



PRINCETON BHAKTI VEDANTA INSTITUTE

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Radhastami - The Appearance of Sri Radha

Rasaraja das Prabhu and Srngara mataji on *kartals* (hand cymbals) accompanied by Syamasundara das Prabhu on guitar opened Harinam sankirtan at the Bhakti Vedanta Institute (BVI) at Princeton University as we celebrated Sri Radhastami – the appearance day of Srimati Radharani, the eternal consort of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Sri Krishna as Sripad Bhakti Madhava Puri Maharaja, Ph.D (Sripad Puri Maharaja) joined in with BVI friends, Dorothy and Ralph. "Today we are celebrating *Radhastami*, the appearance day of Srimati Radharani," Sripad Puri Maharaja said as he opened our weekly *sadhu sanga*. "Sri Radha is the divine consort of Sri Krishna Whom we worship together as Sri Sri Radha-Krishna."



The altar at Princeton Bhakti Vedanta Institute

"Some people complain, 'Why do you think God is only male? They have no explanation why God should only be male,'" Sripad Puri Maharaja said as guest, Ralph asked, 'How do you know God is a male?' "Generally Christians say Jesus and God the Father are both male," Sripad Puri Maharaja responded. "So in Christian religion, Jesus is God?" Ralph followed-up with. "Jesus is considered as the son of God. There are three persons – the Father (male), the Son (male) and the Holy Ghost (dove,fowl). The female is not represented there. In Judism, Jehova Witnesses, Islam and so many other religions God is

also male, no female representative," Sripad Puri Maharaja responded. "In the Vaisnava (worshippers of Lord Vishnu) tradition, God is Krishna and Radha. Krishna is the male and Radha is the female counterpart. Together They make up the Absolute Truth. We don't refer to Krishna by Himself. That doesn't mean anything to us but Radha and Krishna means everything to us. That is called the Absolute Truth – Radha-Krishna (male and female). The Gaudiya Vaisnavas also include Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, so that Radha-Krishna in union, Mahaprabhu in separation, and Gurudev, the topmost devotee servitor represent the complete expression of the Absolute."

"The Absolute Truth is one. It's called *advay jnana* (non-dual). There are both duality and non-duality. The non-dual is the negation of the dual. Non-duality does not imply numerical oneness. Rather it's a dynamic unity that results from the negation of duality. In this world we have all kinds of dualities, like subject and object, good and bad, finite and infinite - everything has its opposite in the material world," Sripad Puri Maharaja said. "In the transcendental world, Radha and Krishna are not merely two, They are one also but Their two-ness and Their one-ness are not contradictory to one another. Ontologically They are simultaneously one and different," Sripad Puri Maharaja continued then mentioned that Srila Govinda Maharaja's once gave the example, "It's like a word and its meaning. When you utter a word, automatically there's a meaning associated with it. The word and the meaning are not separate from one another. You can not have a word without meaning and you

cannot have the meaning without the word, isn't it? So the meaning and the word are inseparable but different at the same time. The meaning (mind) is internal. The word is the utterance, the externalization of what is internal."

"While you were mentioning an example, it came to my mind we have the same situation in our religion. One of the priests use to compare the idea of Trinity with water, oxygen and hydrogen but water is only one, not two separate things," guest, Dorothy said.



Shyasundara das Prabhu, Sripad Puri Maharaja and guest, Ralph during kirtan

"Radha is the personification of Krishna's pleasure potency – *hladini shakti*. Krishna is also called Govinda which means He is the enjoyer of the senses and cows, *Go*, and Radha is His own potency of pleasure or fulfillment as a differentiated expression of His own blissful nature." Sripad Puri Maharaja explained. "In the spiritual world is comprised of *sat, chit, ananda*. *Sat* refers to its eternally existing truth, *chit* refers to its self illumined cognitive nature, and *ananda* refers to its ever fulfilling blissful nature. The spiritual world is thus eternal, blissful and fully self cognizant. The enjoyed and the enjoyer in the mundane understanding are considered two different things but because Krishna as the enjoyer is Absolute, containing all contradictions, the enjoyed isn't left out. Whatever pleasure Krishna enjoys, Radharani also experiences that. It's not a selfish enjoyment. It's an enjoyment that is distributed to all at the same time. Krishna is the root of all His creations, the original source of everything spiritual and material, *Adi Purusha* (first person). So when He enjoys all else connected with Him becomes fully satisfied. Just as pouring water on the root nourishes the whole tree, similarly each person doesn't have to endeavor separately for their own enjoyment. By serving Krishna's pleasure, His enjoyment is distributed to all. That *ananda* or sweetness is Krishna's essence."

"Many people pray to God as if He were their own personal order-supplier. They don't properly understand that He is the enjoyer and has to be satisfied. The Absolute Truth is not only existing in Himself but also for Himself. In *Bhagavad-*

gita 9.24 Krishna tells Arjuna, *aham hi sarva-yajnanam*, 'I am the enjoyer of all the sacrifices you make.' Devotees joyfully sacrifice their own self interests to serve and satisfy Guru and Krishna. This is the meaning of 'die to live.' The fulfillment and satisfaction that we are all seeking is originally coming from Him but because we don't understand our relationship with the enjoying nature of the Supreme Lord, we only think of our enjoyment separate from His and thus we are creating for ourselves action and reaction (*karma*). That is where *karma* comes from. When we understand that enjoyment is not for ourselves separately but for Him, then there's no *karma* in our activities of such service." Sripad Puri Maharaja explained. Referencing the *prasadam* (food offered to Krishna first before eaten) made for the Harinam program, he said, "That wonderful tasting *prasadam* we honor as Krishna's mercy, is no more ordinary food. If you cook and eat food from the environment you are killing all those living entities in the vegetables, grains and fruits. That is a criminal act and there is some *karma* for doing that. But if you take that same food and offer it to Krishna as a sacrifice it becomes *prasadam* (mercy), *karma* free. Krishna is purifying the act of eating. First we have to purify our mentality: 'I am not going to exploit the environment for my own enjoyment but first let me please Krishna.' Through that ray of faith, *kunti*, when we act to please Him we will find inner fulfillment and joy, *bhava*, by the mercy of His *hladini shakti*, Sri Radhika."



Srngara mataji teaching Nitai das to play kartals with Rasaraja das Prabhu

After a brief pause, Sripad Puri Maharaja said, "It is also mentioned in the Old Testament of the Bible that sacrifice of a goat or lamb must be made to God before you can eat it. That kind of offering may not be made to Krishna, however, because He accepts only simple foods like fruits, vegetables, grains and water, '*patram puspam phalam toyam*' as He explains in the *Bhagavad-gita* 9.26. By preparing and offering such foods with devotion they take on a sacred significance that transforms the taste for the devotees who honor it. In this way Krishna is giving pleasure to His devotees through the love and devotion that is put into the preparation and offering of the food to Him. The whole process becomes purifying for us. We become freed from

the desire to immediately satisfy our senses forgetful of Krishna. So we have to be a little sober to understand devotional service.” Sripad Puri Maharaja continued. “These things are given in the scriptures for those who are more thoughtful about the deeper significance of reality. Don’t live a life of ignorance because ignorance causes misery. The misery that people are experiencing in this world is due to not knowing the true nature and structure of reality as an organic whole of which they are an infinitesimal part.”

“Do Radha and Krishna have children?” Dorothy asked. “Parenthood is another kind of relationship. Radha and Krishna are more like the loving relation of boyfriend and girlfriend in the higher plane. Outside that most intimate circle there is also the plane of divine relationship of marriage and children,” Sripad Puri Maharaja responded then asked, why is that so. In response he said, “In married life there are some rules: you are married to this woman, you cannot go to that woman. In the boyfriend/girlfriend stage there is more spontaneity. freedom. In the spiritual world that freedom is very important. The highest plane is spontaneous love. Love without any restrictions. You are not forced in some way to be with this person or that person due to social sanctions, but because of love for its own sake. Radha and Krishna are together because They have intense love for one another and not because of any marriage contract or anything like that. Pure love is based on pure freedom or spontaneity- that is the highest form of love. There cannot be any sense of duty or restriction. The whole thing is governed purely by love alone.”



L-R: Rasaraja Prabhu, Sripad Puri Maharaja, guests: Ralph and Dorothy

“I think a little of that idea is in Judaism. On Saturday after morning service, you are supposed to love each other for the rest of the whole day,” Ralph laughingly said as he added “Whatever that means.” “Loving each other and loving God are not exactly the same thing,” Sripad Puri Maharaja said. “Christ said, ‘Love God above all and love your neighbor as yourself.’ It’s not that we love God and don’t love anybody

else, or love everyone else but not God. It requires proper conception. If we properly understand Krishna as the Absolute we know that He is not just some solitary being. Everything is included within Him, therefore, Krishna is everywhere and if we love Krishna we will love everyone automatically. Such love will be there not only for human beings but for insects, the environment, the animals. I have seen that Srila Sridhar Maharaja would not even swat the mosquitos that landed on him.”

“During Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu’s^[2] pastimes a devotee named Vasudeva had leprosy and on his skin there were maggots. Whenever his skin would fall off with the maggots Vasudeva would pick them up and put them back on his body so they could have their food. What is the vision of such a devotee?” Sripad Puri Maharaja continued. “Jesus Christ had to wear a crown of thorns to mock Him as the king of Jews. He had to suffer the indignity of carrying the cross upon which they intended to hang him. Beating and spitting on Him, He was nailed to the cross. Throughout the day the weight of his body would pull him down and eventually suffocate Him in a very painful and slow death. In the end He simply prayed: ‘Father forgive them for they know not what they are doing.’ He didn’t see that they were doing something wrong. They were insulting and punishing him in such a terrible way, yet His heart was full of love of God. ‘I am only teaching love but they want to show their hatred for me. They don’t understand.’ Thus He taught how to show kindness, compassion, and love even towards your enemies.”

Not seeing a picture of Srimati Radharani and Krishna at the BVI center, Dorothy asked, “I am surprised you don’t have a picture of Radha and Krishna here. How come you don’t have Their picture?” “Well, this really is a center for preaching, and we are not here all the time for worship like in a temple. We feel Radha and Krishna require a certain amount of more direct worship. This is a more informal center for chanting and preaching - that is our *puja* (worship) of Guru Gauranga (Mahaprabhu),” Sripad Puri Maharaja responded. “Mahaprabhu and Nityananda Prabhu are very merciful. They accept and encourage chanting and preaching without requiring other formalities of worship. Sri Sri Radha-Krishna also appreciate that but we like to give Them more direct attention.”

“How did Radha appear?” Dorothy followed-up with. “King Vrsabanuraja would go to the Yamuna river for his daily ablutions and one day he saw this big lotus flower floating down the river. He looked inside and saw this beautiful little baby girl in the lotus flower,” Sripad Puri Maharaja responded. “So he took that baby and brought Her back to his palace and gave Her to his wife, Kirtida. Kirtida devi had wanted a child so much that they immediately adopted Her because they did not know who her parents were. However, it appeared that the child was blind since She would not open Her eyes to see anything. Kirtida devi was very happy, regardless and she invited everyone to come to bless her child, including the parents

of Krishna, Mother Yasodha and Nanda Maharaja. They came with Krishna to see the beautiful baby girl and to congratulate King Vrsabanuraja and Kirtida devi. Baby Krishna also wanted to see that baby so He crawled up close to see Her. As soon as He looked at Radha's face Her eyes opened. The first thing that She saw was Krishna's face looking at Her. Her two beautiful lotus eyes opened and the first thing She saw was Krishna's enchanting lotus face. She didn't want to see anything else first but Krishna."



Baby Krishna meets baby Radharani for the first time

"Yes, Krishna at that time was also a baby," Rasaraja Prabhu clarified for the guests.

Sripada Puri Maharaja said. "These things should not to be taken as just stories. We don't know Krishna's ways of doing things. We are simply happy that we can serve Them. As far as our services are concerned, whom do we serve, Radha or Krishna?" Sripad Puri Maharaja asked his attentive audience, then responded, "Some people want to serve Krishna and some are serving Srimati Radharani. 'I can serve Radharani because by serving Her I can please Krishna.' Others are thinking, 'I want to serve Krishna so I can please Radharani.' The followers of Srila Rupa Goswami want to serve Radha."

"Who came first?" Dorothy asked. Laughingly Sripad Puri Maharaja said, "They both came first. Krishna and His pleasure potency are both the original Personality of Godhead. It's not that one came before the other. The conception of Radha and Krishna forms a more complete idea of God than the notion of just a Male or just a Female Goddess." "Can They be separated?" Ralph asked. "They can experience feeling separated, but that is only because there is an underlying unity or bond of love between Them. We previously mentioned that for a word and its meaning we cannot discern which comes first. Without the meaning there will be no word and without the word there will no meaning to talk about. Like a coin - do you make the head first or the tail first?" Sripad Puri Maharaja asked as everyone began laughing. "You cannot make a coin like that. It has two sides right from the beginning otherwise there's no coin. So we worship Radha-Krishna in union and separation, as one and different." Sripad Puri Maharaja

responded then asked why would we want to serve and please Radharani? Why are we attracted to Radharani more than Krishna? What is the mentality of a vaisnava who thinks in such a way?" In response, he said, "Radharani is serving Krishna with so much love, such purity and intensity with all Her heart, body, strength and energy in a completely non-selfish way. Because devotees also desire to serve in that way that draws our attention and admiration to Her. The complete immersion in loving dedication and service that Her life and personality exemplify attracts us even more than Krishna Himself, from whom everything is coming," Sripad Puri Maharaja continued. "Krishna's position is very wonderful but to see the kind of intense love in serving Krishna that Radharani has we become very attracted to Her because devotees are also striving for that. We want to have that kind of intense serving mood in our lives. So wherever we see that kind of mood we want to surrender our hearts there. There we find Guru. Those looking for devotional service find that to be the most attractive feature of Divinity, so spontaneously vaisnavs are more attracted to Radha than to Krishna."



Front L-R: Nitai, Srngara mataji and Syanasundara das. Back L-R: Ralph, Sripad Puri Maharaja, Rasaraja das and Dorothy

Krishna is called *Bhagavan*. *Bhaga* means opulence. Krishna is the source of everything - the spiritual world, *vaikuntha*, the material world, even devotion to Him is all the opulence of the Lord. *Van* means the possessor of that opulence. So when we think of Krishna, we may think of Bhagavan, but Srimati Radharani is different. Her chief quality is Her pure loving service to Krishna which She distributes to all as faith and devotion. The name Radha comes from the Sanskrit word *aradhana*, which means 'to worship,'" Sripad Puri Maharaja explained. "The highest worshipper of the Supreme Lord Krishna, the Supreme Servitor Godhead who is always most pleasing to the Lord is Srimati Radharani."

With this our wonderful Radhasthami *sadhu sangha* concluded after *prasadam* was served and honored by all.

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