

# SPIRITUAL PERSPECTIVES

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



## The Power of Forgiveness

By Radha devi dasi

We often approach the issue of forgiveness by asking whether an offender deserves to be forgiven. Such an approach ignores the reality that forgiveness is a powerful tool for healing both the victim and the larger community. Without forgiveness, our emotions and reactions are under the control of those who wish us ill. Ultimately, forgiveness springs from an understanding of our relationship with God.

On the evening of June 17, 2015, a mass shooting took place at Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church, known for its long history of civil rights activism, in downtown Charleston, South Carolina, USA. During a prayer service, nine people were killed by a gunman. The morning after the attack, police arrested a suspect, later identified as 21-year-old Dylann Roof. Roof confessed to committing the shooting in hopes of igniting a race war.

Roof placed racial hatred squarely at the center of his crime. After praying with his victims and participating in their bible study, he stood up and pulled a gun from a fanny pack aiming it at 87-year-old Susie Jackson. Jackson's nephew, 26-year-old Tywanza Sanders, tried reasoning with him and asked him why he was attacking churchgo-

ers. Roof responded, "I have to do it. You rape our women and you're taking over our country. And you have to go." He reloaded his gun five times. Sanders' mother and his five-year-old niece, both attending the study, survived the shooting by pretending to be dead.

Roof's hope was that the victims' community begin riots and other violent acts in retaliation for his crime. This, according to his thinking, would inspire others to fight back against the black community. His ultimate goal was a race war in which black Americans could be wiped out.

The survivors of the churchgoers Roof slaughtered had another plan, however. Mere days after their relatives were brutally slain, they addressed him at his bail hearing. One by one, those who chose to speak did not turn to anger. Instead, while he remained impassive, they offered him forgiveness and said they were praying for his soul, even as they described the pain of their losses.

"I forgive you," Nadine Collier, the daughter of 70-year-old Ethel Lance, said at the hearing, her voice breaking with emotion. "You took something very precious from me. I will never talk to her again. I will never, ever hold her again. But I forgive you. And have mercy on your soul."

In choosing forgiveness over bitterness or revenge, these survivors took control of the narrative and cut off any possibility of further racial violence. They also demonstrated a deep understanding of spiritual principles. As Vaisnavas, we are taught that whatever ill fortune befalls us is the result of our past activities. In fact, nothing happens without the sanction of the Supreme Lord. Blaming others, even when they are at fault in some way, ignores the reality that we get what the Lord has allotted us. While forgiveness often requires time and emotional healing, it is an aspect of surrender to God. The survivors of those killed, the members of Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church, demonstrated such forgiveness with admirable strength and grace.



*A memorial near the church in Charleston, South Carolina*

## SPIRITUAL PERSPECTIVES

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# US Congressman and Mayor Among 10,000 Attendees for Detroit Ratha-yatra

By Naimish Patel, ISKCON NEWS, July 28, 2015

<http://ISKCONnews.org/us-congressman-and-mayor-among-10000-attendees-for-detroit-rathyatra,5020/>

Detroit ISKCON celebrated its 30<sup>th</sup> Annual Ratha-yatra on Sunday, July 19<sup>th</sup> with its largest attendance ever – an estimated 10,000 visitors. There were many highlights of the day, including grand opening ceremonies, amazing kirtan by Gaura Mani, Gopal and others, five hours of captivating stage entertainment, jammed packed Kidz Zone featuring Vedic crafts, live cooking demos and so much more.

One of the most exciting features was a grand golden palanquin procession carrying Lord Jagannath, Lord Baladeva and Lady Subhadra to their beautifully decorated Deity tent. Nearby over two hundred guests, most of whom were newcomers, chanted one round of japa right next to the Deities. The newly expanded book tent was busy all day serving guests with Srila Prabhupada's greatest gift to all of us – his transcendental books.

Live continuous kirtan filled the entire atmosphere with blissful transcendental sound vibrations. Finally, all families received an impressive,

full color, free souvenir book containing a beautiful description of Srila Prabhupada's twelve-year miracle, temple activities, Vaishnava songs and more.

Perhaps one of the greatest surprises of the day was when US Congressman David Trott joined the Opening Ceremonies as Honorary Chief Guest. He joined an already impressive group of Honorary Chief Guests for the Opening Ceremonies, including the Mayor, entire City Council, City Manager and several key city officials. Just before Mayor Gatt and Congressman Trott addressed the large crowds, they both were presented with a copy of Srila Prabhupada's *Bhagavad-gita As it Is*. Mayor Gatt was so touched by the gift that he announced in front of all: "Wow, I'm honored. I will begin reading it today!" Congressman Trott pledged his support for the festival and requested us all to reach out to him whenever needed. And now volunteers have already begun planning for next year's Ratha-yatra.



*Dignitaries receive their copy of the Bhagavad-gita As It Is at the Detroit Ratha-yatra festival*





*The ISKCON Sebarang Jaya temple, where the Prabhupada art gallery will be housed, is nearly completed*

## Permanent Prabhupada Art Gallery to Open in Malaysia

By Madhava Smullen, ISKCON NEWS, July 23, 2015

<http://ISKCONnews.org/permanent-prabhupada-art-gallery-to-open-in-malaysia,5012/>

A permanent art gallery entitled “Walking with Srila Prabhupada – The Path of Perfection” is set to open on August 30<sup>th</sup> in Malaysia in honor of the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the ISKCON founder’s arrival in the US.

The gallery will open the day after the completion of the long-awaited second and third phases of Penang State’s Temple of Devotion and Understanding, which was first envisioned by Srila Prabhupada himself during a 1971 visit.

“Walking with Srila Prabhupada” will be located on the mezzanine floor of the temple, and was created by the youth group of the Bhaktivedanta Cultural Centre, a separate four story-building that was finished in 2004 as the first phase of the temple project.

The gallery is the result of a competition in which seventy-five youth, aged twelve to thirty years old, participated. It will depict Srila Prabhupada’s life, and his visit to Malaysia, through a variety of mediums including oil paintings, waxwork, hyperrealistic art, Penang street art, graffiti, dioramas, miniatures, 3D art, vector art and pyrography (burning an image into wood

using a heated metallic point). Robotics will also be added in the future.

The gallery will be divided into four sections. The first, “Srila Prabhupada’s room and rooftop Tulasi gardens,” will feature a one-of-a-kind hyperrealistic statue form of Srila Prabhupada, with every wrinkle and hair rendered in exquisite detail. It will also have two beautiful Tulasi gardens, in which there will be Penang street art of Prabhupada chanting and preaching.

“The second section, ‘He built a house in which the whole world can live,’ will be a chronology of the important events in Srila Prabhupada’s life, depicted using dioramas, hyperrealistic art and robotics,” says Bhaktivedanta Cultural Center board member Sangeeta Vani.

She lays out the section in detail: “It will show him during his childhood, meeting his guru Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati, establishing the League of Devotees in India, writing and printing the *Srimad Bhagavatam*, traveling on the Jaladuta, holding the very first chanting in Tompkins Square Park, and ultimately building a house in which the whole world can live.” After that, the third section, “Srila Prabhupada in Malaysia” will present

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Prabhupada's visit to Malaysia in mini dioramas, graffiti and 3D art. And finally, "The Hidden Jewel" will show historic evidence of Vedic civilization in Southeast Asia and particularly Malaysia, as well as how Krishna consciousness was introduced and developed in the country.

The art for the gallery is currently being created, and will be completed by mid-August.

"Walking with Srila Prabhupada" will be opened during a three-day festival from Friday, August 28<sup>th</sup> to Sunday, August 30<sup>th</sup> this year along with the second and third phases of the Penang temple project -- the temple building itself, and the multipurpose hall.

On Friday, there will be an Adivas ceremony and a recitation of Srila Prabhupada stories. On Saturday, the official opening of the temple, Deities of Sri Sri Radha Krishna and Prahlada Narasimhadeva will be installed, and there will be an abhisekha ceremony, a kirtan, a spiritual discourse, prasadam and more Prabhupada stories. Finally on Sunday, there will be an abhisekha for Srila Prabhupada, a tribute to Prabhupada by Bhaktivedanta Cultural Centre youth, the opening of the art gallery, and kirtan and prasadam.

"We are expecting about 2,000 people for the opening of the gallery and 10,000 for the temple opening," says Sangeeta Vani. "They'll include members of Malaysia's Chinese and Indian communities, as well as international devotees

from India, Australia, Thailand, Singapore, the Philippines, and Indonesia."

A long list of ISKCON VIPs have also confirmed their attendance, including Jayapataka Swami, Bhanu Swami, Janananda Goswami, Ramai Swami, Bhakti Purushottam Swami and Deena Bandhu Das.

After its opening, the Prabhupada art gallery will be combined with a Krishna-Lila and Dasavatara exhibition center and auditorium to attract both domestic and international tourists, and it is expected to draw three to five hundred people a week.

"Visitors to the gallery will get to understand the struggle and difficulties Srila Prabhupada went through to bring Krishna consciousness to all of us, and how a pure devotee can leave an everlasting effect on the lives of thousands," says Sangeeta.

The gallery is also already leaving a deep impression on the youth that are creating it.

"Participating in the competition has deepened their faith in Srila Prabhupada, and got them enthused to serve his and Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's mission," Sangeeta says. "They are very focused on creating a first class art gallery as an offering to Prabhupada in honor of the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of his arrival in the West. They also realize that it will be an important conveyor of knowledge about Prabhupada's life to future generations."



*A sample of the Prabhupada art still in progress*

# Virginia Revises Education Standards for History of India

By Murali Balaji, *The Huffington Post*, June 2, 2015

[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/murali-balaji/history-standard-revision\\_b\\_6993790.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/murali-balaji/history-standard-revision_b_6993790.html)

The insertion of a single word in the new Virginia history and social science standards of learning could have a huge impact on how knowledge regarding ancient India is taught.

For decades, numerous groups — often with contradictory motivations — have sparred over India’s origins, which has often pitted historians against each other and put educators in an awkward position. Some history education groups have even encouraged teachers to ignore textbook content in an attempt to free themselves from oversimplified narratives.

That’s because the debate over the early part of Indian civilization hasn’t necessarily been reflected in social studies content standards, curriculum frameworks, and textbooks. Instead, the most common narrative about ancient India --

the idea of caste has been static and rigid for thousands of years. While it is true that the development of the *avarna/jati* system was (and is) a significant part of Indian social history, most textbooks oversimplified and distorted this intricate and non-rigid system into a static and discriminatory “caste” system that is only practiced by Hindus. In fact, the way caste is described today has nothing to do with Hindu scriptures, which do not sanction caste-based discrimination, and as such, the depictions in content standards and classrooms are deeply problematic.

Secondly, the reference to Aryan migrations assumes the validity of just one of several competing theories regarding ancient Indian origins. Most scholars now agree that Aryans (derived from the Sanskrit term *arya*, or noble one)

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**Perhaps other states will follow Virginia's lead in revising their content standards to allow for more nuance in the study of ancient Indian history and the origins of Hinduism**

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and Hinduism, which originates from the Indian subcontinent — goes something like this: Aryans migrated into (or invaded) the Indian subcontinent and established Hinduism and the caste system. Hinduism then gets “replaced” by more progressive religions like Buddhism and virtually disappears from mention in history.

This narrative had been regurgitated by social studies textbooks for decades, despite calls by religion and history scholars to push for a more accurate and nuanced understanding of Indian history and an emphasis on Hinduism as a living tradition. As more states embrace critical inquiry as part of student learning, even the gray area of history becomes an opportunity for exploration.

However, instructional materials are often constrained by local or state standards, which provide the basic guidelines of what students should know about subjects. The old Virginia standard on ancient India read: “Describe India, with emphasis on caste system and Aryan migrations.”

The old standard was problematic on many levels, but the emphasis on the caste system is largely governed by the false assumptions that

never referred to one group or race of people. Moreover, the debate over the spread of what are known as Proto Indo-European languages continues today among linguistic historians. Others have questioned whether a migration happened at all based on genetic evidence. In other words, we don’t know exactly how the transition from the Harappan age to the Vedic period happened.

The Hindu American Foundation (HAF) contended that the old standard was based on an inaccurate narrative of ancient India and Hinduism that collapsed thousands of years of history and social development together. As I told a Virginia Board of Education member in December, the way the standard was written is tantamount to claiming that George Washington fought the British driving a Ford F-150.

Thankfully, the work done by a core group of Virginia residents in 2008 during the curriculum frameworks revision, as well as a number of recently published academic articles, helped make our case stronger during the standards revision process.

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As a result, the Board adopted a new standard that reads: “locating India in time and place, including its origins, and early development and the debate over the Aryan migrations.”

The word “debate” is critical here because it acknowledges the disputes currently taking place in academia about the settlement of India in the period after the Harappan age. Moreover, given the complex nature of *varna* and *jati* in India (and the fact that the notion of caste wasn’t formalized until well into the Middle Ages), the removal of caste as a point of emphasis was a welcome change.

It also allows for a more robust discussion about history and social development, especially as new evidence continues to shape our understanding of the past. Perhaps other states will follow Virginia’s lead in revising their content standards to allow for more nuance in the study of ancient Indian history and the origins of Hinduism.

After all, history is vibrant and constantly open to new interpretations based on the availability of evidence. State content standards should be a reflection of that vibrancy.

## ISKCON Community Pays Tribute to Former President of India Dr APJ Abdul Kalam

Published on Dandavats.com, July 28, 2015  
<http://www.dandavats.com/?p=18685>

Dr APJ Abdul Kalam appreciated the services rendered by ISKCON such as *Bhagavad-gita As It Is* book distribution, promoting vegetarianism and ISKCON’s Food for Life Mid-day meal program. Further he also inaugurated the Bhaktivedanta Hospital for Heart Center which is a part of ISKCON activities.

On behalf of the entire ISKCON Community we would like pay tribute for the former President of India. It is a great loss for India.



*Dr APJ Abdul Kalam inaugurated Heart Care Center at Bhaktivedanta Hospital in 2013*



*Pervez Musharraf with APJ Abdul Kalam is being gifted with Bhagavad-gita As It Is by Mahamantra Prabhu*

Please send us your feedback:

[feedback@mukundagoswami.org](mailto:feedback@mukundagoswami.org)

# Personal Message...



Dear Friends,

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

There are apparent contradictions in ISKCON, even in Srila Prabhupada's books.

One example occurs in the First Canto of *Srimad Bhagavatam* when the fate of Asvatthama has to be decided after he has killed the sleeping sons of Draupadi.

The passage is in the Seventh Chapter entitled, "The Son of Drona Punished."

The conflict is cited in verse fifty-five wherein Lord Krishna's "equivocal orders" are mentioned [Srila Prabhupada's translation is cited].

Regarding the situation with Asvatthama, an apparent conflict developed. Draupadi wanted Asvatthama spared. King Yudhisthira agreed with her, and Sahadeva and Nakula also agreed with Draupadi. Bhimasena, however, thought that Asvatthama should be killed, and Arjuna had promised his wife Draupadi that he (Arjuna) would kill Asvatthama.

Lord Krishna apparently agreed with killing Asvatthama, although His instruction to kill Asvatthama is cited by Srila Prabhupada as a test.

Both the concept of sparing Asvatthama's life and that of killing him are backed by the *sastra*.

*Srimad Bhagavatam* says in the First Canto, Seventh Chapter, fifty-seventh verse (1.7.57), that there is no prescribed punishment for the relative [son in this case] of a brahmana and that there is no injunction for killing the body.

On the other hand, it is stated in the *Srimad Bhagavatam*, First Canto, Chapter Seven, verse thirty-five (1.7.35), by Lord Krishna Himself that mercy should not be shown to one who is designated as an aggressor [*Bhagavad-gita As It Is*, 1.36, purport citing Vedic injunctions]. It is also stated in the *Srimad Bhagavatam* (1.7.36), that a person who knows the principles of religion should not kill a sleeping person or a boy.

In verse fifty-two, Lord Krishna is addressed as Caturbhuja because according to Sridhara Swami Lord Krishna manifested two extra arms in order to keep Bhima and Draupadi apart.

In the end, Arjuna uses his "sharp intelligence" to remove the *ksatriya* jewel from Asvatthama's head and to disfigure him by cutting his head hair off in sections, thus humiliating him. He also drove him out of the area, thus "killing" and "not killing" Asvatthama. *Bhagavad-gita As It Is* (2.34) tells us that infamy is sometimes worse than death.

Thus Arjuna used his "sharp intelligence." He also acted within *sastric* law as stated in *Srimad Bhagavatam* (1.7.57).

Your servant,

Mukunda Goswami

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

