present a deeper look at the philosophy and lifestyle behind kirtan. Madhava stays in touch with attendees through his website kirtanforever.com and its bi-monthly newsletter so that they remain connected to spiritual life.

His own life as a traveling *kirtaniya*, while exciting and rewarding, is extremely demanding. The team is at the mercy of jet lag, weather, and whatever kinds of food and accommodation is available – sometimes comfortable, and sometimes very austere. Madhava only spends two months of the year at home in Switzerland – and not in a row.

“I go home for a day or two, cut the hedge, pay the bills, and then pack up for another flight,” he laughs.

Keeping equipoised and focused on the Lord during the chaos of traveling can be a challenge, but Aindra’s instructions, and the power of the Holy Name keeps him going. “It’s Krishna Himself,” Madhava says. “We’re trying to serve Him, and He takes care of us. And we see the results. People are taking up the process of chanting – not only kirtan, but japa, too.”

Madhava takes kirtan very seriously, seeing it as serving the Holy Name and connecting people to Krishna, rather than as a job. Wherever he goes, he only asks for plane tickets, a decent place to stay, and some prasadam – never payment (although he does accept a donation if it is offered).

He also is adamant that the current ISKCON culture of kirtan festivals and *kirtanias* should come from the right place.

“The more kirtan the better,” he says. “But we *kirtanias* have to seriously question ourselves: Why are we organizing these festivals? Why are we actually doing kirtan? Is it to be recognized for name and fame? For women? For money? Or for the right reasons?”

“Because people look up to us for inspiration,” he continues. “And if we are just cheating ourselves and others, Krishna won’t even look. We can be chanting, but not really chanting.”

With the right mood, however, kirtan is a transformational experience, purifying the heart and in turn allowing the *kirtaniya* to chant more purely.

“When we chant more purely, the form, qualities and pastimes of the Lord will appear in our hearts,” says Madhava. “As Srila Prabhupada says, it’s not an artificial imposition in the mind. But it comes naturally with practice, sincere

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determination, and faith. And people can feel it – that this person is not just showing off their musical talents or beautiful voice, but they are sincerely calling out to the Lord.”

“And the more sincere the chanting,” he concludes, “The more people are touched and connected to Krishna.”

For more details, please visit <https://www.kirtanforever.com> and subscribe to the bi-monthly newsletter, or email madhava@kirtanforever.com

Kirtan Sound Engineers Raise Awareness About Harmful Sound Levels

By: Madhava Smullen, *ISKCON News*, August 24, 2018
<https://bit.ly/2MEMtdr>

Sacinandana Swami once joked: “The scriptures predict that as Kali-yuga progresses, devotees will play musical instruments so loud that people will not be able to hear the *maha-mantra* anymore.” That might make you crack a smile, but the background isn’t so funny. ISKCON devotees, and in particular kirtan leaders, suffer from a high level of hearing loss. Some parents are afraid to bring their babies into the temple room.

Arjuna Das, an electrician who lives with his wife and two-year-old son on the New Varshana farm in New Zealand, is one of those concerned about the issue. Arjuna does sound for his temple’s kirtan events. His father has been an acoustical engineer for over thirty years.

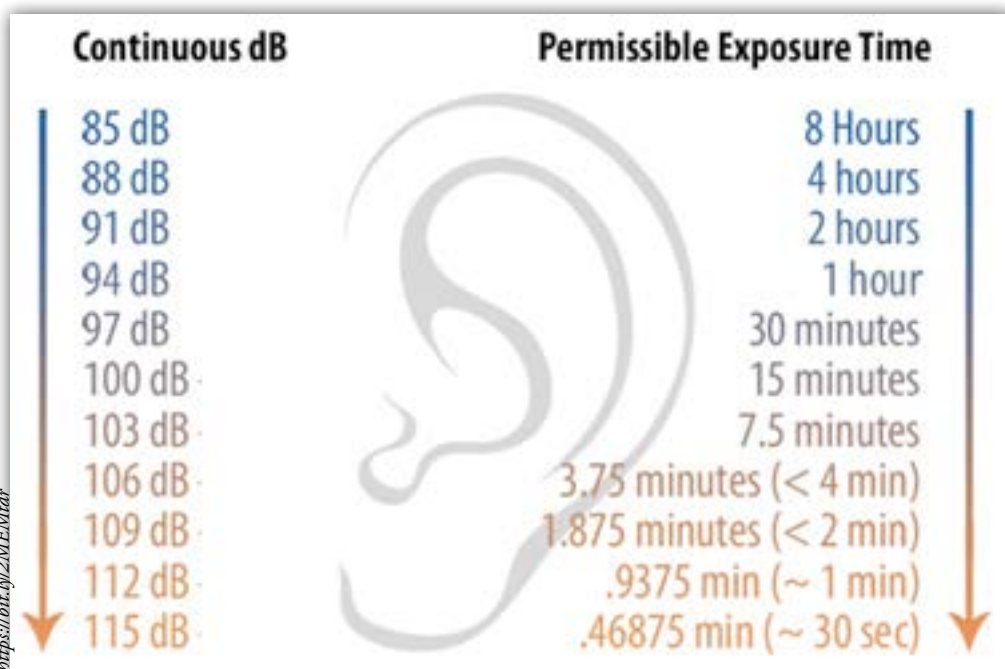
“Safe noise exposure is calculated by the permissible exposure time of a certain decibel per 24-hour period,” he explains. “For example, the safe exposure time for 85 db is 8 hours. But an increase in just 3 db halves the amount of safe exposure time. So the time for 88 db is 4 hours, etc. Most loud kirtans in temples are safe for 30 minutes to an hour at their peak – or even less.”

Arjuna’s father, Ross Palmer of Palmer Acoustics, is working on a device for temples that can read average decibel levels and flash a warning light if noise reaches a dangerous level. Relatively inexpensive digital sound level meters are also available online.

But most important is ISKCON-wide education and a change in kirtan practices. Arjuna feels that Dvija Vara Das, the sound engineer for Indradyumna Swami’s Polish festival tour and the Sadhu Sanga Retreat, has the answers.

“In a balanced kirtan, you should hear the chanting in the foreground, with the instruments creating the background,” Dvija says. “ISKCON kirtans, however, are commonly quite the opposite. The result is that after some time we become tired and the kirtan becomes unpleasant to listen to. Also psychologically, if the music gets too loud and we can’t hear our own voice, we lose interest in participating and just listen instead of singing along.”

The first step is to reduce the number of instruments. In many kirtans, devotees spontaneously pick up instruments no matter how many are already in session. But Dvija Vara advises that just one pair of kartals and one mridanga (no



Safe noise exposure levels

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whompers or gongs) are usually enough even in a large kirtan.

Kartals are the biggest offender, quickly causing hearing fatigue with their upper mid-range frequencies. So, when doing the sound for kirtan festivals, Dvija sits the kartal player behind the lead singer and mridanga player to reduce kartal leak into the mics. He also prefers that backing singers do not play kartals.

“Believe it or not, even without amplification you can hear the kartals very well in the mix, but at the same time there is so much space for other instruments and of course the *maha-mantra* is in the foreground,” he says.

The next step is to ensure that musicians are skillful not only in playing their instrument, but in playing it in a way that contributes to a pleasing and balanced kirtan.

“I think many devotees growing up in our culture of ‘loud kirtans’ don’t have a practical experience that kirtan can be very dynamic yet pleasant, and instruments can be played tactfully and softly,” says Dvija Vara.

kirtan gets faster, they play as loud as possible, as if it’s a competition to see who can play the loudest.”

The third step is to engage professional and experienced sound engineers, or to provide education in managing sound. An experienced engineer can make all the difference. For instance, when a kirtan starts to get more dynamic and devotees tend to play louder, Dvija Vara reduces the sound level of instrument microphones rather than increasing the level of vocal mics.

Investing in high quality sound systems, and installing acoustic panels in temple rooms can also help. The result of all these techniques makes immersing oneself in the Holy Name a much easier and more pleasurable experience, as Arjuna Das found when attending the Sacred Sound kirtan festival at New Govardhana in Australia, which had Dvija Vara managing the sound.

“Having the ideal volume levels not only meant no hearing damage, but it meant no one needed ear plugs, and it made it wonderful for singing along because I could actually hear myself sing,” he says.

Unfortunately, at present some temple managers are insensitive to the dangers of hearing loss and have refused the advice of experienced sound engineer devotees.

However Arjuna and Dvija Vara continue to create awareness, and request others to raise awareness of the problem, too.

“Of course, at the end of the day, when the *maha-mantra* is present, each kirtan – loud or not – is special,” Dvija Vara concedes.

Ross Palmer of Palmer Acoustics recommends the following affordable meter for temples to monitor kirtan sound levels:

<https://www.ebay.com/itm/SNDWAY-SW-525B-Digital-Sound-level-meter-30-130db-screen-display-noise-meter/332258644778?>



<https://bit.ly/2MEMfdr>

Dvija Vara Das does sound on the Polish tour

He adds: “Often mridanga or kartal players are so focused on playing that they are not aware of the volume they create. And when the

Personal

Message...



Dear Friends,

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

Srila Prabhupada recounted this story in a Los Angeles lecture in 1976: A lion was preying upon lesser animals in the jungle. So the defenseless animals, including rabbits, got together and decided to make an agreement with the lion.

The contract was that the animals being stalked by the lion would intentionally sacrifice their lives by going to him daily and offering their bodies to be eaten.

The lion agreed to this proposal as a sort of peace pact. He would not have to hunt, and the animals could live relatively peacefully, knowing that the lion would not be surprising them in the jungle.

One day it so happened that it was a rabbit's turn. He was purposely late. The lion was angry. The lion stated that he was very hungry and that this lateness made things worse.

The rabbit then told him that an unusual thing happened en route to the lion. He encountered another lion that told the rabbit he wanted to eat him. The rabbit replied that this would not be possible because he had an appointment to be eaten by another lion further away.

Hearing this, the lion became ferocious and asked the rabbit about the 'other' lion. The rabbit replied that he would personally take the lion to meet this 'other' lion. The lion agreed and anxiously accompanied the rabbit to see this other 'king of the jungle.'

They went along the road for awhile, and then the rabbit told the lion that the 'other' lion resided in a well that was nearby. "He resides in that well," said the rabbit. The lion, then looked into the well. Seeing the reflection of himself on the surface of the well water, the lion let out a huge roar as if to challenge the 'other' lion.

Thinking his reflection was of the 'other' lion and hearing the roar as if it had come from the 'other' animal, the lion at once jumped into the well and drowned. Thus the rabbit killed the lion.

Srila Prabhupada told this story from the Pancha Tantra to illustrate that brain is superior to brawn. The Sanskrit verse he quoted was *buddhir yasya galam taya, nirbuddhes tu kuto balam, pasya simho madonmatah, sasakena nipatitah*. "One who has got intelligence has got power.

Your servant,

Mukunda Goswami

Mukunda Goswami

