



Spiritual Perspectives

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

June 2020

Can We Handle the Truth?

By: Radha devi dasi

Srimad Bhagavatam explains that in this age, truthfulness (the last leg of *dharma*) is under attack. It is often difficult to determine fact from fiction because of imperfect senses and propensities toward illusion, making mistakes and cheating. In fact, governmental officials, business leaders, social media gurus and others often seek to perfect the art of presentations that obscure truth rather than reveal it. We forget this at our peril.

At the same time, we have to make decisions about living in this world and responding to different events. The current pandemic is an example of how important our decisions can be. In choosing to lean in to stay-at-home orders and other restrictions, we risk serious economic consequences. In defying such orders, we risk serious illness for ourselves and loved ones. We can feel overwhelmed trying to balance these different concerns.

There is an understandable impulse in such circumstances to look for someone with the answers. It is intellectually easier to accept a conclusion rather than figure things out for ourselves, especially in circumstances where the answers are unclear. Such an approach is ideal in the realm of spiritual knowledge. If we want to connect with Krishna, we accept the authority and instructions of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu and his followers. Srila Prabhupada took great pains to give us *Bhagavad-gita As It Is* to ensure that spiritual knowledge is not contaminated.

This acceptance of higher authority is essential in spiritual life but can be disastrous when applied to the material sphere. Spiritual truths are absolute and complete because they originate with Krishna Himself. Material knowledge is never absolute or complete. No one person has all of the answers on any given topic on the material side.

All of which leads to a recent statement by the GBC Strategic Planning Team on a COVID-19 related video making the rounds of ISKCON related websites. *Plandemic*, is a “documentary” video featuring Dr. Judy Mikovits, a former research scientist and inveterate conspiracy theorist who blames the coronavirus outbreak on big pharma, Bill Gates and the World Health Organization. She also claims that the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases buried her research showing vaccines weaken people’s immune systems and made them more vulnerable to COVID-19.



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

Dr. Mikovits’ research on the effects of retrovirus was discredited in 2011 and her recent claims regarding a worldwide conspiracy to spread COVID-19 have also been debunked. Even so, her unsupported assertions have become a rallying cry for many who mistrust mainstream medicine and international organizations. Plenty of Vaishnavas have accepted the conclusions of *Plandemic* and are now advocating for temples to reopen and do away with social distancing and face masks. This flood of social media posts and messages to ISKCON leaders prompted an official response. In criticizing the video, the SPT made one of its most profound statements: “There is a need to promote critical thinking and to encourage ISKCON members to be discerning. . .”

When we receive information from materialists, we have to subject that information to careful review. The Vaishnava world view is at odds with the view of most mainstream leaders. We are used to challenging fundamental ideas such as Darwin’s theory of evolution. Thus, we may feel an affinity with other groups who challenge mainstream ideas, such as the benefit of vaccinations.

It is essential, however, to consider the source when we deal with material knowledge. The fact that a social media commentator shares our views on the flaws of contemporary society does not tell us anything about the quality of their information or conclusions. The Vedic standard for accepting authority is based

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on character. Those who are humble, non-violent, truthful, compassionate and devoted are most reliable. Few material authorities meet this standard.

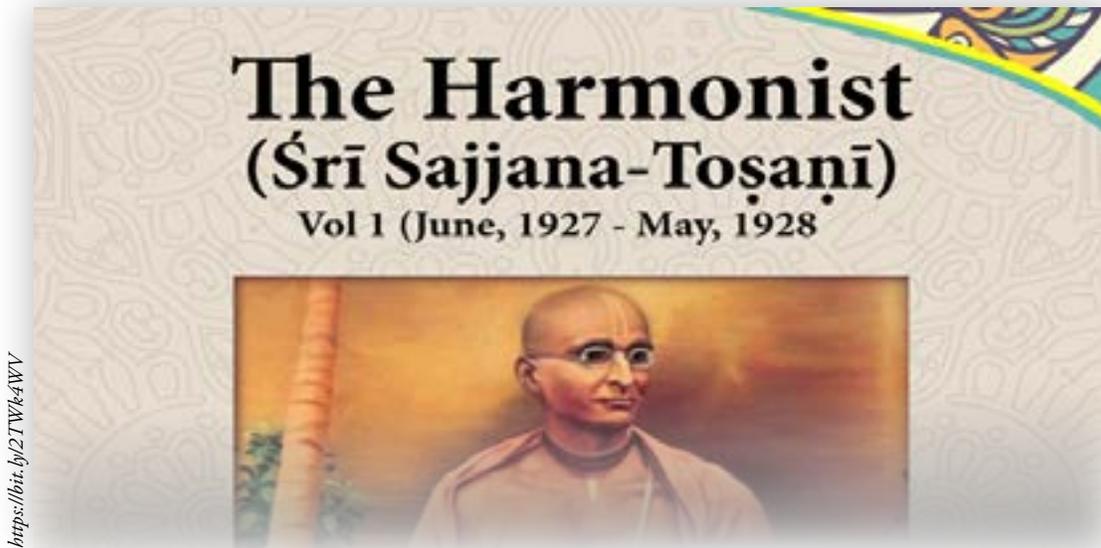
In fact, the material approach to problems often begins with finding someone to blame. While U.S. authorities are blaming China for the spread of COVID-19, local and regional leaders in China are blaming African residents for spreading the virus there. The blame game can feel empowering. Social psychologists tell us that anger gives us a feeling of control and optimism. Fear, on the other hand, leaves us feeling vulnerable. This is why we often jump on the conspiracy bandwagon. Commentators like Dr. Mikovits give us certainty and a focus for the anger we're using to keep fear at bay.

Krishna, on the other hand, tells us that anger leads to a loss of intelligence. Rather than jumping on a ready-made "answer" in precarious times, we must use the critical thinking abilities Krishna has given us. We must also acknowledge that we will never know all the facts of any material situation and tolerate the ensuing uncertainty. The one thing we should never do is blindly follow anyone who is not God conscious. Even in accepting spiritual truths, we are reminded to subject them to the three-fold test of guru, *sastra* and *sadhu*. We must be even more discerning with material knowledge, using our critical thinking abilities to understand when a conclusion is supported by the evidence and when it is not.

The Harmonist, Volume One Now Available in Ebook Format

By: Radha Sakhi Dasi, *ISKCON News*, May 15, 2020

<https://bit.ly/2TWk4WV>



After two years of sheer hard work and utmost determination, Touchstone Media is proud to unveil the first dose of the crest jewel of Vaisnavism and gamut of Vaisnava philosophy in the form of "The Harmonist", volume 1, Ebook.

The original version of "The Harmonist" appeared as "Sri Sajjana Tosani" in Bengali in the year 1879, published by the Vaisnava pioneer Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura. Upon his departure, his son Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura instituted his preaching mission, Sri Gaudiya Math, and established a printing press. In June 1927, he launched "The Harmonist" which was an English magazine with the same format as "Sri Sajjana Tosani." He continued publishing the magazine until 1936, the year he passed away.

"The Harmonist" is an unfathomable ocean of intricate and emphatic conclusions of the Vaishnava stalwarts, encompassing

deep philosophical inferences, intriguing secrets of God consciousness, insightful Vedic and Gaudiya Vaisnava traditions, rich Vaisnava heritage, significant historical events, analytical views of devotion along with politics, social and economic aspects, an in-depth scrutiny of favorable association and growth in devotion with that association.

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura quotes a verse from *Sri Chaitanya Bhagavat* and asserts:

*pr̥thivīte ache yata nagaradi grama
sarvatra pracara haibe mora nama*

"My Name will be preached everywhere, in all the villages and towns of the whole world."

"The Harmonist" seeks to carry out this desire of the Lord. For the present the magazine is appearing in English, Sanskrit

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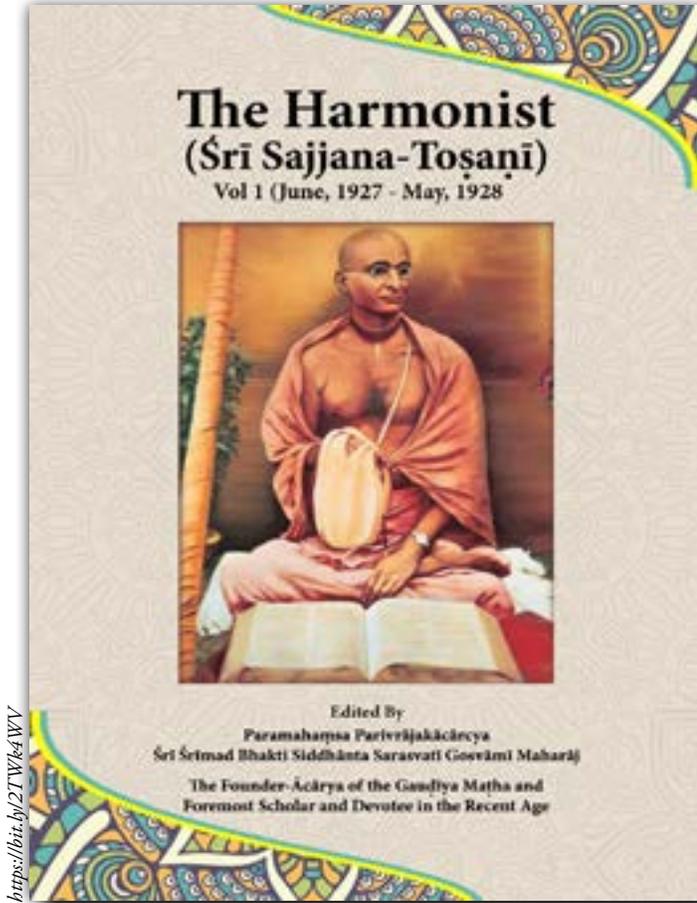
and Hindi. But it does not by any means desire to confine herself to these languages only. The Lord desires His Word to

be preached to all living beings. “The Harmonist” stands for this desire. It cherishes the faith that a day will come when His Word will be preached everywhere all over the world through the medium of all the languages including the language of animals and plants when this will be practicable. It believes that Lord Gaurasundara will in the fullness of time raise up fit preachers in every part of the world and in numbers amply sufficient for His Purpose. This is the message of “The Harmonist”. (An excerpt from “The Harmonist”)

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura’s sublime and solid teachings which were once available in eight thick volumes are being crystallized into Ebook format for the convenience and better understanding of the readers and spiritualists. The set of books were heavy and inconvenient to carry around, so the readers have been requesting the director of Touchstone Media, Isvara Das, for an Ebook version of this magnificent book for a long time. Hence, being able to take a significant step towards fulfilling that request, gave him immense joy.

Touchstone Media has applied all its resources to scrutinizingly scan, compile, convert and present the contents of the first volume of the magazine in the form of a PDF, exclusively for all ardent readers.

For “The Harmonist” Vol. 1 Ebook, you can directly click on <https://www.touchstonemedia.com/harmonist-as-it-is-volume-1-ebook-pdf/> and for any further suggestions or queries do get in touch with the Touchstone Media team at +918336916108 or write at sales@touchstonemedia.com



Harmonist Vol. 1 Sri Sajjana-Toshani

Before I Die...

By: Ananda Vrindavesvari Devi, www.dandavats.com, May 18, 2020
<https://bit.ly/3dm6fsh>

In downtown San Antonio there is a large blackboard on the side of a building that reads “Before I Die... .” Beneath the heading there are spaces for people to fill in the blank – Before I die I want to _____.

Death is surely the great milestone of our life. It hovers close by, although we do our best to forget about it because of fear and pain. And so, even though we hear of others dying daily, we somehow think we will never die. Or that it won’t happen to us for a long time. When it does come close to home, when a near or dear one moves on, we are affected by it. A relationship is suddenly cut. It’s over and we are left with grief and memories.

For most, death means the end of life completely. But those in the practice of Bhakti know it’s just the end of the body, not the end of life. Not the end of me, the soul, the consciousness. The *Gita* explains it is just like taking off one set of clothes and

putting on another. Or moving from one house to another. One place to the next. Death is a change, an end of something but always a beginning of another.

When asked what is the definition of old, one may say – someone close to death. In that sense we can’t really tell who is “old,” as anyone can die at any moment. We never know when our existence in this life will be over. It’s like a drop of water on a leaf – our position in this body, in this world, is so tenuous.

A question about impending death was the catalyst of the great philosophical treatise the *Srimad-Bhagavatam*. A good and noble king, Maharaja Pariksit, was informed he had seven days before his death. He gathered the wisest men around him and asked them – What is the best thing I can do to prepare for death?

That’s how he would have filled in the blank. Before I die I want to ... find out how I can best be ready for that moment.

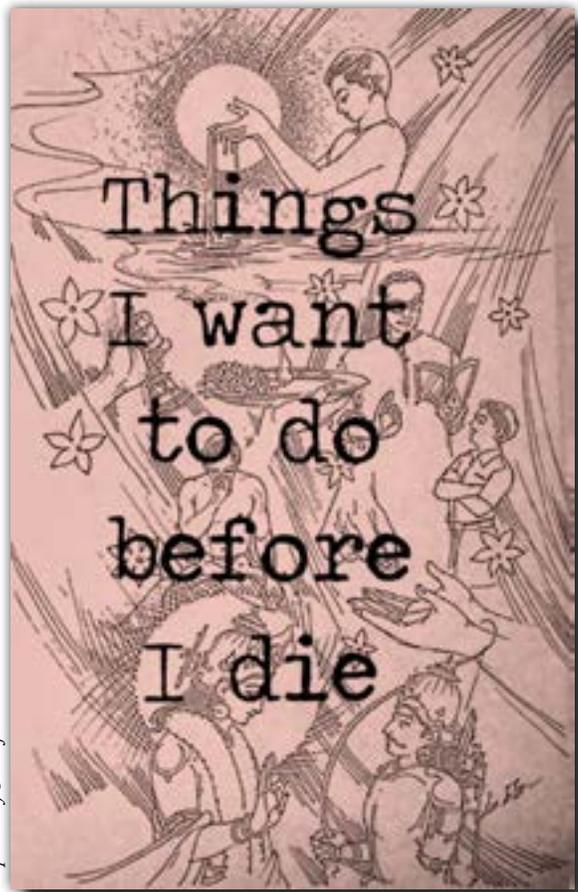
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They told him – just hear about Krishna. This is the most important relationship you have to work on at this time. No need for anything more for the body – now bring the soul forth, bring the spiritual to the front, immerse yourself in this most important relationship and there you will discover your true and original self. This is a golden opportunity.

Who sees death as an opportunity? But for one in Krishna consciousness it is. It is the moment we can step out of the cycle of birth and death (*samsara*) that has us captured since time immemorial. It is that moment between one body and another where we can grasp the hand of Krishna and be pulled out of the ocean of material energy.

The *Gita* teaches that wherever our mind is at the time of death, that will determine our next destination. Better not leave that to chance as our mind is undependable. In a split second it goes off on any emotion, both good and bad. Before we die, therefore, we need to practice what state of mind we want to be in at the time of death. That's the practice of Bhakti. If our heart is filled with affection for Krishna, then at that critical moment we will call out to Krishna, and place our heart, and therefore our mind there. Love conquers all, especially the mind. If we love Krishna, that is where we will go for shelter. And that is where we will go at the time of, and after, death.

So, what do we want before we die? Things that will help us die well. Start making your list today and fill in the blanks.



<https://bit.ly/3dm6f6h>

ISKCON Nashik, India, Organizes *Chaitanya Charitamrita* Contests

By: Sakhipran Devi Dasi, *ISKCON News*, May 21, 2020

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



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

Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu

During these trying times of the pandemic, for devotees who are not working and stuck at home, ISKCON Nashik, India, is offering a great opportunity to participate in an online *Chaitanya Charitamrta* contest (CCC-2020).

Part one of the contest consisting of *Adi-lila* has already been successful wherein nearly 400 devotees from all over the world (India, UAE, Australia, USA, Canada, Qatar, etc.) participated. The contest was conducted online on May 3, 2020, based on the verses and translations of all the seventeen chapters of *Adi-lila* and/or lecture series by Krishnadhan Das on ISKCON Nasik's official Facebook page Iskcon Nashik - Sri Sri Radha Madan Gopal Temple (official).

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The participants expressed great joy to be able to spend their quarantine time in such a wonderful way, by reading *Chaitanya Charitamrta*. It reminded them of how Lord Chaitanya Mahaprabhu appeared to illuminate the whole world on the dark night of a full lunar eclipse.

On their requests, Krishnadhan Das and Gokul Mahajan Das are planning to conduct a similar contest, which is ten-

tatively scheduled for June 21 2020. It will be focused on the *Chaitanya Charitamrta Madhya-lila*, and the contest details will be made available on ISKCON Nasik's official Facebook page.

(Those who do not have the *Chaitanya Charitamrta* book set, can purchase it online or read on the Bhaktivedanta Vedabase) ([Bhaktivedanta Vedabase](http://BhaktivedantaVedabase).)

TOVP Launches New Talk Show, Grand Opening Still Set for 2022

By: Madhava Smullen, *ISKCON News*, May 29, 2020

<https://bit.ly/2BlbxX6>

With architects working virtually during the COVID-19 pandemic, new 3D renderings of the Temple of the Vedic Planetarium in Mayapur have been released.

The images of the temple – which is still expected to see its grand opening in 2022 – show Srila Prabhupada's *Vyasasana*, the Grand Deity altar and temple room, and various walkways and halls on the main temple floor.

In the meantime, while devotees in India and around the world cannot visit Mayapur, the TOVP has launched its own talk show, "TOVP Talks" to keep everyone inspired and connected to the project.

Hosted by Director of Development and Global Campaign Director Braja Vilasa Das, the show will be subtitled "The Vision of the *Parampara*," and will be broadcast via the Zoom live video conference program. A live feed will also be connected to the Temple of the Vedic Planetarium – TOVP Facebook page.



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Top: 3D rendering of Panca Tattva Deities

Bottom: The rendering of the ToVP's main temple room

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“ Caitanya Mahaprabhu has predicted that
‘My name will be spread in every town and village’ ”

<https://bit.ly/2BlbxX6>



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SPIRITUAL PERSPECTIVES

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The bi-weekly webinar will disseminate devotional and organizational subject matters through interviews with devotee speakers highly regarded in their fields.

The first program, scheduled for June 5th at 10:00 am EST / 7:30 pm IST will feature Ambarisa Das (Alfred Ford), the TOVP chairman and great grandson of Henry Ford, speaking on the subject of Wisdom and Wealth.

Live viewers will be able to send in questions, while all programs will be archived afterwards on the TOVP website and youtube channel so that devotees worldwide can use them for their personal extended benefit.

“Caitanya Mahaprabhu has predicted that ‘My name will be spread in every town and village,’” quotes host Braja Vilasa. “And Nityananda Prabhu also predicted that ‘from this temple, the message of Lord Chaitanya Mahaprabhu will be spread all over the world.”

The talk show will go some way

<https://bit.ly/2BlbxX6>

towards doing that before the physical temple has been completed.

* * *

Devotees are encouraged to register for the webinar soon, as there is limited live capacity.

Register in advance here:

https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_H5520W6xQyux7SPXsNanSQ

Watch archived shows here: YouTube Channel: <https://www.youtube.com/user/TOVPinfo>

Visit <https://tovp.org/> for more info.



Personal Message



Dear Friends,

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

March 1977: The Vietnam war had ended only two years ago, and the Beatles as a band were seven years gone. Organized opposition to the Hare Krishna Movement had begun in the mid-seventies, and was gaining momentum in the USA as kidnappings, court cases and assemblies of hundreds of people sought to destroy “new religious movements.”

Organized opposition to ISKCON was made painfully clear to Srila Prabhupada. On March 17, 1977 a decisive turning point occurred. Srila Prabhupada was informed about it during his last visit to Mayapur. The following are excerpts from a conversation that ensued on March 20, 1977 in Mayapur, India just eight months before Srila Prabhupada departed this mortal world:

Prabhupada: Sit down. I am little better today.

Tamal Krishna: Should I read it, Srila Prabhupada?

Prabhupada: Yes.

Tamal Krishna: “Washington, March 18th. The Hare Krishna movement was called a ‘bona fide religion’ yesterday by the New York high-court justice who threw out two charges against the officials of the movement of ‘illegal imprisonment’ and ‘attempted extortion.’

‘The entire and basic issue before the court,’ said the Justice in dismissing the charges, ‘is whether or not the two alleged victims in this case and the defendants will be allowed to practice the religion of their choice, and this must be answered with a resounding affirmative.’ Said Mr. Justice John J. Leahy, ‘The Hare Krishna movement is a bona fide religion with roots in India that go back thousands of years. It behooved Merrilee Kreshower and Edward Shapiro to follow the tenets of that faith, and their inalienable right to do so will not be trampled upon. The separation of Church and State must be maintained. We are and must remain a nation of laws, not of men. The presentment and indictment by the Grand Jury was in direct and blatant violation of the defendants’ Constitutional rights.’ The Justice said that ‘The people rest their case...’ ”

Tamal Krishna: First page of “Times of India.”

Prabhupada: And big heading?

Tamal Krishna: Yes. “Hare Krishna Movement is Bona Fide Religion.”

[laughs] You couldn’t pay for an advertisement this good.

Prabhupada: So, my mission is now successful.

The above newspaper article appeared in full in “The New York Times” on March 18, 1977. [New York City is 10.5 hours behind Mumbai (Bombay)]

Your servant,

Mukunda Goswami

