



SPIRITUAL PERSPECTIVES

AN ISKCON COMMUNICATIONS PUBLICATION
For Friends and Followers of Mukunda Goswami

Unintended Consequences

By Radha devi dasi



Doctors struggle to contain the deadly Ebola outbreak

The recent outbreak of Ebola in West Africa is a potent reminder that, despite technological advances, human beings cannot prevent tragedies in this world. The outbreak will take at least six months to bring under control, according to news reported by the BBC. Speaking in Geneva, medical charity Medecins Sans Frontieres President, Joanne Liu, said the situation was “deteriorating faster, and moving faster, than we can respond to.” Earlier, the World Health Organization (WHO) said the scale of the outbreak appeared to be “vastly underestimated” and that “extraordinary measures” were needed.

The epidemic began in Guinea in February and has since spread to Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Nigeria. Recently WHO reported that the death toll had risen to 1,145. The WHO said in a statement that its staff had seen evidence that the number of reported cases and deaths did not reflect the scale of the crisis. Spokesman Gregory Hartl said experts going house-to-house in Kenema, Sierra Leone, in search of infected people were discovering more cases. “There are probably a lot of patients out there that we haven’t traced or contacted yet,” he said.

Ebola is particularly frightening because there is no vaccine or cure and because fatality rates can reach 90%. The fatality rate in the current outbreak appears to be around 55% but that does not take into account patients who have not been seen by medical professionals.

Not only does this outbreak of deadly disease highlight the limits of man’s power, it can also be described as an unintended consequence of our actions. In fact, the

Ebola outbreak is a result of the four defects of the conditioned soul.

In the introduction to the *Isopanisad*, Srila Prabhupada writes that the conditioned soul suffers from four defects: (1) the tendency to commit mistakes, (2) the tendency to become illusioned, (3) the tendency to cheat, and (4) imperfect senses. These defects are evident in the circumstances that have led to the Ebola outbreak.

For example, the families of many Ebola patients have refused to seek medical care for their relatives, believing that western medical facilities are causing death rather than seeking to cure the disease. This inability to tell friend from foe has hampered authorities’ ability to contain the outbreak and led to its spread from Guinea to surrounding Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Nigeria.

In addition, efforts to modernize Africa through increased urbanization are at the root of this outbreak. The Ebola strain ravaging West Africa and putting the international community at risk has not changed since the first outbreak in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Sudan in 1976. But Africa’s rapid urbanization has far outstripped the capacity of public infrastructure and health services to stem the spread of disease. Most of Africa’s urban poor live in slums where such services are limited.

The Ebola outbreak is therefore not just a medical emergency. It is a clear sign that Africa’s current growth patterns cannot be sustained and can easily unravel as a result of disease outbreaks. The promise of cities as centers of creativity, innovation and growth cannot be realized when nearly 70 percent of the urban population lives in slums. Indeed, the displacement of bats carrying the Ebola virus through deforestation may have contributed to the spread of the disease.

Unintended consequences are a hallmark of the social changes triggered by mass industrialization and a predictable outcome of the four defects of the conditioned soul. Lacking infor-



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mation, due to imperfect senses and our tendencies to become illusioned and make mistakes, it is no surprise that we institute policies that lead to tragedy. In this case, well-meaning leaders seeking

to “modernize” West Africa have created a perfect breeding ground for the spread of an incurable and deadly disease.

Student Says She Was Punished At School For Saying “Bless You”

By Rebecca Klein, *The Huffington Post*, August 21, 2014
<http://huff.to/1p8dSRu>

A Tennessee high school student claims she was suspended after saying, “bless you” to another student in class.

According to Tennessee outlet WMC-TV, Dyer County high school student Kendra Turner was reprimanded after she said, “bless you” to a student who had sneezed.

“She said [the teacher] that we’re not going to have godly speaking in her class and that’s when I said we have a constitutional right,” said Turner to the outlet.

After Turner defended her actions, she said she was sent to see an administrator and given an in-school suspension. Students in the class later sent the outlet a picture of a list of words the teacher had banned from the classroom. “Bless you” was on the list, along with “dumb” and “stupid.”

The school has not responded to *The Huffington Post’s* request for comment at this time.

However, the school’s vice principal told local outlet the *Dyersburg State Gazette* that she thought the situation had been blown out of proportion by

social media, although she would not delve into the details.

“I think this has really been blown out of proportion on social media, but I will say this in regard for our teachers. There is not one here I don’t trust my own kids with and my kids are here and other relatives are here or have been here. I trust the teachers and beyond a shadow of a doubt all of our teachers have the students’ best interest at heart,” said school vice principal Lynn Garner.

She also said that Turner was being disruptive in class.

“In this case, this was not a religious issue at all, but more of an issue the teacher felt was a distraction in her class,” said Turner.

But some local community members told local outlet WREG-TV that they were on the student’s side.

“She should not have been suspended for it at all. If anything, the common courtesy back would be just like, ‘thank you.’ Not, ‘hey you’re suspended,’” said local resident David Nicholson to the outlet.

Remembering James Foley’s Remarkable Faith

By Antonia Blumberg, *The Huffington Post*, August 20, 2014
<http://huff.to/1pGxBx6>

James Foley, an American journalist who went missing in Syria in November 2012, died at the hands of Islamic State militants.

Foley’s friends and family remember a talented, generous and faithful person who “gave his life trying to expose the world to the suffering of the Syrian people” and the horrors of war.

His 2012 disappearance marked the second time Foley had been captured in the thick of political and social unrest. The first came in 2011 when Foley was reporting from the middle of the Libyan civil war. Qaddafi loyalists kidnapped him

and fellow journalist Clare Morgana Gillis and held them captive for 44 days, during which time, Foley later recounted, he often turned to prayer to maintain hope.

In a letter published on the Marquette University website -- Foley’s alma mater -- Foley describes the role prayer played in his life during those days in captivity, his Catholic faith and the only call home his captors allowed him:

I prayed [my mom would] know I was OK. I prayed I could communicate through some cosmic reach of the universe to her.

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<https://huff.to/1bGxBx6>

Journalist James Foley poses for a photo during an interview with The Associated Press in Boston on May 27, 2011. (AP Photo/Steven Senne, File)

I began to pray the rosary. It was what my mother and grandmother would have prayed. I said 10 Hail Marys between each Our Father. It took a long time, almost an hour to count 100 Hail Marys off on my knuckles. And it helped to keep my mind focused.

Clare and I prayed together out loud. It felt energizing to speak our weaknesses and hopes together, as if in a conversation with God, rather than silently and alone.

When he was finally allowed to call home, Foley had been in captivity for 18 days:

I said a final prayer and dialed the number. My mom answered the phone. "Mom, Mom, it's me, Jim."

"Jimmy, where are you?"

"I'm still in Libya, Mom. I'm sorry about this. So sorry."

"Don't be sorry, Jim," she pleaded. "Oh, Daddy just left. Oh ... He so wants to talk to you. How are you, Jim?" I told her I was being fed, that I was getting the best bed and being treated like a guest.

"Are they making you say these things, Jim?"

"No, the Libyans are beautiful people," I told her. "I've been praying for you to know that I'm OK," I said. "Haven't you felt my prayers?"

"Oh, Jimmy, so many people are praying for you. All your friends, Donnie, Michael, Joyce, Dan Hanrahan, Suree, Tom Durkin, Sarah Fang have been calling. Your brother Michael loves you so much." She started to

cry. "The Turkish embassy is trying to see you and also Human Rights Watch. Did you see them?" I said I hadn't.

"They're having a prayer vigil for you at Marquette. Don't you feel our prayers?" she asked.

"I do, Mom, I feel them," and I thought about this for a second. Maybe it was others' prayers strengthening me, keeping me afloat.

Amidst the fear and anguish of his kidnapping, Foley wrote, faith was the only thing that made sense.

"If nothing else," he wrote, "prayer was the glue that enabled my freedom, an inner freedom first and later the miracle of being released during a war in which the regime had no real incentive to free us. It didn't make sense, but faith did."

Foley's mother, Diane, posted a message to the public on Facebook Tuesday night recounting her pride in her son. She wrote:

We thank Jim for all the joy he gave us. He was an extraordinary son, brother, journalist and person. Please respect our privacy in the days ahead as we mourn and cherish Jim.

Both of Foley's parents spoke with media on Wednesday outside their home in Rochester, New Hampshire, calling their son "a courageous fearless journalist."

"We know Jimmy's free," Foley's father, John, said. "He's finally free. And we know he's in God's hands...and we know he's in heaven."

Foley's priest, Father Paul Gousse, reportedly visited the Foleys' house on August 19

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to pay his condolences. Gousse did not speak with reporters, but his parish posted a notice inviting members of the community to join in prayer for James, his family, friends “and all who are still in danger.”

After graduating from college Foley served in Teach for America, where he met Sarah Fang -- who years later went on to work for the public awareness campaign to free him from captivity. In a January 2013 article Fang described Foley’s integrity and dedication to the task at hand.

“His sense of integrity has always meant devoting himself entirely to his work ... He’s always been willing to step into a zone where

no one else wants to go. Jim feels that society needs reporters willing to bear witness and report back the facts of history-in-the-making.”

Other friends and colleagues of Foley’s have come forward to share their memories of the man who spent four years reporting in war-torn countries prior to his capture. Vox’s Max Fisher wrote of Foley’s “unfailing generosity and warmth” in a tribute to the journalist.

“Jim’s faith was something we all agreed not to discuss publicly while he was held in Syria,” Fisher wrote, “but it was the wellspring of his generosity.”

Boston’s Mayor Issues “Sri Krishna Janmastami Day” Proclamation

By Bhaktin Elle Mitchell, *ISKCON News*, August 15, 2014

<http://bit.ly/1C2Wacw>



Arriving on the boat name Jaladuta, it was at Boston’s Commonwealth Pier in 1965 that Srila Prabhupada first set foot on Western soil, and where he composed his prayer “Markine Bhagavata-dharma”

The Honorable Martin J. Walsh, Mayor of the city of Boston, has signed a proclamation declaring August 17, 2014 to be “Sri Krishna Janamastami Day,” a first for Boston ISKCON.

The Boston center of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, established in 1968 and now known as New Gundica Dham, was one of the most prominent temples in the early years of the Hare Krishna movement. His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada set a number of milestones in Boston, distinguishing the yatra’s position as a significant center for the development of Lord Caitanya’s Sankirtana movement in the west.

It was at Boston’s Commonwealth Pier in 1965 that Srila Prabhupada first set foot on Western soil, and where he composed his

prayer “Markine Bhagavata-dharma,” entreating Lord Krishna for the spiritual deliverance of the western countries. Boston was also where Srila Prabhupada performed the first Brahmanical initiations of western men and women, either in or outside of ISKCON.

It was also in Boston that Srila Prabhupada established his original printing press, ISKCON Press, for publishing and distributing transcendental literature, and instituted worship of one of very few Deity forms of Sri-Sri Radha Krishna that he personally installed, Sri-Sri Radha Gopivallabha.

Temple President Pyari Mohan das and ISKCON Boston wish to thank Amit Dixit, Founder and Executive Director of the South Asian Arts Council for his tireless efforts in furthering ISKCON’s outreach into the Greater Boston community. He was instrumental in inspiring and executing this groundbreaking achievement.

PROCLAMATION

WHEREAS: Sri Krishna Janmastami, a yearly celebration of the advent of Lord Sri Krishna, is celebrated as the most holy day of the year by followers of the Hindu faith; AND

WHEREAS: Worshipers of Lord Krishna observe Sri Krishna Janmastami by singing,

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chanting, reading and fasting until midnight, in the company of family and fellow devotees; AND

WHEREAS: Sri Krishna Janmastami is observed at midnight with a ceremony accompanied by congregational chanting and followed by a vegetarian feast to break the fast; AND

WHEREAS: The International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) of New England, the first and oldest Hindu temple in New England, continues to support the spiritual and religious well-being of Boston citizens of all faiths, creeds and ethnicities, and invites them all to celebrate Sri Krishna Janmastami with them; AND

WHEREAS: Thousands of Greater Boston residents of all backgrounds have benefited from the communal worship, spiritual study, and sanctified food given freely by ISKCON over the last 46 years,

THEREFORE: I, Martin J. Walsh, Mayor of Boston, do hereby proclaim, August 17th, 2014 to be:

SRI KRISHNA JANMASTAMI DAY

In the City of Boston I urge all my fellow Bostonians to acknowledge and celebrate Sri Krishna Janmastami and embrace the spiritual beliefs of all citizens.

(signed) Martin J. Walsh

Mayor of Boston

August 17, 2014



Mahabharat Historian Gets Research Reins

By: Editor, *indiadivine.org*, August 21, 2014
<http://bit.ly/1opscVN>

A retired history professor who has written articles arguing that stories from the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* are truthful accounts of events that took place has been named chief of the Indian Council of Historical Research (ICHR), the government agency to promote historical research. Yellapragada Sudershan Rao, whose interests include Vedic literature, Sanatana Dharma and Bharatiya Sanskriti, set the tone for his three-year tenure after taking charge on Saturday.

Under his leadership, he told The Telegraph that the ICHR should take up projects to rewrite ancient history to establish the “continuous Indian civilization,” including the period of the two epics.

“The stories of the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* cannot be termed a-historical just because there is not enough archaeological hard evidence. Excavations cannot be done in many places since people are living there and you cannot evict them,” Rao said from Warangal, Telangana.

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Rao, who taught history at Warangal's Kakatiya University, has written several articles seeking to establish that stories of the *Puranas* and particularly the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* are truthful accounts of historical events.

"A lot of historical material has come through cultural, anthropological, archaeological and ethnographic studies in the last 60 years about the continuous Indian civilization. The findings can be compiled by researchers. I think the ICHR should support historians interested in doing work on these aspects," he said.

Rao, a member of the ICHR council when the previous NDA government was in power at the Center, said studies might be conducted to understand the social system and cultural values during the period of the two epics. He also said archaeological evidence suggesting early habitation in Ayodhya could be traced back to the 8th century BC.

The latest excavations conducted after a court directive at the Ramjanmabhumi site some years ago did reveal ruins of a basement of a big-columned monument on which the Babri mosque was built. Stone pillars and door-jambes with Hindu motifs used in the construction of the mosque were also found, as were images of Hindu deities below the ground at the disputed site.

Asked what the solution to the dispute should be, Rao said: "Historians need not give any solution. Historians present historical materials and the government has to take the decision."

Rao said the ICHR had, over the last two decades, mainly focused its research projects on the modern and the colonial period. Before 1990, however, when R.S. Sharma and Irfan Habib were chairpersons, the council had undertaken several projects on early history.



<http://bit.ly/1anscVN>

A famous scene from the Mahabharata TV-series

"Even during R.S. Sharma's tenure, they were using Marxist tools. Cultural aspects were not given attention. History should be comprehensive, not driven by any political thought," Rao said.

By Marxist tools, Rao said, he meant studies entirely focused on the analysis of economic and material aspects, not culture, art or religion.

The new ICHR chief said a lot of archaeological material and literature were stored in archives in other countries and the agency should take the initiative to get at least copies of such works. Rao said he has not been associated with the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh but loves the country and nationalist ideas. "I love the country and the culture. As a historian, I feel that history should tell people about their culture and civilization."

After taking over, Rao put out a message on the ICHR website where he conveyed "deep gratitude" to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and human resource development minister Smriti Irani for choosing him for the position.

Krishna: The Original Avatar

By Gadadhara Pandit Dasa, *The Huffington Post*, August 15, 2014
<http://huff.to/1bzcX6M>

Hundreds of millions of adherents of the Hindu faith will gather together, around the world, in temples and homes, to celebrate the advent of God on Earth. This festival of the birth of Krishna is known in Hinduism as Janmastami. According to the popular understanding, Krishna took birth in the town of Mathura, located in Northern India, 91 miles

South of New Delhi, approximately 5,000 years ago. This year, the celebration will take place on Sunday, August 17.

Since Krishna is said to have taken birth at midnight, many will observe a fast from food and water until midnight. The idea behind the fast is to decrease our focus on food and increase our focus and attention on our rela-

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tionship with God. Of course, if fasting is increasing your focus on your hungry belly, then better to eat something and keeping on praying. At midnight, many temples will organize congregational singing, dancing, and feasting celebrations to honor the event.

Krishna's personality provides a refreshing perspective about the nature and personality of God. Some descriptions say He likes to dance and play the flute. He is described in Hindu texts as always youthful and all-attractive. This is a stark difference from the popular notion of God as old, angry, cruel and jealous. If God is old, then he comes under the influence of time which would ultimately lead to his demise. However, according to Hinduism, time is an instrument of God and can't influence him.

Krishna spoke the *Bhagavad-gita* ("the song of God"), the most prominent and widely read of Hindu texts. Krishna explained the *Gita* on a battlefield, to his dear friend Arjuna, who was going through a series of major crises about his life and duty. Many Hindus and non-Hindus (Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, Albert Einstein, Carl Jung, and many more) have been fascinated by the deep wisdom of the *Gita*. Many have used it to find the right balance between their spiritual and material pursuits and explore the topics of karma, reincarnation, God, the mind, the soul, time, death, the universe, and the purpose of life.

I first turned to the *Gita* after my parents experienced a major financial disaster that caused them to lose their multi-million dollar jewelry business in Los Angeles. We had lost everything - our properties, vehicles, and almost everything we owned. We ended up moving to Bulgaria, in 1993, looking for ways

to reestablish our financial situation. Being so thoroughly uprooted from my social circle and comfortable lifestyle, I found myself seeking out answers to questions such as "why is this happening to me," "what did I do to deserve this," and "what is the purpose of my life?" Krishna's words gave me solace, hope, and clarity about how to deal with this very unexpected turbulence I was experiencing.

Krishna not only provides deep wisdom and philosophy for the human mind, he also leads by example and demonstrates the trait of humility. After helping Arjuna overcome his dilemma, Krishna humbly drives Arjuna's chariot around the battlefield for 18 days, receiving instructions and executing the orders and requests of his friend. Through this act, Krishna demonstrates the need for us to develop humility and a mood of service to others in our lives. It's through humility and service that one can approach and comprehend the divine.

In the *Gita*, Krishna suggests that he is the "original fragrance of the earth...the taste of water, the light of the sun and moon...the intelligence of the intelligent, the strength of the strong, and the thread upon which all things rest." Meditating on all these messages, many on this day, will worship and pray to the youthful, all-attractive God who is the original Avatar.



Krishna with His beloved cows.
Painting by B.G. Sharma

**Please send your
Thoughts, Opinions, Questions,
Comments, Concerns to:
feedback@mukundagoswami.org**

Personal Message...



Dear Friends,

Please accept my humble obeisances. All glories to Śrīla Prabhupāda.

In a 1965 letter to one of his initial hosts in Pennsylvania, Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote: “And by this I am suggesting why don’t you start a restaurant here in New York? I am sure if you start a business like that you will earn at least \$2,000.00 a month net. This is not a dream but actual fact.”

It seems that Śrīla Prabhupāda advocated taking small steps toward Kṛṣṇa consciousness even in the earliest days. One of several examples is this excerpt from a lecture in the Bowery (Manhattan, New York City) in May of 1966:

“Anyone can adopt it, just to learn these sixteen words: *Hare, Kṛṣṇa, Hare, Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa, Hare, Hare, Hare, Rāma, Hare, Rāma, Rāma, Rāma, Hare, Hare*, these sixteen words. Anyone, any illiterate man or any rich man, any poor man or any man of any country, these sixteen words anyone can learn. You see? *Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare, Hare Rāma Hare Rāma Rāma Rāma Hare Hare*. And chant. Go on chanting it. There is no expenditure.”

My point is that even though chanting the *maha-mantra* while being unaware of its meaning and even though vegetarianism are both a long way from pure Kṛṣṇa consciousness, Śrīla Prabhupāda was advocating these things even from the very start of his preaching in the West.

Nonetheless, he was uncompromising when it came to speaking about the philosophical nature of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. In the same Bowery lecture, quoted from above, he said, “The arrangement is so nice in the administration of nature that we shall get all our necessities of life by the grace of God, and our duty is to advance ourself in the right knowledge of our spiritual existence without unnecessarily engaging ourself for sense gratification. That is the difference between human civilization and animal life.”

My point is that Śrīla Prabhupāda seemed to value taking initiation in Kṛṣṇa consciousness as much as opening restaurants (serving prasadam of course). This indicated that Śrīla Prabhupāda wanted Kṛṣṇa consciousness to begin, even if it meant slowly inching toward purity. Before he even left for the West, he was planning to open a youth hostel. When he was challenged that residents would be meat-eaters, he asserted that the Holy Name would purify them of all bad habits.

Your servant,

Mukunda Goswami



For lectures go to: <http://mukundagoswami.org/lectures>

Video: [Recording the Hare Krishna mantra](#)