



PRINCETON BHAKTI VEDANTA INSTITUTE

REPORT - JULY 15, 2017

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Karma, Moksha, and Bhakti

One of our guests, Zhanna, set the topic for today's discussion on *karma*. She began explaining about her difficulty in getting to our sanga with Sripad Bhakti Madhava Puri Maharaja. PhD, (Sripad Puri Maharaja) at Princeton Bhakti Vedanta Institute's (BVI) due to the pain she has been suffering from lately. "Pain, pleasure, happiness, distress, are all the results of karma," Sripad Puri Maharaja said. In *Bhagavad-gita* 2.14 Krishna advises that we should tolerate pleasure and pain like the passing seasons of winter and summer.

"I was reading something about *karma* and they said that if you have bad *karma*, suffering physically, that bad *karma* is from your previous life and what you do now, you will also suffer *karma* from this life, but in the next life it would be better," Zhanna said. "Every action produces a reaction according to Newton's third law, and that is also the law of karma. So whatever we are doing is causing *karma* and whatever we are getting is *karma* also. What we need to do is find out what is the root cause of *karma* and how to free ourselves from that." Sripad Puri Maharaja said. "Basically, by serving Krishna and His devotees such actions free us from karma and prepare the way for liberation from the karmic world of birth and death, and entrance to the eternal world of divine love.



Sripad Puri Maharaja with Rasaraja das Prabhu during Harinam kirtan

"In a recent online debate one participant was stating that 'everything is energy' and I simply said, you can't just have energy without a source for that energy. If you find energy then you have to ask where did that energy come from, how was it generated?" Sripad Puri Maharaja said. "A dynamo produces energy like electricity. Electricity is not just floating in the air, it

is coming from a source. Today we speak of 'clean and renewable energy' and that basically refers to the source of that energy, whether it comes from a source that will pollute the environment or not. Energy will be the same regardless of the source. You can get it from coal, water, wind, the Sun, and so on. Coal energy is not renewable because it has to be mined from the earth where it formed over millions of years and being a limited supply it may eventually run out. It is also not a clean source of power because of the carbon that is fed into the environment when it burns. Solar, wind, tidal energy are a bit better but the point is that a source of the energy is needed whenever we think of energy. People are saying we need electricity which is very important for the modern lifestyle. However, when they talk about energy they must also realize that the source of that energy must be considered simultaneously."

Sripad Puri Maharaja continued, "The source is the other side of the energy. The most significant thing we tend to forget is where all the energy is coming from. In a similar way we have to think where is all the *karma* coming from? In other words, we don't want to think that I am suffering my *karma* only but is it even possible to live a *karma* free life? How do I live in such a way that I don't get that kind of reaction or how to put an end to it all? If I understand what the source of everything is, where it is all coming from then I can understand how to get beyond reactions of *karma*. We don't have to try to stop acting. We just have to direct our actions toward the center, the source. "



Guest, Zhanna with Sripad Puri Maharaja

“Action and reaction is called *samsara* which is like a circle of repeated birth and death. An activity causes a result and the result causes another activity, like that it goes around like a vicious circle so how to get free of that *karmic* cycle?” Sripad Puri Maharaja asked. “By focusing all activities toward the center everything will be properly adjusted. Krishna says in the *Bhagavatd-gita*: ‘*Aham sarvasya prabhavo* - I am the source of everything.’ Srila Bhakti Raksaka Sridhara Maharaja’s^[1] *Bhagavad Gita - The Hidden Treasure of the Sweet Absolute*, 10.8 confirms this:

*aham sarvasya prabhavo
mattah sarvam pravartate
iti matva bhajante mam
budha bhava-samanvitah*

“I am Krsna, the Sweet Absolute, the origin of all. The entire universe of material and transcendental play, activity, purpose, and the Vedas and allied scriptures which give guidance -all evolve from Me alone. Realizing this hidden treasure, persons of fine theistic intelligence surpass the mundane and embrace the path of love divine, *rāga-marga*, and adore Me forever.”

“What is the meaning of artificial intelligence like we see in machines = the computers? How is it different from genuine intelligence? Zhanna asked. “With real intelligence we will be able to understand that there’s a source of everything,” Sripad Puri Maharaja replied. “In science the word energy means the ability to perform work, to do something, to change the situation in some way. Just like the energy that produces this light helps us to see things in the room, it is also cooling the atmosphere by operating the air conditioner. Energy can do so many different things and can be applied in so many different ways. Energy doesn’t change. It’s the same energy that does different things according to the machine it activates. The main point is that energy has to come from somewhere. It’s not that it is just available without a source” Sripad Puri Maharaja said then asked, “What does conscious energy mean?” In response he said, “The ability to recognize things, the ability to see, know and think. All of these require some kind of energy. That we call *cit Shakti* (conscious energy) and what is that? It gives us the ability to know things.”

“Where does that conscious energy come from?” Sripad Puri Maharaja asked then said, “People don’t inquire about such things. That is what is missing in this world. They are lacking inquisitiveness about the source as if it weren’t there at all and that is the problem. It is only common sense: The source of energy has to be there. Energy doesn’t just float in the air like that. It has to come from somewhere. And conscious energy has to come from a conscious source – the *abhijna svarat* – the independent divine cognitive being (*Srimad Bhagavatam* 1.1.1)”

“I think they don’t go to find the answer because they probably don’t know where to search,” Rasaraja das Prabhu said. “At the least they

may understand there has to be a source. It doesn’t mean they know what that source is but there has to be a source and that much they have to know,” Sripad Puri Maharaja responded. “Sunshine is the energy coming from the sun. The sun has to be there if there’s sunshine. You cannot have the sunshine without the source, which is the sun-globe. Everything has a source. In *Vedanta-sutra* it confirms, *janmadi asya yatah*. In *Srimad Bhagavatam* it repeats *janmadi asya yatah*. In the end I said to that gentleman, ‘If you can understand this much, then you may understand that the energy must not be utilized for any and all purposes for yourself or for anyone else. What is our relation to that source? Energy comes from that source, we come from that source and therefore we have to learn how to utilize everything properly in relation to whom they are coming from and to whom they belong to.’”

“Everything is being provided for us and we can take according to our needs. The provider is one we don’t usually think about. Some give thanks to God before they eat. Those of meager intelligence, *alpa-medasah* do not think of the source. Those of good intelligence *sumedasah* engage in *sankirtan*, glorify the Lord, the source of everything. This is told in the *Srimad Bhagavatm* 11.5.2

*krsna-varnam tvisakrsnam sangopangastra-parsadam
yajnaih sankirtana-prayair yajanti hi su-medhasah*

In general we want to understand two things: (1) there is God, the source of everything and, (2) I am not that source,” Sripad Puri Maharaja concluded.

“There’s a process for developing Krishna consciousness, *bhakti-yoga*, that teaches us how to direct all our activities toward the center, the source, toward Krishna. There will be no unfavorable reaction for that, rather everything will free us from mundane entanglement in the actions and reactions of karma. Serving Krishna properly under guidance of guru can make our hearts free from all our habituated engagements in so many activities that are not centered in Krishna. We can get free from all of that by the practice of *yoga*,” Sripad Puri Maharaja continued. “*Yoga* means to control the mind, to withdraw it from all the splayed out thoughts and misconceptions, from all extraneous activities and focus it on the source, the origin of everything - that’s *bhakti yoga*. The whole practice of *bhakti yoga* is for that purpose only – chanting the holy names of Krishna, reading the books about Krishna and His devotees, offering food to Krishna, offering incense and flowers. Offering yourself, your energy knowing that that energy you have belongs to Him. It’s not yours. You are offering it to Him but it is not yours to begin with. It is actually His but we are trying to clear away that sense of ‘mine’ by our activities, thoughts, and feelings in the knowledge that everything is coming from Krishna. The source is within us and is outside of us also. To mediate in that way brings us to a different understanding of reality. Once we transcend the sphere of non-Krishna centered existence and again focus on the source, all the pains of *karma* are not relevant to us anymore because you already understood what is beyond that through the grace of the great sages, saints, and *sadhus* who are teaching us. As

soon as we find our true, higher purpose, understand the truth and live according to that truth, it is not necessary for *karma* to correct us. *Karma* is for those who don't understand properly and need to be adjusted." After a brief pause, Sripad Puri Maharaja said, "*Moksha* (liberation from the plane of action/reaction) is already there for the *bhakta*, the devotee. We do not have to do anything to get there, it is already available by the grace of guru and Krishna. With our knowledge, hearts, minds properly focused in love for Krishna, we can automatically achieve liberation."

Sripad Puri Maharaja then asked if anyone had a question or personal experience they'd like to share.

"You never heard Mother Theresa give speeches like 'Oh I will tell you how to get rich. You give me \$3,000 and I will bless you with what you have to do to become rich,' Zhanna said. "I still don't understand how they get all that millions of dollars, then they publish their books on all this fake preaching and it is tax free."



Rasaraja das Prabhu, Sripad Puri Maharaja with Zhanna during sadhu sanga

"Mother Theresa used to work and live among the poorest people. She believed that until you can see the face of Christ in the poor, you haven't understood God. That is being God centered, when you never forget God even in the least among us. That was Mahaprabhu's teaching," Sripad Puri Maharaja said.

"What do you think about the bad and good energy that comes from people?" Zhanna asked. "When bad energy comes from a person, I see that as a maladjusted spirit soul," Sripad Puri Maharaja responded. "Sometimes they may have to go in the wrong direction before they can go in the right direction. By the grace of guru and Krishna we pray they may always keep us progressing in the proper direction."

"Darkness is like ignorance. If you get the light of knowledge, then darkness will not affect you," Rasaraja das Prabhu said. "Well the darkness will not affect you but when you deal with some people who don't want to listen to you, then you just have to walk away from this situation because I don't want to be badly or negatively influence by this person," Zhanna said. "He or she will not change my world view but I am emotionally suffering when I'm treated badly like that."

"Even when you are in a situation that is not positive, Krishna is also behind that," Rasaraja das Prabhu said. "It's kind of like a test if we are actually strong in our faith in Him. If there's no test, there's no way to know if you are prepared or not. Everything happens for some reason."

"We are also advised not to see any fault in the environment. Whatever I am seeing that looks like a fault is actually my defect that's letting me see my own inner fault on the outside. Christ said, 'Don't criticize the chip on somebody else's shoulder. The log in your eye is causing the problem.' If you can think like that, you will make the quickest advancement," Sripad Puri Maharaja said.



With this our wonderful *sadhu sanga* came to an end after *prasadam* was served and honored by all.

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

<p>Your humble servant, Kushum Devi Dasi (New York)</p>		<p>Donations via Pay Pal http://bviscs.org/ donation</p>
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