



# Spiritual Perspectives

April 2019

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

## From the Heart

By Radha devi dasi

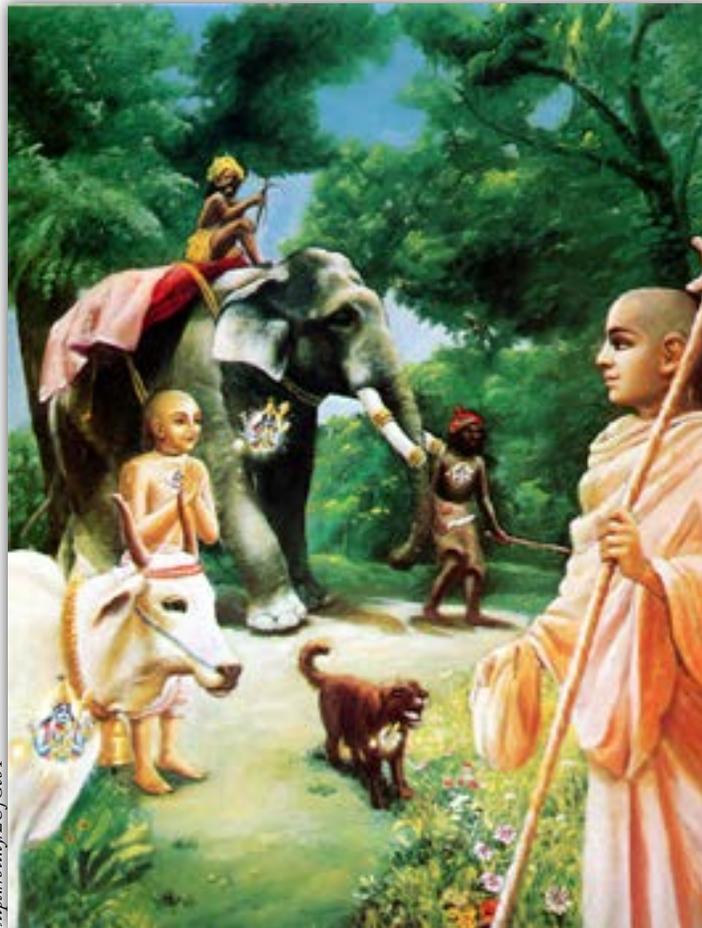
How important are feelings? Devotees sometimes minimize others' feelings. At the same time, we ask why it is hard for people to understand that eating animals causes them suffering? Why is animal suffering seen as unimportant? Sometimes feelings matter to us and sometimes they don't.

Part of the explanation lies in the mechanistic world view that came about during the Industrial Revolution. According to that world view, mankind is separate from and superior to the natural world, including the animal kingdom. Seeing "nature" as an impersonal result of chemical reactions freed us from the need to consider the possibility of any suffering other than our own.

Animal researchers have contributed to this impersonal view of their subjects by rejecting the notion that animals can experience emotions. A new book, *Mama's Last Hug*, by scientist Frans de Waal, attacks the notion that humans alone experience a wide range of emotions. De Waal cites numerous examples of animal emotions from hope in pigs and jealousy in capuchin monkeys, to forgiveness and reconciliation in chimpanzees. Acknowledging the very real suffering of exploited animals is an important step in protecting them.

To students of the *Bhagavad-gita*, this exploration of animal emotions is no surprise. Vaisnava philosophy teaches us that all living entities are spirit souls.

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



*The humble sage sees with equal vision Bhagavad-gita As It Is*

We all spring from the ultimate source, the Supreme Lord. We are aware that all living beings experience birth, death, old age and disease and the suffering that goes with them. However, we too can draw an important lesson from De Waal's research.

Understanding how a lack of empathy leads to exploitation, we should be careful not to cultivate that lack of empathy in the name of our faith. Because people deny or minimize an animal's emotions, they can kill that animal with no remorse. As Vaisnavas we sometimes show a hard hearted reaction to the suffering of others. It is common to hear Vaisnavas say things such as "it was their karma" in the wake of natural disasters. Many of us have been told to "get off the mental platform" when feeling sad or anxious.

But this is not ideal Vaisnava behavior. For a proper role model, we can turn to Draupadi's example in the wake of her sons' murder by Asvatthama. In arguing that Asvatthama's life should be spared, Draupadi pointed out that his death would cause his mother to suffer. Because I have lost my children, Draupadi says, I know how much pain his mother would experience.

Like Draupadi, we have to acknowledge that others suffer and that their suffering matters. While pain is inevitable in the material world, we can do our best to help others avoid that pain and offer comfort when others need it.

# Roots of Kirtan Festival Introduces Newcomers to Chaitanya Mahaprabhu

By: Madhava Smullen, *ISKCON News*, March 22, 2018  
<https://bit.ly/2ID7tCW>



*Jaya Giridhari as Nimai Pandit in his youthful scholar days*

On Saturday, March 16<sup>th</sup>, just a few days before Gaura Purnima (Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's Appearance Day), around 250 people visited Manhattan's Bhakti Center for the Roots of Kirtan festival – described as “dynamic, creative and overflowing with devotion.” Attendees were a mix of bhakti practitioners and newcomers who had heard about the event on social media or in their yoga class. Roots of Kirtan is one of a series of introductory events by The Bhakti Center that correspond with major Vaishnava festival days.

“We've been trying to curate these events in a way that very much focuses on the experience of a person new to bhakti,” says Jahnvi Harrison, a teacher at the Bhakti Center's newly founded School of Kirtan. Each event features an experiential element that's exciting for people unfamiliar with the tradition.

The Lotus Festival, for instance, celebrates Janmastami, Lord Krishna's Appearance Day, with a ceremony in which everyone gets the chance to offer a real lotus flower. During The Pearl Festival, corresponding with Radhastami, participants offer a pearl sewn onto a circular card, on which they write a prayer. All the pearls are then strung onto a necklace for Srimati Radharani.

Roots of Kirtan, of course, celebrates Gaura Purnima. “Kirtan is widely known and very popular nowadays,” says Jahnvi. “But many people don't know about its roots – what the kirtan tradition is, its culture and history, the people who historically spread it all over the world. So the idea was to host a festival that both inspires people in

their connection with kirtan, and is also educational and a vibrant, dynamic experience.”

The Roots of Kirtan festival began with kirtan by Bhakti Center resident Kishor Gopal. This led quickly into the main highlight of the event, a forty-minute original drama, written and directed by kirtan singer Gaura Vani and titled “A Mango Tree in the Courtyard.” The play was intended to provide insight into the life of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, who is the fifteenth century founder of Gaudiya Vaishnavism and the modern kirtan movement, and is revered by devotees as Lord Krishna Himself. However, Gaura Vani wanted to make it a unique presentation, rather than the usual straight depiction of pastimes. Thus the play was comprised of four scenes with four different actors, each playing Lord Chaitanya at a different period of his life.

“The idea was also to have different types of people playing Lord Chaitanya, including a woman – myself; and an African American – Jaya Jagannath Prabhu; to show that we can't really understand Lord Chaitanya with our material conception,” Jahnvi says. “Lord Chaitanya has so many features, but they're all within one person – the feminine, the masculine, different colors, different moods. We are unable to find all those aspects within one ordinary human being – so we wanted to try and give people a flavor of those different facets, with different actors and different scenes.”



*Jahnvi Harrison as Chaitanya Mahaprabhu founding his sankirtan movement in Navadvipa at Srivas Angan*

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The first scene, with Chaitanya Mahaprabhu played by Jaya Giridhari, depicted the Lord's youth as scholar Nimai Pandit.

The second, with Jahnavi Harrison as Chaitanya, showed him founding his kirtan movement in Navadvipa, and performing Nama Sankirtan with his devotees at Srivas Angan. It also included his initiation by Isvara Puri, and his rejection of his scholarship in favor of simply chanting the Holy Names.

The third scene featured Jaya Jagannath Das as Lord Chaitanya dancing in seven kirtan parties at the Ratha-yatra festival in Puri, Orissa. A former professional dancer, Jaya Jagannath delivered a powerful and beautiful portrayal.

the past decade. The feast included rice, koftas, baked samosas with tamarind chutney, maple flavored malpura, and blueberry cheesecake. As with all Bhakti Center meals, it was entirely vegan (the Center does offer ahimsa milk sourced from Gita Nagari farm in Pennsylvania to its presiding Deities).

"People had a wonderful time," Jahnavi says. "I think the drama in particular, and seeing Lord Chaitanya's life, inspired people. Many who were coming to the Bhakti Center for the first time said they cried the whole way through or got goosebumps. One community member brought her father, who despite not understanding the whole story was still very moved by the experience. So I think the power of spiritual art to bypass the intellect and actually penetrate the heart was exhibited."

In addition, many were deeply fulfilled by the celebration and community of the festival. "For a lot of people, outside of birthdays, or going out to clubs or bars, it's quite a foreign experience to come together in a festive mood to celebrate something that's very spiritual, deep, and uplifting," says Jahnavi. "I think that is very impactful, whether you've done it many times before, or whether this is your first time."

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To see more photos of the festival, visit: [https://www.facebook.com/pg/bhakticenter/photos/?tab=album&album\\_id=1989443711153537](https://www.facebook.com/pg/bhakticenter/photos/?tab=album&album_id=1989443711153537)

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*Jaya Jagannath as Lord Chaitanya dancing at Puri Ratha-yatra*

Finally, writer-director Gaura Vani enacted the Lord during his time in the Gambira, a small chamber in the house of Kashi Mishra in Puri, where he spent his last days in deep ecstatic longing for Krishna.

The drama was narrated by well-known devotee comedian Yadunath Das and featured live music by Jahnavi's sister Tulasi, Tulasi's husband Namarasa Das, and professional violinist Charlie Burnham.

The mood of the play was the perfect inspiration for the stand-up kirtan that ensued afterward. Vibrant and joyous, everyone danced for over an hour as Gaura Vani and others chanted, passing the mic around to different kirtan leaders.

As they sat down, tired, participants tucked into a delicious prasadam feast cooked by Doyal Gauranga Das, a resident monk at the Bhakti Center for



*Gaura Vani as Lord Chaitanya during his final days in deep ecstatic longing for Krishna*

# The BBT's New *Kṛṣṇa Book* App

Published in Reports, [www.dandavats.com](http://www.dandavats.com), March 28, 2019

<https://bit.ly/2Xb9n1K>

Available on Apple's App Store/iTunes store:

The BBT's new *Kṛṣṇa Book* app

With the full text in English, Russian, and German, with more languages being prepared.

The text is fully – and quickly! – searchable in each language. Easy-to-read with many customizable features, including the ability to bookmark,

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Switch easily from one language to another – you can compare the Russian or German to the English or vice versa. Read in your own language or practice learning a new language using Srila Prabhupada's book as a guide.



Includes an extensive, captioned image gallery, with paintings from the first printing and their original captions, as well as from later printings. A third image gallery includes beautiful photos of Srila Prabhupada with inspiring quotes about *Kṛṣṇa* and the *Kṛṣṇa Book* from his books, letters, lectures, and conversations.

Find it on the App Store or iTunes Store by searching for “kṛṣṇa” by The

Bhaktivedanta Book Trust

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If you like the app, don't forget to leave a review.

Coming soon: Multilanguage *Srimad-Bhagavatam* apps. Cantos 1 and 2 are almost ready and will be released soon. We'll let you know!

Your servant, Kaisori Devi Dasi

## Krishna Lunches feed New Zealand's Prime Minister

By: Jambavati Devi Dasi, [www.dandavats.com](http://www.dandavats.com), March 28, 2019

<https://bit.ly/2KG3DM7>

Yesterday in Dunedin, New Zealand's Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern was visiting a local Mosque to comfort and reassure the Local Muslim Community after the recent terror attack in Christchurch where 50 Muslim worshippers were brutally murdered while praying.

She then made her way to The Otago University Clubs and Societies Building where ISKCON Dunedin holds their Krishna Lunch Program, daily feeding at least 250 hungry and very grateful students and staff delicious nutritious prasadam.

As the Prime Minister walked up the stairs Jahnava Mata dasi the Krishna Lunch coordinator greeted her with a smile and a copy of Kurma's Great Vegetarian Dishes which she graciously and thankfully accepted.



*New Zealand's Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern at the Krishna Lunch Program*

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Says Jahnava Mata dasi: I thanked her for her brilliant leadership and compassion.

To which she replied: I would like to think it's what any decent human being would do.

I said you're more than a decent human being and then she just smiled and gave me a big hug.

She also acknowledged our efforts and was happy to have a photo taken to remember the occasion. I was left feeling honored and inspired by such a genuinely compassionate and incredibly intelligent Leader.

Oh, and of course we gave them prasadam.

## Festival of Joy to Share India's Spiritual Culture with City of Dallas

By: Madhava Smullen, *ISKCON News*, March 22, 2019

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



*Lord Jagannath's Ratha-yatra Parade at last year's festival (Photo credit Melissa Hennings from Dallas Observer)*

Previously, Ratha-yatra in Dallas was a small scale affair, with ISKCON Dallas devotees pulling Lord Jagannath's chariot through their local neighborhood. But last Spring saw them partner with the Dallas Arts District to put on "Festival of Joy," a major cultural event for the entire Dallas area.

Despite an unexpected cold front during which temperatures dropped to 29 degrees, three thousand people still turned up. Large outside heaters and hot chai helped, and the activity booths were packed throughout the day. The event brought the community together,



*Everyone braved the cold to serve Lord Jagannath last year*

was covered widely by the media, and was attended by Dallas Mayor Mike Rawlings.

The event will be put on jointly by the Mayor's Office – Mike Rawlings is a major supporter of the arts – along with the Dallas Arts District and Kalachandji's restaurant. At least five thousand people are expected, including a Western audience from the Arts District area, as well as Indian congregation members from the local suburbs. As many as 350

trained volunteers will staff the booths and activities.

Proceedings will kick off at 11 a.m. with an auspicious coconut ceremony performed by

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Dallas temple president Nityananda Das and at least three visiting sannyasis – Giriraja Swami, Rtadhvaja Swami, and Hanumatpresaka Swami, with more still to be confirmed.

Attorney General of Texas Ken Paxton will then give a short speech. He'll be joined by Ms. Texas America 2019, Danielle Marie, who raises awareness for important issues and is deeply interested in Eastern philosophy. Mayor Mike Rawlings also plans to attend.

A mridanga presentation by ISKCON Dallas women and youth, and an Oddissi dance by Krishna Veni dance group will draw people's attention. Lord Jagannath, Baladeva and Subhadra's chariot will then begin rolling out for a two-and-a-half hour parade from 11:30 a.m. till 2:00 p.m.

The extended route will go right through the Dallas Museum district. Accompanied by uproarious kirtan with Gaura Vani and the *Mayapuris*, the parade will also feature a huge Lord Jagannath from Chicago, life-size Jagannath, Baladeva and Subhadra puppets, and devotees wearing traditional Indian horse costumes. Meanwhile during and after the parade, a slew of entertaining and educational activities will make a perfect family day out at Klyde Warren Park.

Festival goers will get to dip stencils and block prints shipped from Vrindavan, India, into paint, make paisley and peacock patterns on a shawl, and take it home as a personalized gift. They'll have

their faces painted with gopi dots by a team of artists. And they'll get to try on a sari or a turban.

"The Mayor had a lot of fun trying on a turban last year," laughs project leader Gopi-Gita Schomaker. "Two turban tiers circle around you, twisting the cloth. It's a full cultural experience!"

Children's activities, run by ISKCON Dallas primary school TKG Academy, will include many crafts such as making buttons, book marks, and Jagannath lanterns. Magician Dattatreya Yogesvara Das from Alachua will deliver his best mind-blowing tricks. The Dallas Public Library will showcase books on Indian arts and culture. And the Dallas Zoo will have activities centered around Indian wildlife such as tigers.

Meanwhile in the Ask A Monk tent, Giriraja Swami, Rtadhvaja Swami, Hanumatpresaka Swami and several local devotees will answer questions, with different sessions devoted to a particular topic of interest. In the book booth, interactive games will inspire people to read Srila Prabhupada's books.

Elsewhere Jagannath Das will do personalized astrology readings, and there will be Ayurvedic cooking demonstrations and talks on healthy eating and holistic living. In addition, a new yoga tent will hold yoga sessions every half hour with teachers from various local yoga studios, including the renowned Dean Hollingsworth of Dallas Yoga Center.



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

*Young bharatanatyam dancers perform for the Lord*

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## SPIRITUAL PERSPECTIVES

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Cultural and spiritual entertainment, of course, will also be a major part of the festivities, going on all day from 11:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Packed with local dance groups and instrumental artists, the performances will conclude with a grand finale kirtan as the *Mayapuris*, Gaura Vani, and dancers Vrinda and Gangi Sheth get the crowd bouncing and chanting the Maha-Mantra. “Our message is that Indian culture and the Vedic tradition can teach you how to find inner peace and happiness, whatever turmoil and chaos you’re going through,” Gopi Gita says. “That you don’t have to depend on externals to find that happiness – you can always tap into that place of joy.”

“I hope that people have so much fun and such a good time that they come again next year and bring all their friends!” she adds.

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For more information, please visit

<http://fojdallas.com/>

We Would Appreciate Your Feedback  
Please Send Your Response To :

**[feedback@mukundagoswami.org](mailto:feedback@mukundagoswami.org)**



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

*Devotees with Dallas Mayor Mike Rawlings*

# Personal

# Message...



Dear Friends,

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

Below is an excerpt from *Divine Nature* originally published in 1995.

## Yamuna Devi

“If Americans reduced their meat intake by only 10%, 60 million people in the world could be fed,” says Washington, D.C. resident Yamuna Devi. That’s especially significant when you consider that every year 20 million die of malnutrition.”

When she’s not writing recipes for the *Washington Post*, teaching cooking classes, or making public appearances, she’s writing vegetarian cookbooks. In 1988, her *Lord Krishna’s Cuisine* became the International Association of Cooking Professionals (IACP) “Best Cookbook of the Year,” the only time this honor went to a book of non-Western cookery. Published in several countries, the book has become a classic of its genre. It evolved from Yamuna’s more than 25 years as a lacto-vegetarian and practitioner of Krishna consciousness. A second book, *Yamuna’s Table*, has also become a cookbook industry steady seller.

“There’s a spiritual dimension to vegetarianism that sees the world as a living planet in which all species are interdependent,” says Yamuna.

“People are beginning to understand that proper vegetarian eating is better for their health. But when I explain the callousness of the meat industry and what it’s doing to our environment, it penetrates to their deepest sense of conscience. What I call spiritual vegetarianism can be one of the most positive approaches to avoid ecological disaster.”

America has lost two-thirds of its topsoil to date, she explains, adding that such erosion currently amounts to 4 million acres per year, 85% of which comes from raising animals for food.

Other facts in Yamuna’s compilation:

Half of the world’s tropical rain forest deforestation is directly linked with live-stock enterprises, including hamburger chains;

At present depletion rates, all rain forests will disappear from Central and South America by the year 2010;

1,000 species become extinct each year due to rain forest destruction.

A meat-centered diet, she points out, is nutritionally inefficient and agriculturally wasteful. Grain cycled through farm animals loses 90% of its protein. Eighty percent of the corn and 95% of the oats grown in the U.S. are eaten by livestock. It takes 16 pounds of grain and soybeans to produce a pound of beef.

Your servant,

Mukunda Goswami

