



# Spiritual Perspectives

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

May 2020

## Krishna/Corona

By Radha Devi Dasi

In a campaign speech, Former American president, John F. Kennedy, famously observed that the Chinese word for crisis is said to come from the words “danger” and “opportunity.” It is undeniable that the virus known as COVID-19 has spurred a world-wide crisis. We are all facing increased risk of illness and death along with significant financial losses. We also face continued uncertainty about our livelihoods and lifestyles. No one can anticipate what the world will look like when the corona crisis wanes or even when that point might come about.

As devotees, we are enjoined to see Krishna’s mercy in everything. Srila Prabhupada taught us that when we take up devotional service, we still experience karmic reactions. However, Krishna is personally arranging our karma to help us make spiritual advancement. Thus, a devotee sees challenges as gifts from Krishna and looks for the opportunity in every crisis.

What gifts is Krishna giving us through this pandemic? First and foremost, the corona crisis provides the perfect opening for reaching millions of people with Krishna conscious philosophy. The arbitrary nature of the virus highlights the fact that suffering in the material world can seem inexplicable. Bad things happen to good people. The average person is getting a clear look at the law of karma. And the concept of karma is on the average person’s radar right now. For example, CNN anchor Chris Cuomo, who does not practice any eastern religion but is quarantined at home with COVID-19, tweeted that only good luck and karma can keep an infected person from suffering.

The general public is also seeing first-hand how meat-eating causes suffering to people, as well as to the animals they consume. The world’s recent epidemics and pandemics have all stemmed from animal to human contagions. No one can deny the link between eating animals and disease, and China is even now considering a ban on eating certain types of wildlife.

This crisis also gives us a chance to see the environmental costs of our consumer society. Pollution levels around the globe have fallen. Major cities are seeing clear skies for the first time in decades. Contaminated waterways, such as the Yamuna river in Delhi, are running clear from the simple result of factories shutting down for just a few weeks.



*Shoppers keep their distance as they wait to access a supermarket in Barcelona, Spain. Photograph: David Ramos/Getty Images*

In communications there is a saying, “don’t tell, show.” While we’ve been telling the world about the pitfalls of the material lifestyle, Krishna is clearly and directly showing all of us how we can make our lives better by pulling back from the overconsumption we have come to regard as normal.

The opportunities that come with a crisis, however, still require action on our part. Now we can share our philosophy with a world predisposed to listen. While temples are closed, virtual services, lectures, kirtans and other events are multiplying quickly online. Even something as simple as posting a link on a social media page can contribute to this preaching effort.

We can all do at least one thing a day to help others connect with Krishna. In fact, as people spend more time social distancing, everyone seems to hunger for connection. It isn’t information alone that brings people to Krishna consciousness. We have to engage the heart in order to help others see the value in God consciousness.

We also have to remember to avoid the blame game. For instance, it is tempting to admonish those who consume animals while the resulting pandemic rages across the world. However, we have to keep in mind that positive reinforcement is essential to motivate people to change behavior. Now, more than ever, is the time to reach out in a very personal and loving way.

# Food For All UK Distributing 4,100 Meals Daily, Expects to Increase to 20,000

By Madhava Smullen, *ISKCON News*, April 13, 2020

<https://bit.ly/2x6W6A7>



<https://bit.ly/2x6W6A7>

*Parasurama cooks prasadam in his famous 'biggest pot in the Western World'*

With the UK now about to go into its fourth week of lockdown, people who would be struggling from one week to the next during normal times are now running out of money. Many are also sick or completely isolated in their homes without any family members. In this environment, more and more community groups are calling for free meals to help those in need.

Enter devotee-run charity Food For All, which has now increased its daily distribution from 2,200 *prasadam* meals to

4,100 a day. Six hundred of these go out from the Gokula Café in Watford to nearby towns and cities. The rest is distributed by Food For All's main kitchen in Holborn, London – nicknamed Krishna's Castle – which has turned its entire car park into a giant factory for mass producing containers of *prasadam*.

"We have the capacity to make 20,000 meals," says Director Parasurama Das. "And we expect to gradually reach that number. Every day, community groups and councils are phoning me up, giving me lists of hungry people."

The massive operation at Krishna's Castle starts at 4:30 a.m. every morning when kitchen manager Sofia turns on the gas hobs, and Parasurama goes out to pick up fresh food from various markets.

"We have stocked up on fifteen tons of dahl and tons of rice," Parasurama says. "And every day, food companies and closed-down restaurants are donating vegetables and huge pallets of ingredients like tofu and canned tomatoes."

About forty volunteers arrive at 6:00 in the morning, including devotees, young activists, and out-of-work chefs, to make the meals of rice, subji and pakoras. The volunteers have already "peeled and chopped 200 kilos of potatoes and 100 kilos of carrots the

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<https://bit.ly/2x6W6A7>

*Staff at Gokula Cafe in Watford make prasadam and deliver it to nearby towns and cities*

night before and they get added in first,” Sofia said in an interview with the *Evening Standard*. They cook in several large pots including one Parasurama bought in a factory in Agra next to the Taj Mahal, which he calls “the biggest in the western world.” “You can put five of us in it and sail down the Thames,” he told the *Evening Standard*.

Once it’s cooked, Parasurama spices the food and offers it to Krishna.

By 9 a.m. it is ready to serve out, and the piping hot *prasadam* is divided into thousands of Tupperware-size portions and shipped out in six vans.

Food For All is part of a citywide humanitarian effort to help vulnerable Londoners that includes many other charities. These all transport their free food to the more than 40 food distribution hubs that have been established in 31 London boroughs. The hubs include the now empty Tottenham Hotspur football Stadium in Haringey, entertainment venue Alexandra Palace, and the Sobell Leisure Centre in Islington.

Other charities like Age UK, who deliver to elderly people, as well as representatives from various communities, then come to pick up the *prasadam* and other food like bread, fruits, dry goods, and canned items, and deliver it to people in need.

“Our own volunteers also deliver meals,” says Parasurama. “We have a small team of young guys on bicycles with trailers, and they’re distributing individual containers to houses where sick people are.”



*Food For All volunteers load groceries into one of their vans — fresh produce is also sent out to distribution hubs along with the prasadam*

In addition, Food For All is also delivering little hampers called “Bhakti Boxes” to sick or elderly devotees, which include rice, subji and pakoras, as well as other gifts like fruit, ginger, and lemons.

The charity doesn’t intend to stop at its Holborn kitchen’s full capacity of 20,000 meals a day, either. They are currently waiting for the local council to give the go-ahead on a mobile kitchen in Watford which will be able to produce a further 5,000 meals.

They are also in negotiations with the London Government and Council Chief Executives for a massive expansion to 100,000 meals a day if demand increases enough, which would see Food For All temporarily move its kitchen into the Tottenham Hotspur Stadium or Alexandra Palace.

The special thing about all of this, according to Parasurama, is that no one working with Food For All is getting paid a single penny – they are only doing it out of a sincere desire to serve.

“Even the non-devotee volunteers call our kitchen ‘Krishna’s Castle,’ and they’re always asking me, ‘Have you offered the food yet?’ he says. “They really like that idea. And they’re not asking for anything, they just love doing it. So this is real *bhakti*.”

*Parasurama Das makes a prasadam delivery to one of London’s new food distribution hubs - Tottenham Hotspur Football Stadium*



<https://bit.ly/2x6W6A7>

# Vaisesika Das on Staying Safe and Sane During A Pandemic

By: Madhava Smullen, *ISKCON News*, April 8, 2020

<https://bit.ly/351fB9K>

With most ISKCON temples around the world now closed except to residents due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and most devotees staying at home under “shelter-in-place” orders, day-to-day life can be a challenge.

In these times, it can be good to hear from a well-wisher who is grounded in both real-world smarts and spiritual understanding. We spoke to Vaisesika Das, Prabhupada disciple, temple president at ISKCON Silicon Valley in California and longtime inspirational leader, and asked him to provide some practical advice and uplifting words on how to stay safe and sane during a pandemic.

## Take COVID-19 Seriously and Follow Precautions

“I don’t think that as a whole, from what I’ve heard, we ISKCON leaders are taking this seriously enough,” Vaisesika says. “I think we should set a good example by simply following what the scientists are telling us about the Coronavirus, and what we should do about it. We shouldn’t speculate, put forward conspiracy theories, do things halfway or say it’s not a big deal.”

“I think that’s dangerous not only because it could help to spread the virus in our communities and all over the world,” he adds. “But also because it’s a bad image for us, showing that we didn’t really care, or that we didn’t put the most into it that we could have.”

## Use Five Tips For Working and Living at Home

Vaisesika’s five tips for working and living at home with the whole family during the pandemic are:

- 1) Get yourself a “Do Not Disturb” sign. “If you need time to yourself now and then, you should have it.”
- 2) Start your day right with a strong morning routine. Vaisesika advocates writing down an affirmation or goals for the day, chanting a set number of rounds, and reading a set number of pages from Prabhupada’s books. “Don’t hang out in your pajamas all day,” he says. “Be regulated.”
- 3) Set ground rules for the people in your space. “Have a discussion, and make time for everyone to talk about the things they need in order to remain steady and sane.”
- 4) If you’re working at home, schedule breaks. “Interestingly, although we’re all at home, I find that people are working twice as hard as they were before the pandemic,” says Vaisesika. “Often they used to get relief while commuting. But now that everyone’s home, they’re practically barraged 24 hours a day – ‘Hey, you’re home, you might as well get on the phone with



Vaisesika Das leads a live “Spiritual Fitness” seminar on March 27<sup>th</sup> for corporate clients

me.’ So schedule your own breaks during the day, and follow them completely.”

5) Dedicate some space in your house for the place where you work, and the place where you do your spiritual practice. “Then set it up so it’s clearly demarcated, and everything doesn’t all merge together.”

## Stay in the Moment

“It really helps to see each day as a self-contained unit,” says Vaisesika. “Stay in the moment, and stay in the day.”

He adds: “For instance, this morning I woke up and I read my 41 pages of *Bhagavatam*. There were a lot of other things I could have done, urgent emails I could have read. But instead I said, “I’m counting my pages, and I’m not gonna budge from that. And as soon as I started reading, I started to feel relief.”

## Find Your Community

While we have to physically isolate, it’s important not to be emotionally isolated, and to find association with other devotees.

“Try to connect with the outside world through the Internet,” Vaisesika says. “I have noticed that more than ever before, devotees everywhere are broadcasting out, because they have a need to connect with others. So find your community online, participate and feel part of it.”

## Channel Your Anxiety into Practical Steps

It can be hard not to get swept up in the environment of fear created by the COVID-19 pandemic. But, Vaisesika says, “There’s anxiety, and then there’s panic. Panic means you’ve reached the level of irrationality. You start doing stuff you don’t have to do, wasting money, time and energy, and getting yourself into more trouble than you were in before.”

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Anxiety, however, can be channeled into practical steps. “Make a list of the things you absolutely know you have to do, and then take care of them,” Vaisesika advises. “For instance, if you need to take care of your finances, get online and shore ‘em up. Do whatever you have to do. Don’t be constantly worrying about it. Just do the practical things and leave the rest to Krishna, knowing that you did your part, and now the world’s going to move in its own way.”

### Don’t Chase the News

To reduce anxiety and increase peace of mind, “Wait for the news, don’t attack it,” Vaisesika says. “Don’t check in every ten minutes – it’s not that vital for you. You know what you have to do -- stay home, wash your hands, and don’t touch your face! That’s within your zone that you can do something about. Don’t stay constantly on the 24-hour news cycle, because it’s moving too fast for our brains to process.”

He clarifies: “Of course, it’s not that we should avoid news altogether, especially during this time when vital information may be important. Rather, one can aid one’s peace of mind by lengthening the intervals between one’s consumption of such news. There is no need to constantly chase it.”

### Ask the Right Questions

“In my corporate seminars, I teach that there are two questions you can ask in difficult situations,” Vaisesika says. “One is ‘Why me?’ That question leads you down into the darkest regions of anxiety, and it keeps you there. So that’s the wrong question to ask.”

“The right question is, ‘What is the lesson in this?’ And if you keep asking that question, ‘What is the lesson, what is the lesson, what is the lesson?’ no matter how things are changing in your life, it will give you a higher perspective immediately.”

“This is how a devotee sees things, according to Lord Brahma in the famous *Srimad-Bhagavatam* verse 10.14.8, *tat*

*te ’nukampām su-samīkṣamāṇo*. That whatever’s happening to me, even if it appears to be inconvenient, there’s a lesson in it for me, and it’s coming from a benevolent Source who’s trying to teach me something.”

### Step Back and Look at The Situation From A Higher Level of Vision

While COVID-19 and the struggles and tragedies it yields are very real, sometimes it can help to look at things from a more cosmic, philosophical level of vision.

“The whole material nature is always being destroyed, and it’s always changing,” says Vaisesika. “So rather than getting attached and trying to hold on, just observe that it’s changing, and think, ‘Isn’t this interesting?’”

“Within the lifetime of any living entity, there’s going to be some changes. And our lifetime, according to Brahma, is over in a couple minutes. So it’s not that significant.”

What’s more, Vaisesika says, “Nobody – even in the Coronavirus pandemic – is really, truly dying. Because we don’t die – we actually just change bodies. According to Vedic *sastra*, everything’s happening according to an exact plan. Karma is perfect, and Krishna, who designed it, is perfectly benevolent.”

“So whatever’s happening, is happening for a reason. In one sense, nobody’s actually dying – we’re only moving from one circumstance to another. So from a much higher perspective, we can see that this is just the churning of the material nature. And we need not become overly upset about it.”

### This Too Shall Pass

From yet another perspective, Vaisesika says, “This too shall pass.”

“Everything blows through,” he concludes. “And looking back on it, everyone’s going to see that this was a very pivotal time in history, when, at least for the people who took advantage of it, we were able to get a new lease on life.”

## As We Remain Indoors Nature Heals And Wildlife Takes To The Streets

By Natalie Porter, *TheOpenMind*, April 15, 2020

<https://www.the-open-mind.com/as-we-remain-indoors-nature-heals-and-wildlife-takes-to-the-streets/>



Although the virus is devastating to humans, there is an upside to the lockdown — significant air quality improvements across the globe.

During these challenging days, some wonder sightings are happening around the world. The spread of pollution and carbon dioxide falls rapidly globally.

Improvements to our environment were visible from the first day of

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lockdown globally based on data analysis and comparisons of data before the enforcement of restrictions.

In 2020, India, with a population of about 1,380,004,384, carbon dioxide rate has fallen drastically due to lockdown. According to the World Health Organization, India was in the top 21–30 worst polluted cities in the world, which makes India's air pollution about five times higher than the "global safe limit" recommended.

Some residents have said that for the first time in 30 years, the Himalayas are visually more transparent.

Harbhajan Singh, a former Indian cricketer, said: "The view was unimaginable."

"This sight is unprecedented," according to local conservationist Sant Balbir Sing Seechewal.

As people remain indoors, animals take to the streets.

The presence of humans would typically keep such wildlife animals from roaming. Some animals are naturally curious and

start wandering while others are going hungry as they relied on tourists to feed them treats.

There is a negative side to life on the streets for some animals. Some of the animals rely on people, mostly tourists, to feed them. Now they are searching around the cities for food. It is possible that they can get hit by a car, or they could swallow some plastic garbage.

**Spain:** Peacocks stroll the streets in Ronda.

**Great Britain:** Wild goats eat manicured hedges in Wales.

**Singapore:** Otters found swimming in the city fountains.

**Chile:** Pumas sighted roaming in Santiago.

**South Carolina:** An Alligator seen by a resident heading towards the mall.

**Thailand:** Monkeys take over the sidewalk in Lopburi.

**Japan:** Silka deer wandered through the city streets in Nara.

## Air Pollution Has Dropped By As Much As 60% In Major Cities Across The World Due To Lockdown

By Elias Marat, *TheMindUnleashed.com*, April 23, 2020

<https://themindunleashed.com/2020/04/major-cities-air-pollution-dropped-lockdown.html>



As the globe continues to grapple with the inexorable spread of the coronavirus pandemic, air pollution has plunged to unprecedented new lows worldwide and especially in some of the most contaminated cities, new research has found.

On Earth Day, Swiss-based air quality technology company IQAir published a COVID-19 Air Quality Report that shows how air pollution levels in 10 major cities around the globe have fallen to as much as 60 percent due to government-

mandated shutdowns of non-essential businesses and physical distancing measures meant to curb the novel coronavirus.

The study examined cities' measurements before and after the COVID-19 outbreak of the harmful fine particulate matter known as PM 2.5. The particulate matter, which lodges deep into the lungs and passes into vital organs and the bloodstream, causes a number of serious risks to people's health.

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The report looked at London, Los Angeles, New Delhi, New York City, Madrid, Mumbai, Rome, São Paulo, Seoul, and Wuhan.

The research revealed a “drastic drop” in air pollution in almost every city facing lockdown compared to a year earlier, with the exception of Rome.

New Delhi experienced a 60 percent fall of PM2.5 from 2019 levels. The metropolis also experienced a sharp drop in hours during which the Indian capital experienced air pollution ratings of “unhealthy,” with the percentage of hours falling from 68 percent in 2019 to 17 percent during the 2020 lockdown. In Mumbai, air pollution dropped by 34 percent.

Seoul, South Korea, saw a 54 percent decrease from last year while soot levels in Wuhan, China, dropped by 44 percent.

Meanwhile, in São Paulo, Brazil, air pollution has dropped by 32 percent.

In sunny Los Angeles, California, which has long been associated with its clogged freeways and dense smog, Angelenos celebrated Earth Day with some of the best air quality the city has ever seen, according to IQAir. With far fewer cars on the road due to the city’s Safer-at-Home order and much-welcomed spring showers, the City of Angels’ fine particle pollution has dropped by 31 percent compared to last year and 51 percent compared to the previous four-year average.

IQAir North America CEO Glory Dolphin Hammes said:

“We saw that L.A. had some of the cleanest air quality in the world.

“About a year ago, Los Angeles was ranked the worst air quality in the entire country- and now we’re seeing some of the best air quality in the world.”

Meanwhile, New York City saw its air pollution drop by 25 percent as a result of its lockdown.

London and Madrid saw far more modest air pollution reductions at 9 percent and 11 percent, respectively.

Frank Hammes, CEO of IQAir Group said in a statement:

“Across the globe, the coronavirus pandemic has had a monumental impact on the way we live.

“While the human and economic costs are devastating, we are also witnessing how much of air pollution comes from human activity. The drastic reduction in air pollution during COVID-19 lockdowns shows how our habits and behaviors directly impact the air we breathe. That’s an important insight [after] this unique Earth Day.”

While this news is more than welcome amid the horrific stream of daily news related to the novel coronavirus that attacks the respiratory system and our bodies’ major organs, the news regrettably will not last.

Air pollution is expected to kick off again with a vengeance once restrictions are loosened and industries churn back into action. Such rebounds impacting air quality and greenhouse gas emissions have been recorded during past crises including the 2008 recession.

However, the dire fears over a prolonged and deep recession with no precedent since the Great Depression of the 1930s could mean that this respite for the air could last much longer than investors and global markets desire.

## “Krishna Lunch for Healthcare Heroes” Launches in Gainesville, Florida

By: Prabhupada-priya Dasi and Guru Gauranga Das, *ISKCON News*, April 3, 2020

<https://bit.ly/2Vz6YA7>

On March 11, 2020 the University of Florida (UF) suspended on-campus classes and urged students to go home in light of public health concerns related to COVID-19. Several days later, ISKCON Gainesville (also known as “Krishna House”) suspended operation of its “Krishna Lunch” program.

Racking their brains to find a way to keep “Krishna Lunch” going in conformity with public health guidelines, Krishna House president Srutisagara Das and his management team devised a “Krishna Lunch To Go Only” program. Shortly thereafter, work began on a novel plan to deliver Krishna Lunch to local hospitals where healthcare professionals heroically treat patients infected with the COVID-19 virus.

Called “Krishna Lunch for Healthcare Heroes,” the program was formally launched on April 2, 2020 (Rama Navami). A number of congregational members promptly stepped up to offer much needed financial support to get the new program off the ground.

Originally established at UF under the direction of ISKCON Founder-Acharya His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, the Krishna Lunch program served its first free vegetarian meal in 1971 and has continued serving Krishna Lunch (also known as *prasadam*, or Krishna’s mercy) on UF class days ever since (see Everything You Should Know About Krishna Lunch at UF). That’s because Krishna Lunch is the way Krishna devotees share their love with UF and Gainesville.

Back in 1971, Swami Prabhupada gave his disciples the following instruction:

“[D]o something wonderful there in Gainesville. Wonderful means simply chant [Hare Krishna] loudly and distribute *prasadam*. That is not very difficult. It is very easy. Simply if you do it enthusiastically and sincerely, then success will be there. (Letter from Srila Prabhupada to Bhakta Bill dated June 29, 1971) This seminal instruction by Srila Prabhupada has been the “heart and soul” of Krishna House ever since.

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https://bit.ly/2Vz6YA7



*Krishna Lunch is being delivered to local hospitals where healthcare professionals heroically treat patients infected with the COVID-19 virus*

Currently, about 25 devotees in their early 20s live at Krishna House. Some are UF students, and others are full-time novice devotees (bhaktas). In addition to performing their daily spiritual practices (sadhana) and temple service (seva), these devotees have been putting in hundreds of hours each week prepping, cooking and serving “Krishna Lunch” to about 1,000 UF students each day.

On March 31<sup>st</sup>, Krishna House devotees started “Krishna Lunch for Healthcare Heroes.” The first day’s menu consisted of a potato and chickpea vegetable in tomato ma-

therapist, hospital technician, administrator or employee can directly order a free lunch for delivery. Whoever coined the saying “there’s no such thing as a free lunch” wasn’t a healthcare hero enjoying Krishna Lunch in Gainesville!

For those who would like to order or donate, please visit: <https://krishnalunch.com/supportourheroes>.

For those eager to start a “Krishna Lunch for Healthcare Heroes” program, please contact Srutisagara Das at [srutidas108@gmail.com](mailto:srutidas108@gmail.com).



https://bit.ly/2Vz6YA7

*Srutisagara Das delivers Krishna Lunch to appreciative hospital staff at the UF Shands Pediatric Emergency Room*

sala sauce, basmati rice, salad with Krishna House’s vaunted almond dressing and an apple cinnamon halwa desert. By noon of “Day 1,” the Krishna House van was loaded and on its way to make deliveries to local hospital emergency rooms and intensive care units.

Krishna House has also launched a digital platform through which any physician, nurse,

## SPIRITUAL PERSPECTIVES

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# Personal Message



Dear Friends,

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

The following passage is from the Preface of the *Srimad Bhagavatam*.

“Human society, at the present moment, is not in the darkness of oblivion. It has made rapid progress in the fields of material comforts, education and economic development throughout the entire world. But there is a *pinprick* (emphasis mine) somewhere in the social body at large, and therefore there are large-scale quarrels, even over less important issues.”

The Pandavas were informed that the Kaurava landholders wouldn't even spare them as much land as could be made by the point of a needle. And thus a bloody fratricidal war ensued, and many people were killed.

The point (pun intended) here is that something as small as a pinprick can generate large-scale quarrels. The lesson we can learn from this is that even the tiniest things can be most powerful.

The weight of the driving force (human) of an aircraft is only a minute percentage of the weight of the vehicle. Yet this tiny entity is powerful enough to overcome this planet's gravity. Similarly, paper bank notes are only a fraction of the weight of the precious metal they are supposed to represent. What is even more amazing is that wealth is often measured by entities as ethereal as electronic impulses on hard drives somewhere. Every hour of every day billions of monetary units are exchanged and transferred at a stroke of fingers on computer keyboards. Today, wealth is by numbers: real and intangible.

Unforeseen by doomsayers, conspiracy theorists and back-to-the-land advocates, all of whom have predicted imminent world war or economic and social collapse, in the Time of the Coronavirus, a microbic entity invisible to the naked eye has brought a world civilization to its knees.

The example we are familiar with is that of the soul. Although its magnitude is described in the Vedic literature as *keśāgra-sateka-bhāga punaḥ śatāṃśa kari, tāra sūkṣma jīvera 'svarūpa' vicāri* (*Caitanya-caritamrita* Madhya-līlā 19.139), it is said that it is so small that it is invisible (*Bhagavad-gīta* 2.25 purport).

All this illustrates the fragility of modern civilization. Maybe this is the “pinprick” that Srila Prabhupada wrote of more than half a century ago.

Your servant,

Mukunda Goswami

