



Spiritual Perspectives

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

I Know What I Like

By Radha devi dasi

Developmental psychologists have long known that a healthy person needs to have a coherent identity. Where a person has not developed a coherent identity, mental health treatment can be needed. Identity includes our likes and dislikes, as well as character traits and values. Most of us believe that we choose many of the characteristics that make us individuals. After all, my preferences, my beliefs, and many of my personality traits are within my control, right?

Krishna, on the other hand, tells us that we are controlled by the material energy. He also says that the material energy, being His energy, is something we cannot overcome without His help. We understand that we need to follow His instructions to get out of the material world. But we often believe that our free will operates when we make choices about relationships, jobs, children and all the other decisions we make daily. Resistance to the idea of surrender is often fueled by the fear of giving up free will.

How much free will do we really have? Material scientists are now discovering that our preferences and choices may be more predetermined than we ever suspected. We like to believe that our choices are the result of rational consideration. In truth, different material forces are pushing in different ways.

Recent work on the polarization of political debate has identified two forces that cause us to form opinions in a less than rational manner. Social trust is the degree to which we trust outside sources to give us good information. It turns out that humans are all predisposed to trust those most like us. In other words, we give greater weight to information we receive from those who look or think like us.

Once we have formed opinions, we become subject to confirmation bias. Confirmation bias is the tendency to give greater weight to information that confirms what we already believe. Ironically, our “rational” decisions are actually driven by these emotional tendencies.

But there are even more forces at work. Our preferences and actions are governed by hidden biological influences as well. It turns out we have little control over something as fundamental as our personal tastes. Our behaviors and preferences are controlled by our genes,



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

as well as by the effect of environmental and microbial factors on those genes.

A recent *National Geographic* article described these findings. For example, certain microbes can change the behavior of the hosts they infect. The parasite *T. gondii*, has been shown to cause anxiety in humans. The new science of epigenetics is the study of how chemical changes made to DNA, or proteins that interact with DNA, can affect gene activity. DNA can be modified by environmental factors in ways that can profoundly affect development and behavior. The microbes in your body have been shown to affect behaviors like overeating and illnesses like depression.

Other research has shown that certain areas in the brain are different for liberals and conservatives, and this may affect how they respond to stressful stimuli. For example, conservatives tend to have a larger amygdala, the fear center of the brain, and have stronger physiological reactions to unpleasant photos or sounds. Considered together, these biological differences may partially explain why it's so difficult for a liberal or conservative to get the other to “see the light.” You're asking people not just to change their mind but also to resist their biology.

These examples are just the tip of the iceberg. The truth is, every human behavior—from addiction to attraction to anxiety—is tethered to a genetic anchor. So when we defend free will, we are really defending our right to be subject to psychological, genetic and microbial forces we are not aware of and do not understand. Krishna does give us free will but that freedom to choose is limited. We can choose to turn toward Krishna and He will help us overcome the material energy that is pushing us in all directions. Or we can choose to be subject to forces we cannot control.

New Krishna Temple Opens in Salt Lake City

By Anuttama Dasa, ISKCON Minister of Communications, *ISKCON News*, August 19, 2019
<https://bit.ly/2Pd3ZfA>



The new Salt Lake City Krishna temple boasts a traditional design with beautiful domes, arches, and decorative columns

Utah, the American state best known for its mountains, skiing and majority Mormon population is now home of two beautiful Hare Krishna temples.

On Saturday, August 17th, several hundred Krishna devotees and friends, as well as a large number of first time visitors, flocked to their state's newest Krishna temple—in Salt Lake City—to witness its historic official opening.

The new expansive temple structure is home to Sri Sri Radha Govinda, beautiful white marble

Deities of Lord Krishna and His consort, Srimati Radharani. The temple boasts traditional domes, high ceilings, ornate columns, and spacious walkways. The temple room is pleasantly bright by virtue of large windows on three sides and the light colors of its walls and marble floor. The building also features a large entryway with seating areas for dozens, and a gift shop.

“I wanted to create a space that evokes joy so that once entering people will carry that feeling with them,” explained Vaibhavi dasi, the temple's



*Left: A large crowd enjoyed the first arati ceremony and kirtan in the new temple
Right: Priests offer blessings to the devotees attending the opening*

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designer. “Unlike our Spanish Fork temple, this one is not situated on top of a hill, it’s in a city. So I created that same sense of space using high ceilings and rounded walls, providing a peaceful and spiritual experience,” she said.

Vaibhavi and her husband, Caru das, are the driving and devotional force behind both the Salt Lake City and Spanish Fork temples. Spanish Fork, which opened in 2001, has become well known globally for hosting the “Holi Festival of Colors” each spring. That event draws 20,000 participants, many of whom are Mormon students from the nearby Brigham Young University (BYU).

The new temple project in Salt Lake, conveniently close to the downtown of Utah’s largest city, sits on 4 acres of land and includes the new temple building as well as an existing former school building with existing classrooms, a commercial kitchen, offices, and a large multi-purpose room. The property’s spacious grassy areas and new parking lot provide ample space for a variety of Vaishnava festivals and events.

Guests to the temple opening were treated to a Bharatanatyam dance by Los Angeles based Malini Teneja, a variety of kirtan performed by children and adults, and a multi-course vegetarian *prasada* feast. The audience also heard



Their Lordships, Sri Sri Radha Govinda, are the center of devotion at the new temple



George Pratt, a practicing Vaishnava, observant Mormon, and local attorney, shares his remarks while Caru das, Temple President, looks on

brief remarks shared by Caru das, Sri Sharma and Dinesh Patel, both leading contributors to the temple, and Mr. Ron Clark, a spokesperson and leader of the Mormon Church.

“To be sure, this temple will be a place of lively and colorful celebration, where youth of all ages may gather to enjoy festivities—a safe and meaningful place of life, music, peace, and tranquility... In love and with open arms, dear friends of the Krishna Temple of Salt Lake City, we welcome you and we thank you [for] broadening our understanding and allowing us insight into your beautiful faith.”

Srila Prabhupada, in his murti form, gazes on the crowd while listening to the remarks of Ron Clark, spokesperson for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

After the event, and many months of hard work and challenges in completing the project, Vaibhavi shared her reflections: “People want to be inspired and proud of their temples, their culture, and their places of worship. The thing I noticed most at the opening was the joy on the faces of everyone there. They all were having such a wonderful time.”

Bhakti Course Based on Award-Winning Book “Wise-Love” Launches

By Madhava Smullen, *ISKCON News*, August 16, 2019
<https://bit.ly/2ZpQ5ur>



Left: “Wise-Love” with the Montaigne Medal Right: Author Pranada Comtois

“Journey into the Heart of Bhakti,” an online study guide to the award-winning book “Wise-Love,” has just been launched at pranadacomtois.com/course/journey-into-the-heart-of-bhakti.

“Wise-Love,” by Srila Prabhupada disciple Pranada Dasi, is described as “a handbook of the essence of bhakti written for a modern, Western audience.” “Wise-Love” is the book’s term for bhakti, meaning love grounded in reason and philosophy. The essential theme of the book is love – how our current experience of love is unsatisfying because we lack wise-love, which is unconditional and grounded in a relationship with the Supreme Person.

In April this year “Wise-Love” won the prestigious Montaigne Medal, a special distinction under the Eric Hoffer award that recognizes “the most thought-provoking books . . . that either illuminate, progress, or redirect thought.”

The free online eCourse to accompany the book has been written by Tulsi Rani Dasi, a Bhakti-Yogini who holds a Master’s Degree in Education, along with Pranada. It is catered to “Wise-Love” readers, seekers, and yoga teacher trainers, and can be for individual self-paced study or a structured fifteen-week group study program.

The program helps students assimilate and internalize key concepts in Wise-Love through discussion, experiments, and meditations in group and individual exercises.

Each week, students review two to three chapters of “Wise-Love,” and do a corresponding exercise, with optional extra exercises for those who want to dive deep. About half an hour of study time is required per week. Lessons include All About I; Purging Falsity; Building an Internal Foundation; Sacred Sound and Kirtan; What is Wise-Love?; Experiencing Bhakti; and A Meditation: The Person in the Mantra.

“The course will take readers of “Wise-Love” on an inner pilgrimage to experience the transformative power of bhakti and see life from a spiritual perspective,” Pranada says. “The exercises will help them take theoretical concepts and apply them in their lives.”

Enroll in the course for FREE here:
<http://www.pranadacomtois.com/course/journey-into-the-heart-of-bhakti/>

ISKCON Officially Registered in Albania for the First Time Ever

By Madhava Smullen, *ISKCON News*, June 30, 2019
<https://bit.ly/2U1368q>

After decades of communism, civil war, and bans on all religion in Albania, ISKCON was finally officially registered in the Southeast European country on May 31, 2019 for the first time. Now a small group of devotees are making friends and contacts, distributing Prabhupada's books and hatching plans for establishing ISKCON centers. In a country long starved for spirituality, the response is enthusiastic, and the future hopeful and exciting.

The Beginnings of Krishna Consciousness in Albania

Prior to 1990, Albania was completely isolated from the international community, and even the Soviet Union. As a result, it became the poorest country in Europe during the first phase of the Cold War.

In 1967, Communist leader and dictator Enver Hoxha initiated spiritual genocide when he banned all manifestations of religion in Albania. Churches, temples and mosques were demolished, closed or at best designated as historic monuments. Clergymen and priests were sent to labor camps or physically disposed of. If the authorities got wind that someone was practicing religious activities, he or she was immediately sentenced to ten years in prison.

Although this cruel communist regime ended between 1991 and 1992, some slight reform was introduced before that in 1990, and this was when devotees first attempted to spread Krishna consciousness in Albania.

A group from the former Yugoslavia – Akrura Das, Navadvipa Das, Daivi Shakti Dasi, and Rasa Sundari Dasi, along with Bhaktivaibhava Swami, then known as Avinas Candra Das – headed to the Albanian capital, Tirana. There, they distributed two hundred copies of the brochure “Krishna, the Reservoir of Pleasure” in Albanian. They also organized a public program, which seventy people attended.

However, due to decades of the government's suppression of religion, most local people, afraid of possible consequences, did not respond positively. While on *Harinama*, some threw stones at the devotees. Others even dragged them by the *sikha*. Finding the conditions too unfavorable, devotees left.

The transition from totalitarian socialism to parliamentary democracy was not easy, and only brought

more problems for Albania, including economic collapse in 1997 and a civil war. The country remained forgotten, and devotees did not return for a long time.

Venturing Back

In 2010 and 2011, a group of devotees from Croatia finally returned to Albania, where they hosted a *Harinama* tour in the three largest cities, and distributed “Atma” magazine. In 2014, *Sri Isopanisad* was the first book to be printed in Albanian. Still, there was a lack of systematic outreach there. So Bhaktivaibhava Swami requested Trilokatma Das, a Czech devotee, and ISKCON's zonal supervisor for Slovakia, Macedonia, and now Albania, to do the needful.

The stories of people stoning devotees in Albania gave Trilokatma considerable pause. But, after some time, he decided to accept the challenge.

In May 2016, Trilokatma gathered Croatian *sankirtan* devotees Vrishabha Das, Nayananda Das and Bhakta Peggy, who were eager to distribute books in the last European country where Krishna consciousness had not yet been established. The group would do sit-down *Harinama* in Tirana in full devotional dress, with one playing the harmonium, one on *kartalas*, and the other two distributing *Sri Isopanisad* books. To their surprise, people were very positive and favorable – they were able to distribute sixty *Sri Isopanisad* books a day. Devotees met with a similar response in other major cities, such as Elbasan and Durres. They soon distributed all the books they had brought, and collected many contact details from young people, who kept asking if there was an ISKCON center in Albania.

Due to the positive reception, *sankirtan* devotees returned again in 2017 and 2018, with Sankirtan Das, Suresvara Das, and Daitya Sudhana Das from the Czech Republic distributing a further 800 copies of *Sri Isopanisad* in October 2018.

A New Dawn

Trilokatma himself also spent a month in Albania in 2018. Using contacts the book distributors had collected, he organized several home programs and two public events. Gradually, the first group of people seriously interested in Krishna consciousness began to manifest in Albania.

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Left to Right: Czech book distributors Suresvara Das, Daitya Sudhana Das, and Sankirtan Das Trilokatma Das signs the founding documents of ISKCON, Trilokatma Das distributes books in Durres, New devotees and founding members of ISKCON Albania - (left to right) Bhaktin Livia, Bhaktin Besmira, Bhakta Sidrit, and Bhakta Daniel, Nayananda Das distributes a book to Turkish tourists while Bhakta Peggy and Vrishabha Das do Harinam

One couple created the Facebook group Mantra Meditation Albania to keep everyone informed about upcoming programs and activities. Several young people got *japa malas* and began chanting the Hare Krishna *maha-mantra*. A student from Durres named Sagita, who had received a *Sri Isopanisad*, volunteered to translate *Perfect Questions, Perfect Answers* into Albanian. Many were eager to have regular meetings and to learn to cook vegetarian preparations.

Trilokatma again returned to Albania this year, spending February to April 2019 there. During his visit he organized two “Bhakti-yoga picnics” in a Tirana city park, celebrated Gaura Purnima at a local yoga studio, and was invited onto national TV channel Ora News for an interview about Krishna conscious philosophy and his plans for spreading love of God.

He also enlisted language expert Professor Ardian Doka, from the University of Tirana, to evaluate Sagita’s translation of *Perfect Questions, Perfect*

Answers. He hopes the book will be published by the North European BBT sometime in late 2019.

Trilokatma continued to train newcomers in Krishna consciousness, helping them study and bringing a few to attend the Nityananda Trayodasi festival in Macedonia to inspire them. He also enlisted the help of lawyers and other influential persons in applying for registration for ISKCON, and engaged five “bhaktas” – the pioneers of ISKCON Albania – in signing the application.

Since his visit, Trilokatma received news from Bhakta Daniel, a new Albanian devotee, that ISKCON was officially registered in Albania on May 31, 2019, allowing it to operate as an official non-profit organization.

Future Plans

Trilokatma Das is set to spend another two to three months in Albania starting in July. Then, he hopes to get sponsors and find a Bhakti-Yoga center in Tirana where regular programs can take place. Later, he also hopes to open a Govinda’s vegetarian restaurant.

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Other exciting possibilities, while not concrete, are on the horizon. One supporter, a sociologist named Aneta Mehali, has told Trilokatma about an unused hospital that could be donated and turned into an Ayurvedic clinic. Meanwhile a businessman contact has offered to help devotees establish a farm community in the stunning countryside of Këlcyrë, southern Albania.

“In the long term future, my idea is to build a replica Vedic Village there, similar to the ‘living history’ medieval villages you see throughout Europe,” Trilokatma says. “Visitors could learn to milk cows; make butter, ghee, and puris; have classes in yoga and Ayurveda; and eat at a prasadam restaurant. At the end of their tour they could visit a temple and see *brahmanas* performing *yajnas*. We would engage the local people, who are expert in various crafts. It think it could be an interesting project for the Balkan area – even for all of Europe.”

The outlook for Krishna consciousness in Albania is very different from what it once was. Trilokatma, who was at first afraid to go there after hearing about the violent and suppressive history, now can't praise the country and its people enough.

“I've fallen in love with Albania,” he says. “The people are very friendly and open. And after years of repression, they are spiritually hungry. They are looking for answers. I feel a similar mood there like the one I experienced in the '90s in the Czech Republic after the communist era, when people were crazy after our books and we were distributing 100 books a day. We have a special opportunity now, while they are not yet spoiled by Western consumerism.”

He concludes: “It is so inspiring to be doing such pioneering preaching. Wherever I go in Albania, I can feel that actually, everything is already done. Lord Krishna and Srila Prabhupada have arranged everything, and I'm just a tool in their hands.”

8,000 Learn About Simple Living, High Thinking at Krishna Valley Fair

By Madhava Smullen, *ISKCON News*, August 2, 2019
<https://bit.ly/33YVYOL>

An incredible eight thousand people attended the Krishna Valley Fair in Hungary over the weekend of July 19th to 21st, many of them tourists vacationing at the nearby holiday hotspot of Lake Balaton. These numbers have been consistent over the past few years for the Fair, which draws nearly a third of the 30,000 people that visit Krishna Valley throughout the whole year.

A big percentage of the Fair crowd are return visitors to Krishna Valley, one of the largest and oldest eco-villages in Europe. Established in 1993, the 700-acre sustainable farm is home to 150 devotees who care for sixty cows and oxen, and produce their own vegetables, fruits, grains and milk.

Communications director Gandharvika Prema Dasi explains why residents open up their normally quiet, peaceful community to so many people: “Krishna Valley is not just for us to realize Srila Prabhupada's vision of simple living, high thinking, but to show others that it's accessible, and teach them how they can also live naturally while keeping God in the center.”

Of course, devotees do this in a fun way. There were so many activities at this year's Krishna Valley Fair, that visitors could participate in all three days without getting bored. Some families didn't even go further than the schoolhouse, where children

could learn how to make simple toys from materials around the house; do origami and other crafts; watch shows by a magician, or a pantomime artist; and sample a variety of sandwiches and snacks.

Meanwhile at the vegetable garden, devotee tour guides showed people how to maintain a garden without chemicals, and shared different techniques and secrets. And at the cottage industry household, visitors learned how to weave using flax grass grown on the farm.

“We taught them how to card wool, how the flax stamps get broken and how the fibers are separated from the refuse, how to hackle the fibers, how to spin them into thread, and how to weave them,” says Gandharvika Prema. “We also demonstrated how to use vegetable derived colors to dye the thread, and make bracelets, bags, and rugs from them. These are all traditional Hungarian techniques of making clothes and materials, so people were amazed that we Krishna devotees were protecting such ancient local traditions.”

Nearby at the goshala, or cow protection center, visitors could pet two young calves and take photos with them. They could also watch the cowherd men use flour produced on the farm to make chapatis and rotis, and yoghurt from the cows to make lassi. Then they got to sample these offerings, as well as

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EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Mukunda Goswami

PRODUCTION MANAGER

Hari-kirtan das

EDITORS

Mukunda Goswami

Radha devi dasi

PROOFREADING & EDITING

Haridas das

Padma malini devi dasi

GENERAL CONSULTANT

Devaprastha das

DESIGN AND LAYOUT

Raj Dutia

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sandwiches made with vegetables grown on the farm.

“While they were eating, they could chat to the cowherd men and ask for recipes,” says Gandharvika Prema. “It was very personal.”

Visitors could then follow “The Milky Way,” a long road from the goshala to the temple, lined with shops selling Indian jewelry and clothes. They could sample Indian fare like subji, pakoras and sweets at a huge 800 square meter Govinda’s restaurant. And at yet another dining option, the tandoori restaurant in front of the temple, they could have dishes cooked by pujaris (priests) using an outdoor mud oven.

Inside the temple itself, every fifteen minutes tour guides brought new groups of 30 to 40 people to visit Sri Sri Radha Shyamasundara, the presiding Deities and center of all the activities in Krishna Valley. There, guides introduced them to Srila Prabhupada, described how he established ISKCON and wrote his books, and explained the importance of Deity worship. At the end of the tour, many bought Prabhupada’s books.

Coming out of the temple, tourists could see a firsthand example of everyday Krishna

conscious simple living, as husband and wife Lila Sukha Das and Brijabasi Dasi opened up their home.

“The couple stood in front of the house, inviting people in,” says Gandharvika Prema. “Everyone was amazed to see that it looked just like anyone else’s house – with nice furniture, a kitchen, bathroom, hall etc. But the electricity comes from solar panels; there’s a wood stove instead of a gas one; and they draw their water by hand from a well outside. The couple also lives a very simple life, with few possessions or technological toys, lots of books, an altar, and a small vegetable garden outside.”

To go deeper into the philosophy that inspires this lifestyle, visitors could meet Sivarama Swami, Krishna Valley’s spiritual leader, who has become very popular all over Hungary through his Facebook videos on “Modern Morality from Ancient Wisdom.” Many came to the Fair just to listen to his teachings – he gave talks every two hours – as well as to shake hands with him and take selfies with him.

Other attractions at the Fair included trying on saris and gopi dots, ox cart rides, a Holi celebration, dramas, dances and musicals about Lord Krishna’s pastimes, and even live traditional Vedic weddings.

“People always think it’s some kind of artificial theater – but when they realize the weddings are real, they are amazed,” says Gandharvika Prema. “They feel like part of our family.”

After the fair, visitors often comment that while in Krishna Valley, they feel like they are in a “wonderland.” Many come year after year to get an emotional and spiritual pick-me-up. They say that they love the devotees, especially how they are always kind and smiling.

“The long term purpose of the event is to give people an impression of Krishna and the Krishna conscious lifestyle that will last for their whole lives,” Gandharvika Prema says. “They let us look into our hearts during this event, and we hope that our guests feel part of Krishna’s huge family, and take small or big steps towards Him by starting to read about Him, follow His instructions, change their lifestyle, and take up some spiritual practices. Eventually, maybe they will feel ready to join our community and live with us a happy life.”



<https://bit.ly/33YVYOL>

Top Left to Right: Krishna-lila dance and drama performances, Ox cart rides in Krishna-valley, Visitors learn how to turn flax grass into thread and weave baskets and rugs, Devotees prepare dishes using vegetables grown on the farm, Saying hello to the cows

Personal

Message...



Dear Friends,

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

The word “plagiarism” can be deceptive and is often misleading.

“Plagiarism” is derived from the Latin word “plagiare,” which means “to steal.”

Webster defines the word as “the unauthorized use or close imitation of the language and thoughts of another author and the representation of them as one’s own original work.” The Oxford dictionary defines it as “the practice of taking someone else’s work or ideas and passing them off as one’s own.”

However, corporations, the music industry, the news, the medical world, social media and many other industries and interest groups have for decades routinely ‘plagiarized’ without challenge or interference.

Once it was reported that the late Steve Jobs, in younger days, angrily accused Bill Gates of lifting Apple’s television technologies. Shortly thereafter, when the two were face-to-face, Gates reportedly defended himself by calmly saying said that he (Gates) broke into the house of Xerox to steal its TV, only to learn that it was already stolen (presumably by Jobs).

‘Plagiarism’ has grown into such an academic offense that some universities have threatened to withdraw science degrees when theses and dissertations were alleged to contain plagiarism. Celebrated writers have often been accused of using other peoples’ written materials while claiming them to be their own. Among them: Shakespeare, Coleridge and Oscar Wilde.

Even software has been used to discover instances of plagiarism, especially in the arts.

Ex-Beatle, George Harrison, had to pay \$1.5 million because of a successful lawsuit that accused him of stealing the melody and harmony from “He’s So Fine,” a popular 1963 recording by the Shiffons. He was sued for using the melodic and chord structure of the Shiffon recording for his number-one hit in 1970, “My Sweet Lord.”

In a sense, all cultural, business, educational and governmental policies have already been in use in some form or another. This supports the maxim that “there is nothing new under the sun.”

Many entities are famous for manipulating English words for enhancing popularity. For example, we don’t drink brown sugar-water, but consume the ‘Real Thing.’ Proponents are not ‘anti-abortion’ but ‘pro-life’ and ‘pro-choice.’

At the end of a 2005 opinion article on plagiarism, the London Guardian craftily wrote, “We apologise for the fact that three words of the above piece are the author’s own.”

Maybe the word “plagiarism” should be replaced by the coined word “unattributed,” because “unattributed” has not been robbed from anyone.

Could it be that the very word “plagiarism” was itself stolen from Latin?

Your servant,

Mukunda Goswami

Mukunda Goswami

