



# Spiritual Perspectives April 2016

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

## ALL ABOUT ME

By Radha devi dasi



One thing is clear from an examination of social media; we live in an age of narcissism. Everyone, from Kim Kardashian to the middle school student next door can publicize the mundane details of their lives for the entire world's amusement. The resulting obsession with our own activities and attributes is anything but healthy. Even worse, narcissism is on the rise. Narcissists turn themselves into glittering figures of immense grandeur to shield themselves from their fear of criticism and their own unacknowledged doubts. The central symptom of the disorder is described by Elan Golomb in *Trapped in the Mirror*; the narcissist is doomed to unhappiness as he cannot achieve intimacy with anyone. He sees other people like items in a vending machine, using them to service his own needs and unable to see that others have needs as well.

Epidemiological evidence shows that narcissistic personality traits rose as fast as obesity in the U.S. from the 1980s to the present. The rise in narcissistic traits has increased since the turn of the century. Examples are everywhere. American presidential candidate, Donald Trump, epitomizes lack of empathy and the radical overestimation of his own talents and likeability. English columnist, Katie Hopkins personified a disturbing pride in not caring for others in her recent comments on the European migrant crisis. "No," she wrote in a column for the *Sun*, "I don't care. Show me pictures of coffins, show me bodies floating in water, play me violins and show me skinny people looking sad. I still don't care."

This appalling lack of compassion occurs not only at the level of celebrities and public figures. There is a general hubbub of narcissism underneath which is broadcast clearly on social media. Terrible tragedies such as terrorist attacks and natural disasters are appropriated by people thousands of miles away and used as a backdrop to showcase their sensitivity, foresightedness, and intelligence. The fact that actual humans are suffering becomes a trivial detail.

The warped perspective, that I am the center, prevents us from connecting with each other and with the Supreme. We work harder at self-promotion, projecting our most glamorous selves in public, while feeling increasingly empty and lonely. Without spiritual vision, societies can only become colder and crueler as we play into the delusion that my needs are the only ones that matter. But, no one can be happy in isolation. When Krishna is in the center, we are connected to each other and can experience real happiness.



# Historic meeting with the Prime Minister of India Shri Narendra Modi

By Vrajendranandan Das, ISKCON National Communications, March 18, 2016  
[bit.ly/1pDqatk](http://bit.ly/1pDqatk)

Dear Maharajas and Prabhus,

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

Srila Prabhupada has set a vision for devotees to “hunt for the rhinoceros” and to “think big.” His Divine Grace personally believed in engaging the leaders of society in Krishna Consciousness in order to set an example to the common populace. In pursuance of this vision, by the blessings of *Sri-Sri Radha Parthasarathi* and Srila Prabhupada, we received the rare opportunity of visiting the Honorable Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi at his residence in New Delhi and gifting him a copy of the Special Edition *Bhagavad-gita*, printed in Italy. The Prime Minister liked this special *Gita* and assured that he will keep it with him all his life.

His Holiness Gopal Krishna Goswami Maharaja apprised the Prime Minister about the global preaching efforts of ISKCON, particularly the propagation of the priceless message of the *Bhagavad-gita* in most of the significant languages of the world. The Prime Minister was pleased to hear that the *Bhagavad-gita* is available in 81 languages of the world.

The Prime Minister was also presented with a copy of the *Bhagavad-gita As It Is* in Russian, Chinese, Gujarati, Hindi and English. Maharaja also offered to have a copy of the *Bhagavad-gita As It Is* in all languages, kept in the Prime Minister's Library; something which Srila Prabhupada would have been pleased to hear.

He also told him that ISKCON has over 650 temples across the world and more than 60 Goshalas. The Prime Minister mentioned twice or thrice during the meeting that ISKCON is doing good work.

Maharaja presented him with a photo of his visit to Moscow in October 2001. He was pleased to see this photo, recollecting his Russia visit and the trip to the ISKCON Temple in Moscow.

The ISKCON team also utilized the opportunity to invite the Prime Minister as the chief guest for the major function we are planning for the ISKCON 50 celebrations centered on the Joy of Devotion in November. The Prime Minister mentioned that he needed some time for confir-



*His Holiness Gopal Krishna Goswami Maharaja (left) Prime Minister Narendra Modi (center)*

mation and did not commit, but was favorable to the idea. We are hoping for Krishna's mercy that this possibility materializes.

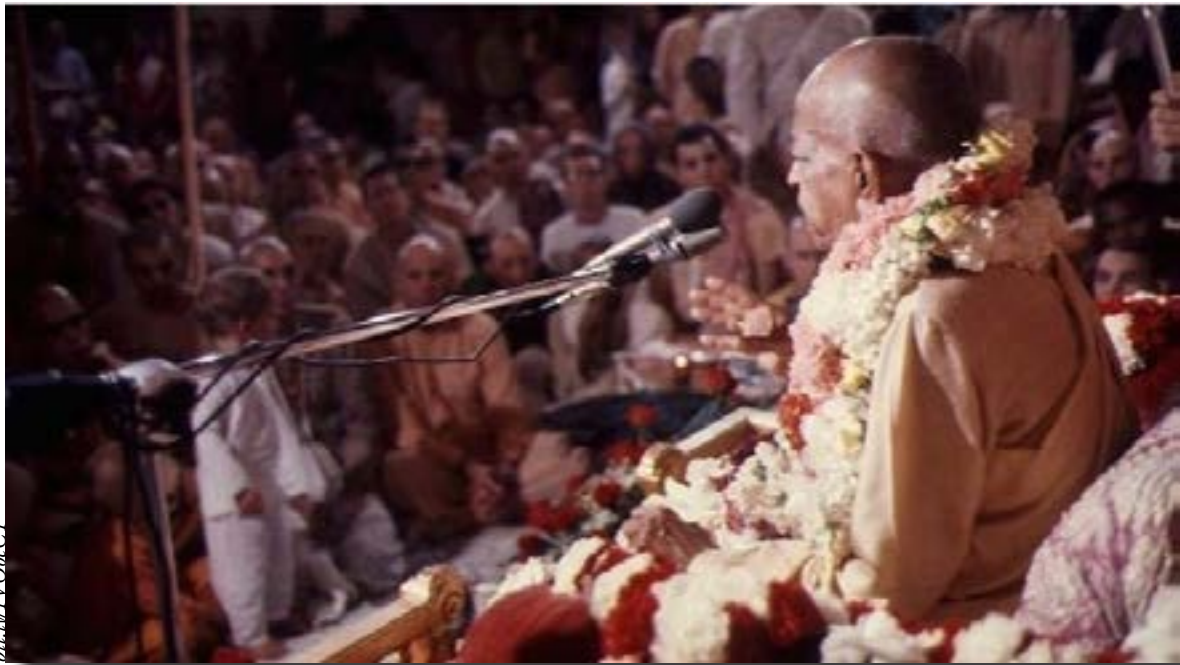
It was particularly heartening to see the joyful and respectful manner in which the Prime Minister received the ISKCON team and spent nearly 15 minutes with us. As soon as the meeting was over, Doordarshan, the National Television Channel of India started flashing the video coverage of the meeting. By afternoon, Twitter with several million followers of the Prime Minister, his YouTube Channel and the Prime Minister's website [Narendramodi.in](http://Narendramodi.in) all flashed the following personal message: “Touched to receive a copy of the *Gita* from Shri Gopal Krishna Goswami Maharaja.”

This was the first ever time that a meeting with the Prime Minister of India has been featured so prominently and positively across media, particularly the wide reaching social media.

Your servant,  
Vrajendranandan Das, Director  
ISKCON National Communications  
New Delhi

# Vanipedia Launches “A Month in the Life of Srila Prabhupada”

By Madhava Smullen, ISKCON News, March 17, 2016  
bit.ly/1VOocCY



*Srila Prabhupada gives a lecture*

At Vanipedia.org, the dynamic online encyclopedia of Srila Prabhupada’s words (vani), manager Visnu Murti Das and his Radhadesh, Belgium-based team are constantly adding new features during ISKCON’s 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary year.

The latest is “A Month in the Life of Srila Prabhupada,” ([http://vanipedia.org/wiki/A\\_Month\\_in\\_the\\_Life\\_of\\_Srila\\_Prabhupada](http://vanipedia.org/wiki/A_Month_in_the_Life_of_Srila_Prabhupada)) a calendar showing each month of Srila Prabhupada’s recorded life in the West, through the years 1966 to 1977. Visitors can click any month to see all of Srila Prabhupada’s letters, lectures, conversations, and morning walks from that month.

“A Month in the Life of...” is a vast archive – it includes over 2,200 of Prabhupada’s lectures, 905 of his conversations, 490 morning walks, 65 interviews, and 6,570 letters. It also includes hundreds of short audio and video clips with subtitles in 87 different languages.

All this can reveal many gems. For instance, in March 1966 – exactly 50 years ago – Srila Prabhupada gave some of his very first recorded *Bhagavad-gita* lectures in New York, which you can listen to and watch audio clips of with photos and subtitles.

He also wrote to Padampat Singhania asking for help in starting a Radha-Krishna temple. And he requested Sumati Morarji, who worked with the Scindia steamship company, to arrange conveyance of men and goods, such as Sankirtan instruments from India, for free.

Despite its giant archive, each month of “A Month in the Life of...” is presented in a clean and easily accessible format. Each notable day features several color coded boxes with a picture of Srila Prabhupada and a carefully chosen quote from a lecture or letter. Clicking on these quotes brings one to the full source.

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We Would Appreciate Your Feedback  
Please Send Your Response To :  
[feedback@mukundagoswami.org](mailto:feedback@mukundagoswami.org)

“These statements from A Month in the Life of Srila Prabhupada offer unparalleled insights into his devotional character; his vision to respiritualize human society; his dedication to translate, publish and distribute his books; and his expertise to tirelessly lead and manage his worldwide movement,” says Visnu Murti. “Through them, one can also experience how Srila Prabhupada consistently represents the pure teachings of Lord Caitanya Mahaprabhu and His associates.”

The Bhaktivedanta Archives, based in North Carolina, are also helping to make all Prabhupada’s teachings available to everyone, a particularly important effort during ISKCON’s Golden Jubilee year.

“Once you find an audio clip or quote you are into on Vanipedia, you can download the entire audio and full transcript for free at [https://prabhupadavani.org/transcriptions/?content\\_type=Transcripts+with+Audio](https://prabhupadavani.org/transcriptions/?content_type=Transcripts+with+Audio),” says the Archives’ Nitya Tripta Dasi.

For those interested in even more, the Vanipedia project includes seven “petals” that provide an everexpanding and nearly endless resource of Srila Prabhupada’s teachings: Vanipedia, Vaniquotes, Vanimedia, Vanisource, Vanibooks, Vaniversity, and Vanictionary.

“Srila Prabhupada often followed his guru’s lead in calling book distribution ‘The Brihat Mridanga,’ or ‘the big drum,’” says Visnu Murti. “Today, the Internet is the *Brihat Brihat Brihat Mridanga*.”

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Please visit A Month in the Life of Srila Prabhupada here: [http://vanipedia.org/wiki/A\\_Month\\_in\\_the\\_Life\\_of\\_Srila\\_Prabhupada](http://vanipedia.org/wiki/A_Month_in_the_Life_of_Srila_Prabhupada)

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## How to understand Lord Krishna?

By Sri Nandanandana dasa (Stephen Knapp), [www.Dandavats.com](http://www.Dandavats.com), March 16, 2016  
[bit.ly/1LQFMnI](http://bit.ly/1LQFMnI)

Sometimes people say that they want to see God, or that God is not perceivable. And this is confirmed in the Vedic scripture, but with additional points of instruction on how we can perceive the Supreme Being. The *Svetasvatara Upanishad* (4.20) explains “His form of beauty is imperceptible to mundane senses. No one can see Him with material eyes. Only those who realize, through deep pure-hearted meditation, this Supreme Personality, who resides in everyone’s heart, can attain liberation.”

Krishna *lila* or His pastimes are eternally going on in the spiritual world, whereas they appear to be happening only at certain points in time within the material energy. However, one who has purified his or her consciousness can still witness these activities even while in the material body. This can especially happen at the holy places (*dhamas*) where the spiritual and material energies overlap, and where the spiritual world appears with this material domain. Such places include Vrindavana, Mathura, Jagannatha Puri, Dwaraka, etc.

And when the Lord is pleased with your service, He can reveal Himself to you. In this way, many greatly elevated and pure devotees of Krishna have been able to have personal darshan of the Lord and witness His pastimes even while in the material body. Then they may leave instruc-

tions for the rest of us to follow so that we can do the same. This is verification that the process of devotion, bhakti-yoga, works. The *Srimad-Bhagavatam* (10.14.29) continues with this point. “My Lord, if one is favored by even a slight trace of the mercy of Your lotus feet, one can understand the greatness of Your Personality. But those who speculate to understand the Supreme Personality of Godhead are unable to know You, even though they continue to study the Vedas for many years.

The *Katha Upanishad* (1.2.23) also relates “The Supreme Soul can neither be attained by studying the *Vedas*, nor by sharp intelligence, nor by hearing many discourses on the scriptures. However, the Lord reveals His original transcendental form to the soul who embraces Him within the heart as the only Lord and Master. That soul alone can attain Him—the Supreme Soul, the Personality of Godhead, the Lord of the heart.”

Since Krishna is the Supreme Being and source of all enjoyment, it is in our best interest to engage in His service, for that will also connect us to Him and give us that great pleasure and bliss that we are always trying to find. That is the point of devotional service, called bhakti-yoga, which is the process of connecting (yoga) with the Supreme through devotion (bhakti). In

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bit.ly/ILQFMnI

the Absolute Truth in the form of the Supreme Person is much easier and much more attractive than struggling to realize, meditate on, or merge into the great white light of the impersonal brahmajyoti, or some other non-personal aspect of God. By understanding the Supreme Personality, all other facets of the Absolute, such as the Brahman effulgence and Paramatma or Supersoul, are also understood. In fact, those who are absorbed in Brahman realization can easily become attracted to understanding the Supreme Personality as did such sages as Sukadeva Gosvami and the Kumaras, as noted in *Srimad-Bhagavatam*:

“Let me offer my respectful obeisances unto my spiritual master, the son of Vyasadeva, Sukadeva Gosvami. It is he who defeats all inauspicious things within this universe. Although in the beginning he was absorbed in the happiness of Brahman realization and was living in a secluded place, giving up all other types of consciousness, he became attracted by the most melodious pastimes of Lord Sri Krishna. He therefore mercifully spoke the supreme *Purana*, known as *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, which is the bright light of the Absolute Truth and which describes the activities of Lord Krishna.” (SB12.12.68)

Since Lord Krishna is the Supreme Personality, then naturally there are certain ways in which to understand Him. This is a science, which we can more deeply explain later. But for now we can offer a summary of the instructions that point the way. The main point of consideration is that if we are trying to understand Lord Krishna, then we need to know what pleases Him, which is something that we can find from His direct instructions.

The key is explained directly by Lord Sri Krishna Himself when he says: “Knowledge about Me as described in the scriptures is very confidential, and it has to be realized in conjunction with devotional service. The necessary paraphernalia for that process is being explained by Me. You may take it up carefully. All of Me, namely My actual eternal form and My transcendental existence, color, qualities and activities—let all be awakened within you by factual realization, out of My causeless mercy.” (SB 2.9.31-32)

To start on this process, one needs to hear from one who knows and is acquainted with the qualities of Lord Krishna and can explain them to others. This is established in this famous verse:

this way, our inherent loving propensity is directed toward the supreme lover and natural object of love, God. There is no better way of finding God than this. In other words, through devotion we do not try to see God, but we act in such a way that God reveals Himself to us. Then everything is accomplished. There can be no greater achievement in the human form of life than that. Everything else is temporary; it comes and goes. Only our spiritual achievements last eternally because they are connected with the immortal soul. Therefore, reawakening our relationship with the Supreme is the highest goal in human existence.

Since it is established in the Vedic texts that the Absolute is a person, then meditating on the personal form of God rather than the impersonal feature is the highest form of meditation. This is verified in *Bhagavad-gita* (12.2): “The Supreme Personality of Godhead said: ‘He whose mind is fixed on My personal form, always engaged in worshipping Me with great and transcendental faith, is considered by Me to be the most perfect.’” Herein, we can understand that realizing

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*yasya deve para bhaktir  
yatha deve tatha gurau  
tasyaite kathita hy arthaha  
prakashante mahatmanaha*

“Unto those great souls who have implicit faith in both the Lord and the spiritual master, all the imports of Vedic knowledge are automatically revealed.” (*Svetasvatara Upanishad* 6.23) Lord Krishna also says, however, that “I am never manifest to the foolish and unintelligent. For them I am covered by My internal potency, and therefore they do not know that I am unborn and infallible.” (Bg 9.25)

Lord Brahma concurs with this point and verifies the need for the performance of devotional service, in which he says to Lord Krishna, “My dear Lord, devotional service unto You is the best path for self-realization. If someone gives up that path and engages in the cultivation of speculative knowledge, he will simply undergo a troublesome process and will not achieve his desired result. As a person who beats an empty husk of wheat cannot get grain, one who simply speculates cannot achieve self-realization. His only gain is trouble.” (SB 10.14.4)

As Lord Krishna establishes the foundation for attaining the means to understand Him, He also explains how to begin the process. “Only by practicing unalloyed devotional service with full faith in Me can one obtain Me, the Supreme Person. I am naturally dear to My devotees, who take Me as the only goal of their loving service. By engaging in such pure devotional service, even the dogeaters can purify themselves from the contamination of their low birth.” (SB 11.14.21)

In his summary of the *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, Sri Suta Gosvami also explains the above point: “Remembrance of Lord Krishna’s lotus feet destroys everything inauspicious and awards the greatest good fortune. It purifies the heart and bestows devotion for the Supreme Soul, along with knowledge enriched with realization and renunciation.” (SB 12.12.55)

Lord Krishna continues His instructions to Arjuna: “My dear Arjuna, only by undivided devotional service can I be understood as I am, standing before you, and can thus be seen directly. Only in this way can you enter into the mysteries of My understanding.” (Bg 11.54) “The person who is searching after the Supreme Absolute Truth, the Personality of Godhead, must certainly search for it up to this, in all circumstances, in all space and time, and both

directly and indirectly. O Brahma, just follow this conclusion by fixed concentration of mind, and no pride will disturb you, neither in the partial nor in the final devastation.” (SB 2.9.36-37)

Herein it is as if Lord Krishna is speaking directly to us, that if we follow through with this process, we will be successful even at the time of death, which is certainly the final test of life in whatever we may have done.

“For one who worships Me, giving up all his activities unto Me and being devoted to Me without deviation, engaged in devotional service and always meditating upon Me, who has fixed his mind upon Me, O son of Pritha, for him I am the swift deliverer from the ocean of birth and death.” (Bg 12.6-7)

“All that you do, all that you eat, all that you offer and give away, as well as all austerities that you may perform, should be done as an offering unto Me. In this way you will be freed from all reactions to good and evil deeds, and by this principle of renunciation you will be liberated and come to Me.” (Bg 9.27-28)

“By regularly hearing, chanting and meditating on the beautiful topics of Lord Mukunda with ever-increasing sincerity, a mortal being will attain the divine kingdom of the Lord, where the inviolable power of death holds no sway. For this purpose, many persons, including great kings, abandoned their mundane homes and took to the forest [for performing spiritual pursuits].” (SB 10.90.50)

Here it becomes clear that, as it is further described, for those who hear and chant the holy name and topics of Krishna, millions of grievous sinful reactions become immediately burned to ashes. Of course, the most important time for remembering the Lord and chanting His name is at the time of death. That is why it is said that those who chant “Krishna, Krishna” at the time the body expires become eligible for liberation.

The *Gopala-Tapani Upanishad* (1.6) states, “One who meditates on this Supreme Person, glorifies Him, and worships Him, becomes liberated. He becomes liberated.” In conclusion, Lord Krishna simply explains that, “Thus I have explained to you the most confidential of all knowledge. Deliberate on this fully, and then do what you wish to do.

Because you are My very dear friend, I am speaking to you the most confidential part of knowledge. Hear this from Me, for it is for your benefit. Always think of Me and become My devotee. Worship Me and offer your homage unto

*Continued on page 7*

Me. Thus you will come to Me without fail. I promise you this because you are My very dear friend. Abandon all varieties of religion and just surrender unto Me. I shall deliver you from all sinful reactions. Do not fear.” (Bg 18.63-66)

Thus, the way to understand Lord Krishna is not so difficult to comprehend. There is nothing else to do but take Lord Krishna’s instructions seriously and take to heart as best we can the process as provided and summarized in these instructions.

Or as the Lord Himself says, once again: “Thus, not by engaging in the service of the modes of material nature but by developing Krishna consciousness, knowledge in renunciation, and by practicing yoga, in which the mind is always fixed in devotional service unto the Supreme Personality of Godhead, one achieves My association in this very life, for I am the Supreme Personality, the Absolute Truth.” (SB 3.25.27)

## We are less spiritual at work, study shows

By Staff Writer, *NYR Natural News*, August 24, 2015  
[bit.ly/22DRnOw](http://bit.ly/22DRnOw)

Rather than being a constant, spirituality can vary throughout the day, say University of Connecticut researchers and some things are more likely to knock us off the spiritual path than others. Speaking at the 110<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the American Sociological Association (ASA), the researchers explained that people had the highest levels of spiritual awareness in the morning and while engaged in activities such as praying, worship, and meditation. Spiritual awareness also was high when people listened to music, read, or exercised. It was low, however, while people were doing work-related activities or playing video games.

Being at work reduced spiritual awareness, which the authors measured as self-reported awareness of God, a higher power, or larger ideal. Those who worked the most appeared to have the lowest awareness. Additionally, the study found that the kind of people who regularly watched the news had higher overall spiritual awareness than those who did not; however, the act of watching the news lowered awareness for everyone.

### Taking the soul’s pulse

This study analyzed data from the larger SoulPulse study, which collects data using participants’ smartphones. This experience sampling method allowed researchers to track spiritual awareness in real time during study participants’ normal daily activities. During the study, a total of 2,439 people in the United States took two SoulPulse surveys each day for two weeks between November 2013 and May 2015. Wright and his collaborators used that data for their study. Each daily survey included 15 to 25 randomly selected questions from a larger pool of 120 daily questions.

Although the SoulPulse participants were socially and geographically diverse, the study group is not a nationally representative sample because it was limited to people who owned a smartphone and who volunteered to be in the study. In some ways this makes the variations in participants’ spiritual awareness throughout the day all the more surprising.

“There is a complex interplay between spiritual awareness and the situation. Sometimes the situation you are in affects your spiritual awareness. Other times your spiritual awareness affects the situation you’re in,” said Bradley R.E. Wright, an associate professor of sociology at the University of Connecticut and a co-author of the study.

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