

PRINCETON BHAKTI VEDANTA INSTITUTE

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Dharma, War, and Love

Our weekly *sadhu sanga* gathering at Princeton's BVI (Bhakti Vedanta Institute) began with Harinam kirtan. Nila Madhava das Prabhu on *mrdanga* (drum), accompanied by Rasaraja das Prabhu and Sripad Bhakti Madhava Puri Maharaja, Ph.D (Sripad Puri Maharaja) on *kartals* (hand cymbals).



Nila Madhava Prabhu, Sripad Puri Maharaja, Dorothy, Rasaraja Prabhu

Sripad Puri Maharaja asked if there were any questions/topics that we would like to discuss? Rasaraja das Prabhu spoke up and said, "While driving here, Kushum and I were discussing a program I saw on TV about faith. One lady was talking about the help she received in a Christian church. She said she was suffering so much she was at the point where she was losing faith. She said she was asking God 'if I am a good Christian, why did you give me so many problems?' Then I remembered an incident mentioned in the 11th Canto of the *Srimad Bhagavatam* (11.8.22-42) where Sri Krishna was answering some of Uddhava's questions and in one of those answers Krishna referred to an *Avadhut* (one who has risen above bodily-consciousness), who had the realization that he has many gurus such as the sun, the water, the wind and also a prostitute (Pingala). One day Pingala was looking for clients. She saw many rich, well dressed men and so many others but none came to do their business with her. They passed in front of her house, where she would be standing but they just passed her like she wasn't even there. She was getting frustrated so she went inside her house, refreshed herself and came out again but in the end, nobody came to her. Finally she withdrew into her house and went to sleep but was thinking about

what happened that day. She then realized, 'Oh, I was trying to sell my body to all these people for some satisfaction.' She was so frustrated but then began thinking that 'all this suffering that is happening to me is for some reason. I have to surrender to my Lord, the one that lives in my heart, not this or that man that comes to my house.' So in this way Pingala got some realization and peace of mind whereas the Christian person was blaming God, that He wasn't helping her because she was suffering so much. It's the same situation but two people are seeing it in different ways. On one side the prostitute is blaming herself for her suffering and the other side the Christian lady was blaming God for her suffering. Some devotees may also experience suffering and right away they don't want to know about Krishna or the devotees anymore. One devotee may have one realization and another devotee may see their suffering and problems in life in a different way. So maybe you can please elaborate a little more about that."

"In the first canto of *Srimad Bhagavatam*, eighth chapter, the prayers of Queen Kunti are recorded," Sripad Puri Maharaja offered in reply to his attentive audience then continued, "She was praying to Krishna, 'Please send me calamities and problems. I don't want to be happy. When I am happy I forget You, but when I am miserable I am deeply meditating on You, and You mercifully come to protect Your devotees.' These intense emotions arise from a deep feeling of separation from Krishna. Actually, there's no separation from the viewpoint of knowledge. Krishna is within everyone's heart. When attention is directed toward things other than God, then we are conscious of everything but Krishna, and when one is thinking of Krishna one sees everything in relation to Him. That feeling of connection is Krishna consciousness. When someone is suffering and they are thinking 'I don't believe in God anymore, it is also a way of thinking of God but they have not established their proper relation, *sambhanda jnana*. They have not developed their faith, *sraddha*, which is the

beginning of love of God, for we cannot love someone in whom we have no faith..”



Sobha ji, Nila Madhava Prabhu, Sripad Puri Maharaja and Dorothy

“*Shradha* (faith) comes from *sukriti* (good merits) and those who have not developed that piety due to so many impious activities may want to turn back toward an impious life. But those who have that *sukriti*, their faith will be strong in the face of adversity. They will not turn away. They will find that every problem presents an opportunity to remember Krishna,” Sripad Puri Maharaja said then asked, “In married life, what keeps the couple together when some obstacle or difficulty comes. What do you think is the cause?” In response Dorothy said “love” and Rasaraja das Prabhu said “some affection.” Do the husband or wife ever think that ‘I want to leave this relationship?’ Sripad Puri Maharaja pressed further.

“In my opinion, if there’s a third person involved, then the solution is not easy but they may still live together. There may not be as much love as before but as long as they communicate, they feel that they need each other for some reason like financial security, children, family, They get used to living in their new relationship, like brothers and sisters,” Dorothy responded.

“Two people, when they are in a relationship like that, are thinking of more than their own satisfaction - maybe there are children or some concern greater than themselves, So it’s also like that with God/Krishna.” Sripad Puri Maharaja continued. “The idea of a relation with Krishna is a more comprehensive idea than that of one’s relationship with others. From Krishna’s side, of course, He’s always affectionate towards us, due to His all-loving nature. From our side, however, we have to realize that we are part of something greater than our own provincial conception of ‘I and Mine’. A devotee does not make it a priority of judging situations according to whether ‘I am happy or not.’ When we get to a stage beyond our own self-interest, then even if we think ‘I am unhappy in this relationship’ a devotee may consider, ‘but if my unhappiness makes Krishna happy then I am happy.’ Srila Bhaktisiddanta Saraswati Thakur mentioned that devotees may embrace their own unhappiness if that’s what makes Krishna happy, because a devotee’s aim is not with one’s limited self but always to serve and please Krishna.”

“Krishna sometimes, in front of Radharani, embraces Chadravali, the counter party to Srimati Radharani, just to tease Her. This creates some distress or even anger (*mana*) in Radharani. But even though it

apparently turns Radha against Krishna it also enriches the complete spectrum of loving feelings that are exchanged between Them. Srimati Radharani holds the superlative position in Krishna’s heart since She alone embodies *mahabhava*, or the greatest love for Krishna as His most perfect counterpart. So it is not the happiness or distress that comes to us in life that is important, but how we react to it. Those who have faith and love for Krishna do not consider everything on the basis of their own egoic importance, but recognize God or Krishna as the center of their lives. The events that happen in this world is not called ‘Mystery’ but ‘History,’ because it’s not merely about my life - it’s all going on under His Will for His own purposes.”



“Now I’d like to talk about something I read recently about *dharma* (duty). Do you know what is *Dharma*?” Sripad Puri Maharaja asked. In response, guest, Shobha said, “It is what you have to do, so you just do it. Do the things that you were supposed to do and don’t expect anything from it.” In agreement, the audience said that “*dharma* is duty.”

“*Dharma* is an essential teachings of Veda which concerns the establishment of *Sanatan Dharma* (eternal vocation). It signifies our essential dynamic nature,” Sripad Puri Maharaja said. “When scientists look at things and try to find their essence, they look for a smaller thing or particle like the atom, nucleus, or proton. In other words, they look for things to explain things. In their conception grass, for example, is a thing and the essence of grass is also a thing. But *dharma* doesn’t signify that essence is a thing. Like you (Sobha) were saying, it is something that we do, which is dynamic and not a reified thing. It is an act. Srila Prabhupada explained to us that ‘the *dharma* of water is to wet (wetness)’ so what is the *dharma* of the living entity then?” Sripad Puri Maharaja asked. In response Rasaraja das Prabhu said, “*kṛṣṇera 'nitya-dāsa'*” *Śrī Caitanya Caritāmṛta Madhya* 20.108-10 confirms this:

jīvera 'svarūpa' haya — kṛṣṇera 'nitya-dāsa'
kṛṣṇera 'tāstāhā-śakti' 'bhedābheda-prakāśa'
sūryāmśa-kiraṇa, yaiche agni-jvālā-caya
svābhāvika kṛṣṇera tina-prakāra 'śakti' haya

“It is the living entity’s constitutional position to be an eternal servant of Kṛṣṇa because he is the marginal energy of Kṛṣṇa and a manifestation simultaneously one with and different from the Lord, like a molecular particle of sunshine or fire. Kṛṣṇa has three varieties of energy.”

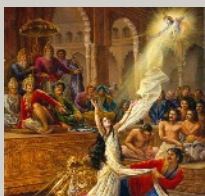
“To serve (*dasa*), yes, every living entity is serving in some capacity,” Sripad Puri Maharaja agreed. “The Sanskrit word *dharma* comes from the root *dhri*

which means that which supports, maintains, i.e., the essence. However, the essence is not a thing like an atom or particle, but an activity – such as 'to serve' or 'to wet.' To be engaged in our occupational duty is not a thing but rather an activity which necessarily includes purpose, final end, or goal for which the act is performed."

"Modern science doesn't understand things in that way. Essence for them is just another thing microscopically behind the macroscopic things of the world. In addition, because they do not have a dynamic conception of organic activity they cannot understand the purposes of things or what Reality exists for," Sripad Puri Maharaja continued. "There was a big change in people's thinking when modern science was developed that led them to think in terms of physical and mechanical principles, laws of necessity, and so forth rather than in terms of activities, purposes, and final ends. For more ancient cultures the practical activities that led to goodness, happiness, immortality were more important than the theoretical study of impersonal, static or reified things that is the focus of modern scientific knowledge."

"So *dharma* is the key concept in the Indian religion with multiple purposes?" Dorothy asked. "Yes, *dharma* indicates the essence or that which supports and maintains the whole of reality, and which is not a thing but rather dynamic activity. Ultimately it is beyond any sense of duty and more properly described as divine love or *prema dharma*. Without love the whole system would collapse." Sripad Puri Maharaja responded.

"What is the significance of women in relationship to *dharma*? If we think about the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*, both of these involved war - and what was the cause of those wars?" Sripad Puri Maharaja asked. "Greed and *dharma*," Shoba responded. "Yes, both involved *dharma* but in the case of the *Ramayana*, it was Sitadevi whose chastity was being provoked by Ravana (demon) and in the case of the *Mahabharata*, it was *Draupadi* whose sanctity was being violated by the Kuruvus. What is the connection of the sanctity and chastity of women with *dharma*?" Sripad Puri Maharaja asked then responded that "These are attributes of lust (exploitation) that are opposed to love (devotion) that is the principle of *dharma*. Exploitation, activities of self-centered lust, drag us away from our *dharma*, so those tendencies have to be fought. This is the cause of war in the defense of *dharma*, as is being illustrated in the epics of India. In the Islamic countries today many are fighting to protect their religious principles concerning women and what they see as the corruption of their sanctity and chastity if they embrace the standards of Western women. Of course extremism in this regard is to be considered in the case of the ultra-orthodox or conservative sectors of society."



Draupadi being disrobed



Sita Devi being tricked by Ravana

"It's oppression, right?" Sobha asked. "They may not see it as oppressive. They consider it as protecting their women-folk against what appears to them as the exhibitionism that western women have adopted which fosters an exploitative, lusty mentality in the world," Sripad Puri Maharaja responded. "Anyhow, in the Vedic culture protection of women was of primary importance as far as *dharma* is concerned when we consider its true significance."

"The role of the Feminine in the lives of the previous avatars has its place. But what role does the Feminine play in Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's life?" Sripad Puri Maharaja asked.

"Viṣṇupriyā and Lakṣmīpriyā" Nila Madhava das Prabhu said. "They were there. His first wife, Śrīmatī Lakṣmīpriyā died at a young age and He did not want to leave His mother alone so He married Śrīmatī Viṣṇupriyā Devī so she could stay with His mother when he left home to become a sanyasi. He was very affectionate to His mother and didn't want to break her heart either by retiring to Vrindavan so He said that He would go to Jagannath Puri so that she could get news of His well-being from the devotees traveling between Bengal and Puri."

"Yes, but then I am thinking that the Feminine principle in Mahaprabhu's life is Srimati Radharani, who is no longer external to Him but reconciled within Himself." Sripad Puri Maharaja responded. "Mahaprabhu came to establish the *yuga dharma* not as the Lord but as the most devoted Servitor of the Lord, Srimati Radharani, the embodiment of the greatest Love, *mahabhava* personified. Thus Mahaprabhu did not come to kill or destroy the enemies of *dharma* but to freely (with mercy beyond justice) distribute His divine love in separation (*vipralambha dharma*) to them in the form of the *sankirtan yajna* of the Holy Names."

"The feminine is *Shakti* (energy) and the masculine is *Shaktimam* (energetic source), like the protector and the protected. All living beings are feminine with regard to Krishna because we are all dependent upon Him. We are His *shakti* so we do not have any independent existence from the source of that energy. The electric light bulb will not shine unless it is connected to the power outlet. It doesn't shine on its own. It has to get energy ultimately from the power company, then it can shine. Like that also, even our consciousness is not possible without Krishna. Some people think 'I can go directly to Krishna,'" Sripad Puri Maharaja said laughingly. "We can't - we are dependent so how can we do anything independent of Him? We can't say 'I am going to become Krishna conscious.' It is up to Him to help. He has to provide that mercy and guidance for us. Krishna says, '*Aham sarvasya prabhavo* – I am the source of even your own Krishna consciousness.'" This is confirmed in the *Bhagavad Gita - The Hidden Treasure of the Sweet Absolute*, 10.8

*aham sarvasya prabhavo
mattah sarvam pravartate
iti matva bhajante mam
budhā bhāva-samanvitāḥ*

"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."

Nila Madhava das Prabhu added, "I was thinking that when Rasaraja Prabhu was asking the question about devotees who get discouraged when they have reverses or struggles in their lives, there also should be enthusiasm, patience, and determination. When you were saying what is needed when there's dispute between a husband and wife, it is sometimes patience too that is needed because happiness and distress come just like winter and summer and the sober person knows that they are going to pass in the same way. This means that when both happiness and sadness will come they would also pass. So, I think patience, determination, and enthusiasm are necessary for every couple."

"Yes. Thank you Prabhu - our transcendental councilor," Sripad Puri Maharaja replied and then asked. "What is the *yuga-dharma* (duty for this age)?"

"Harinam Sankirtan (chanting of the Lord's holy names)," Rasaraja das Prabhu responded.

"Yes. If we can do that much then Mahaprabhu's mission will be fulfilled. Of course Srila Guru Maharaja (Srila Sridhar Maharaja) would remind us that it's not only the name but the conception of the name that is important. If we have the proper conception from guru of what we are doing, then chanting would have some effect and benefits us," Sripad Puri Maharaja concluded.

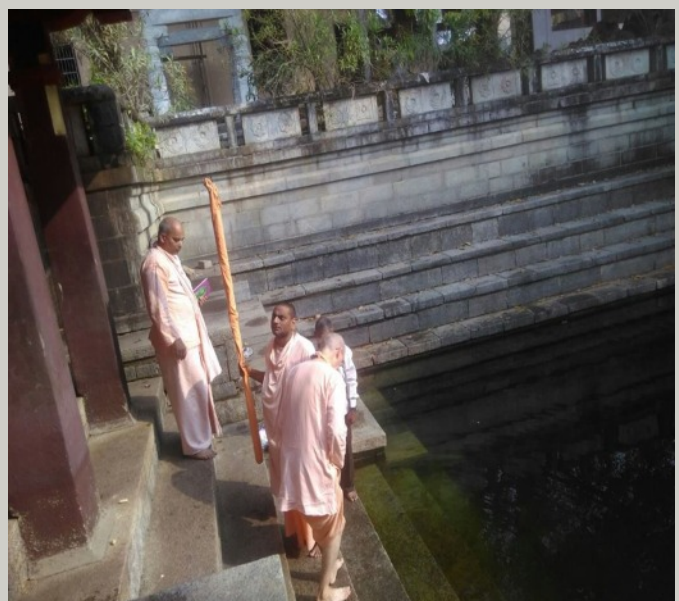



Recently received *sannyasa* from Srila Acharya Maharaja, Sripad Bhakti Hridaya Mahayogi Maharaj in Vrindavan - preaching with Sripad Bhakti Niskama Shanta Maharaj and Sripad Bhakti Vijnan Muni Maharaj. Jaya Mahayogi Maharaja! Please accept our humble *dandavat pranams* at your holy feet.



Guest Ralph, Kushum DD, Prabhus: Rasaraja das, Nila Madhava, Dorothy with Sripad Puri Maharaja. *Mahaprasadam*

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



<p>Your humble servant, Kushum Devi Dasi (New York)</p>		<p>Donations via PayPal may be sent to seva@bviscs.org</p>
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