



Spiritual Perspectives

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

September 2020

A CLEANER REALITY

By Radha devi dasi

There are lessons to be learned in times of crisis. The world-wide disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in positive impacts on the environment and the climate. The considerable decline in travel has caused many regions to experience a large drop in air pollution. In China, lockdowns and other measures resulted in a significant 25 per cent reduction in carbon emissions and 50 per cent reduction in nitrogen oxides emissions, which one Earth systems scientist estimated may have saved at least 77,000 lives over two months. Around the world we are seeing cleaner air, clearer water, and an increased presence of animal life.

Crisis is often described as a time of danger and opportunity. The current pandemic gives us the opportunity to reassess our lifestyles. Are we willing to change the way we live in order to protect the Earth? We live in an age where technology forces changes in our lifestyle at a rapid pace. Those of us born in the middle of the 20th century find our lives now depend on devices that had not been thought of when we were children. Even younger people are using more technology and using it differently than they did as children. As time goes on, more people become involved in this technology revolution and the changes are coming at an ever increasing rate. As a consequence, we use more and more energy per capita every year.

Unfortunately, mankind's ability to cope with the consequences of change lags behind the pace of that change. While per capita energy consumption is estimated to have risen from 20 gigajoules in 1820 to 80 gigajoules in 2000, many regions still depend on market forces to deal with the increased pollution that comes from the rise in energy consumption. Countries either decline to pass anti-pollution legislation for fear of discouraging economic growth or simply fail to enforce the laws they have.

Is mankind simply a self-destructive species? After all, we know both the causes and

the effects of this deadly pollution, yet we fail to take simple steps to reduce it. Northern India, for example, could greatly reduce air pollution by giving farmers an alternative to their current practice of burning crop stubble to prepare for a new crop. The knowledge exists and is not hard to implement. It simply takes the will to help people make simple changes in their practices.

The failure we have is one of leadership, not technology. In assuming that market forces will regulate the effects of pollution or other ills, we ignore what the scriptures tell us about our own natures. Because we identify with the body, our outlook is both self-centered and immediate. Sense gratification promotes a short-term, ego-centric outlook. But dealing with pollution and other social ills requires us to defer (or even forego) short-term pleasures. We often resist changes that are beneficial for society but not for us personally. Dealing with these issues requires both spiritual understanding and self-control.

Unfortunately, our leaders are not generally chosen for these qualities. Mere military power or promises to increase opportunities for sense enjoyment are the more usual bases for modern political power. Without spiritual leadership, we continue making



The canals of Venice saw much less traffic because of the pandemic and city residents said the water was clearer. CNN

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self-destructive choices. Pollution control, you see, requires sense control.

Right now, we are being forced to adapt our lives to new realities. Less travel, less entertainment and less resource consumption have followed in the wake of COVID-19 related travel restrictions. The benefits of these changes are literally right before our eyes. Plain living looks better all the time.

<https://cnn.it/2Dv4u0o>



World Holy Name Festival 2020

By: ISKCON Harinam Sankirtan Ministry, *ISKCON News*, August 17, 2020

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



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The newly formed ISKCON Harinam Sankirtan Ministry is holding the World Holy Name Festival from September 17–23.

This year, they aspire to expand the festival beyond the borders of ISKCON into the greater society. With the support of devotees worldwide the festival can reach out and bring the holy names to new people.

Because of the global pandemic, traditional ways to share *Harinam*, on the streets and in kirtan events, are severely restricted. Thus, they plan to offer many ways to participate online and in smaller safer settings.

To do this they need devotees' help with the artwork, marketing, web development and audio and video production, organizing in local areas. Anyone interested to get involved please contact ekalavyadas@gmail.com.

In the coming weeks, they will be providing resources to help devotees celebrate the World Holy Name Festival. These include materials to participate in the Japathon, Holy Name Retreats, and even learn a new beat on the mridanga!

And, most importantly, they will give ways for devotees to share *Harinam* with others. This main outreach program is in conjunction with the Fortunate People campaign. Fortunate People is a global effort to collect audio and video recordings of people chanting the Hare Krishna *maha-mantra*. It's especially meant to make it fun, easy and inspiring to get people to chant the *maha-mantra* for the first time as part of its worldwide Peace and Love campaign.

The World Holy Name Festival will especially focus on the theme of "Let's Make the World Fortunate" through the Fortunate People program. They'll soon be sharing more

details on how you can participate to the fullest extent.

But for now anyone can get started by making a recording of themselves chanting, and uploading it on www.fortunate-people.com. Then they are requested to find a friend or family member who is not chanting, and encourage them also to record and upload a chant.

See this video with His Holiness Lokanath Swami, Minister of Harinam Sankirtan, sharing more information on Fortunate People.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ojRWQKmW_Y&feature=youtu.be

To make sure not to miss anything please join the lists:

Email: <http://eepurl.com/ha4tD5>

Whatsapp: <https://chat.whatsapp.com/EnEF8KGlRA01q6EzrcKO5H>

Facebook : [@worldholynamfestival](https://www.facebook.com/worldholynamfestival)

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World Holy Name Festival (WHNF) Tentative Schedule 2020

Throughout the Festival we'll highlight the Fortunate People "One Plus One" Campaign

Sept. 16: Adivas:

- 1) Individual Yatras broadcast Bhaktivinoda Thakur bhajans that glorify the Holy Name.
- 2) Welcome Podcast: Curtain Raiser with Lokanath Swami, Pancharatna das, and special guests.

Sept. 17 - 23: Daily

- 1) 5 pm - 6 pm (IST): Online Japa Retreat (7 days / 7 facilitators)
- 2) 6 pm - 7 pm (IST): *Srimad Bhagavatam* Classes with Holy Name verse.
- 3) 7 pm - 8 pm (IST): Kirtan broadcast (7 days / 7 kirtaniyas)
- 4) 8 pm - 9 pm: *Namamrta*: Glories of the Holy Name (7 days / 7 speakers)
- 5) After *Mangal Arotik*, reading Srila Prabhupada Quotes on Holy Name (each center). We will provide suggested quotes.

- 6) Daily *Srimad Bhagavatam* Classes in local centers with suggested verses on Holy Names.

Special Events:

- 1) Sept 20: Global Kirtan Connect: Each time zone takes a turn for one hour of kirtan for a total of 24 hours, encircling the globe with a garland of Kirtan. 24 Time Zones. 24 Empowered Kirtan Leaders. 24 Hours of Ecstatic Kirtan!
- 2) Sept 20: *Nagar Sankirtan*: Devotees around the world are encouraged, Government regulations permitting, to take *Harinam Sankirtan* to the public in the streets, parks, etc.
- 3) Sept 24 (Grand Finale): Global Japathon

Please visit the new website (under construction, but lots of resources already available)

www.kirtanministry.com

Please contact
ekalavyadas@gmail.com
 for more information.

Devotees Comment on Research That Volunteering Makes Us Happier

By: Madhava Smullen, *ISKCON News*, August 14, 2020

<https://bit.ly/2QWdca1>



<https://bit.ly/2QWdca1>

Food For Life volunteers distribute free prasadam in Budapest, Hungary

According to a recent survey conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau and other federal agencies, more than a third of U.S. adults have signs of clinical anxiety or depression. This hasn't been helped by the Coronavirus pandemic, which has impacted people's mental well-being as well as their physical health and led to feelings of stress and isolation. Some have reached out by volunteering to help those worst affected; interestingly, however, new research suggests that volunteers are also improving their own mental health and happiness by doing so.

Referring to a study published this year by the "Journal of Happiness Studies," based on data from nearly 70,000 research participants in the United Kingdom, "Greater Good Magazine" wrote, "Compared to people who didn't volunteer, people who had volunteered in the past year were more satisfied with their lives and rated their overall health as better. Additionally, the researchers found that people who volunteered more frequently experienced greater benefits: Those who volunteered at least once a month reported better mental health than participants who volunteered infrequently or not at all."

This research is interesting to ISKCON devotees because it aligns with the Vaishnava philosophy that service satisfies the soul.

"Ultimately, our tradition teaches that to be completely satisfied, we need to serve God, or Krishna," comments ISKCON Communications Director Anuttama Dasa. "And the highest service we can do for others is to help them connect with

God. That is certainly the long-term solution to life's problems. But in our day-to-day activities, serving others by helping them out of whatever distress they are undergoing is also part of having a service mood."

During the pandemic, ISKCON devotees in India, the UK, Hungary, Argentina and other countries have voluntarily helped healthcare workers and those in need by distributing millions of *prasadam* meals. Some devotees have distributed free masks. Others have helped their own devotee community by providing

COVID-19 safety resources and free online seminars, classes, kirtans, and children's entertainment and activities.

Sruti Sagara Dasa, who serves as president of the Krishna House in Gainesville, Florida, shared his personal insight on volunteering and its benefits. Sruti manages Krishna Lunch for Healthcare Heroes, which delivers *prasadam*, sanctified vegetarian lunches to doctors and nurses, and Krishna CARES, which delivers lunches to the vulnerable, especially the elderly, and those economically impacted by the pandemic.

"Even though we don't know these people personally, by reaching out to them and offering something from our hearts, we feel a connection," he says. "We are all parts and parcels of God, Krishna, and when we serve each other we feel that common connection."

Whether dropping lunches off outside the door for doctors and nurses, or speaking with people while social distancing and wearing masks, the service is a very personal interaction for Sruti Sagara and the other Krishna House volunteers.

"It's like, 'we cooked these meals for you, and we really want to support you in these times,'" Sruti Sagara says. "It's very uplifting and definitely positively affects the mental health of both the volunteers and the recipients."

He adds: "The nature of the soul is to do service – service to God, and service to others. So we all feel satisfied, we feel like we are doing the right thing. It's just very nourishing, and very satisfying, because that's the nature of the soul. To serve, and

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to be able to look beyond the needs of our own body and mind, and see how we can help others.”

In terms of depression and anxiety, while volunteering isn't recommended to replace therapy or other professional care, connecting with a cause based on a higher purpose can help people to see beyond their immediate problems.

<https://bit.ly/2QWdca1>



Krishna House president Sruti Sagara Das (in white) and Arianna after delivering prasadam for the Krishna CARES program

“One of our volunteers was coming out of a relationship, and it was tough for him,” says Sruti Sagara. “But being able to focus on giving to others helped him focus beyond himself, and helped him process his emotions as well.”

The effects can be very practical. ISKCON Hungary spokesperson Gandharvika Prema Dasi, who has worked with Food For Life for fifteen years, explains that underprivileged people who benefitted from receiving *prasadam* often volunteer to help serve *prasadam* themselves.

“Often they have lost their self-confidence, the feeling that they are needed, or that they are useful for society,” she says. “By volunteering, they feel needed and able to help others, although they themselves are still in need. It changes a lot in their way of life, their thinking, their lifestyle. Many are able to find a new job after gaining the self-confidence from doing voluntary work.”

Often, the benefit derived from services such as distributing *prasadam* is so powerful that it becomes infectious. One biker who became a volunteer for Food For Life in Hungary took on the responsibility of managing the program every Saturday, and has been doing it for the past fifteen years. “A few years ago his son, who had been three years old when he started, finished school and joined Food For Life too!” Gandharvika Prema says.

For Vaishnavas, volunteering also helps develop the service attitude that is integral to devotional life. When devotees bring

that service mood back into their day-to-day relationships and devotional lives they can be doubly benefitted.

“I don't think we should ever diminish our activities that are directly Krishna conscious,” Anuttama says. “But we can also be indirectly Krishna conscious, all day, every day. Devotees are not supposed to live in a vacuum – we're supposed to interact with people, and bring our Krishna consciousness and our service attitude and volunteer mood into everything we do.”

The ultimate example of this is ISKCON *Founder-Acarya* Srila Prabhupada. A simple example is provided in Volume 2 of the *Srila Prabhupada Lilamrita*. Prabhupada told the early devotees living at the 26 2nd Avenue temple to treat the landlord, Mr. Chutey, like their father. Meanwhile Prabhupada himself would assist Mr. Chutey with some of his tasks, including even helping him take out the neighbors' trash.

As Lord Chaitanya says in *Sri Siksastakam*, one should “be ready to offer all respect to others. In such a state of mind one can chant the Holy Name of the Lord constantly.”

“I've experienced in my own life that my mind can become very self-absorbed and self-centered,” Anuttama says. “Usually when that happens, I find myself less enthusiastic and moody. But if I meditate on just being a servant and doing what's necessary to help others, to serve the temple, and to serve the community, I definitely feel much happier.”

Please Send Your Feedback To:
feedback@mukundagoswami.org

New Book: The Nectar of Lockdown by Niranjana Swami

By: Sri Radha Devi Dasi, *ISKCON News*, August 20, 2020

<https://bit.ly/3202B4n>

A new book *The Nectar of Lockdown*, Volume 1, by Niranjana Swami is now available in English in both paperback (250 pages) and e-book formats.

In his daily talks in April 2020, Niranjana Swami gives invaluable instructions on keeping Krishna's holy names prominent in our daily lives and the proper consciousness to develop—not only during the coronavirus lockdown, but also during our continued lockdown in this material world.

Topics in the book include: Protection of the holy name; focusing the uncontrolled mind; the highest perfection of life; understanding our insignificance; the gift of *prema*; the *dharma*



<https://bit.ly/3202B4n>

Niranjana Swami

for the Age of Kali; creating auspiciousness; dependence on Krishna; and being humbler than a blade of grass. To enhance the reading experience, the book is also beautifully illustrated.

Visit <https://niranjanaswami.com/> to order copies.

For bulk orders (10 or more copies) and/or shipments outside North America, please email orders@niranjanaswami.net or send a direct message to Gauranga Press on Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/gaurangapress/>) to discuss possible reduced prices.

This book will also be available in Russian at a later time. Details will follow.

SPIRITUAL PERSPECTIVES

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<https://bit.ly/3202B4n>

Personal Message



Eulogy for Bhakti Charu Swami

Dear Friends,

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

“The world won’t be the same without him.” I know it’s a bit of a tired cliché, but I really feel that way.

To me he was a mentor and *siksa* guru.

Bhakti Charu Maharaja’s life in Kṛṣṇa consciousness shows that ISKCON, despite having and still encountering many obstacles, is alive and well more than 50 years after its inception.

Why do I say this? Because Bhakti Charu Swami showed without doubt that the movement Srila Prabhupada started in 1966 would grow and prosper. For one thing, he initiated as many or more dedicated disciples than Srila Prabhupada did, and to my knowledge, many, if not all of them have contributed and continue to contribute admirably to ISKCON’s growth.

There are many good qualities that Maharaja possessed, too numerous to write about in this short essay.

Following Srila Prabhupada’s example he spent a lot of time translating, sometimes starting at midnight. He was knowledgeable and dedicated to sastric wisdom. He travelled incessantly often outside his designated GBC zone, even taking great risks to his health. He died “with his boots on,” a saying often attributed to Srila Prabhupada, conjuring up the image of a soldier on the battlefield (figuratively fighting with *Maya*, a Vaisnava’s eternal enemy). He floated and developed the concept of ISKCON-global being Srila Prabhupada’s ASRAMA and of himself as an “assistant teacher” or “teacher’s assistant,” with Srila Prabhupada being THE teacher. He instructed me on *tilaka* application. He always made me feel important – what people of the world call “massaging the ego.” He actually made me think of myself as more important than him, a thought that was patently untrue. By nature, he was soft-hearted, mild, personal, gentle and humble.

He produced a multi-part video series on Srila Prabhupada’s life. He rejected philosophical and theological presentations that were nonsensical. He promoted cow protection, which was dear to Srila Prabhupada’s heart. He actively participated in the 2016 Sydney Opera House presentation of ISKCON’s 50th Anniversary.

He is a deeply realized soul.

His offering printed in the BBT global *Vyasa-puja* book was read out loud on August 13, 2020 in the New Govardhana temple in Australia.

He proved by his life that ISKCON would continue and would grow vibrantly and purely even after Srila Prabhupada’s physical departure.

Your servant,

Mukunda Goswami

Mukunda Goswami

