



PRINCETON BHAKTI VEDANTA INSTITUTE

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Reality By Itself And For Itself

Sripad Rasaraja das Prabhu on kartals, Sriman Syamasundara das Prabhu on guitar opened Harinam sankirtan led by Sripad Bhakti Madhava Puri Maharaja, Ph.D (Sripad Puri Maharaja) rendition of the Panca Tattva mantra followed by the Maha Mantra. With guests Bhakta Ralph and Bhaktin Dorothy we all joined in harmoniously.



L-R- Syamasundara das Prabhu with Sripad Puri Maharaja, guest, Dorothy, and Rasaraja das Prabhu during Harinama Sankirtana

Making reference to his explanation given on an online scientific forum, Sripad Puri Maharaja said, he was not sure how many caught what was being presented, so he wanted to reiterate what was explained. "There are two points-of-view: 'Reality for us' and 'Reality for Itself.' 'Reality for us' means we have some perception of reality or of the environment. Within the subjective self, one can understand something about the world. 'The 'I' is the subjective sense of self in which 'I have some conception of reality out-

side of myself, the world,' so there's the reality for myself and there's the reality that is for Itself. Reality by and for Itself and the Reality for me are two different perspectives," Sripad Puri Maharaja explained. "The self is the perceiver and the non-self is perceived within the self or the world is perceived within me. The world is in the mind, as they say sometimes. because I have an idea of the world. When I say the world, it's my idea of the world. Everybody sees the world differently and when they say world, they think they all mean the same thing but they each really mean something entirely different."

"The relative reality and the absolute," Rasaraja das Prabhu interceded. "The relative depends on the person's vision, which is material and the absolute is the eternal reality. It doesn't depend on anything material because it's spiritual."

"An example for me is time," guest, Ralph, said referring to his recent heart surgery. "It's already six months but for me it feels like yesterday. I still can't believe that."

"There is psychological time and there's solar time," Sripad Puri Maharaja continued. "The time I subjectively experience and the time the earth has rotated on its axis. For example, if

we look at the sun, it appears to be moving, but why? Because the environment around us is stationary we don't think we are turning because we don't see any movement of the environment around us, so we think the sun is moving. It's like an optical illusion. We see everything around us as static, so we don't see the earth rotating but from the point of view of the sun, the earth is rotating and it's standing still. So how we see things and how things are actually, are two different things. However, that's something nobody ever usually thinks about."

How does reality see itself? Syamasundara das Prabhu asked. "We are part of the total reality. We are not apart from it. What we are calling reality, we are part of it but we see ourselves apart from it," Sripad Puri Maharaja responded then asked if we understood what he had just explained. Realizing from our expressions, he said, "I know people usually do not think of these things but it's a very important point."

In trying to clarify the point further, Sripad Puri Maharaja asked if we are part of this world or not? "Let's call the world reality, as it is by itself. We are part of that but we draw ourselves back from that and say the world is something different from me. 'I perceive the world. I am standing here and the world is standing there. I am in here and the world is out there.' The self and the not-self but what I am calling the not-self includes me because that not-self is the world that includes me. When I say world, I am included in that," Sripad Puri Maharaja explained. "This is what we need to understand. When we say universe are we not part of the universe?" he asked. "When I look out to the universe, it is out there but it includes me in it. I am part of it so when I think that I am separate from the universe, I am forgetting that I am part of the universe and not separate from it at all. The sense of separation of self identity apart from the world is an illusion, a false sense of self because my real self is there in the universe."

"Some people say the world is in the mind," Sripad Puri Maharaja said then asked if the world is in the mind. "The perception of the

world I have is the huge space where I live," guest Dorothy responded. "Yes, you are also in that world. So your perception of the world is really your perception of you being in the world. We generally forget that the self is in the world and think of it being only outside of it. This is called false sense of self. *Ahankar* (false ego). I falsely identify myself as separate of the reality that I am actually already included in and a part of," Sripad Puri Maharaja reiterated then asked if it is clear.

"Everyone has a different perception," Rasaraja das Prabhu responded.

"But to give up this *ahankar* that 'I am the perceiver' of the world and to identify myself with the real ego that is in the world, in the reality, how do we do that? Sripad Puri Maharaja asked then said. "To dissolve the subjective self, to think I am perceiving the world and to recognize that the self is there in the world. The world, which I am really a part of is perceiving me."

"Would Absolute reality (God) perceive Itself?" Syamasundara das Prabhu asked.

"Yes, the real perceiver is not ourselves. The reality Itself is perceiving Itself through us," Sripad Puri Maharaja responded. "This is the kind of mystical understanding of truth. Meister Eckhart once said, 'The eye with which I see God is the same eye with which God sees Himself.' Reality is the source. Reality is perceiving me and is the source of my perception, so what I am calling my perception of reality is actually reality's perception of Itself."

"Is there a need for reality to perceive Itself?" Syamasundara das Prabhu asked?

"Perceptual ability is part of reality. We find ourselves perceiving because the reality has that ability itself. Because God is a self-conscious or sentient Person therefore we are conscious. We are getting that consciousness from Him, not from ourselves," Sripad Puri Maharaja responded.

"The form of man is made in the image of God, coming from the form of God, not that we anthropomorphically think 'God is like us.' That is not what the scriptures say. The scriptures say, 'man is in the image and likeness of God.' Other religions have trouble understanding that God is in a

human form. They think, 'Oh no, you should not think of God like that. That is an anthropomorphic conception.' But the proper conception is that we are theo-morphic beings - in the image of God we are made. It means if we are in the image of God, then God must have the same form as a human being," Sripad Puri Maharaja continued. "In the Vedic culture, we believe God is both male and female. In this world we find both male and female and that is because it is there in God not because we are male and female, therefore God is. No, it's the other way around. The reality defines us. We don't define it because we are part of the reality and therefore it tells us what we are. We cannot expect it to be otherwise. If we think 'I can define reality,' that is called abstract or subjective idealism, in which I am the total determiner of everything in my mind. Nobody really lives like that. Nobody can really believe that and act otherwise, because if they acted in the way they think, they would not do anything. They would just sit and believe 'whatever I am thinking, that's it,'" Sripad Puri Maharaja said laughingly.

"When people say they love God in their own way, they don't want to follow any religion and claim 'I follow whatever I think is best,' it is actually contradictory because God has to tell us what He is otherwise people have different personal opinions of God and that makes no sense for understanding Who God actually is," Rasaraja das Prabhu said.

"Yes, they don't know what is actually God. Sri Krishna says in the *Bhagavad-gita*, *ye yatha mam prapadyante* – 'according to the way you surrender to Me, I reward you accordingly.' Sri-la Sridhar Maharaja's *Bhagavad-gita - The Hidden Treasure of the Sweet Absolute*, 4.11 confirms this:

*ye yatha mam prapadyante
tams tathaiva bhajamy aham
mama vartmanuvartante
manusyah partha sarvasah*

"Howsoever people surrender to Me, I accordingly reward them. Being the ultimate goal of all paths, I am the objective to be attained by all. O Pârtha, all men follow My various paths."

"In other words, Krishna is saying 'Whatever conception of Me you want I am giving you. You want to be cheated I am cheating you. You want to see everything materially, no problem, I'll provide that to you also.' Man proposes and God disposes," Sripad Puri Maharaja continued. "We want certain things. We want to think in certain ways, Krishna arranges for that to happen. Our opinion of what we want is being provided for us to be seen in that way. We are not independent in that sense. It's not that we can just think what we want. We want and then the thought is manifested. We are looking for a certain satisfaction, to think in a certain way and those thoughts arise accordingly. Similarly, if you want to act in a certain way, you are given a particular body to act in that way. For example, if you like to have sex all the time, then you are given the body of a dog to have sex anywhere and anytime. They don't care about the situation, out in the public, in the streets, wherever, they want. If you want to hang naked from the trees, monkey bodies are there, naked, hanging from a tree."

There are some principles, some rules in society for us to follow in order to live in the society like civilized humans. We cannot live outside and walk around naked," guest Dorothy said. "That is only for human beings. In the animal kingdom they don't have that. There's no restriction about nakedness or sex," Sripad Puri Maharaja responded. "Because they don't have the power of rationality," guest Dorothy countered. "That is correct but that indicates that there's a certain mentality there and that mentality is given to them in the form of human life because they desire it. It is all by the Lord's Will - not a blade of grass moves without the Will of the Lord. They are given a body according to their desires and the mentality to go along with it."

"Sridhar Maharaja once told 'if you want to be cheated, you will be cheated.' Krishna is the greatest cheater. He will allow you to cheat yourself and everyone else, no problem. But if you want Him, if you are a devotee, He will also provide that opportunity by His grace. If you want to come to Him, to worship, love and adore Him, He will also provide that and that is what He encourages in the *Bhagavad-gita*," Sripad Puri Maharaja continued. "Krishna says, 'If you want anything in the world, you can have it but I am telling you this, my friend that I am the best thing that you could ever have. If you

want the best thing, you will have to come to Me. I am Krishna, the reservoir of all pleasure. You can find all satisfaction in Me. If you want to come to Me, I will help you. I will provide everything you need'. There is no need to foolishly waste your time in other things. Try to understand His teachings that He gives us in the scriptures.”

“I remember when I first came to Krishna Consciousness they told me this process leads to a life of *“sat-chit-ananda* (eternal, blissful and full of knowledge). I thought to myself I never heard anybody tell me I can get eternity, bliss and knowledge. Nobody has ever offered such a proposal to me. When I heard that I thought, ‘who would be foolish enough not to try for such a thing,’ because there was no one else providing such an opportunity,” Sripad Puri Maharaja said then asked the audience if they have ever heard of such an offer. No one has ever heard of such an opportunity. “The Muslims say you can get some beautiful women in paradise, but who needs beautiful women if you can have God?”

“It’s a material conception. They want to have material enjoyment after life,” Rasaraja das Prabhu said. “Yes, they want the heavenly planets, paradise. Heaven is different from the transcendental world of Krishna consciousness. Krishna consciousness is not about self enjoyment. It is about pleasing Krishna and His devotees, serving, devoting, dedicating your life to Krishna,” Sripad Puri Maharaja said. “So if you want to go to Krishna, you have to approach His divine land with *saranagati* (complete surrender, submission and serving mood). Only in that way Krishna says *mam ekam sharanam vraja* (*Bhagavad gita* 18.66) ‘will you come to Me. With your love you can come to Me, not with love for yourself but with love for Me and you will get Me as the reward.’ We are part and parcel of Krishna’s energy. We don’t get satisfaction by taking everything from the reality around us for oneself but rather recognizing our subordinate and dependent part in this whole system of reality and acting accordingly with theo-centric conception, not ego-centric conception. That’s how we realize *sat-chit-ananda*.”

“Srla Guru Maharaja said we are the objects, not the subject. God is the subject and we are the object, so this is a different way to see. It’s not that I see God, but rather God sees me,” Rasaraja das Prabhu said. “We are also subject but Krishna is Super Subject. You are a subject to yourself but everyone else is an object to you,” Sripad Puri Maharaja responded. “We are subjects to ourselves and objects to others, so we are subject/objects and we have a relationship with Krishna, He is the Super Subject and we have a loving relationship with Him. Love is not an objective thing but a subjective thing. It requires two persons to love.”

“Does this tie into the *achinta-beda-beda* concept?” Syamasundara das Prabhu asked. “Yes,” Sripad Puri Maharaja responded. “Faith is a key word in this. You have to have faith, belief in God,” guest Dorothy said. “If you don’t have faith, your mind is always trying to find arguments to counter whatever is being said. Faith is necessary in order to go in a proper direction otherwise the mind is always trying to find some excuse. ‘Why should I think like this? Why not like that and so forth.’” Sripad Puri Maharaja responded. “Faith is needed to go in the proper direction and through that faith, that conviction, proper knowledge will come to us. We will understand everything automatically through faith by the grace of the Lord when He is pleased with us.”

In referring to her many conversations with the visual representation (pictures) of Lord Jesus Christ and Sri Krishna on her wall, guest Dorothy said then asked, “I am very attracted to Krishna. I pray to Them. I feel the communication when I talk to Them every night. The Jewish and the Muslim people do not have figures of God, so how do they communicate with God?” “In the Jewish and Muslim religion, they have a book (Torah and Koran) and that is held to be sacred and expressions of God in His words. It’s hard to have faith in a book, but they have faith in that. Some Divinity is there in that conception and we respect that. They have some kind of connection with divinity. They know that there’s something more than just this life. It is very hard to maintain some kind of connection when there’s no person there but their idea is that if you give a personal form to God, then you are materializing your conception of God. They feel if

you make God a person, you are somehow bringing your material idea to the Divine which should not be imported to that level. They feel the concept of God should be very pure, transcendental and free of all material ideas,” Sripad Puri Maharaja responded.

“I used to go to a Catholic school and there was a Church and they have an image that looks like God. It looks like Zeus, an old man with big, white, long beard and looking down at the people,” Rasaraja das Prabhu said. “In some religions, it’s like God will punish you if you don’t follow the rules. It’s not like affectionate love. It’s like a ruler, a dictator, if you do not follow the rules you will be punished.”

“The Muslims believe in Allah, who is God but do you know the meaning of Allah?” Sripad Puri Maharaja asked then responded. “The All Just One! Of course it’s impossible for a non-person to be just, so it would be difficult if that is how they believe Allah is. So He must be personal. You don’t say somebody is just if they are not a person.. Anyhow, they think of Allah as the ‘All Just One.’ Like you were saying, if you do the right thing, you will get good benefits. If you do the wrong thing, you will be smashed. That is the way they understand God as Allah. Of course there is much more to it than that.”

“Krishna, on the other hand, means what? ” Sripad Puri Maharaja asked. “All Attractive,” Syamasundara das Prabhu responded. “Yes, All Attractive, all beautiful, all powerful, all sweet, all loving. Everything attractive is what Krishna embodies. Whatever you find attractive that is located in the reservoir of all attractions and that is called Krishna, Who is always enjoying and giving enjoyment. *Krish* means one who is always enjoying and *na* means, who is giving enjoyment, so Krishna is called the reservoir of all pleasure, *akila rasamrita murthi*,” Sripad Puri Maharaja responded. “He is contained in that pleasure, He is receiving that pleasure from His devotees who worship Him and He is giving that pleasure to His devotees also through that worship. Meditating on these things are very helpful to our spiritual life and trying to understand and apply that in our realization in our life. It will help

us to grow steadily in our spiritual development and it will help others also who have the ability to understand.”


“Are Krishna and Rama the same person or two Gods?” Dorothy asked. “Krishna is all attractive to us and He is giving that pleasure to us in that relation. Producing that pleasure is called Rama. Krishna is attracting us and Rama is the pleasure potency coming from Him to all. Two different aspects, one is receiving (Krishna) and one is distributing (Rama) pleasure. We can think of it like that,” Sripad Puri Maharaja responded.

As our interactive *sanga* came to an end, *prasadam* was served and honored by all.



L-R Back Row: Bhakta Ralph, Rasaraja Prabhu. Front Row: Syamasundara Prabhu, Sripad Puri Maharaja, Bhaktin Dorothy

All Glories to Sri Guru and Sri Sri Gauranga
Srila Bhakti Nirmal Acharya Maharaja ki jai
Sripad Bhakti Madhava Puri Maharaj ki jai

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