

# PRINCETON BHAKTI VEDANTA INSTITUTE

## REPORT - OCTOBER 22, 2016

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### Vyasa Puja of Srila B. R. Sridhar Deva Goswami Maharaja

"Today we are celebrating *Kartik (Damodar Maas* - the holiest month in the Vaisnava lunar calendar) and Srila Bhatki Rakshak Sridhardeva Goswami Maharaj's<sup>[1]</sup> appearance day. During the month of Damodar we offer lamps (*deep dan*) to Lord Damodar (childhood form of Sri Krishna), and we will chant the *Damodarastakam*. For Srila Sridhara Maharaja's *Vyas Puja* we will offer flower petals and sing *Sri Guru Vandana*," Sripad Bhakti Madhava Puri Maharaja, Ph.D (Sripad Puri Maharaja) said. "Within this *Kartik* month there are several other auspicious festivals being celebrated like *Govardhan Puja*, *Diwali*, and others."

While offering flower petals and obeisances Sripad Puri Maharaja with kartals began our *sadhu sanga* with Srila Sridhara Maharaja's *Vyas Puja* chanting along with the devotees "*śrī guru caraṇa padma, kevala bhakati sadma*<sup>[2]</sup>" by Narottama Dasa Thakura from the *Prema Bhakti Candrika*. We then chanted *Damodarastaka*,<sup>[3]</sup> '*namā-īśvaram sac-cid-ānanda-rūpam/ lasat kuṇḍalaṁ*

*gokule bhrājamaṇam*'. This prayer describes the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Sri Krishna's early childhood pastime of running from Yasoda Mata (His mother) when she tried to punish Him for stealing butter from the *gopis*, the cowherd women of Vrindavan. During this special month of Kartik, devotees around the world sing these eight (8) verses of prayers every day. Each verse describes various exceptional qualities and features of Sri Krishna's childhood pastimes. We chanted the Sanskrit and read the English translations.



**Mother Yasoda chasing Sri Krishna to punish Him by tying Him to a wooden mortar.**

"Oh, this is very good," Dorothy said as she read verse six of the *Damodarastakam*.

*namo deva dāmodarānanta viṣṇo  
prasīda prabho duḥkha-jālābdhi-magnam  
kṛpā-dṛṣṭi-vṛṣṭyāti-dīnaṁ batānu  
gṛhāṇeṣa mām ajñam edhy akṣi-dṛśyaḥ*

“I bow down to you O Supreme Limitless Lord Damodar. O Master, be pleased to bestow Your merciful glance upon me, and deliver this poor ignorant fool who is submerged in an ocean of misery and become visible to my eyes. ”

“By the mercy of Sri Guru (spiritual teacher), we have such beautiful prayers, songs, and thoughts upon which to meditate” Sripad Puri Maharaja said. “Sri Guru is the mercy incarnation (avatar) of Krishna, ‘*ācāryam mām vijānīyān.*’” This is confirmed in the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* 11.17.27:

*ācāryam mām vijānīyān  
nāvanmanyeta karhicit  
na martya-buddhyāsūyeta  
sarva-deva-mayo guruḥ*

“One should know the *ācārya* as Myself and never disrespect him in any way. One should not envy him, thinking him an ordinary man, for he is the representative of all the demigods.”

“*Gurudev* manifests in this world as the mercy incarnation of the supreme Lord. Everyone has a mother. Some are not so fortunate to have a mother that may seem not to care about them but most people have mothers who very much care about their children. Mothers have that natural tendency to selflessly care for their offspring. Mothers may also be considered a natural kind of mercy manifesting the Lord’s unconditional love for each of us,” Sripad Puri Maharaja said. “It is through mother that we have our first birth in this life of material existence and through initiation by Guru we are given a second birth into the

transcendental world of loving service. We may first experience and learn what unconditional love is from a mother but *Gurudev* is teaching us unconditional love for Krishna. Soldiers are willing to sacrifice their own lives for the freedom and security of their families and countrymen. Thus love and freedom are ideals that we hold more dear than life itself. Socrates in the *Phaedo* says essentially that philosophy means learning to die. In other words, to raise one’s attention from the immediate world of the body and senses to the mediate world of pure thinking is like willingly separating the soul from the body which we call death. Thus truth and the ideal of a contemplative life are held to be more valuable than a life of material enjoyment.”



**Rasaraja das Prabhu and Dorothy with Sripad Puri Maharaja.**

“Yet these ideals although detached from sensuous reality are not free of self-interest or extended self interest. It is only when the conception of the independent self is relinquished as a false notion, the false ego, or we may call it self-forgetfulness, that real devotion, dedication and love for its own sake may be realized. *Gurudev* comes to give us thorough transcendental knowledge the second birth into the self-forgetful world of unconditional love of the Lord. The opportunity to come in contact with guru is already a connection with the unconditional mercy of Krishna,” Sripad Puri Maharaja continued. “Out of unconditional love for her children even if they become criminals a mother still sees their lovable nature. Christ forgave those who betrayed him and even those who killed Him.

Krishna equally accepted the love of animals like monkeys, elephants and birds as His devotees. In a similar way when we come to Guru, he doesn't look at our bad qualities, misdeeds or sinful activities. He is only concerned with how he can help a lost soul establish his loving service connection with Krishna. Whatever has been done out of ignorance is forgiven by the mercy of Sri Guru and Gauranga and the path for establishing a loving relationship with Krishna is laid out for us by Their grace. Second birth gives us the opportunity to connect with the conscious plane of *bhakti* (devotion, dedication) and that divine consciousness is coming through *divya jnana* (divine teaching/knowledge) from the words and character (*achar*) of Gurudev or Acharya, and his gracious affection for us. From our side we must also have an affectionate relationship with Guru that includes a submissive attitude (*pranipat*), humble desire to make progress (*pariprasna*), and eagerness to follow the higher ideal of service (*sevaya*)."



**Rasaraja das Prabhu offering obeisances to Srila Sridhar Maharaja for Vyasa Puja**

*devam divya-tanum suchanda-vadanam  
balarka-celancitam  
sandrananda-puram sad-eka-varanam vairagya-  
vidyambudhim  
sri-siddhanta-nidhim subhakti-lasitam  
sarasvatanam-varam*

*vande tam subhadam mad-eka-saranam  
nyasisvaram sridharam*

"I fall at the feet of Srila Sridhar Dev, who with charming expression sings his songs of sweet nectar. Dressed in fine garments like the newly-risen sun, he is the true saint, the devotees have chosen. His detachment and knowledge are just like an ocean, the treasurehouse of complete, perfect conclusions. Radiant in pastimes of loving devotion, the abode of pure ecstasy, bestower of good fortune; foremost true follower of Srila Bhakti Siddhanta, foremost great general of the whole renounced order, my lord and my master, my only shelter, I worship his feet, Srila Sridhar Dev."



**Bakula Mataji and Surottama das Prabhu later joined the celebration.**

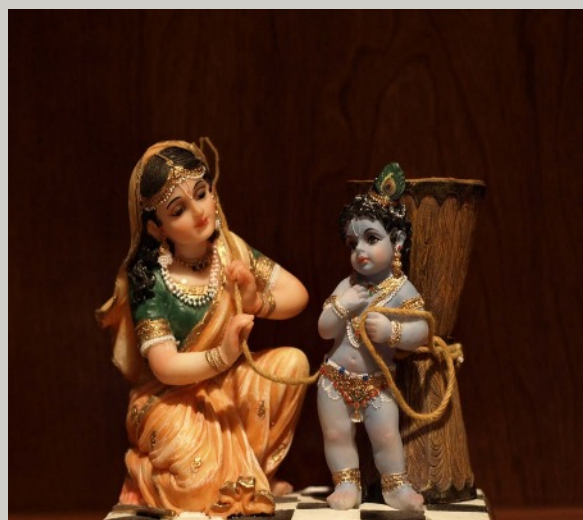
"You said there's another world, when we die do we go to another world?" Dorothy asked. "Well it's not like changing from one planet to another, it's more like a change in heart or consciousness," Sripad Puri Maharaja responded.

"If its reincarnation will we be there in a different world?" Dorothy followed-up with. "We try to think in terms of the evolution of consciousness. Everything that we experience is due to our consciousness. If there were no consciousness there would be no conception of a world. There would be nothing because consciousness is like a light that reveals everything to us. If there were only darkness we could not see or know anything. Our consciousness determines everything we

experience, so when our consciousness is conditioned by selfish enjoyment we conceive a world external to us which we can overlord, and that is called material energy. But when consciousness is purified of that type of conditioning we will be conscious of things differently. That kind of purification or change of consciousness, change of heart is what allows you entrance even into the highest plane of the spiritual world called Goloka. Consciousness refers to your conception or knowing that is created by thinking, so transcendental consciousness or purified thinking is required to experience the spiritual worlds of divinity," Sripad Puri Maharaja continued. "Not that you can get into a spaceship and go to Goloka. You would not be able to go there like that. It's not that kind of a place. It's a place that is already within you, but covered by misconception. When Krishna is pleased to purify our hearts and our consciousness of all mundane desires and misconceptions, then only may we be given the divine eyes to see His world. Everything happens in that plane by His grace."

Referring to verse three (3) of the *Damodarastakam*, Sripad Puri Maharaja quoted, "He is only conquered by devotees whose pure love is imbued with intimacy and is free from all conceptions of awe and reverence.' The high conception contained in that line reveals the one and different nature, *acintya bedha bedha tattva*, of the Lord and His devotees. It is not a matter of greater or lesser as some philosophers and religious traditions conceive of God. The form of Krishna who mother Yasoda was able to bind with the rope of affection is called *Damodar*, because

He was bound around His belly. Because Krishna encompasses the Totality of all existence within His belly it is greater than anything or anyone within it. Since a rope is a finite thing of this world it cannot be used to measure the totality that is within Krishna, then how did that rope go around His waist?" Sripad Puri Maharaj asked then said, "It is by His grace only because He saw the enduring love of His Mother for Him. When we love someone we are always thinking about that person. Thus it is said that love means finding or seeing yourself in another. This is intimacy or non-difference that yet does not annihilate difference. Krishna and mother Yasoda were bound by this kind of intimacy. But this does not only involve thinking. Where there is thinking there is also personality. *Bhaktas* (devotees) endeavor to develop that kind of love for Krishna and in that way their lives become perfect."



**Sri Damodara being tied with rope by Mother Yasoda**  
**Figure shared by Rasaraja das Prabhu**

"Is Goloka a real place in India?" Dorothy asked. "In this world Goloka is called Gokula in Mathura, close to Vrindavan. Gokula is next to the Yamuna River where Krishna lived during part of His childhood and where He performed His pastime (*lila*)," Sripad Puri Maharaja responded. Dorothy then wanted to know if there's "a big temple for



Krishna" there. "I think there are more than five thousands (5,000) temples in Vrindavan," Rasaraja das Prabhu said. "Vrindavan is a simple place of many forests and temples," Sripad Puri Maharaj added.

"Gokula appears in this world. In the spiritual world it is called Goloka. They are considered non different," Sripad Puri Maharaja continued. Dorothy then said that if she ever goes to India, that (Gokula) is the first place she wants to visit. She then asked when did Srila Sridhar Maharaja leave this plane and where was he living. "In 1988 Srila Guru Maharaja disappeared from our vision," Sripad Puri Maharaja responded. "His Math or the spiritual institute where he was teaching is in Sri Nabadvip Dham, West Bengal, India. This is also a holy abode, considered to be non different from Vrindavan, where Sri Krishna Chaitanya Mahaprabhu<sup>[4]</sup> appeared."

"Why is he (Srila Sridhara Maharaja) important?" she asked. "He is our guru (spiritual teacher) and from him I received *sannyas* (renounced order of life). He is the founder of the organization of which we are part - Sri Chaitanya Saraswat Math. He was a very learned and saintly devotee. He composed some of the deep ontological truths of Sri Krishna Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's teachings in Sanskrit poetry, which only an exalted Vaisnava can do," Sripad Puri Maharaja responded.

"Do gurus get married?" Dorothy followed-up with. "*Sannyasis* don't get married. Previously Srila Sridhar Maharaja was married for a short time but his wife passed away and he joined his guru's organization and became a *sannyasi*. He

gave up everything to become a full time preacher and servitor in his Guru's mission ."

"So you have to live in poverty?" she followed-up with. "No, detachment doesn't mean you don't have anything. It means that you don't allow anything to have you – or take control over you, so a *sannyasi* is detached in that sense. You can come in contact with anything but you don't let it control you. You have your own self control. That is *sannyas*. Of course, even the pride of renunciation of Lord Shiva was defeated by his attraction to Krishna in the alluring form of Madan-Mohan-Mohini. So attachment to Krishna alone is considered absolute renunciation."


"Can a *sannyasi* engage in any work or he is not working?" Dorothy inquired further. "A *sannyasi* doesn't make a living by earning money. Traditionally a *sannyasi* lives only by begging for his livelihood, relying only on the mercy of Krishna and *gurudev*. Krishna provides everything. One has to trust that Krishna will provide for him," Sripad Puri Maharaja responded. "Didn't Jesus teach, 'why are you working so hard? The lilies of the field, they are so nicely dressed but they don't work, so why are you working so hard.' Previously one may be working but after *sannyas* we don't take a job to earn a living. Yet somehow or other a devotee's needs are always taken care of. My Gurudev wanted me to preach the science of Krishna consciousness to the scientists and that has become my life's work."

Prasadam was then served and honored by all.



With this our wonderful *sadhu sanga* came to an end.

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

<p>Your humble servant, Kushum Devi Dasi (New York)</p>		<p>Donations via Pay Pal May be Sent to <a href="mailto:seva@bviscs.org">seva@bviscs.org</a></p>
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[1] [http://scsmath.com/docs/sridhar\\_maharaj.html](http://scsmath.com/docs/sridhar_maharaj.html) - Om Vishnupad Srila Bhakti Raksak Sridhar Dev-Goswami Maharaj - Founder-President-Acharyya: Sri Chaitanya Saraswat Math (SCS Math)

[2] <http://kksongs.org/songs/s/srigurucaranapadma.html> - śrī-guru-caraṇa-padma, kevala-bhakati-sadma,

[3] <http://kksongs.org/songs/n/namamisvaram.html> - namāmiśvaram śac-cid-ānanda-rūpaṁ


[4] 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. Srila Rupa Goswami has glorified Lord Chaitanya as being the most munificent Lord because He freely distributed pure love of Godhead.

**Only God Can Make a Tree**  
Poems (and theories) are made by fools like me.

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A Sentient Absolute, Ultimate Reality that is self-conscious, can alone create a universe that is knowable by self-conscious life.  
Empirical experience establishes that life comes only from pre-existing life, never from matter.  
Material Nature (as biomass) is also produced only from life.  
Scientifically, therefore, we should conclude that life is fundamental, not matter.



Discussion/Meditation  
Every Saturday @ 2 PM  
Vegetarian Luncheon

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