

PRINCETON BHAKTI VEDANTA INSTITUTE

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Celebration of Sri Nityananda Prabhu's Appearance Day

After a wonderful outdoor Harinam Sankirtan at Princeton's Palmer Square Park, we went back to the Bhakti Vedanta Institute's (BVI) office for our weekly *sanga* with Sripad Bhakti Madhava Puri Maharaj, Ph.D (Sripad Puri Maharaja). We began with Rasaraja das Prabhu on *mridangam* (Indian percussion) singing *nitāi-pada-kamala, koṭi-candra-suśītala* ^[1] by Narottama Dasa Thakura accompanied by Sripad Puri Maharaja on *kartals* (hand cymbals) and the assembled devotees in honor of Lord Nityananda Prabhu's appearance day which is celebrated as Sri Nityananda Trayodasi.

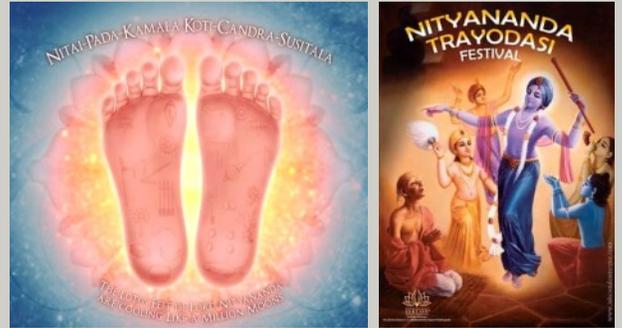


L-R Rasaraja Prabhu on *kartals*, Jayadeva Prabhu on *mridangam*, his daughter, Gita-Govinda and fortunate passer-by rocking to the rhythm of *Harinama*

nitāi-pada-kamala, koṭi-candra-suśītala
je chāyāy jagata jurāy
heno nitāi bine bhāi, rādhā-kṛṣṇa pāite nāi
dr̥ḍha kori' dharo nitāir pāy

"The lotus feet of Lord Nityananda are a shelter where one will get the soothing moonlight not only of one, but of millions of moons. If the world wants to have real peace, it should take

shelter of Lord Nityananda. Unless one takes shelter under the shade of the lotus feet of Lord Nityananda, it will be very difficult for him to approach Radha-Krsna. If one actually wants to enter into the dancing party of Radha-Krsna, he must firmly catch hold of the lotus feet of Lord Nityananda."^[1]



The Lotus Feet of Sri Nityananda Prabhu

What is the meaning of Lord Nityananda and Radha Krishna?' Sripad Puri Maharaja asked as he began speaking. In response, he said, "Lord Nityananda appears to us in His form as *guru* (spiritual teacher), the manifestation of the Lord's (Sri Krishna) mercy to graciously enlighten us about our original position as spirit souls, loving servants of the Lord. Radha Krishna means *prema* (loving devotional service) to the Lord. People are looking for love in this world but they are looking in the wrong place. Real love is for Krishna so Lord Nityananda (*guru*) gives us that opportunity to develop ourselves in Krishna consciousness, to engage ourselves in devotional service. If we come to *guru* and we don't engage in service and don't learn that we have a

position of service to the Supreme Lord then we have not understood properly what spiritual life is. We are missing the great opportunity that has been given to us. The Lord provides that opportunity for us through the grace of *guru*, devotees and scriptures. He provides the opportunity to serve Him by serving those who are engaged in the service of the Lord. Those who serve His servitors are also engaged in the service of the Lord. And when one reaches the perfection of loving service, when one wants to serve spontaneously and can't live without that service, then one has received the grace of Sri Sri Guru Gauranga Radha Krishna."

"Srimati Radharani, who is she? Sripad Puri Maharaja asked then said, "Radharani is the personification of *prema* (loving devotional service) and Krishna is *ashraya*, the shelter or refuge of all surrendered souls who serve Him - to Whom all services are directed. These are the teachings of guru, of the *acharyas*. If one doesn't get the shelter of Lord Nityananda, the association (meaning service) of *guru*, *sadhu* (saintly person), then how will we serve? Who will he serve?" In response, he said, "He will serve his own mental delusion, his own selfishly conditioned conceptions. Only with the real presence of the servitor of the Lord can we learn how to genuinely serve. We can't render this service on our own otherwise anyone can say 'Yes, I am serving God.' We have all seen that many times before in our lives. Anyone can take that position, that attitude, but they have no authentic experience of what service is. Service means to actually serve *guru* and *vaisnavs* (worshippers of Lord Krishna). This is quite different from mere sentiment."

"How to serve someone? We don't know how to do that actually. In this world everyone is really serving themselves. Everyone has some type of service in their life and it is always for another person, but we expect some reward for that." Sripad Puri Maharaja continued. Referring to one of the devotee in the audience as an example, he said, "Jayadev Prabhu is a teacher and he has to do so many things for the students. He can't just go there and think about what he wants. He has to look at the students to see what they need or he will not be doing the job he is being paid for. Those who are married, have to think of their spouse and what they want. They can't just think of themselves. We always have to think of someone else, and thus we are engaged in service for marital satisfaction. But what about the service of the Lord? How do we serve the Lord?" Sripad Puri Maharaja asked. In response he said,

"That also requires a personal relationship, a person to serve, otherwise it's just mental and the mental is very easy. It's called *sahajiya* [imagined enlightenment without surrender]. This is not service. Real service actually engages one in the service of others who are serving the Lord through *guru*. You have to serve the devotees, the *guru* and then that is a substantial thing. We may not take that lightly because that would be a great offense. The Lord is providing an opportunity for us to serve and we simply ignore it. What could be more unfortunate? Lord Nityananda is so merciful He gives that service opportunity to everyone without discrimination. He doesn't care for our qualifications or disqualifications. Anyone who comes can take up the Lord's service and He's willing to give us that opportunity."



L-R: Rasaraja Prabhu on mridangam, Sripad Puri Maharaja, Bhaktins: Dorothy and Madhu, Ved ji

"Those people who do volunteer work at the hospitals and so many places helping other people, are they doing the type of service you are talking about?" Bhaktin Dorothy asked. "They are doing service but that's worldly service. That's OK everyone has to do service.. You can't live in this world without service. If you don't go to work and work for somebody, how are you going to live? Even if you have your own business, you still have to serve your customers. That's service in this worldly plane of mundane existence. But that will only bring reaction to us (*karma*). Real service refers to the fifth dimension of life, *bhakti* (service of divinity)," Sripad Puri Maharaja responded. "There are *dharma* (duty), *artha* (work/wealth), *kama* (lust/enjoyment) and *moksha* (liberation). These are the four *Purusharthas* - four aims/dimensions of human life. If we do our duty, we make money and with that money we try to please ourselves, satisfy our senses. Then after we've done all of that we get tired of it and want to retire. All of those stages, even *Moksha*, relate to this world. To think 'I want to become free from this world' means it's related to this world. This desire for liberation relates to this world only, but beyond that there's something higher and that is *bhakti*, the dedicating/divine service world, the fifth dimension of life." Sripad Puri Maharaja explained. "Bhakti is totally outside worldly conditioned concerns. and that can only be understood by a *bhakta* (devotee). It's something we have

be raised up to. We have to practice that type of service and that is called *sadhana*. It requires the association of the *vaisnava* who has been trained under the discipline of *guru*, and who has satisfied him and received his grace, then we can possibly engage there otherwise it is not ordinary. We don't usually come to that position automatically. It's not a material thing, it's not a mental thing either. It's a transcendental spiritual activity. It has nothing to do with material, physical, mental, intellectual, or ego. Service is mercifully given to us by Krishna through His devotees" Sripad Puri Maharaja said.

"We are preaching to so many scientists on the Internet and they are very intellectual. They think everything can be done if they just think about it, calculate and figure it out in their minds. And they all have many different theories and ways of thinking about things. They believe their imaginations are the reality, but you can't reach the transcendental platform by such calculative endeavors," Sripad Puri Maharaja continued. "To learn how to approach the spiritual platform, the source or origin of the mental, physical, intellectual, rational, whatever there is in our experience in life and life itself, that is all coming from a deeper and broader substance called Spirit (*Brahma*)."

The first aphorism in the *Vedānta-sūtra*^[2] is *athāto brahma-jijñāsā*. Once one can appreciate the miraculous nature of this world, and how all our material activities can not satisfy our real interest by the mercy of *sadhu/guru*, it is called *athāto*. *Athāto* means 'now.' Now that you have realized the superficiality of mundane life, you should inquire from him about *brahma* (spirit), the spiritual, transcendental platform. Don't be so wrapped up and absorbed in the mundane, mental, physical and intellectual plane of existence. You have to understand what is higher than that - the knower of the mind, body and intellect. We are souls (*atma*). *Atma* means spirit and only spirit can understand what spirit is. It doesn't require mind, intelligence, nothing except *atma*," Sripad Puri Maharaja explained. "The *atma* can know itself and what is his land of true residence, his homeland. That is the transcendental plane, the spiritual world. He is a member of that plane, not of this mundane existence. *Athāto brahma-jijñāsā* – the first three words of the *Vedānta*, the conclusion of all knowledge is given by *Vedānta* and what does it start out with? 'Now' If you have some inkling of something beyond just this flickering existence (*athāto*)."

"*Brahma-jijñāsā* - *brahma* is spirit and *jijnasa* means 'inquire.' Now how do you inquire about what's beyond your

mind, your intelligence, your senses - how can you even know about *Brahma*? What is the process?" Sripad Puri Maharaja asked. "The same material has to be spirit also," Rasaraja das Prabhu responded. "Yes, but what is the process?" Sripad Puri Maharaja inquired further. "Approach *guru*," Jayadeva das Prabhu responded. "Yes, we have to approach *guru* and *shastra*. So *athāto* means once you understand something beyond this world, you have to go to someone who knows that which is beyond this plane and has some knowledge about that and how to get to that plane because we are caught in the mundane mind and intellect. Our whole life is created by that network but what has created that intelligence? What is the source of the intellect? The mind cannot be understood by the mind and intellect. With these limited things, how can we understand what has created mind or originated us?" Sripad Puri Maharaja asked in his response.



Assembled devotees engaged in *sravanam* (hearing).

"How does it relate to the body" Ved Gupta ji asked. "The body and mind both belong to the material plane but the soul is different. When the *atma* leaves, the body will remain like a piece of garbage that has to be buried in the ground or burned before it creates some pollution in the environment and stinks everything up," Sripad Puri Maharaja responded.

"How can we know that the *guru* is actually also realized?" Jayadeva das Prabhu asked. "According to *sastra* (scriptures) and *sadhu* (saintly person) *guru* can be understood. They must all be in agreement. If the *guru* is teaching something that is not in agreement with *sastra* and *sadhu*, then we have reason to question his validity. If they are teaching in accordance with them then we have to accept otherwise why will we reject them," Sripad Puri Maharaja responded. "We may have some inspiration in our hearts and some people spontaneously just come like that also. 'I am convinced by this person that he can give me some spiritual direction.' That may happen if we have that type of *sukriti* (good merits) in our life but otherwise if we're always doubting then we have to try to understand through other means that are around us. We can read scripture or get some advice from friends who we trust, then we may understand who is *guru* otherwise how will we know."

"Guru Maharaja gave an example that if you want to buy real gold, you have to find where the gold came from. In the same way he said if you want to find a *guru*, you have to inquire where that knowledge came from to him, so it has to be *guru-parampara* (disciplic succession). The association of *guru* that came in the line from Krishna that means you know that his knowledge came from Krishna through *guru parampara*," Rasaraja das Prabhu said.

"There are three ways we can know if guru is authentic – *guru, sastra* and *sadhu*. If whomever you approach as a *guru* has a bona fide *guru*, then we can accept. A person may not be on the transcendental platform themselves but if one preaches according to *guru, sastra* and *sadhu* then he is to be accepted," Sripad Puri Maharaja responded. "If the individual person we approach is a good messenger, if he doesn't interfere or tamper with the message that is coming from *guru, sastra* and *sadhu*, then we have to accept that message."

"There are so many talking about so many ways to follow and saying this is the correct way to live, so how to identify which is correct?" Ved Gupta ji asked. "We have to have a little knowledge, some intelligence to understand. Just like if you want to learn how to become a good businessman, then you may go to a good businessman to learn from him, if not, how else will you learn?" Sripad Puri Maharaja responded. "We have to go to a good teacher and we can understand that if I am learning how to do what I came for then this is a good teacher. If you don't learn, then you say, 'this is the wrong person for me.' So like this we have to have some good intentions within ourselves, good intelligence to understand what is right, what is wrong, what is good, what is bad and with that we can definitely approach the proper person. There's no reason why we would be cheated or misdirected if we are ourselves sincere. If you are sincere, Krishna will come in the form of *guru*. The Lord is not insensitive to us. Who is sincere about understanding his relation with the Lord, the Lord will not neglect us because He is as real and sincere as we are."

"Do you call Krishna, the Lord as the Christians call the Lord?" Bhaktin Dorothy asked. "Krishna is the supreme Lord or *Ishwara*. This means that everything is coming from Him and under His control. Whatever there is, even our service, our love, our intelligence, our mind, our body, whatever it may be it's coming from Krishna. He is the source of everything,"

Sripad Puri Maharaja responded. "So, I can mention the word, 'Lord' in referring to Krishna?" Bhaktin Dorothy further inquired. "Yes. The word Lord means who is the master. Of course Krishna is more than a master, He likes even more to be considered as the beloved son, lover, the friend also," Sripad Puri Maharaja explained.

"I feel I am soul, not body, so how should I behave in society?" Ved Gupta ji asked. "No, don't associate soul with this world. Only associate with devotees. We only associate with devotees. We don't associate with everybody. Association means to serve the devotee society so we only serve the devotees. We don't serve others. We have to serve others just to live but our heart's service is with the devotees, the Lord and *guru*. That is where our real attachment lies. We do everything else as duty," Sripad Puri Maharaja responded. "In Krishna *lila* (pastimes) the Gopies (cowherd girls) are married and they do their duties so perfectly to their husband so that the husbands will never suspect that they are going to Krishna for their real satisfaction. Their real joy is with Krishna not with the other things. They perform their duties perfectly in this world but in their hearts they have another mind, another interest and therefore it is called *parakiya* (paramour love). Not the ordinary love of husband and wife but paramour love. What we consider illicit love in this world, in that world (spiritual) it's the highest love because they know that their love is for Krishna and whatever they are doing, they are doing their duties so that nobody can disturb them. They want to be peaceful in this world, so they do their duties perfectly but really what they are thinking of is much higher. So we can learn from hearing about the pastimes of Krishna how His devotees act, think, feel and we can get some inspiration so we may serve them accordingly."

"In Sanskrit Krishna means dark. Dark means what you cannot see, only the lighted part we can see. Nityananda is the manifesting light by which we can see and Krishna is the dark that we cannot directly see. You can't see Krishna with these eyes. Krishna is actually the Supreme Negative (the Potent). What does that mean?" Sripad Puri Maharaja asked. "We can't directly relate to the negative with our positive or manifested body and senses. Only by negativity (surrender) can we enter the service world. We can easily understand the positive so Krishna sends the positive, potency or manifest energy to us and that is Nityananda. He manifests His mercy through Nityananda Prabhu. Balaram appears as Nityananda Prabhu in Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's^[3] *lila*. Balaram is the *Sandini shakti* (the manifesting potency) personified. He manifests/creates the

spiritual world, the bodies of the Gopas, trees, sacred *dharm*, rivers – the whole environment for the pastimes of Krishna.”



“The manifestation of the Lord in this plane is Nityananda Prabhu’s representative, *guru*. It is a very important energy for us who are conditioned souls. Without that manifestation of the Lord’s mercy how will we reach Krishna, the supreme negative? Negative means it’s attracting the positive. So Krishna is the attractor of everyone and everything. Thus another meaning of Krishna is the all-attractive. We can’t see that but we can feel it just like gravity. No one has ever seen gravity but you can feel it. Gravity is attracting everyone downward,” Sripad Puri Maharaja continued. “People cannot understand gravity because they cannot see it. It’s like a mysterious force. In a similar way Krishna is attracting us to the higher world of surrender and service through our hearts.”

“Nityananda Prabhu came to rescue the most fallen people in this *kaliyuga* (age of quarrel, hypocrisy and ignorance). He makes no discrimination of who is higher or lower in life. He gives a chance to everyone to approach Mahaprabhu,” Rasaraja das Prabhu said. “Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu was a *sannyasi* (renunciate) and more selective, so He sent Nityananda Prabhu to rescue the most fallen souls. Gurudev is an extension of Nityananda Prabhu. With the connection of *guru* we can get the connection to Krishna but not otherwise so Nityananda Prabhu is the original *guru*, the *adi-guru* (original guru).”

“Anyone who has eyes can see, anyone who has ears can hear, they can come in contact with Nityananda Prabhu. Krishna is a little difficult to reach. Nityananda Prabhu, gurudev and vaisnavas are our most direct connection to Krishna” Sripad Puri Maharaja said.

With this, our most wonderful *hari katha* came to an end and as an added surprise Jayadeva das Prabhu distributed a gift to all the devotees, color copies of his masterpiece painting of Sri Nityananda Prabhu, which was appreciated by all.



Prasadam was served and honored by all as our festival of Sri Nityananda Trayodasi concluded.

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

<p>Your humble servant, Kushum Devi Dasi (New York)</p>		<p>Service Donations https://ipn.intuit.com/pay/Bhaktivedantalinstitute</p>
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[1] *Nitai Pada Kamala* by Narottama Dasa Thakura
<http://kksongs.org/songs/n/nitai-padakamala.html>

[2] <http://www.vedabase.com/en/sb/4/25/26>

[3] Sri Krishna Chaitanya Mahaprabhu appeared in in Mayapur, West Bengal, India in 1486. Although He is the Supreme Lord Himself, Sri Krishna, He posed as a devotee, and revealed the most sublime sentiments and the natural disposition of a devotee. He taught us by His own example how to establish a connection with the Lord through the practice of pure devotion. Sri Rupa Goswami has glorified Lord Chaitanya as being the most munificent Lord because He freely distributed pure love of Godhead.

People were created to *be loved*. Things were created to *be used*. The reason the world is in chaos is because things are being loved and people are being used.