



Spiritual Perspectives

May 2019

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

Spiritual Solutions and Climate Change

By Radha devi dasi

The United Nations General Assembly recently marked the celebration of International Mother Earth Day with a discussion of the urgent need to take action against global warming, noting that climate change is the single greatest threat to sustainable development globally. According to President of the General Assembly, Maria Fernanda Espinosa, “We are the last generation that can prevent irreparable damage to the planet and to its inhabitants. We are at a crossroads; this is the moment in which we decide the path we wish to take, to avoid reaching a point of no return in global warming. We already know the results of inaction.”



<https://bit.ly/30chFlkh>

Unfortunately, the urgency around global warming is nothing new. Despite widespread, scientifically based confirmation of the problem, despite international treaties, and despite the popular will in most nations, the industrial processes that fuel global warming continue unabated. At best, we can hope to slow climate change. Nothing accomplished thus far shows any hope of halting or reversing global warming.

The root of the global warming crisis is human activity. Over the last three decades of the 20th Century, gross domestic product per capita and population growth were the main drivers of increases in greenhouse gases. In other words, global warming is driven by the fact that there are more people who continue to use resources at an increasing rate.

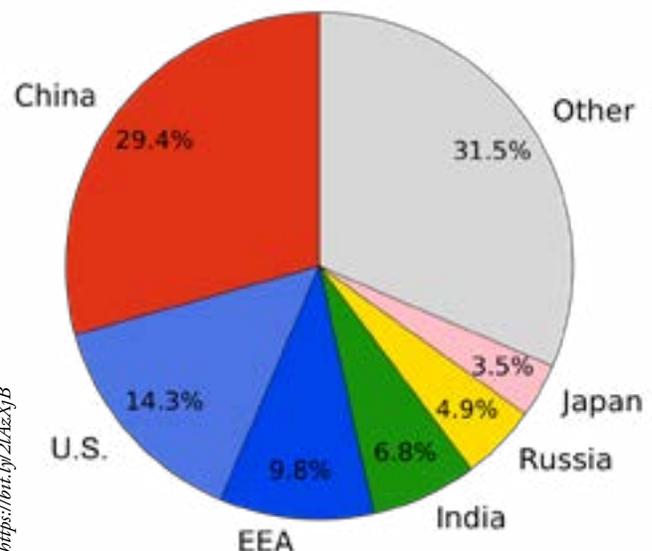
Thus, global warming is the direct result of a spiritual problem. As conditioned souls, we seek happiness in the form of material sense gratification. However, the happiness derived from sense gratification is temporary and limited, leaving us ultimately unsatisfied. In the absence of spiritual knowledge, we seek increasing sense gratification (using more and more resources) in the same way that a heroin addict requires ever increasing

amounts of the drug simply to feel normal. But nothing material ever provides lasting happiness.

The solution to our environmental crisis does not rest in new technologies or political agreements. To save our planet (and ourselves) requires a shift in consciousness. In addition to developing “green industries” we all have to commit to reducing consumption and living less materially opulent lives.

This need is especially prevalent in the developing and developed countries where we have the margin to reduce consumption while still living comfortably.

But to convince others (and ourselves) to live more simply requires an understanding of the source of real happiness. Without understanding our identity as spiritual beings, we will continue to seek satisfaction in the wrong places. Only transcendental knowledge can provide the foundation necessary for a real solution to the climate trends that threaten us all.



<https://bit.ly/2L4zXYB>

Global carbon dioxide emissions by country in 2015

Future Leaders of ISKCON Trained at GBC College in Brazil

By: Madhava Smullen, *ISKCON News*, April 29, 2019
<https://bit.ly/2VtueRA>

A group of forty devotees have completed the first one-year GBC College Course in Latin America, which included online classes and two residential courses, preparing them to become ISKCON's future leaders. The program began in April last year, and the second residential course, lasting fourteen days, just concluded on April 27th.

The men and women participating ranged in age from twenty-five years old up to their mid-fifties, and hailed from Paraguay, Peru, Bolivia, Chile, Puerto Rico, Mexico, Argentina, and Ecuador.

The GBC College is not a physical location, but the name of a course devised by Gopal Bhatta Das and Kaunteya Das of the GBC Strategic Planning Team to plan succession for ISKCON. First offered in Mayapur, India in 2015, it expanded to Russia in 2017, and Latin America in 2018 to ensure that devotees who come from different regions and speak different languages could also have the opportunity to participate.



Devotees gather at the current residential course in Campina Grande, Brazil

This April's Latin American residential course was offered at the Jaladuta Institute in Campina Grande, Brazil. Headed up by Dhanvantari Swami, it's a well-established spiritual education center with full facilities and accommodations, set amidst beautiful forests and wildlife.

Teachers of the GBC College course included Devakinandana Das, his wife Mitravinda Dasi, and Dhanvantari Swami, all longtime educators and teachers at the Institute. Joining them was Bhakti Charu Swami; Bal Govinda Das of ISKCON Pune; GBC Kaunteya Das; Baladeva Das of the ISKCON Ministry of Education; Yugala Lila Dasi, a digital marketing expert from Japan; and Ekanath Gaura Das.

"We trained devotees in personal skills like sadhana, japa, and how to manage their own time properly," says Ekanath Gaura, who is the GBC College's Latin American Director, and an alumnus of the course himself.

"We also gave them a toolkit for ISKCON leaders, including communications, coaching, mentoring, conflict resolution, project management, risk management, and marketing."

Finally teachers taught the course participants how Srila Prabhupada used to manage, with Bhakti Charu Swami sharing his personal experiences with Srila Prabhupada. Another key topic was education versus indoctrination – how to properly create independent thinkers.

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Dhanvantari Swami walks with Bhakti Charu Swami, followed by Devakinandana Das and Ekanath Gaura Das

“We want to make sure that our leaders have good sadhana, and are properly educated and trained, so that they can serve the devotees better,” says Ekanath Gaura. “Our main goal is to create a culture amongst leaders of caring for devotees’ needs.”



Bhakti Charu Swami gives Srimad Bhagavatam class

Throughout the course, students also get a chance to practically apply what they’re learning, by working with their local GBC on a project, and then introducing it at the end of the course. After graduating the GBC college, some students are likely to be chosen by GBC members to assist them as zonal supervisors or global duty officers throughout Latin America. Other students will become temple presidents or project managers. Some may simply use their new skills to improve their current services.

The GBC College has already created several new young devotee leaders in Latin America, such as Mathuresh Das, the zonal supervisor for Bolivia and Peru; Divya Priya Dasi, zonal supervisor for Ecuador; and husband-and-wife Prema Rupa Madhava Das and Prema Rupini Madhavi Dasi, who serve on the temple board in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

Ekanath Gaura encourages all devotees to keep up to date in new techniques and skills, and to keep learning. “It doesn’t matter whether it’s with us or somewhere else,” he says. “But we always need to evaluate and assess ourselves, and keep improving. Because at the end of the day, we’re trying to serve the devotees better – and we should take advantage of whatever we can to help us do that.”



A group exercise with Latin American leaders

Tenth Annual Vaishnava Muslim Dialogue Held in Washington, DC

By: Madhava Smullen, *ISKCON News*, April 29, 2019
<https://bit.ly/2VYFHbl>

Muslims and Vaishnavas celebrated the tenth anniversary of their long-running interfaith relationship in Washington, DC with their tenth annual dialogue in the city on Saturday, April 20th. At each meeting over the past decade, volunteers from each tradition have presented a paper on a chosen topic, one sharing the Vaishnava perspective, and the other the Muslim perspective; followed by an open discussion.

Topics discussed over the years have included “The Name of God,” “What Do I Love When I Love My God?,” “What Do I Do When I Love My God?,” “Sacred Aesthetics,” “The Soul,” and “Inspirations for Peace Building.”

This year’s dialogue was held at the home of founding members and Srila Prabhupada disciples Anuttama Das and Rukmini Dasi, in Silver Spring, Maryland, a DC suburb.

The twenty-three participants comprised twelve Vaishnava Hindus and eleven Muslims. The group included several professors from both traditions, as well as leaders of national Muslim and Hindu/Vaishnava organizations in North America.

While many were academics, all were also committed members of their respective faiths. The group was also rather varied, including African

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The dialogue underway

American, Anglo American, and South Asian participants, along with college students.

After introductions, papers were presented on this year's chosen topic, "Attributes of God." Speaking from the Vaishnava perspective, Bhayahari Das, chairman of the ISKCON of DC temple in Potomac, began by explaining how the Supreme Person is "*sac-cid-ananda-vigraha*" – full of eternity, knowledge and bliss.

Quoting the *Brahma-sambhita*, he described how the Lord is the cause of all causes, and has no other cause. He also explained *Brahman*, *Paramatma* and *Bhagavan* – the all-pervasive energy of God, the supersoul or God in the heart, and the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

Next came Abdul Khan, the Muslim representative and a longtime participant in the dialogue. In his deeply philosophical paper, Khan explained how God's attributes in the Islamic tradition are primarily delineated through His ninety-nine names revealed in the *Koran*.

These include Ar Raheem, The Most Merciful; Al Khaaliq, The Creator; Al Ghaffaar, The Ever-Forgiving; Al Wali, the Protecting Friend; As Salam, the Ultimate Provider of Peace; Al Alim, The All-Knowing or Omniscient; and Al Aziz, the Almighty, the Self-Sufficient.

After discussing the two presentations, participants broke for a delicious vegetarian lunch. They then continued speaking, with the discussion moving on to challenges each group faces in practicing their faith.

Many members felt that Muslims and Vaishnava Hindus share much in common individually as they try to practice their faith amidst everyday problems. However they expressed their angst at the politicization of religion in the world today and especially the tension being fomented between Hindus and Muslims.

Several older members of the group who had emigrated to America recalled that while grow-

ing up in India, both Hindus and Muslims would attend each other's events. One member spoke about how as a young Muslim, his father would have a *brahmana* come to teach him the *Upanishads* in the morning, and later an *Imam* to teach him the *Koran*.

"We all shared stories of the glory days when we were friends with each other, religion was never a wall and we believed *mazhab nahin sikhata aapas may bair rakhna* – religion does not teach one to have ill-will towards the other," says a Muslim participant who serves as the Executive Director of the

Center for Pluralism in Washington, DC. "In the last few years, the bridge of goodwill is gradually collapsing, and as Lord Krishna says, we have to restore the *dharma*, the righteousness back again to live without apprehensions and tensions."

The discussion went on to what everyone could do individually to try to increase understanding, awareness and friendship between Muslims and Hindus in America and around the world. Ideas included promoting more formal and informal interfaith dialogues. "In light of [the recent terrorist attack] in Sri Lanka, our dialogue is a model to be replicated the world over," commented a Hindu participant who acts as Director of Government Relations at the Hindu American Foundation.

Another idea was to create programs for youth of both faiths to visit each other's mosques and temples.

"I think it would be very helpful for ISKCON members in all temples in North America and beyond to organize field trips for middle, and high-school students to visit mosques, churches, and synagogues," says Anuttama Das. "So that they can learn about other religious traditions, and build friendships with youth of other faiths."

Anuttama also feels that ISKCON devotees should be leaders in promoting interfaith understanding all around the world, as Srila Prabhupada often taught that all religions should work together to promote God consciousness.

For its part, the Washington DC Vaishnava Muslim dialogue has created some deep and true friendships between members over the past decade. Concluding this April's meeting, there were smiles everywhere, and many participants commented on how much they look forward to the dialogue as a source of spiritual and religious rejuvenation every year.

Next year's meeting is already being planned, with the topic decided as "Free Will and Destiny."

Krishna Days Facebook Page Keeps Fans Up-to-Date on Vaishnava Festivals

By: Madhava Smullen, *ISKCON News*, April 28, 2019
<https://bit.ly/2E6Ca0y>



Devotees bathe Sri Sri Pancha Tattva during the Gaura Purnima festival at ISKCON Mayapur

Krishna Days, a new Facebook page launched this Gaura Purnima (March 2019), keeps followers up-to-date and informed on all Vaishnava sacred days. (<https://www.facebook.com/Krishna-Days-1158068497684951>)

The page, run by Mangalavati Citra Dasi of the ISKCON Connections Office in Mayapur, is based on information provided by the GCAL Team of Bhanu Swami, Bhaktarupa Das, Gopalapriya Das and Sadasivananda Das.

GCAL, a computer program downloadable at <http://www.krishnadays.com>, calculates Gaudiya Vaishnava observances for any location on the planet according to the calculation standards determined by the GBC Body's Vaishnava Calendar Committee.

"There are different calculation systems followed by different groups of devotees," says Bhaktarupa Das. "This sometimes leads to disagreements over when a particular event should be observed in a particular place. The purpose of creating GCAL was to try to eliminate such disagreements."

By clicking "Like" or "Follow" on the Krishna Days Facebook page, devotees will see posts on their wall reminding them of upcoming festivals, appearance and disappearance days, and Ekadasi fasts one to two days before the actual day. The default time will be Sri Mayapur (West Bengal) time,

although followers can find their own local time by downloading the GCAL app at Krishnadays.com.

Each post on the Facebook page will include information about the sacred day in question, such as quotes, stories from the scriptures, videos, lectures and images. For instance, the recent post about Kamada Ekadasi features the full story behind the sacred fast day; while a post about Tulasi Jala Dan includes a five-minute video that explains the observance, and the importance of rendering service to Tulasi Devi.

"The page will serve as a reminder of Ekadasi days and appearance days as well as a mood setter before the actual festival day, so that devotees can prepare their minds, similar to the adivas ceremonies," says page administrator Mangalavati Citra Dasi. "The adivas ceremonies prepare the mind so that the soul can enter into the proper humble, grateful and prayerful mood, and connect nicely with the Lord on His appearance day."

She adds: "Another service the page will provide will be to ensure that the content on Facebook is inspiring and Krishna conscious. It will serve as good *sadhbu sanga*, which is the number one protection against negative influences. It will also help ISKCON centers and temples to inspire, remind and educate devotees about the depth of the Vedic culture which lies behind each

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festival day. When devotees read about the lives of our previous acharyas, they get that freshness and inspiration to continue on with their spiritual life with renewed strength and faith. Our previous acharyas are our role models, our source of ecstatic emotions, our good association and the source of blessings upon us. When we pray to them for their mercy and connect with them, especially on their appearance and disappearance days, we can establish a nice relationship with them.”

The page will also educate the Vaishnava community on different Vaishnava rites and *samskaras*. An accompanying smartphone app is under development.

“We trust and pray that we can serve the Vaishnava communities throughout the years with this very important service,” Mangalavati says. “We would appreciate if everyone could help us spread the news by sharing this Facebook page to all their friends with just one click.”

Follow the Krishna Days Facebook page here: (<https://www.facebook.com/Krishna-Days-1158068497684951>)

Download the GCal computer program here: <http://www.krishnadays.com>

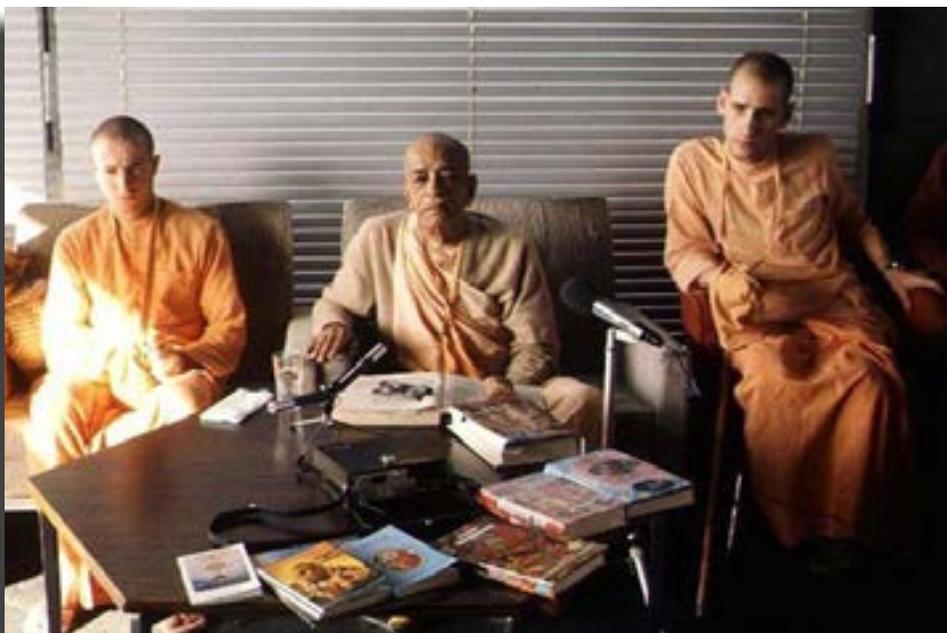


<https://bit.ly/2E6Ca0y>

Bhanu Swami, one of the devotees behind the GCal program

Why We Distribute Books

Published in Articles, www.dandavats.com, April 29, 2019
<https://bit.ly/2VtLaHy>



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

A devotee-bookseller explains.

Have you ever met a Hare Krishna devotee in an airport, a parking lot, or on the street distributing books and collecting donations? Many people wonder why we do this. I've been distributing books for over six years, and I'd like to tell you something about the origin of book distribution.

Devotees are not ordinary booksellers; their book-selling is transcendental. It is *sankirtana*, the glorification of Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

Sankirtana can be executed very easily, without great

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SPIRITUAL PERSPECTIVES

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endeavor or expense. One can simply chant the Hare Krishna mantra by himself or with others. Or one can read about and discuss the pastimes of the Lord and His devotees. When we give someone a book, we allow him to get in touch with the philosophy and pastimes of Krishna. Any donation he gives helps support the book publication and the temples of the Krishna consciousness movement. Temples worldwide distribute *prasadam* (spiritual food) free of charge and give people the opportunity to come and take part in spiritual activities. And all of this is *sankirtana*, the glorification of Lord Krishna, which is what Krishna consciousness is all about.

Sankirtana is not new. Five hundred years ago in West Bengal, India, Lord Caitanya Krishna Himself in the role of His own devotee came to establish *sankirtana* as the process of purification in this age. At that time, many persons believed that one could attain perfection only by intense study of Sanskrit and the Vedas. They would spend their whole lives memorizing and discussing verses. Many also believed that spiritual life was open only to those born in the families of *brahmanas*, or intellectuals. Lord Caitanya, however, did not concern Himself with caste distinctions, nor did He require candidates for spiritual life to possess vast amounts of learning. He allowed everyone the opportunity to engage in the service of God simply by chanting the holy names: Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare/ Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare.

Lord Caitanya desired that the chanting of the holy names of God be spread to every town and village in the world. Traveling widely throughout India, He introduced people to the chanting of Hare Krishna and also asked them to give the chanting to others. He directed His most competent disciples to write books elaborating all aspects of devotional service to Krishna, for the benefit of people in the future.

After Lord Caitanya left this world, many persons claiming to be His followers changed the essence of His teachings, until by the 1800s His teachings were no longer respected by intelligent, educated persons. Then, on September 2, 1838, Bhaktivinoda Thakura, a pure devotee of Lord Caitanya, was born in India. Although a highly placed government magistrate and the father of ten, Bhaktivinoda Thakura would rise very early every morning to write essays, books, poems, and songs about devotional service to Lord Krishna. Thus, through his writings and personal influence, he reestablished the purity and deep meaning of Lord Caitanya's teachings.

Bhaktivinoda was very concerned that the message of Lord Caitanya be spread throughout the world, and he prayed to the Lord for a son to help him accomplish this mission. On February 6, 1874, Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura was born to him in Jagannatha Puri. Even as a young boy, Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati was an avid scholar of Vedic literature, and his father trained him in proofreading and publishing his magazine, *Sajjana-tosani*. By age twenty-five, Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati had established himself as an outstanding author and scholar. He never married, but directed all his attention to the distribution of Krishna consciousness. He initiated many disciples and established the Gaudiya Math, a unified group of devotees, temples, and presses throughout India.

Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati was especially interested in using the printing press to disseminate Krishna consciousness, and he coined the term "*brhat mrdanga*" (big *mrdanga*) in relation to the printing press. A *mrdanga* is a drum used to accompany the chanting of Hare Krishna. This drum can be heard for only a block or two, whereas the "*brhat mrdanga*" of the printing press can be heard all over the world.

We Would Appreciate Your Feedback
Please Send Your Response To :

feedback@mukundagoswami.org

Personal

Message...



Dear Friends,

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

“Cleanliness is next to Godliness.” This phrase was repeated many times by Srila Prabhupada.

In the *Bhagavad-gita As It Is*, cleanliness or purity is mentioned as one of characteristics of a *Brahmana*. Cleanliness also implies neatness.

Srila Prabhupada once wrote me a letter when I was the temple president of Bhaktivedanta Manor. In it he said, “One thing is that you should keep everything very clean. That is the first business. Every room should be as clean as a mirror. The *prasadam* room should be immediately cleaned after taking *prasadam*, otherwise you are inviting rats. Be careful.” The day I received that letter I asked someone to purchase cleaning materials.

Every time I came into Srila Prabhupada’s presence, even if it was a room in a building in a large, noisy, congested city like New York, the room had a quiet, rural-like atmosphere. Srila Prabhupada himself exuded cleanliness. His body and his garments were spotlessly clean. His nails were always trimmed, and his room was neat and well-organized.

When he initiated devotees, we had to hear – and some of us had to utter – mantras that contained the word *pavitra* (purified), signalling that from that *diksa* day onward all we initiates would have to be “clean” both inside and out. The outside was the daily bath [and always a bath after evacuation], and a major part of the inside was chanting a minimum number of 16 rounds of the *maha-mantra* each day.

In the West, municipalities spend millions on street-sweepers, cleaners, and refuse collector salaries, garbage disposal trucks, city dump maintenance and various other operations that collect and recycle waste. Also, companies spend billions of dollars producing and marketing cleaning substances, including cosmetics. Proprietors meticulously clean their houses and cars before selling them.

Srila Prabhupada used the word “cleanse” many times. Quaintly, he pronounced it “cleenz.” He told us that Krishna consciousness was a system for purifying the heart. He intimated that all people, from curiosity-seekers to the spiritually oriented, would appreciate a temple that was immaculately clean. Even non-devotional people can appreciate cleanliness. Maybe this is a covert indication of their dormant Krishna consciousness. It is written in the *Caitanya-caritamrta* that “Pure love for Krishna is eternally established in the hearts of the living entities . . . when the heart is purified . . . this love naturally awakens.”

Your servant,

Mukunda Goswami