



# Spiritual Perspectives

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

April 2020

## Curing Addiction

By Radha devi dasi

We all have a tendency to believe we know best and that is summed up in the saying, “you see what you want to see.” Human beings simply ignore evidence in order to hold on to their pre-existing beliefs. In fact, this tendency rests on the intersection of maya’s influence and our own free will. Choosing to ignore the existence and supremacy of the Supreme Personality of Godhead is the ultimate expression of our willful blindness.

Nowhere is this bias more apparent than in the attitudes of atheistic scientists toward spiritual solutions. A recent study by the Cochrane Collaboration, a global network of independent researchers, highlights the scientific bias against the spiritual. The Cochrane Collaboration found that the spiritually based Alcoholics Anonymous program (known as A.A.) performed better in keeping people sober than other common forms of treatment for alcoholism.

News reports on the study, including interviews with scientists, focused on A.A.’s social network aspect and the fact that it costs nothing to join. However, developing spiritual consciousness is at the heart of the A.A. program which consists of 12 “steps” that lead to continued sobriety. The program requires its followers to recognize that they are powerless over alcohol and that they need to rely on a power greater than themselves to overcome their dependency. Among other things, the steps also call for followers to identify their



*An early A.A. meeting*

shortcomings and to humbly ask God for help. The program also helps its followers to hold themselves accountable for changing their bad behavior.

The A.A. program, in fact, reflects the words of Sri Krishna in the seventh chapter of the *Bhagavad-gita*. “This divine energy of Mine,” Krishna says in verse 14, “consisting of the three modes of material nature, is difficult to overcome. But those who have surrendered unto Me can easily cross beyond it.” With the recognition of their own weakness and a heartfelt plea to the Lord for help, A.A. members are given the spiritual strength to overcome at least some material attachments. Yet the researchers involved failed to even consider whether the spiritual aspects of the program played a role in its relative success.

As Vaisnavas, we can also learn from the A.A. program. We are all addicted to the material energy and need assistance in crossing beyond it. While we know the Holy Names purify us, we also know that we can be blind to our own anarthas. A.A. offers a step by step program of learning to surrender to God’s will, to identify and surrender our bad habits, and to help others do the same. That’s surely worth investigating.



<https://bit.ly/2USfKZ1>

<https://bit.ly/2X4LypN>

# ISKCON Mayapur Introduces COVID-19 Measures, Daily Nrsimhadeva Puja for the Protection of Devotees

By Madhava Smullen, *ISKCON News*, March 20, 2020

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



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

*Mayapur pujaris will offer a special daily Nrsimhadeva puja for the protection of devotees all over the world during the COVID-19 pandemic*

With different countries around the world at different stages of COVID-19 precautions, ISKCON Mayapur has introduced its own safety measures for visitors, community devotees, and stranded foreign devotees.

ISKCON's headquarters in West Bengal, India has announced that starting from March 19, temple darshan times for visitors will be restricted to 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. and 5:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. Arrangements will be made so that the visitor line will enter the Mayapur campus, take darshan, and then immediately exit the campus. Other than the designated route, all other parts of the campus will be off limits for pilgrims.

In addition, all pilgrims and visitors will be thermal scanned as they enter the campus, and will be subject to compulsory disinfection before entering the temple. Only packed prasadam will be made available to visitors.

The temple room will be barricaded to keep a safe distance between visitors and community devotees; the temple hall walls and floor will be washed twice a day with disinfecting soap and water; and permanent soap dispensers will be installed in all hand washing areas. Mayapur guest houses will stop accepting any new bookings for guest rooms until April 15, and all existing bookings after March 21 will be cancelled.

Special measures are also in place to care for community devotees.

"Community devotees who wish to visit the temple are strongly advised to visit at the time when the temple is restricted for visitors," an official announcement on Mayapur.com reads. "However, they will not be stopped if they want to visit the temple at other times at their own discretion."

Devotees have been requested to stock enough essential food and medicine to last them for two months, and to contact Krsna Vijay Dasa if they need specific food items in bulk quantity, and Santhanu Dasa if they need medicines that are not available in the pharmacy.

All previous advisories related to immunity boosting, hand washing, social distancing and avoiding congregating remain valid. The elderly and vulnerable have been advised to take advantage of temple programs through the website <https://www.mayapur.tv/>.

Any community members returning back to Mayapur after traveling anywhere in India or overseas are asked to report to the MCS office (Mayapur Community Sevaks) immediately and keep themselves in a fourteen-day self quarantine.

Finally, management has announced that any foreign devotees who are stranded in Mayapur and are unable to travel back to their home countries due to air travel restrictions can approach the Gada Bhavan guest house reception to get rooms at a discounted nominal price. They can also get prasadam cou-

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poons from the Gada kitchen, and receive regular prasadam meals there. The Mahaprasadam and Govinda's prasadam venues will also remain open to serve devotees as long as they are not mandated by the Government to close.

Over at the Temple of the Vedic Planetarium, construction will continue apace, with many new precautions in place for worker safety and hygiene, so that the temple can still open in 2022. Meanwhile chairman Ambarisa Dasa has requested Mayapur priests to do a daily Nrsimhadeva puja for the protection of devotees around the world.

“Lord Nrsimhadeva is worshipped for three reasons – to protect the devotees, to protect the mission, and to protect the guru,” say twin Mayapur priests Jananivasa Dasa and Pankajanghri Dasa. “So we are praying every day that Lord Nrsimhadeva will protect everyone, that the virus may soon be gone, and that service can go back to normal.”

TOVP Fundraising Director Braja-Vilasa Dasa advises devotees to follow all government precautions, take care of their health, and use the extra time in social isolation to dive deeper.

“Please stay healthy, wash your hands very frequently and regularly, chant extra rounds, and pray to the Supreme Personality of Godhead,” he says.

In this connection, he cites ISKCON's *Founder-Acharya*. “Sri Prabhupada said, ‘Health is number one. Chanting is number two. Service is number three. Then comes reading,’ Braja-Vilasa quotes. “Health is number one primarily because when it is cared for, we can use our body, mind and words in the service of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Sri Krishna, without any problems.”



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

*Construction will continue on the TOVP with many new precautions*

## ISKCON Communications Course - Now Online!

By Nityananda-kari Dasi, *ISKCON News*, March 20, 2020

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

ISKCON Communications Minister Anuttama Dasa, in collaboration with Bhaktivedanta College, translated the ‘ISKCON Communications’ training he gives world-wide in the classroom into the online environment, and the course is as dynamic, powerful and thought-provoking as it is when taught in person. The course is designed for members of ISKCON in order to help them communicate more effectively in their everyday services and especially for those involved in ISKCON Communications ministries.

Start date: April 6, 2020 Duration: 4 weeks

To function effectively in the world, and especially as members of ISKCON, devotees need to learn to communicate well. They have a sacred mission to fulfill, one that needs them to be able to interact with all kinds of people in a way that helps them — and the world — awaken their spiritual understanding, their relationship with God, Lord Krishna, and to live more happy, peaceful lives.

Some of the topics covered are:

- principles of effective communication
- understanding ISKCON audiences
- learning how to successfully listen and listening pitfalls
- preparing yourself for public speaking and giving a good speech
- presentation skills
- giving feedback
- writing a good press release
- giving effective interviews
- interfaith relations
- relationship with the government, scholars, and media

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More info:

<https://bhaktivedantacollege.com/events/iskcon-communication-course/>

# Former President of Bhaktivedanta Manor Srutidharma Dasa Passes Away

By Madhava Smullen, *ISKCON News*, March 13, 2020  
<https://bit.ly/39BUnjt>



*His Grace Srutidharma Dasa*

His Grace Srutidharma Dasa, former temple president of Bhaktivedanta Manor, UK, passed away on Tuesday, March 10, at the temple where he dedicated his life in devotional service. Although he took on the post of temple president at Bhaktivedanta Manor in 2009, Srutidharma Prabhu served at the Manor for over forty years, starting back in 1978.

Diagnosed with cancer in early 2018, Srutidharma's condition meant he had to withdraw from active service. He spent his remaining days absorbed in Krishna consciousness. During this time he continued to inspire both guests and personal carers with his expressed love and deep gratitude. Without complaint he accepted his condition as the Lord's mercy upon him, through which he might progress his inner life more deeply.

In his final hours he was serene and without discomfort. His passing was auspicious as was his life, surrounded by devotees, chanting the Lord's holy names, in the holy place of Bhaktivedanta Manor Hare Krishna Temple.

Several events took place on March 12 to honor His Grace Srutidharma Dasa. The first, from 11:30 a.m. to 1:45 p.m. at the Sri Krishna Haveli at Bhaktivedanta Manor, was Antima-sraddhanjali, or kirtan, offering flowers and final respects. The second, from 3 to 4 p.m. at Saint Marylebone Crematorium in London, was the *Antyeṣṭi-kriyā*, or Ceremony of Cremation.

Finally, devotees absorbed themselves in kirtan, or congregational chanting, for Srutidharma Dasa from 7 to 9 p.m. at the Sri Krishna Haveli. Further evenings of kirtan in his honor will take place at the Haveli at the same time on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday, and from 4 to 9 p.m. on Sunday.

At this time, Srutidharma Prabhu's own writings, from his article "My Thoughts on Cancer," are particularly poignant:

"The *Bhagavad-gita* explains that we are spiritual beings on a material journey," he wrote. "This life is simply a chapter, and according to the spiritual consciousness we develop now, the rest of the story unfolds. Our current situation is a result of past activities, and the responses we generate now will determine our future. Having the bigger picture helps to put everything in perspective."

"I have mixed feelings," he added. "On one side there is a natural care, concern and affection for my spiritual friends and family who I have spent so much time with. We have served each other and been through so much. We have plans to do so much more, and the thought of separation is painful. On another side, there is anticipation, urgency, opportunity and excitement to deepen my own spirituality and use this test to come face to face with God."

Srutidharma's whole life, in fact, prepared him for this final test. Read more about his life and service below, in this piece by Kripamoya Dasa:

## "This Life is for Serving Others"

Srutidharma Dasa, the beloved son of Raojibhai and Dhanlaxmi Patel, and younger brother to Mukesh, was born in Jinja, Uganda in 1958. As a twelve-year-old boy he made the journey to London with his family and grew up in Wembley.

Around the same time, the early devotees of Krishna came from America and eventually started a temple at 7, Bury Place near the British Museum. It was there, at age 19, that the young Shailesh Patel met Srila Prabhupada and became very impressed with his words and mission.

After graduating in biochemistry, Srutidharma was engaged in heart research. Some months later, he took part in the Mahabharata Youth Club, an initiative for the young people of Harrow, Wembley and Southall started by Akhandadhi Dasa of Bhaktivedanta Manor. Along with two friends he became an enthusiastic member of the youth club, taking part in energetic kirtans and plays. After Akhandadhi Dasa persuaded them to join

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the temple in 1980, the three friends became the first of many young devotees to become sadhus from the local community, much to the surprise of their families. The two friends eventually became Pranabandhu Dasa and His Holiness Atmanivedana Swami.

Srutidharma quickly became an indispensable member of the outreach team and visited thousands of families in London over the next decade. He was known for his ability to present Krishna in an attractive manner and always had the right story or scripture verse for any occasion. He sang, acted in dramas, gave speeches to crowds great and small, conducted *samskaras*, and raised funds. No task was too big and no service too menial for him, and he turned his hand to a remarkable variety of initiatives and projects with enthusiasm and determination. In doing all this, he was always a charming gentleman to those he met, and a genuine sadhu. His skills and affectionate dealings with others impressed a generation of worshippers at the Manor, and when Srutidharma asked them to help Srila Prabhupada's mission they would often accept the invitation, becoming donors, life members, *sevaks*, and patrons.

When Bhaktivedanta Manor was beset on all sides with challenges to its very existence, Srutidharma proved indispensable to the campaign to keep the temple open. Whether through a sponsored walk in 1989, fund-raising dinners, meeting members of Parliament and Hindu leaders, Srutidharma coordinated the campaign through various community networks. He spent months at the end of 1993 and early 1994 touring the country to request all Hindu groups to unite to demonstrate their concern and to fight the proposed temple closure. Eventually, his energetic campaigning and urgent request that each town send a coach or two to London brought 36,000 people onto the streets before the Houses of Parliament.

After the grand victory in 1996, Srutidharma and Pranabandhu jointly formed the Bhaktivedanta Manor Foundation (BMF). Two years later, in the Spring of 1998, Srutidharma was married to Sri Radhika Dasi. They shortly became the proud parents of a son, Nitai.

As a priest, chaplain to the Mayor of Harrow, interfaith leader and religious minister, Srutidharma was also involved in publishing. He became the head of publications and conceived, designed and edited a series of publications for the Manor, including paperback books, magazines, guides, leaflets, calendars, websites, and the famous Janmashtami Souvenir Book.

Srutidharma Dasa formally became the president of Bhaktivedanta Manor on the 18<sup>th</sup> of July 2010. Over the last ten years, and until only months before his passing, he continually expanded his range of relationships to include chaplaincy, visits to schools and businesses, sankirtan street processions, visiting members of Parliament, conducting corporate events, informal house gatherings and larger spiritual retreats. He was interviewed by newspapers, radio and television. He offered kind hospitality to visiting leaders of all religious groups and encouraged the congregation and volunteers in their spiritual lives. He met many dignitaries including chief rabbis, archbishops, two Prime Ministers, members of the royal family and Her Majesty the Queen.

Srutidharma Dasa gave his life selflessly and wholeheartedly in the service of Srila Prabhupada and Radha Gokulananda. For forty years he was a major pillar of the activities and achievements of Bhaktivedanta Manor, a genuinely warm and affectionate brother and spiritual teacher to thousands, and a sadhu who united all in service to Krishna, the Lord of his life.

\* \* \*

Watch a poetic video about Shrutidharma Dasa by FilmWorks Studios.

<https://vimeo.com/263836069/68298daed3>

Watch Gauri Dasa's speech at Shrutidharma Prabhu's funeral:

<https://vimeo.com/393458521/be011fca29>

## Fear, Coronavirus, and Detachment

By Chandrashekhara acharya dasa, [www.dandavats.com](http://www.dandavats.com), March 18, 2020

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

When I read the news this morning, I got scared. People all over the world are starting to brace themselves in fear of the coronavirus epidemic. "What if coronavirus spreads really far and wide? What if devotees get coronavirus? What if I get coronavirus? What if I die?" I started to think.

Vaisnava or not, we all fear death. Therefore all of us are concerned, to a greater or lesser degree, about whether or not we will become infected by the coronavirus. In spite of our trying

our best to avoid the contamination, we may end up catching the virus. How do we see this precarious situation from the eyes of Scripture?

According to the *Gita*, we all are souls encaged in material bodies, and these bodies are themselves testimony of our being "contaminated" by the three modes of material nature. In his purport to *Srimad Bhagavatam* 4.11.25, Prabhupada states, "That we have a material body proves that we are infected by the three

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



*Chandrashekhara Acharya Dasa (Cyril Wohrer, Mst., Oxford)*

material modes of nature.” In one way, all of us are already contaminated, since the state of being “contaminated,” or “infected,” is a state of being that all souls in the material world share.

Furthermore, Krishna declares this world as *aśāsvatam*, temporary (*Bhagavad-gita* 8.15) – a place of misery “wherein repeated birth and death takes place” (*Bhagavad-gita* 8.16). Seen from this angle, death is not surprising down here. We all have to die, one way or another. Therefore there is no need for a conditioned soul to be surprised by the possibility of dying, including dying from coronavirus. All of us will die, one way or another.

Krishna also says, “You have a right to perform your prescribed duty.” In the same verse, Krishna adds, “But you are not entitled to the fruit of action.”

As a practicing *Bhakti yogi* or *Bhakti yogini*, it is your duty to take care of your material body as intelligently as possible. It is your duty to take all necessary precautions to avoid catching the coronavirus (or any virus, for that matter). But you should also be detached; you should think “If I catch the coronavirus, so be it.” Krishna says, “I am all-devouring death” (*Bhagavad-gita* 10.34). In this respect, Srila Prabhupada once

recalled the time when, during World War II, bombs were falling on Kolkata. Prabhupada said, “I was in the bomb shelter, and the bombs were falling; and I was thinking as I was chanting Hare Krishna that if I had to die now, it would be wonderful to die while chanting Hare Krishna.” (*Srila Prabhupada Lila*, “Return to America, 1967”).

Prabhupada was teaching by his own example that if one is Krishna conscious (or even trying to be Krishna conscious), then one should see death as a form of God and should be confident of God’s care, remembering His promise in *Bhagavad-gita* (8.10) that if one, at the time of death, engages himself or herself “in remembering the Supreme Lord in full devotion,” then he or she “will certainly attain to the Supreme Personality of Godhead.”

If we therefore continue living our life in the spirit of dependence on the Lord, all the while being detached from the result of our efforts to avoid diseases of all kinds, we will live a relatively peaceful life, and – if the words of the *Gita* are true, chances are that Krishna will take us back into His kingdom after our death – a place free of viruses and full of love of God.

## SPIRITUAL PERSPECTIVES

**EDITOR-IN-CHIEF**  
Mukunda Goswami

**PRODUCTION MANAGER**  
Hari-kirtan das

**EDITORS**  
Mukunda Goswami  
Radha devi dasi

**PROOFREADING & EDITING**  
Haridasa das  
Padma malini devi dasi

**GENERAL CONSULTANT**  
Devaprastha das

**DESIGN AND LAYOUT**  
Raj Dutia

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**Please Send Your Feedback To:**  
[feedback@mukundagoswami.org](mailto:feedback@mukundagoswami.org)

# Personal Message



Dear Friends,

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

Preaching is a thankless task. But if only one person takes a book and says he or she will read it, and gives other friendly feedback, that makes the book distributor's day. Even after 1,000 refusals the one person who takes a book makes the entire day a glowing success.

Nonetheless, we are constantly reminded that preaching is very difficult. Preaching is something like raising a child, where a mother has to be, among other things, a teacher, a cook and a doctor without ever getting thanked. However, some basic math presents another side to this thankless task picture.

Since we are only into the 5,000th year of *Kali-yuga's* 432,000 years we are just at the start. To be exact, we are presently 1.16% of the way through *Kali-yuga*. According to our philosophy, the ages deteriorate gradually, such that at the end of the age of quarrel, 100% of the people will be inimical, impious and atheistic. This means that at the present moment, approximately 75% of the general public are pious, or at least religious, theistic, or believers in God in some way, shape or form.

Rounding figures downward it works out that two out of ten people in this age believe in God. This means that approximately one out of five people are theists, maybe in the "closet" theists, but still believers. These one out of five may be sinful, because of bad association, but they have potential. THIS "view" provides a brighter perspective than the soldiers-fighting-maya mentality.

Whether the golden age has already begun or will begin at some unknown future time, only Krishna knows. But regardless of what we think, we can consult the numbers and thereby go forth without being constantly in lamentation over the doom and gloom scenario.

This is not to say that we should always appear thrilled, thus lulling ourselves into a false sense of security. Yet mathematical reality can remove the feeling of constant dread that accompanies some outreach projects, especially book distribution. And even though repeated birth and death naturally occur within this brief life span, and even though unsuccessful material outcomes often outweigh our Pollyanna-like optimism, there is another side to the story. Therefore, there is something to be said for always feeling content.

Your servant,

Mukunda Goswami

