

Sri Sri Guru Gaurangau Jayatah
Bhakti Vedanta Institute
Princeton University Harinama
Princeton, NJ

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Today was such an amazing and blissful day from the moment I stepped into the kitchen to prepare bhog to the moment we arrived back at home and everything in between. No traffic delays, an ecstatic outdoors Harinam at Princeton's Palmer Square Park and a beautiful sanga back at the Bhakti Vedanta Institute (BVI)'s office with quite an amazing group of guests. My heart truly felt only a divine intervention could have made all the arrangements for such a perfect day to celebrate the appearance day of these "three wonderful transcendental Devis - Srimati Sita Devi,^[1] Srimati Lalita Devi^[2] and Srimati Radharani.^[3]" Smiling Rasaraja das Prabhu said, on our way back from sanga, that "this was a very auspicious day. Everything went so nicely. It was a beautiful day."

Back at the BVI's office Sripad Bhakti Madhava Puri Maharaj, Ph.D (Sripad Puri Maharaj) engaged in a pre-sanga discussion with guest Betsy (a musicology student at Rider University), familiarizing her with BVI's mission through a series of questions and answers. To one of those questions, Betsy said she "has read only the *Bhagavat Gita*." "The *Bhagavat Gita* is the general book of spiritual knowledge in summary form," Sripad Puri Maharaj said as he handed her the written version of the *Mahamantra*. "This is called the *Mahamantra* (the great mantra)." Pointing to the two paintings of Sriman Mahaprabhu^[4] and Nityananda Prabhu, Sripad Puri Maharaj explained that "Mahaprabhu and Nityananda Prabhu came to teach that *Mahamantra* five hundred (500) years ago. Mahaprabhu is considered an incarnate of Krishna. Krishna is the name of God in the Vedas (sacred books of India) and its corollary literature. Mahaprabhu came especially in this age to teach the chanting of the holy Names of Krishna." Sripad Puri Maharaj said then asked Betsy if she has heard of Srila Prabhupada^[5] to which she said "no." Pointing to the other pictures, he said, "He is the teacher/guru who started the Hare Krishna movement in the West in 1966, the others are also gurus (spiritual teachers) who we came in contact with after him."



Prabhu Jayadeva with mrdanga, Rasaraja das on kartals and. Guest Betsy with Spd. Puri Maharaj

Opening sanga, Sripad Puri Maharaj on kartals (hand cymbals) sang The *Pancha Tattva Mahamantra* followed with a very enthusiastic rendition of the Hare Krishna *Mahamantra* and paying obeisance to Sri Gurudev. Accompanying him were Prabhus: Syamasundara das on guitar, Rasaraja das on kartals and Jayadev das on mridanga, while his new guest chanted rhythmically with the rest of us.

"Today we want to honor the female energy of the Lord. The Lord is both male and female. The energy is the female and the source of that energy is the male according to the ancient Vedic culture. The female energy of the Lord is called Shakti (energy) and the male energy is called Shaktimam (source of the energy). The energy is sometimes more important than the source of the energy but you cannot have one without the other. It's the energy that is useful for us but that energy has a source," Sripad Puri Maharaj explained. "We can't separate the two. We can't just talk about the source of the energy (Krishna) and neglect the energy (Radha).

The first lady devotee whose appearance we are celebrating today is Sita Devi, the consort of Sri Advaita Acharya. "It is Sita Devi who gave the name Nimai to Mahaprabhu when He was born under the neem tree. She wanted to make sure that He was protected against any attacks from evil influences. Nimai is named after the Neem tree, which has many antiseptic qualities. In India the people are still using the neem plant for many antiseptic purposes," Sripad Puri Maharaj said.

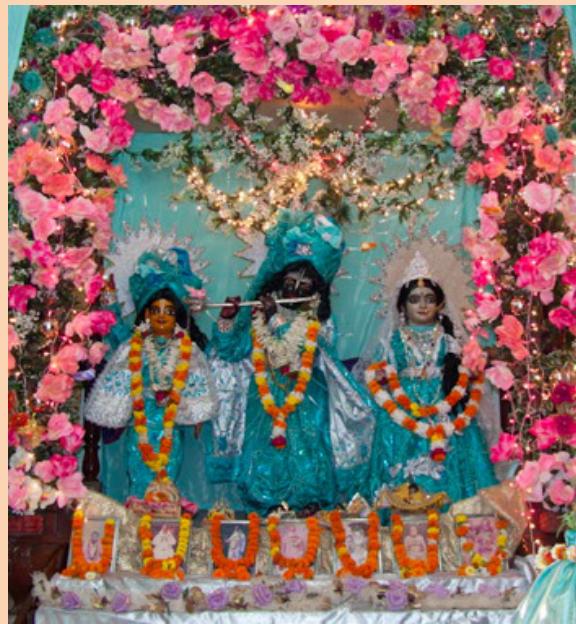
Lalita devi, is the second spiritual lady whose appearance we are celebrating. "Lalita Devi is one of the chief Gopis (maid servants of Radha Krishna) in Srimati Radharani's camp. She favors Radha over Krishna. She looks after all of Radharani's affairs and makes sure all of Radharani's needs are met when she serves Krishna," Sripad Puri Maharaj explained. "Gopis are the different loving energies of the Lord. There are millions of Gopis and out of those millions,

sixteen thousand (16,000) are special and out of those one hundred and eight (108) are even more special. Of those one hundred and eight, eight (8) are even more important. Vishaka and Lalita are among those important eight Gopis. Two are most important, Srimati Radharani and the other one you all know, but we will not mention her name, and of those two, Srimati Radharani is the most important."

Why is Radharani the most important Gopi? Sripad Puri Maharaj asked his attentive audience. "Because She has the most intense love for and dedication to Krishna. The purest of the purest love is found in Srimati Radharani. She is worshipped as the Supreme Personality of Servitor Godhead. She is completely dedicated to Krishna," Sripad Puri Maharaj said. After a brief pause, he said "Krishna is always wondering how is it possible that Radharani has 'so much love for Me.' What is it that is inspiring Her so intensely, and not only that, She is experiencing joy tens of million of times more than Krishna is experiencing," Sripad Puri Maharaj continued. "She is experiencing joy of serving and Krishna is experiencing joy of being served. Krishna is always interested to find out how Radharani is experiencing so much joy even more than Him. In order to taste her love for Him, Krishna came as Mahaprabhu. He comes in the mood of Radharani, as a *bhakta* (devotee - one who serves Krishna) to taste that joy that Srimati Radharani is experiencing through love of Himself. Devotees who have received faith and devotion by Her grace are coming in the same line as Srimati Radharani." *Śrī Caitanya Caritāmṛta Ādi 1.5* states:

*rādhā kṛṣṇa-praṇaya-vikṛtir hlādinī śaktir asmād
ekātmānāv api bhuvi purā deha-bhedam gatau tau
caitanyākhyam prakātam adhunā tad-dvayam caikyam āptam
rādhā-bhāva-dyuti-suvalitam naumi kṛṣṇa-svarūpam*

"The loving affairs of Śrī Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa are transcendental manifestations of the Lord's internal pleasure-giving potency. Although Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa are one in Their identity, They separated Themselves eternally. Now these two transcendental identities have again united, in the form of Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya. I bow down to Him, who has manifested Himself with the sentiment and complexion of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī although He is Kṛṣṇa Himself."



Sri Sri Guru Gauranga Gandharvika Govindajiu

"There are two types of devotees: Krishna *dasya* (those who want to go directly to Krishna) and Radha *dasya* (those who want to be devotees of Radha)," Sripad Puri Maharaj explained. "Some devotees want to go directly to Krishna, they think 'I want to serve Krishna. I want to have the bliss of serving Krishna.' That's very good but those who want to serve the most perfect servitor of Krishna, that person who is giving the most satisfaction to Krishna, to want to serve them is less selfish than the one who wants to serve Krishna directly. 'I am not very good at serving and pleasing Krishna but Srimati Radharani is so good at pleasing Him, so let me serve that servant. Let me give my service to Her. I may be able to somehow supply Her needs in Her service to the Lord.' This is the genuine humility of the devotee; so we follow this path called Radha *dasya* (servants of Srimati Radharani)."

"In the higher scriptures it mentions the service of Radharani, and not only that, but the service of the servant of the servant of the servant, a million times or more removed. Whatever drop of service or connection we can get to that higher plane of dedication, we want to take it. A devotee is that anxious to render service. Wherever s/he can find a small drop of connection with that higher plane of service, dedication and devotion he or she takes that up immediately without delay or looking for something else to do. That opportunity is so rare and so high -- a devotee feels that inspiration within his/her heart. He or she is drawn to that higher service, Sripad Puri Maharaj explained. "We don't consider the bodily form in the affairs of the heart. Anyone can serve Radharani - male or female. She is the embodiment of the mood of pure devotion."

In further explaining Srimati Radharani's mood, Sripad Puri Maharaj said, "In Mahaprabhu's appearance, there are two associates - Gadadhara Pandit and Gadadhara das. Gadadhara Pandit is considered the *bhava* (heart) and Gadadhara das is considered the *kunti* (halo) of Srimati Radharani. The mood of devotion of Srimati Radharani is called *bhava* and the energy, the lustre that emanates from her is the *kunti*.

Madhurya rasa – loving service to Krishna, which is coming from Her heart is the mood that she spreads," Sripad Puri Maharaj explained. "Just by seeing Her and being in Her presence, the whole spiritual world is being maintained. That spiritual world is the world of loving devotion to Krishna, all coming from Her mood to serve Krishna. Just by the luster that is coming from Her love, it pervades the whole atmosphere there. Not only Her but also there are Baladev and Krishna Himself, but They are different energies."

Sripad Puri Maharaj went on to explain the different energies of the Lord which are *Hladini*, *Sandhini*, *Samvit*. "*Hladini* means the pleasure potency, *Sandhini* means the manifesting potency and *Samvit* means the cognitive potency. These things are there coming from three different personalities, not that there is just one thing and everything is the total of that. There are many varieties of spiritual qualities that we can learn about and understand what they are or how they are constituting our own spiritual selves. In a perverted way, material energy is also constituted in a similar way," Sripad Puri Maharaj continued. "In the material world we have knowledge and cognition. These are all different energies of the Lord. Everything we are experiencing, in the mundane sense, is only our mundane consciousness, dull, not perfect or enlightened awareness of things. So these are all the multifarious energies of the Lord. They are manifest in the material and the spiritual worlds. Those that make progress in the conscious world, in the plane of devotion and dedication, they can find the perfection of all they are searching for there."

Retrieving back into the library of his memory, Sripad Puri Maharaj recalled Sridhar Maharaj's^[7], 'majestic' revelation of the Gayatri mantra - *Om bhur bhuvah svah, tat savitur varenyam, bhargo devasya dhimahi, dhiyo yonah prachodayat.*

"Srila Sridhar Maharaja revealed the most sacred meaning of Gayatri. He told that the 'Gayatri is the worship of Srimati Radharani.' The word Gayatri means song, and the sound of Krishna's flute is also Gayatri, therefore, Krishna's flute song is also the worship of Radharani. When we think of Krishna's flute, when He plays that flute in the spiritual world, the cows, cowherd boys, the devotees, Mother Yasodha, the trees, every living entity when they hear it, their whole energy is drawn towards the service of Krishna. Their hearts becomes excited when they hear that flute song," Sripad Puri Maharaj said then asked what do

they do when they are hearing that flute song? "They are remembering Krishna, they are remembering they want to come to Him, to serve Him, to dedicate their whole lives, their love, which was always there but it becomes intensified when they hear the sound of Krishna's flute," Sripad Puri Maharaj said then asked, what is that devotional energy? "That energy of love is coming from Srimati Radharani. The *Svarupa Shakti* (loving energy), that is Radharani. The Gayatri mantra has to do with that *Svarupa Shakti*."

Sripad Puri Maharaj went on to further explain the deeper meaning of the Gayatri Mantra. *Bhur* means the sensuous plane *bhuvaḥ* is the mental plane, *svah* is the rational/intellectual plane. There's a slight difference between the mental and intellectual plane. In the Western philosophy they talk about understanding and reason. In the German idealist philosophy, especially Kant and Hegel, they talk about *Verstand* (understanding) and *Vernunft* (reason). In the modern Western philosophy they are very keen about this subtle distinction between the two terms. In the Sanskrit language you will also find, *manas* and *buddhi* (mind and intellect).

"There are the planes of sensuous inspection, mental or understanding plane, and the rational plane but above that, still, is *savitur* which means the sun. The sun is like the soul. The sun illuminates everything. When it comes up, you can see what is going on around you. Without the light we cannot see, our eyes are useless, so the sunlight is necessary to see. Yet a dead man still has his eyes, but he doesn't see anything. Why? Because the life spark is needed to see the sun, the light of the sun, to hear something, to taste, to smell, to touch. There has to be a soul in that body. The soul has to enlighten us in that sense. The sun will not help us to see if there is no soul. The soul is detecting the sun and the sunshine and everything else. Without that particle of consciousness that illuminates everything for us, we will not be able to detect anything," Sripad Puri Maharaj explained. "Above *tat*, the sum total of our knowledge, and *savitur* is *varenyam* which is above the soul and therefore worshippable. The super consciousness there is something superior. Sometimes it is called the Supersoul, *Paramatma*, which is above the *atma* (soul). *Varenyam* is above us and is therefore worshippable, so we have to give our respect and honor to that because we are dependent upon that and without that we have nothing, and we are nothing."

"*Bhargo* means *Svarupa Shakti*, Srimati Radharani. *Svarupa Shakti* (our devotional sentiment) is an energy and that energy personified is Srimati Radharani. Without that energy, Her mercy, we cannot have devotion. We won't have any faith, we won't feel it. Her halo, Her grace, emanates out to us. Sometimes that halo (energy) is called faith. If we even have faith in these things then we know we have the mercy of Srimati Radharani, in a very subtle form, we can say, but it's experienced by those who know it."

"*Devasya* means the *Deva*, the *Ishta Devta*, Krishna. So there is *Deva*, the source of energy and *Bhargo*, the energy itself. Then there's *Dhimahi*. *Dhimahi* means meditation. We should meditate on these things. Meditate does not mean that we should sit down and close our eyes, that is only one type of mediation but that is not the type of meditation meant here. Sit down and close your eyes is not service," Sripad Puri Maharaj continued. "Meditation means full engagement of the mind and the senses with love, *dhimahi*, not just close your eyes and sitting there like a mushroom. That is not the kind of *dhimahi* that we are talking about. Meditation on those spiritual energies, they are there and if we can enter into that world of mediation, of service, of devotion, dedication and love - they are *dhimahi*."

"*Dhiyo yo nah prachodayat* means if you engage in that type of meditation, what is the result? The result is that you will become enthused for service. Whoever engages in service, gets the result from that -- you get even more enthusiasm for service. More love is generated by tasting that love through service. It's not that 'now I've served, now I'm finished.' Once you get that taste of service, you want more and more and more. Your enthusiasm will build by just doing a little service. That is called *ananda* (ecstasy). You are completely absorbed, consumed in that type of joy, surrender and service mood," Sripad Puri Maharaj explained. "In the spiritual world by surrender you get more joy and by taking you get less. By giving of ourselves we get more. The Gopis are ready to give up millions of lives just to wipe one drop of sweat from the Lord's lotus feet. That's a very high conception but the idea there is of self sacrifice, self giving, not to any mundane thing, but to the highest ideal. The more we are free from the desire for personal satisfaction, the more satisfied we will be," Sripad Puri Maharaj said then asked "Why? Because that is our constitutional nature. We are meant to be servants of God; that is what we are created as, not only for. We are His *shakti* (energy). We are all *shakti* and that energy is to serve the source of that energy. So by engaging in those activities, we come to our actual self realization. By taking energies and exploiting them for our own purposes, we are in the misconceived plane, where there will always be some problem. Some misery will come to attack us because whatever we have taken from the environment will have to be taken from us. That is Karma, action and reaction. Whatever action we do in this world, some reaction will come to collect what we have taken illegally. We belong to the world of dedication."



Part of the audience with Sripad Puri Maharaj during Sanga

He then asked, "What would we do without air? Without light, even if I may have perfect 20/20 vision? We are dependent in this material world but everyone is thinking 'I am completely independent.' We are dependent on food, water, light, oxygen – in everything we are dependent. '*Jivo Jivasya Jivanam*' Life requires life to maintain our life. We have to live on life. We have to take life in order to live. The whole system is set up like that. We have to give our life in order to get that life in the higher world. We have to use our life for the higher purpose in order to get the highest fulfillment of our life," Sripad Puri Maharaj continued. After a brief pause he said, "We can serve with affection or by force, but no one can survive here independently." *Srimad Bhagavatam* 1.13.47 confirms this,

*ahastani sahastanam
apadani catush-padam
phalguni tatra mahatam
jivo jivasya jivanam*

"Those who are devoid of hands are prey for those who have hands; those devoid of legs are prey for the four-legged. The weak are the subsistence of the strong, and the general rule holds that one living being is food for another."

At this point in *sanga*, Sripad Puri Maharaj opened the floor to comments and questions. "It appeared that Srimati Radharani was blind as a baby then She opened her eyes when Krishna came to visit and the first thing She saw was Krishna," Rasaraja das Prabhu said. "King Vrishabhanu found baby Srimati Radharani on a lotus flower on the banks of the Yamuna river. She was sitting on the crown of the lotus flower. She was blind, She couldn't see anything and when mother Yasoda heard that King Vrishabhanu and his wife, Kirtida, has a baby girl that is blind, they went to see Her. Krishna was eager to see this little baby, so He crawled up to the cradle and peeked in and all of a sudden Radharani

opened Her eyes and saw Krishna as Her first sight," Sripad Puri Maharaj explained.

Sri Radha's name is so sacred we do not find it mentioned everywhere. Jayadeva's poems are one of the few places which revealed the name of Srimati Radharani. We cannot find Her name even in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* or *Mahabharata* except in a covered way, but for those embued with love they can see Her everywhere.. Only in a few selected and exalted places we find Her name is mentioned and the reason for that is Her name is such a sacred conception, it was not distributed widely to the public otherwise very few would understand. Most might misunderstand. Even in Madhava Acharya's or Ramanuja Acharya's writings we don't find Her name mentioned," Sripad Puri Maharaj continued. "Nimbharka is one of the few acharyas who mentiones Radha and Krishna. In many *mandirs* (temples) in India you will find only Krishna. Radharani may be represnted as a small dress sitting there next to Krishna to indicate Radharani but in Vrindavan, of course, She is fully represented. They have such high regard for Her that She is not revealed to the general public, that is why I have mentioned about not repeating Her name while chanting. We have to chant Her name with great respect, in the proper mood and conception so that we do not commit any offense."

Of course the word *aparadha* (offense) contains Her name also, *apa* Radha (shadow of Radha, where the light doesn't enter) so *aparadha* is like the shadow of Srimati Radharani, *svarupa shakti*, does not manifest there. By engaging in offense to her, to devotional service, it can have destructive effect on our service, so that we should want to avoid that as much as possible. To avoid the chance to make such offenses She is not mentioned generally to people. Today is a special day and you are hearing these things which are not normally spoken about, but if we make offense to those things then our whole spiritual life can get ruined so we want to be very careful in representing those things and also thinking about them and to not take them in any mundane way.

In closing, Sripad Puri Maharaj explained why we take only *Prasadam*. "We eat the *Prasadam* that was offered to the Lord first. If we take food without offering first to Krishna, then we are doing something wrong because we are not remembering where it is coming from and to Whom it belongs, so we first offer the food to Krishna then we take it. Not that He needs something from us but to serve Him and show our love."

With this, our blissful *sanga* came to an end. *Prasadam* was served and honored by all.



Left to right: Bakula Mata, Sachimata with Mohan das, Srngara Mata with Nitai das, guest: Betsy, Prabhupada: Syamasundara das, Rasaraja das, Spd Puri Maharaja, Jayadev das, Kadamba Mala Mataji and daughter, Gita.

Srimati Radharani ki jai
Srimati Lalita devi ki jai
Srimati Sita devi ki jai
Harinam Sankirtana ki jai

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

Your humble servant
Kushum devi dasi
(New York)

[¹] Srimati Sita Thakurani, the Consort of Sri Advaita

[²] Sri Lalita Saptami -
http://scsmath.com/events/calendar_events/08_LalitaSaptami.html

[³] Sri Radhastami -
http://scsmath.com/events/calendar_events/09_Sri_Radhastami.html

[4] Sri Krishna Chaitanya Mahaprabhu
http://scsmath.com/docs/chaitanya_mahaprabhu.html

[5] His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Srila Prabhupada (Srila Prabhupada) is the founder Acharya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON), a worldwide spiritual confederation of temples, ashrams and communities.

[6] Srila Advaita Acharya
http://scsmath.com/events/calendar_events/01_AdvaitaAcharya.html

[7] Srila Bhakti Raksak Sridhar Dev-Goswami Maharaj - Founder-President-Acharyya: Sri Chaitanya Saraswat Math

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