

Sri Sri Guru Gaurangau Jayatah
Bhakti Vedanta Institute
Princeton University Harinama
Princeton, NJ
September 27, 2014

Our outdoors Harinam was held at Princeton's Palmer Square Park where Sripad Bhakti Madhava Puri Maharaj, Ph.D (Sripad Puri Maharaj) opened with The Pancha Tattva Mahamantra (*Jaya Sri-Krishna-Chaitanya Prabhu Nityananda / Sri-Adwaita Gadadhara Shrivasadi-Gaura-Bhakta-Vrinda*) followed with the Hare Krishna Mahamantra (*Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare / Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare*). Accompanying him on musical instruments were Prabhus: Syamasundara das on guitar and Rasaraja das on kartals (hand cymbal). At 2 pm we returned back to the Bhakti Vedanta Institute (BVI's) office for *sanga*.



Prabhus: Rasaraja das on kartals Syamasundara das on guitar with Sripad Puri Maharaj

In opening *sanga*, Sripad Puri Maharaj said, "Today we are celebrating the *Vyasa Puja* of Srila Acharya Maharaj,^[1] the spiritual leader of Sri Chaitanya Saraswat Math." On the occasion of *Vyasa Puja* we normally sing the *Sri Guru Vaisnav Mahatmaya Giti* - "*Sri-guru-carana-padma, kevala-bhakati-sadma*" by Sri Narottama das Thakur. We also sang the *Pranam Mantra* to Srila Acharya Maharaj on his appearance day. After reading a brief description of Srila Acharya Maharaj, Sripad Puri Maharaj asked if anyone would like to say something in remembrance of Srila Acharya Maharaj before offering our obeisances to Srila Acharya Maharaj's photo. In common, we all said that we "have heard about him, heard from him during *sanga*, listened to his various talks and read his many writings" but have not visted him in India as yet.

In December 2009, on his Sri Vyasa Puja Srila Bhakti Sundar Govinda Dev-Goswami Maharaj (Srila Govinda Maharaj),^[2] publicly appointed Srila Acharya Maharaj as the Successor President Sevaite Acharya of Sri Chaitanya Saraswat Math. “Despite this clear decision, he is facing many difficulties from the antiparties, competing for his position,” Sripad Puri Maharaj said. “Where is the question of competing if Srila Govinda Maharaj himself appointed Srila Acharya Maharaj as the sevaite president,” Syamasundata das Prabhu asked. “Yes, people don’t follow. They want to have their own opinions followed. But we have to follow the order of Gurudev otherwise there will always be fighting because there are always personal differences. In the spirit of cooperation if Gurudev says ‘do this’ or ‘do that’ we have to follow Guru’s instructions,” Sripad Puri Maharaj said. “We are all different. Naturally everyone has their own ideas, opinions and experiences. We all have free will and different understandings of things. So Guru is necessary to bring some harmony to all these differences, and the proper disciple humbly accepts what Guru says and doesn’t try to impose his own opinion.”

“So many things happen in our lives that we don’t like, then what to do? We say, ‘OK, it’s Krishna’s will. Right? It’s not ‘my will be done, it is ‘Thy will be done,’” Sripad Puri Maharaj continued. “We accept the arrangement that is made by Gurudev as the Divine Will and we go on like that. It will be better for us because everyone will work together and will be focusing our concern on the real thing ‘becoming Krishna conscious’ and ‘engaging in service’ by surrendering ‘my energy, my thoughts, my efforts, my feelings, everything to the service of Gurudev and the devotees.’”

“Maharaj, is there a notion in the philosophy of a perfect disciple? Is there a level of perfection that a disciple can reach?” Revant Prabhu asked. “*Saranagati* (complete surrender)! The disciple surrenders his body, mind, words, everything to Gurudev. He doesn’t keep anything for himself, not even his mind. He allows Guru to be his mind. That’s a perfect disciple,” Sripad Puri Maharaj responded then asked, who can do that? “Whoever can surrender themselves entirely to Guru they can achieve perfection of Krishna consciousness. That’s all it takes. The perfection of Krishna consciousness comes when we surrender ourselves completely to Gurudev and the words of Guru.”

“That perfection is unique, right? It’s one, there’s no different flavor of that perfection, right?” Revant Prabhu followed-up. “*ācāryam’ mām’ vijānīyān*” Sripad Puri Maharaj responded. “Krishna says He’s the acharya, so if we can see that and accept that Guru is as good as God, then we can understand what surrender means. 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.”

“What is the criteria to say you are surrendered?” Revant Prabhu further inquired. “Some of these Jihadists are going around saying ‘we are servants of Allah and we want to kill everyone who is not serving Allah.’ They are ready to give up their lives and the lives of others for their ideal. But that is a very dangerous thing to think that we have direct connection to God. So a proper Guru or guide is necessary to tell us if we are surrendered or not,” Sripad Puri Maharaj explained. “Guru has to be of perfect quality also. He can’t be any person who is saying ‘I am a holy man. I know Krishna. I talk to Him.’ Guru holds a very important position in our lives, so he has to be very genuine.”

After a brief pause Sripad Puri Maharaj asked “So how do we know who is Guru?” In response he said, “We know who is Guru from his Guru. He has to be a disciple. He has to be authorized by his Guru and his Guru has to be authorized by his Guru. It must be traced back to Guru-parampara (disciplic succession).”

“Who is the first Guru,” he asked then said, “Lord Brahma. And who is Lord Brahma’s Guru? That is Krishna! So we come in the line of Brahma *sampradaya* (lineage). We come from that line where Lord Brahma is the first teacher. Each Guru is following him, coming from Brahma to the present day. So those saintly teachers who come from that line are also qualified but that is not the only line. There are four lines (*sampradayas*) the vaisnavas accept, but who’s coming in the Brahma *sampradaya* line we respect as Guru, and if we submit to them then we are also in that line, a perfect line coming directly from Krishna through Lord Brahma,” Sripad Puri Maharaj further explained. “It’s not blind following because it could be a very dangerous thing to surrender to another person who is not bona-fide or authorized, especially when so many people are following those who are going in the wrong direction.”



Sripad Puri Maharaja, Amit, Shymasundar, Revant, Rasaraja Prabhus.

Revant Prabhu wanted to know if there's a fool proof method, or can we have the idea of Krishna as our Guru? "It's not safe. As I was saying, there are many people, like the jihadists who think they are ordered by Allah to do so many things including killing innocent people," Sripad Puri Maharaj responded. "They read the holy book (Koran) and think 'Oh Allah told like this then let's go out and cut the neck of everybody who is not worshipping Allah.' They think they have direct connection with God. That is a very bad idea because we all have some imperfections in us, and to think with that imperfect heart and imperfect mind that we can have direct connection with God, then it is foolish. We are materially conditioned souls, so we need a guide who has come in disciplic succession, a person who has studied and become qualified under the discipline of Guru. To live under guidance of Guru means there's some discipline. We can't just do what we want. We have to have the directions and instructions of Guru who can tell us if we are going in the right or wrong direction. The meaning of disciple is discipline."

"How do we know if what we are doing is correct? Do we have the proper understanding? Our Guru can tell us if we are doing right or wrong. He has to correct us," Sripad Puri Maharaj continued. "Never think you have direct connection with Krishna. We are finite. He is infinite. Then how can the finite come in touch with the Infinite? He will have to come down to the finite level for us to have connection with Him, then, you have connection. Krishna's coming down to the finite level means Guru."

"It a descending process, not ascending," Rasaraja das Prabhu said. "Yes. Krishna comes down to us and He is called Guru," Sripad Puri Maharaj said. "In the *Bhagavat Gita*, it says 'approach a bona-fide master submissively, inquire from him, and serve him humbly and he will impart knowledge to you because he has realized the truth,' Amit ji said. This is confirmed in the *Bhagavad-gītā - The Hidden Treasure of the Sweet Absolute* 4.34,

*tad viddhi praṇipātena
paripraśnena sevayā
upadekṣyanti te jñānam
jñāninas tattva-darśinaḥ*

“You will be able to attain knowledge by satisfying the divine master with submission, relevant inquiry, and sincere service. The enlightened souls who are learned in scriptural knowledge and endowed with direct realization of the Supreme Absolute Truth will impart divine knowledge to you.”

“‘*Tattva-darśinaḥ*’ means who has direct realization of the truth and that is called divine knowledge,” Sripad Puri Maharaj said then asked, “And how did he get that divine knowledge?” “‘*Praṇipātena*’ through submissive approach, ‘*paripraśnena*’ asking pertinent questions, and serving Guru. You can get a connection of genuine spiritual service through that process. Whoever can learn in this way, can attain perfect knowledge and they can also become Guru, not by just one’s own mental speculation. We are finite, we are already conditioned by so many habits and experiences in our lives. And that has taught us to think and act in certain materially conditioned ways.”

“Can’t we undo the conditioning?” Revant Prabhu asked. “Yes, but not on your own. If you are drowning in the ocean, how can you help yourself? You need someone who is not drowning. By proper instruction and purification under the direction of Guru we can become purified.”

“Whether it’s the mundane or spiritual plane, the same process of having a teacher and student relationship is there, and in that way our knowledge becomes more and more proficient. To become proficient in that knowledge we need a good teacher who has some experience of that subject and of that knowledge. Not only theory but experience also. Some teachers have theoretical knowledge, that’s also good but one who also has experience is best,” Sripad Puri Maharaj responded. “‘*Tattva-darśinaḥ*’ means who has seen the truth. Seeing doesn’t mean with these mundane eyes but rather with knowledge. *Sastra chakshus* means one who sees through the knowledge of the scriptures. The eye that is backed with the proper conception can see the truth by direct experience.”

“You have to approach with an open mind so that Guru can put something in it. If you go with a closed mind he cannot impart knowledge,” Amit ji interjected. “If we approach with a glass already full of knowledge, then you cannot put anything else in there, so we have to limit our empirically acquired knowledge to allow room for higher knowledge to come in,” Sripad Puri Maharaj responded. “Then what we have is not really knowledge,” Revant Prabhu asked? “We have

knowledge from our limited experience. But we want to get knowledge from the unlimited source, not only from our own limited experiences,” Sripad Puri Maharaj further explained. “In *ragas* there are *aroha* (ascending) and *avaroha* (descending) scales. There are also different types of knowledge. Knowledge that is descending is proper knowledge, *sastra chakhus* or revealed truth, and the other knowledge that is going up, that is scientific knowledge. This is referred to as induction and deduction in English.”

“If a barrel is filled with balls, and we pick white balls each time, by induction we can say all the balls in the barrel are white, without picking all of them. But we cannot be sure. It is an imperfect limited process. Only by deduction, from someone who knows all the balls are white, can we know for sure. From our limited experiences of particular things we cannot prove anything universal, so we need knowledge coming down to us for that.”

“That is the abstract knowledge,” Revant remarked. “No, what we immediately experience is the abstract,” Sripad Puri Maharaja replied. “What we see here in immediate perceptions are only appearances, -- the essential nature and truth underlies it. Anything that is immediate has an essence, a deeper meaning to it. So as the immediate, whatever we see, whatever we are doing, we experience only the immediate. We are the abstract and the actual truth of what we are made of is not known to us in this physical plane. To know what the essence is, we need descending or revealed knowledge, that essence will reveal itself to us and tell us what that essence is, because we cannot reach it by the ascending or inductive process. Sripad Puri Maharaj said. “Krishna tells us He is the essential truth or support of everything. Everything is coming from Krishna, ‘*vasudevah sarvam iti*’. All else is abstract. *Bhagavad-gītā – The Hidden Treasure of the Sweet Absolute* 7.19 confirms this:

*bahunam janmanam ante
jnanavan mam prapadyate
vasudevah sarvam iti
sa mahatma su-durlabhah*

“After many births, the enlightened soul {blessed with devotional association} realizes that everything is of the nature of {subordinate to} Vāsudeva, and thus he surrenders unto Me. Such a great soul is very rare.”

“Phenomenal appearances don’t have any substantial being on their own. Appearance is based upon on something more than what we see around us. The whole scientific endeavor is based on not accepting what you see but what is underneath or behind it.” Sripad Puri Maharaj continued. “That plane is not the abstract, we are the abstract. We think of things as just being there, but being

there has an essence also associated with it. Thus being is the manifestation of essence. We are the manifestation, so what is *That* which is manifested in everything? That is a deeper spiritual reality. That we have to learn from the higher plane of reality itself which is revealed to us through Gurudev.”

With that the talk concluded, then a feast of *prasadam* was served and honored by all.



Special offering prepared for Srila Bhakti Nirmal Acharya Maharaja's Vyasa Puja.

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] Srila Acharya Maharaj: http://scsmath.com/docs/acharya_maharaj.html

[2] Srila Bhakti Sundar Govinda Dev-Goswami Maharaj - Srila B.S. Govinda Maharaj, Sevaite-President-Acharya Sri Chaitanya Saraswat Math

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

Donations are the only financial support we have for this program

<https://ipn.intuit.com/pay/BhaktivedantaInstitute>