



Spiritual Perspectives

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

How To Forgive?

By Radha devi dasi

Forgiveness is considered a virtue in any spiritual philosophy. But we sometimes struggle with how to forgive those who have truly done something wrong. On one hand, we want to punish those who commit crimes and abuse. On the other hand, even an abuser can be a devotee. *Bhagavad-gita* enjoins that we consider a devotee's faults as the result of previous conditioning – a fan can still keep moving for some time after it is unplugged. Similarly, a devotee can continue a bad behavior for a short time as they are being purified. How do we resolve the need to protect people with the need to forgive and support those whose behavior warrants punishment?

An American judge recently demonstrated one way of dealing with this complicated dynamic. Judge Kemp was criticized for hugging a criminal convicted of murder and handing her a *Bible*. Amber Guyger, a white police officer, fatally shot Jean Botham, a black accountant, without warning after she mistakenly entered his apartment thinking it was her own. Botham was sitting in his living room when Officer Guyger walked in and shot him. The story sparked international outrage and seemed to highlight an all too familiar dynamic of American law enforcement – a defenseless black man killed by a trigger-happy police officer. Evidence of racist statements by Guyger only added to the outrage.

Judge Kemp, who is black, responded to Ms. Guyger reaching out for a hug by giving her one. According to Judge Kemp, Guyger asked her if she thought God could forgive her for her actions. When criticized for her post trial actions, Judge Kemp said, "I could not refuse that woman a hug."

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

Judge Kemp's actions triggered a sense of anger and betrayal among black Americans and critics of American policing. Her response? "I don't understand the anger. And I guess I could say if you profess religious beliefs and you are going to follow them, I would hope that they not be situational and limited to one race only."

While a judge is generally supposed to be neutral, Judge Kemp's actions balanced the needs of society with her own personal spiritual understanding. While presiding over the trial, in her official role, she maintained her neutrality. Guyger was convicted of murder. After the trial, however, she related to Guyger on a personal level. She reached out to give solace and spiritual counseling to a suffering soul.

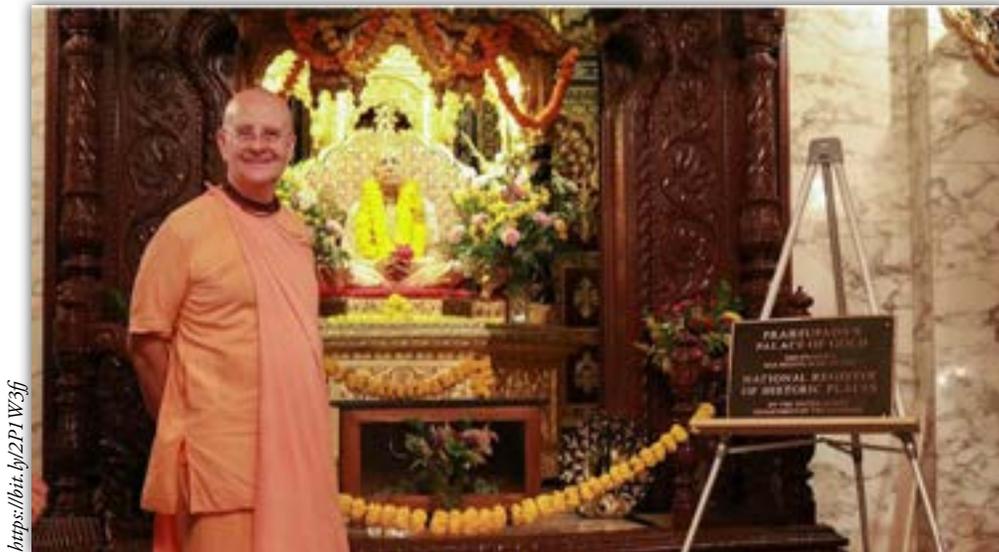
This ability to separate the official from the personal is crucial to any system that actually seeks to rectify people. We sometimes see a tendency to demonize devotees who have hurt others. At other times, we see egregious behavior excused on the strength of long-term devotional service. Instead, we should remember that punishment is necessary and that all devotees need support. Compassion requires consequences for bad actions but also hope and love for the offender.



Judge Kemp hugs Officer Guyger after trial

Prabhupada's Palace Added to National Register of Historic Places

By Madhava Smullen, *ISKCON News*, October 7, 2019
<https://bit.ly/2P1W3jf>



<https://bit.ly/2P1W3jf>

Chandrasekhara Swami, a former resident of New Vrindaban, with Srila Prabhupada and his National Register plaque

Srila Prabhupada's Palace in New Vrindaban was officially listed on the National Register of Historic Places on August 28th by the West Virginia State Historic Preservation Office, the Department of the Interior, and the National Park Service.

Around seventy devotees from around the US gathered on Friday, September 27th, during the opening ceremonies for the 40th Anniversary of the Palace, to celebrate the distinction. They formally dedicated a cast bronze plaque commemorating the achievement, and offered it to Srila Prabhupada's murti in his Palace.

"For the past number of years, we've been trying to get the Palace a status as a historic building in West Virginia," said Palace Reunion Festival organizer Sukhavaha Dasi, to cheers from the crowd. "It's a federal thing, not just a state thing, backing that this is a historic building!"

After the brief ceremony, devotees carried Srila Prabhupada's *murti* around the Palace, circumambulating it several times in celebration. There was also kirtan and a *prasadam* dinner.

The event was covered on the front page of the *Wheeling Intelligencer*, a local newspaper, which quoted longtime

resident and former teacher Lilasuka Dasi as being overjoyed with the recognition the Palace of Gold received.

"It's about time, because I feel that our spiritual master brought a lot of elevated consciousness, of a lot of things, to the western world," she said in the article. "Vegetarianism is really increasing here in the West, and I feel it's because of our spiritual master. And the Palace, it brings so many people to West Virginia, it brings people to Marshall County."

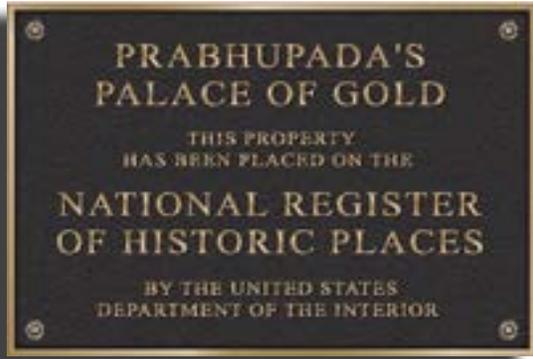


<https://bit.ly/2P1W3jf>

Rshabadeva (left) and Gopisa, two of the devotees who helped get the National Register listing, share a moment

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<https://bit.ly/2P1W36f>



The National Register of Historic Places Plaque

Getting Srila Prabhupada’s Palace listed on the National Historic Registry took several years of concerted effort by a number of dedicated people.

They are: Jaya Krsna Dasa, former President of ISKCON New Vrindaban; Vrajakishor Dasa, former manager of Prabhupada’s Palace; Rshabadeva Dasa, general assistance; Gopisa Dasa, legal and logistical support; Chaitanya Mangala Dasa, archival resource and logistical support; and Jeff Smith, Structural Historian and National Register and Architectural Survey Coordinator at the WV State Historic Preservation Office.

“Normally a building isn’t eligible till after it has been around for at least fifty years,” Chaitanya Mangala says. “Exceptions are sometimes made

for buildings of ‘exceptional importance.’ With info we provided, and the significant impact it has had in the state of West Virginia, Mr. Smith convinced the West Virginia Archives and History Commission and the National Register Review Board that Prabhupada’s Palace should be listed after only forty years.”

Because of this, Chaitanya Mangala explains, Mr. Smith deserves devotees’ appreciation for his significant part in getting Prabhupada’s Palace officially listed in time for its 40th anniversary. The stunningly ornate Palace was of course built by devotees themselves, initially meant as a residence for Srila Prabhupada where he could retire and translate his books. After his passing in 1977, it became a sacred place.

“And now, this designation gives Srila Prabhupada’s pre-eminent *Smrti Samadhi*, or memorial shrine, a new level of prestige and national significance,” says Chaitanya Mangala. “It’s another positive step in the never-ending quest to manifest Srila Prabhupada’s grand vision of New Vrindaban being a premier place of pilgrimage in North America.”

In the near future, another upcoming ceremony will see the bronze plaque commemorating the listing officially installed on the Palace wall, where guests will see it as they arrive to take the tour.

Harvard Is Going Vegan to Save the Planet

By Contributor, www.totallyveganbuzz.com, October 11, 2019

<https://bit.ly/31v6j2n>

Harvard plans to focus promoting plant-based food as part of a commitment to reduce food-related greenhouse gas emissions by 25 percent by 2030.

The university has signed the Cool Food Pledge, created by World Resources Institute (WRI) and UN Environment, to add to its promise to make Harvard fossil fuel neutral by 2026 and fossil fuel free by 2050.

The *Harvard Gazette* interviewed Executive Vice President Katie Lapp, who said: “Addressing the emissions associated with our food choices is a focal part of Harvard’s holistic approach to using our campus as a testbed to address climate change and sustainability.

“This pledge gives us a common science-based collective target and a way of learning together with institutions around the world as we strive to create a more sustainable food system.”



<https://bit.ly/31v6j2n>

Sustainability, energy conservation, and healthy eating are some of the areas of focus for Harvard in its bid to realize long term goals

ISKCON Devotee Nominated Co-Chair of UN Multifaith Advisory Council

By: Madhava Smullen, *ISKCON News*, October 7, 2019
<https://bit.ly/2J5nwJn>

An ISKCON devotee has been nominated co-chair of the UN Multifaith Advisory Council on Religion and Development.

Gopal Lila Das (Gopal Patel) is Director of the Bhumi Project, an environmental effort of the Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies. He also co-leads The Sacred Ecology Forum at the Bhakti Center in New York City, and is an advisor to the Climate Action Task Force at the Parliament of the World's Religions.

His relationship with the UN goes back ten years to 2009, when the Bhumi Project was launched with seed funding from the UNDP (United Nations Development Programme). Later, in 2015, the Bhumi Project was invited to give a Hindu Response to the SDGs, seventeen Sustainable Development Goals set by the United Nations for the year 2030. Since then, the Bhumi Project has engaged with the UN in various ways.

In Gopal Lila's new position as co-chair of the UN Multifaith Advisory Council on Religion and Development, he will represent the Bhumi Project and the Hindu communities it has been working with on climate change and environmental issues.

His co-chairs are Bani Dugal, head of the B'ahai office to the UN; Rudelmar Bueno de Faria, Secretary General of Christian organization Act Alliance; and Husna Ahmad OBE, head of Muslim developmental organization Global One.

The Multifaith Advisory Council is the first time in the UN's seventy-four-year history that it has created a religious advisory council of the world's faiths. It is comprised of forty faith-based

organizations who actively work and engage with the UN through Interagency Task Force on Religion and Development.

The Task Force is made up of UN employees from different UN agencies such as UN Women, UNICEF, and UNDP, who ensure that faith voices are represented in all UN policies, campaigns or programs. The Council will work with them to coordinate outreach and engagement with faith-based entities.

As well as Gopal Lila and his co-chairs, the Council is made up of representatives from many of the biggest faith-based development and relief

organizations in the world, who do work in human rights, gender equality, peace and security, environmental issues, and children's rights.

Member organizations from 2019 to 2021 include The World Council of Churches, Islamic Relief, the

Alliance of Religions and Conservation, the Interfaith Centre for Sustainable Development, and the Tzu Chi Buddhist Foundation.

At a two-day retreat on December 5th and 6th in New York City, the current members will determine the work they want to do over the next two years. They'll also host the annual Kofi Annan Faith Briefings next summer, where both Council members and UN staff will participate in presentations and discussions about religious groups' development and relief work.

No ISKCON organizations are currently members of the Council. "But if ISKCON was to create its own charity that did a range of development



Gopal Lila Das (left) with Nimai Lila at the *Una Terra, Una Famiglia* environmental march in Rome

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SPIRITUAL PERSPECTIVES

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work [beyond single-focused projects like Food For Life], then that entity could potentially become part of the Council in the future,” Gopal Lila says. “Right now, there are still three spots left to fill out of our forty spaces. And further spots may open up in the future.”

In the meantime, Gopal is excited about the difference he can make, and how he can help ISKCON devotees become more aware about current issues.

“ISKCON members have a responsibility to proactively engage in the world to address the concerns that we see around climate change, gender, healthcare, education, and peace and security,” he says. “And there is a lot that ISKCON can contribute to those global issues.

“It’s what some of us here at the Bhakti Center are calling ‘Engaged Bhakti’ – how do we not step away from the world, but actually engage from a Bhakti lens and perspective? Srila Prabhupada engaged very actively to address the issues of the world. And that’s an element of ISKCON’s work which is underdeveloped, but which I think is a core part.”



<https://bit.ly/2J5nuJn>

Gopal Lila Das speaks at the UN earlier this year

He concludes: “Often, we don’t know what the global concerns are, so we don’t know how to add value – or we’re dismissive of the issues. With this opportunity, in addition to ensuring there’s a Hindu voice at the table with the Bhumi Project, I’ll be able to learn about and help educate ISKCON members about global issues so that they can engage with them more, and add value.”

George Harrison’s Visit to Juhu, Remembering and Giving Thanks

By Giriraj Swami, www.Dandavats.com, October 13, 2019
<https://bit.ly/2Bpz0DI>

I will never forget the moment when I heard that George Harrison had passed away, shortly after Thanksgiving in 2001. The strength of my feelings of separation surprised me—and made me think how important and dear George must have been to Srila Prabhupada and Sri Krishna. And I remembered my own little experience with George in Bombay.

In 1974 George came to visit Srila Prabhupada at Hare Krishna Land, in Juhu. He was wearing a white kurta and white yogi pants and had a plain bead bag. I took him around the property, and he expressed his appreciation for our work and encouraged us in our efforts. When at twelve-thirty we heard the conch shell blow for *raja-bhoga arati*, we went to the temple shed, where George chose a pair of kartals and played and sang with the other devotees. Puri dasa, originally from Scotland, was doing the arati, and when he turned to offer the ghee lamp to the devotees and saw George, his hand started trembling so much that he thought he might drop the lamp.

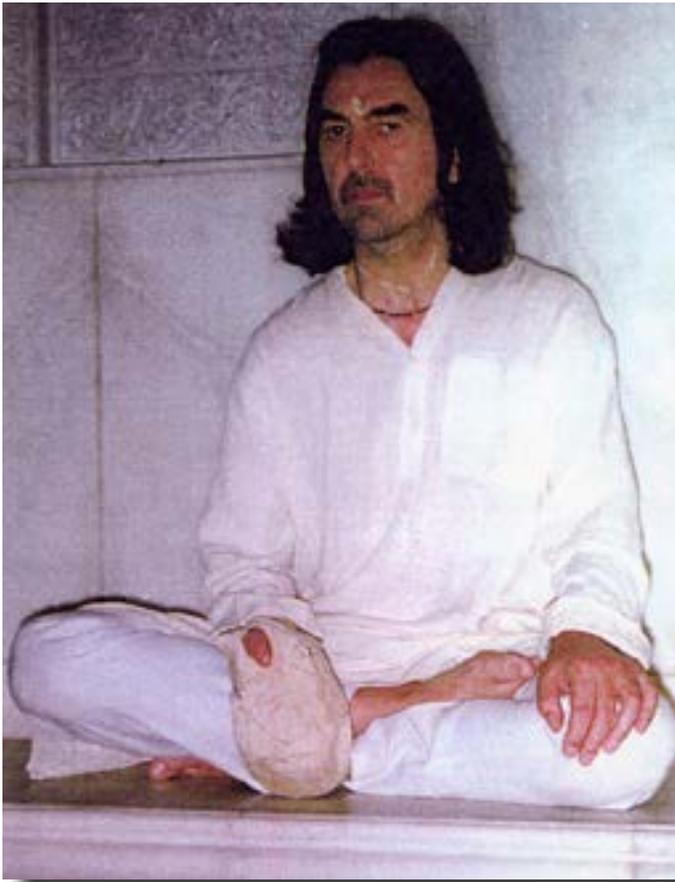
After the *arati*, I arranged a full plate of *maha-prasada* for George and, after he ate, accompanied him to meet Prabhupada in his apartment. Prabhupada greeted him warmly, and I left them together and returned to my office.

“Prabhupada was behind his desk, with George in front of him,” Kishor das later described. “I barely remember what was said, but I remember the feeling of love that went back and forth between them. It was tangible. I didn’t really understand what this relationship was. I was young, and here was a big rock star, and a pure devotee of Krishna, and there was I somewhere. But I could just feel this feeling of love that went back and forth between Prabhupada and George.”

About two hours later, a pudgy twelve-year-old boy with glasses—the son of our friend and supporter Pranjivan G. Valia of the “Hare Krishna” house in the Juhu Vile Parle development—came to my small office at the back of the property. “I heard George Harrison is here,” he said.

“Yes,” I replied, “he is.”

<https://bit.ly/2Bpz0DI>



George Harrison (2/25/1943 - 11/29/2001) Chanting Japa

“I want to see him,” he stated.

“Well, you can’t. He’s meeting with Srila Prabhupada.”

He looked me straight in the eye, sizing me up, and, concluding that he wasn’t going to get anywhere with me, turned, dashed to the stairs, and bolted down the steps.

Oh my God, I thought. He’s going to try to find him. So I bounded down the stairs in hot pursuit.

I ran across to the next building, and when I reached the second landing, in front of Prabhupada’s flat, I found the door ajar. The boy stood just inside, and beyond him George sat cross-legged with his back erect, like a yogi—a perfect disciple listening attentively at the feet of his master.

With the boy’s abrupt appearance, Prabhupada and George ended their meeting, exchanging some final words. George was gracious and appreciative, Prabhupada affectionate and kind. I was upset that the boy had interrupted them, but they took it as a matter of course. Maybe it was time for the meeting to end; maybe they took it as Krishna’s arrangement.

Shyamasundar and I accompanied George back to the temple shed for darshan of the Deities. He paid full dandavats, lying completely flat on the floor before Them for a long time, and then left.

The next year, on a morning walk in Sanand, Gujarat, Prabhupada recalled the meeting: “He is very nice boy—George. I have studied. Very good boy. He showed me in Bombay. He came to see me in Bombay, last year. He is keeping Jagannatha within his bead bag and chanting.”

I and many thousands—perhaps millions—of people are thankful to George for all the service he rendered to Srila Prabhupada and the Krishna consciousness movement, for making the holy name of Lord Krishna—the Hare Krishna *maha-mantra*—and the principles of Krishna consciousness so accessible to people all over the world and for attracting so many souls to the all-attractive Supreme Personality of Godhead, Krishna.

Hare Krishna.

<https://bit.ly/2J9pqZz>



George Harrison chanting with devotees

Personal

Message...



Dear Friends,

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

Have Srila Prabhupada's books been tampered with? Many think so. About three years ago, this issue was discussed in a global GBC meeting in Mayapur. The result was inconclusive.

For this reason, a meeting was held at the Potomac temple on the outskirts of Washington, D.C., the capital city of the USA, in the latter part of September of this year.

I want to clarify that although a recent change was made at my behest, I am completely neutral and unbiased on this debate.

The following is a February 2014 partial exchange between myself and a BBT editor:

Do ALL the residents of Brahmaloaka go Back to Godhead automatically or to "spiritual planets according to their desires at a time of devastation?" That is what *Bhagavad-gita As It Is* (copyright 1989, 8.16/purport) seems to indicate in the following passage.

"Those who progress in Krishna consciousness on the higher planets are gradually elevated to higher and higher planets and at the time of universal devastation are transferred to the eternal spiritual kingdom. Baladeva Vidyabhusana, in his commentary on *Bhagavad-gita*, quotes this verse:

*brahmana saba te sarve samprapte pratisancare
parasyante krtatmanah pravisanti param padam*

"When there is devastation of this material universe, Brahma and his devotees, who are constantly engaged in Krsna consciousness, are all transferred to the spiritual universe and to specific spiritual planets according to their desires."

However, this seems to oppose the concept that "From the highest planet in the material world down to the lowest, all are places of misery wherein repeated birth and death take place. But one who attains to My abode, O son of Kunti, never takes birth again." [*Bhagavad-gita As It Is* 8.16].

An encyclopaedic selection would support this, for example:

Restrictive example:

The officer helped the civilians who had been shot.

or

The officer helped those civilians who had been shot.

In this example, there is no comma before "who." Therefore, what follows is a restrictive clause (not all of the civilians had been shot).

Non-restrictive example:

The officer helped the civilians, who had been shot.

Here, there is a comma before "who." Therefore, what follows is a non-restrictive clause. It changes the sentence to mean that all the civilians had been shot. [from Wikipedia]

As a result of this exchange with the BBT editor, the confusing comma, which had caught my attention and was the result of an editing mistake, was removed and this change was accepted in the VedaBase and all subsequent printings. Thus we now read,

"When there is devastation of this material universe, Brahma and the devotees who are constantly engaged in Krsna consciousness are all transferred to the spiritual universe and to specific spiritual planets according to their desires."

Your servant,

Mukunda Goswami

Mukunda Goswami.

