



Spiritual Perspectives

December 2016

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

Politics and Respect

By Radha devi dasi

America's recent presidential election revealed profound differences in the values and expectations of its citizens. If nothing else, President-elect Donald Trump is a divisive figure. His win in November set off a wave of large urban protests from Americans who declare he is "not my president." Some states are now undertaking to recount all the presidential votes as a result of the deep dissatisfaction with this election. World leaders have equally polarized views of Mr. Trump, with some praising him and others issuing stern warnings before he has even taken office.

Given the tenor of his campaign rhetoric (his opponent was a "nasty woman" whom he described as "the devil") it is not surprising that the public discussion over America's election sounds more like a dysfunctional family brawl than a reasoned debate. What is surprising is the degree to which Vaisnavas are participating in the drama. Social media is replete with Vaisnavas calling public figures (and worse yet, each other) by distasteful names and impugning each other's character and intelligence. This low-class communication style spills over into many other areas where devotees can disagree with each other.

Some have defended these *Kali-yuga* style disagreements by highlighting the importance of the



<http://www.vovanews.com>

topics being discussed. For instance, one devotee distraught at the prospect of cuts to social welfare and persecution of minorities, wrote that Vaisnava's who support the president-elect cannot be real devotees. No one who chants the maha-mantra, he believes, could support Mr. Trump's policies. While this is an extreme example, there are many instances where devotees have been just as harsh with each other over interpretations of our scriptures or Srila Prabhupada's instructions.

And why not, what duty do we owe to those who would (at least in our eyes) harm others, destroy Srila Prabhupada's legacy, ruin ISKCON, and on and on? Sometimes we assume that Vaisnava *aparādha* is not a problem if the other person's actions are sufficiently egregious. After all, Arjuna slew the Kauravas and Lord Shiva cut off Daksha's head after tolerating many insults.

At the same time, Sri Caitanya's direct instructions call on us to offer all respect to others. Mahaprabhu did not limit that instruction to exclude the fallen, the ignorant, or even the demoniac. As followers of Sri Caitanya, we owe respect to non-devotees, to each other, and even to our "enemies." Whatever our disagreements, however important our message, however misguided or fallen our audience, we can at least communicate respectfully.



<https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/254761>

Lord Damodar with His Wooden Mortar Enters Bollywood

By Mahavaraha Das, *ISKCON News*, November 14, 2016
<http://bit.ly/2fwUY0>



Jayapataka Swami facilitates Damodar program at fashion studio

On the evening of the 27th of October 2016, Bollywood fashion designer Rohit Verma invited Jayapataka Swami to have a Damodar program at his fashion studio in Mumbai. It was a short and well-organized program for which Rohit Verma had invited about fifty of his close friends including Bollywood celebrities, famous designers, and well-known beauty queens.

Jayapataka Swami described the Damodar-lila to the audience who listened with rapt attention. He stressed that Srila Prabhupada, ISKCON's Founder Acharya, wrote him a letter that the Karthik month was a special opportunity, like a discount offer for those people who are otherwise busy at work. "It brings all auspiciousness by doing a little devotional activity of offering lamps to Lord Damodar in this month," he said.

This was followed by a melodious singing of *Damodarastakam*. Jayapataka Swami gave out Damodar kits to each of the attendees along with a small book written by Srila Prabhupada and a box full of delicious *prasadam* snacks from ISKCON Juhu's Govindas.

The guests spent over an hour with Jayapataka Swami. They were asking him questions and seeking his blessings. Everyone enjoyed the festive atmosphere. Rohit Verma's sister, Anuragini Radha dasi, and her mother Rajasri Gopi, played important roles in organizing this successful program.

The Janmashtami dress of ISKCON Juhu's Sri Sri Radha Rasavihari, Sri Sri Gaura Nitai, and Sri Sri Sita Ram Lakshman Hanuman this year was both designed and gifted to Their Lordships by Rohit Verma.



Guests of Rohit Verma listen to Damodar-lila

Vrindavan Film *Reconnection* Wins 15 Awards

By Madhava Smullen, *ISKCON News*, November 3, 2016
<http://bit.ly/2gfLt0Z>

Reconnection, a 40-minute film written and directed by Siberian devotee couple Shyam Gopal Das and his wife Vijaya Radhika Dasi, has been making a real splash in the film festival world.

A cinema verite piece, it tells the story of tech professional Sean Fletcher, a typical victim of our Internet-addicted age. Emotionally and spiritually

cut-off, Sean stops in Vrindavan, India on the way to Nepal, and finds that the sacred village breaks him down to his core and helps him reconnect with his own heart and inner values.

Beautifully shot and edited and perfectly capturing Vrindavan's contradictory energy and chaos, peace and devotion, *Reconnection* has made

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http://bit.ly/2gft.r0Z

A poster for the Show Reconnection around the World campaign

a big impression since it hit the film festival circuit in June 2015.

It has made it into the official selections of 27 festivals around the world, and won 15 awards. These include first prize in the 'Best Short Film' category at Toronto's ReelHeART International Film Festival, much valued by independent filmmakers; and 'Best Cinematography' in California's Back in the Box Competition.

In India, *Reconnection* was awarded at two major indie film festivals – the Indian Cine Film Festival in Mumbai and Dada Saheb Phalke Film Festival in Delhi.



http://bit.ly/2gft.r0Z

Vijay Radhika and Shyam Gopal at 6th Dada Saheb Phalke Film Festival

In Mumbai, G.L. Bhardwaj, a veteran filmmaker who worked with Bollywood legend Raj Kapoor and directed acclaimed documentaries like "Shocking Asia" and "Shree 420" presented Shyam Gopal and Vijay Radhika with their award.

Bhardwaj lovingly referred to *Reconnection* as the "Radhe Radhe film" and praised it saying, "My film 'Land of Krishna' made several international and national awards, but [*Reconnection*] has done it much better!"

"We were so humbled, yet so honored to receive the award from him!" Shyam Gopal says.

The filmmakers were also delighted to receive the Vaishnava Film Award at the Vaishnava Film Festival in Mayapur, West Bengal in March. "We were not able to attend, but it was an honor for us that the film was so highly appreciated by the Vaishnava community we belong to," says Shyam.

Film festival jury members and film critics also lavished praise upon *Reconnection*.

"The uplifting Holi festival, monkeys stealing things, Indian cuisine in its diversity and colorfulness, temples, cows, the concept of timelessness, the merging of the mundane and the sacred in almost untraceable ways, everything that comes to mind when one imagines India in its proper place in *Reconnection*," enthused the Largo Film Awards in May.



http://bit.ly/2gft.r0Z

Shyam Gopal (Maxim Varfolomeev) receives an award from G.L. Bhardwaj at 3rd Indian Cine Film Festival

"*Reconnection* is not only a film, but a journey on the path of forgotten values that wait to be rediscovered by the technologized society," wrote 12 Months Film Festival director Vlad Alexandru.

And Switzerland's Ouchy Film Awards review said, "Humble in its appearance, Vrindavan is not trying to awe you by grandeur of white temples and impeccable nature. What it offers is a healing experience through helping others and sharing your life and love with them."

Others called the film "visually stunning," "a journey of spiritual awakening," and a film with "the power to give correct priorities in life."

Individuals who viewed limited free online screenings of the film were also deeply impacted. Hatha-yoga teacher Natalie Shustova from Moscow, Russia wrote, "This film is about a search for happiness which is not fleeting. I recommend it to everyone!"

Canadian film festival-goer Drea Andrea Burck wrote, "Opening night of the ReelHeART

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International Film Festival included two wonderful films — *Reconnection* and *Searching for Dragons* — that made this avowed urban girl want to get off the grid and figure things out.”

And ISKCON devotee Kamala Sundari Dasi wrote that the film gave her “goose bumps hundreds of times, and there were many points where I had tears in my eyes. This movie fascinates, and is calling you to go back to Vrindavan. I want to be there right now!”

Shyam Gopal and Vijay Radhika themselves, meanwhile, are moved by seeing other people get transformed by Vrindavan through their film – just as they were transformed by visiting the holy town years ago.



An absorbed audience watches Reconnection at the Vaishnava Film Festival in Mayapur

“More than ten years back, we found ourselves in Vrindavan for the first time,” Shyam says. “Vrindavan changes people’s hearts with its unique atmosphere. Back then something happened to our hearts and minds, something indescribable, just like it still does to many people who visit.”

He adds, “It was important for us to show that sometimes by losing your conventional self

you end up in finding your true self. The reviews and the reactions of film festivals show us that we have made the right decision. Now it’s important to us that as many people as possible see the film.”

The last official screening of *Reconnection* will be conducted in December 2016 in Mumbai, India at the Navi Mumbai International Film Festival.

After that, Shyam Gopal and Vijay Radhika need help to recoup the cost of their privately funded film, so that they can make it available for free public access. They are currently raising funds through their “Show Reconnection around the World” campaign on the film’s website.

After that, they plan to continue making spiritual cinema.

“We want to tell stories in such a way that changes people’s views of life,” Shyam Gopal says. “Next we have a TV series in development that will target a wide audience and have the potential to raise consciousness. We hope to produce it at a higher level than *Reconnection* too.”

The couple have started FIVE Pictures, a creative online community that supports media with the potential to bring about a consciousness shift. They also intend to expand their Vrindavan Experience project, a Facebook community that helps people visit Vrindavan and keep in touch with it afterwards, into a new website.

“We are in search of people who love Vrindavan, and have a strong desire to share it with others by all available modern means,” says Shyam Gopal.

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To help get *Reconnection* released for free viewing to the public, visit <http://five.pictures/reconnection/#YourReconnection>

Historic Ratha-yatra Held in the Heart of Santiago

By Cintamani Madhavi Devi Dasi, www.dandavats.com, November 17, 2016
<http://bit.ly/2fI5CZ>

On Saturday, November 12, the Chariot Festival Ratha-yatra was held in Chile, with thousands of people pulling Lord Jagannath’s car through the main avenue of the capital, followed by a cultural show in front of the Government Palace La Moneda.

In an unprecedented event, Santiago’s main street, Avenida Libertador Bernardo O’Higgins, was used exclusively by the majestic chariot that carried the Lord of the Universe and the people who pulled its ropes, filling the streets of Santiago with joy and colors like never before.



http://bit.ly/2H15CZ

Ratha-yatra cart in Santiago, Chile

It all started as a dream. When Sri Bhakti Das, in charge of the Department of Culture of ISKCON Chile, visualized Lord Jagannath, Baladeva and Subhadra in front of La Moneda, he felt that it would be a beautiful offering for Srila Prabhupada on the 50th anniversary of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness.

In December 2015, Sri Bhakti met with the manager of the last Ratha-yatra in Chile, Arjuna Das, who shared his experiences on the organization of the previous festivals. In addition, Pundavanika Devi Dasi and Premi Krishna Das joined the production team. Because this year the chosen place was so historic, a large number of permits and governmental authorizations would be necessary.

After almost a year of work, the festival was confirmed and the preparations began in the different areas. “All the devotees of the yatra offered service to make it possible, from the team to build the car (led by Viryavan Das and Bhakta Matías Vallejos), the coordination of the stands, communication, *prasadam*, cleaning, and so many other services. It was amazing to see the teamwork of the community,” said the organization team.

The event was covered by the mainstream medias in Chile, on television, radio and newspapers. This contributed to the significant attendance at the Ratha-yatra, especially by people who had never before contacted Krishna consciousness.

On the day of the event, the tour began at a strategic point in downtown Santiago, the Gabriela Mistral Cultural Center (GAM). With a sunny day and a clear main avenue,

Lord Jagannath’s chariot was placed between joyous singers and dancers. The devotees of ISKCON Chile worked for weeks to prepare a choreographed dance to guide the procession and the public appreciated its beautiful, flowing movement.

Three disciples of Srila Prabhupada attended the festival: His Holiness Maha Visnu Swami, His Grace Visuddha-sattva Das and His Grace Dharmatma Das. Harinam Ruci also attended, and encouraged everyone to dance and sing the Hare Krishna maha-mantra.

The procession concluded in Plaza Bulnes, a historical place in Santiago in front of the Palace of La Moneda. There, booths were set up featuring Food For Life, transcendental literature, questions and answers, yoga, activities for children and *prasadam*. In addition, a first class artistic show was performed with a dance presentation by Danza Odissi Chile and the participation of outstanding Chilean musicians such as Millapol Gajardo and the musical groups Om Bhakti and Krishna Sambandha.

The festival’s activities, which lasted until 9:00 p.m., allowed the attendees to learn about the culture of Bhakti, contact Srila Prabhupada’s books, and taste delicious *prasadam*.

“I was very happy to see how the whole community was united by this Ratha-yatra, working together to position the legacy of Srila Prabhupada in the most important place of our country. I hope Krishna will give us His blessings to continue this beautiful teamwork forever,” said Sri Bhakti Das.



http://bit.ly/2H15CZ

Ratha-yatra Sankirtan party in Santiago, Chile

SPIRITUAL PERSPECTIVES

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Family of Famed Architect Joseph Goddard Present Historic Archives to ISKCON

By Nima Suchak, www.Dandavats.com, November 15, 2016
<http://bit.ly/2fzvY2K>

The archives of famed Leicestershire architect Joseph Goddard were handed over to ISKCON in a ceremony on Monday, November 14th.

Tony and Joe Goddard, the great grandsons of Joseph Goddard, the architect of Leicester's Clock Tower and the grade II* listed former bank on Granby Street, signed over archives and their copyright to the care of ISKCON in the presence of members of Leicester City Council, representatives from The Victorian Society, historians and design students.

Joseph Goddard designed and built the grade II* listed heritage property at the heart of Leicester City Centre in 1874 as the headquarters of the Leicestershire Banking Company. The spectacular gothic building which is now an ISKCON Center has long been acknowledged as a landmark in Leicester's Victorian architec-



Leicestershire Banking Company building on Granby Street

ture, and one of Goddard's most important works. The building is set to contribute to regeneration, engagement and a place of a multi-variety of activities to suit the needs of all people.

The archives will be placed in a newly built Heritage Room at the Center for the benefit of schools, colleges, universities, and the general public.

On the gifting of the archives, Tony Goddard, an architect himself said:

"The Goddard family are delighted that the archive of their papers and drawings, a record of the family's architectural endeavours over the past 160 years, are to finally find a long term home in one of Joseph Goddard's best known buildings, the original Leicestershire Banking Company's building on Granby Street, and now the new home to ISKCON. The archive will now be properly catalogued, and available for public access."



Grandsons of Joseph Goddard sign over archives to ISKCON

Personal

Message...



Dear Friends,

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

5,000 years (SB 1.3.24/purport) is approximately 1.2% of 432,000 years (SB 1.3.25/purport) of the *Kali-yuga* period of time. Since about 75% of the denizens of this age are sinful and gradually the percentage is increasing to 100% (SB 1.16.25), and since the age has barely begun, one can assume that 25% of the people of this age are currently pious or innocent. That means roughly one out of four people will be reasonably receptive to the Krishna consciousness philosophy. I say “approximately” because the percentage figures cited above may not be uniform across the globe. For example, 80% of Indians in India may be religiously inclined, whereas only 1% of people in other parts of the world may have spiritual inclinations. That may sound extreme, but it’s a possibility.

Thinking that the “Golden Age” has already begun may be true, but it could also be naivety. In any case, there are 428,000 years to go. So it seems that things are going to get better before they get really intolerable. The 12th Canto of the *Srimad-Bhagavatam* speaks of the end days of *Kali-yuga* when the stature of human beings is reduced greatly and the human lifespan will be 50 years maximum (SB 12.2.11), and many other extreme anomalies are enumerated in the sastras (S.B. 12.2.12-16).

Whatever the immediate future may bring (and 10,000 years is but the blinking of an eyelid in the grand sweep of time), we have to prosecute Krishna consciousness with deep, sincere devotion to guru, *sastra*, *Vaisnavas*, *mahajanas* and Srila Prabhupada, and with an aim to develop love of God.

ISKCON is currently celebrating 50 years of existence, and what has transpired since its incorporation on July 13, 1966 was unforeseen; with some observers even saying the growth of ISKCON has been a modern miracle. And Srila Prabhupada is on record as saying, “one day people will understand in the history that this movement was for saving the human society. That day will come.” (Dallas, TX, USA lecture on March 3, 1975.)

Therefore whatever difficulties we face, it appears that by confronting them with the sword of *sastric* knowledge and with the behavior that Srila Prabhupada has taught us, ISKCON will be successful, provided we are true to our initiation vows.

I beg to remain,
your servant

Mukunda Goswami