

Sri Sri Guru Gaurangau Jayatah
Bhakti Vedanta Institute
Princeton University Harinama
Princeton, NJ
March 28, 2015

Sri Ram Navami celebrates the appearance day of Lord Sri Ramachandra, the 7th avatar (incarnation) of Sri Krishna, The Supreme Personality of Godhead in the month of Chaitra (Mar-Apr), on the ninth day of the growing moon (Chaitra Masa Shukla Paksha Navami Tithi). Lord Sri Ramachandra appeared as the oldest son of Kaushalya and Dasharatha, the king and queen of Ayodhya/.



Sri Ramachandra with Sita Devi, Sri Lakshmana and Hanuman ji

Begining sanga, Sripad Bhakti Madhava Puri Maharaj, Ph.D (Sripad Puri Maharaj) said, the life and activities of Sri Ram are explained in detail by Rsi Valmiki in the Ramayana. "In that story when Sri Ram and Sitadevi were in the forest, Hanuman, their eternal servant helped Them handle so many difficulties that They had to face. Hanuman is a devotee of Sri Ram," Sripad Puri Maharaj said. "Sri Ramachandra is considered the 7th avatar (incarnation) of the daśāvatāra (ten avatars of Lord Vishnu). Matsya, Kurma, Varaha, Narasimha,

Vamana, Parashurama, Rama, Krishna, Buddha and Kalki are the daśāvātāra. An avatar is an incarnation who descends from the transcendental world."

"This world is a reflection of the spiritual world, the original plane of Krishna and Ramachandra. In the spiritual world there are different panes of realization or spiritual consciousness just like in this material world people have different levels of material consciousness. Some are conscious of God, some are atheist, some are of more intellectual nature, some are of a more sensuous nature. There are different natures not only within the human species but also within the species of animals, plants, and insects. They all have different levels of consciousness," Sripad Puri Maharaj continued. "The ancient Greek philosopher, Aristotle, said 'the plant has a vegetative (or nutritive) nature. They are only concerned about absorbing nourishment from the soil without cessation, but the human beings, who also have a nutritive nature, is rational and has control over eating. They don't eat all the time.' The humans have a higher, rational consciousness which is not available to the plant or animal species of life. Animals don't develop philosophy or religion whereas Man has that capacity. In the spiritual world there are also different levels of consciousness, so there is a difference between Krishna consciousness and Ram consciousness."



Part of the audience during sanga with Sripad Puri Maharaj

At this point our guest, Dorothy, asked, "We Catholics say God made man from earth and women from the rib of man, what is your concept of the human being? How does your religion see it? Where does the human come from?" "These things are very difficult to understand because some people want to explain everything in a stepwise manner, the evolutionary conception, but it doesn't necessarily have to happen like that. Things don't necessarily evolve," Sripad Puri Maharaj responded. "By God's word, everything can come at once. It's not that everything has to gradually evolve from nothing. The ancients thought that the world is eternal – although there is development and growth within it."

Sripad Puri Maharaj went on to further explain that "There is a world that is called spiritual where everything is eternal, but it's not like this world where everything comes and goes. When that world is reflected in the exploitive mind

and ego of the finite being (human) it is seen as material. The spiritual world of God-centered dedication appears to be material, from our finite ego-centric perspective. The spiritual world is Krishna (God) centered whereas the material world is a self centered relection. The original and its reflection are similar but there is a different substance for each, just like a reflection in the mirror is not the same as the world that is being reflected," Sripad Puri Maharaj explained. "In the mirror everything is there. What's outside the mirror is also in the mirror but the reflection in the mirror is not the real world. It looks like the real world but it's not. The same way this world is like the spiritual world but it's only a reflection in ignorance - not the real spiritual world."

"When you die, where do you go?" Dorothy followed-up with. "You belong to the spiritual world but somehow got lost in the mirror of this reflective world You are lost in the reflection. You are not on solid ground, Sripad Puri Maharaj responded then asked, "how do you get to the real world?" "Behaving well and praying to God," Dorothy responded. "You have to develop the consciousness of reality, Reality the Beautiful (Sri Krishna), and get rid of the illusion which is caused by the self interest, where we put ourselves in the center of the whole world. 'We see the world around ourselves. We don't see it around God.' To learn how to see the world around God is called Krishna consciousness, a Theo-centric, God-centered world and that can be reached through bhakti-yoga, chanting the Holy Names of the Lord, hearing from the devotees, learning and practicing the instructions of the scriptures and engaging in devotional service, praying to to loose our self-centered ego and regain that God-centered awareness. That is done by the process of bhakti-yoga, surrender and service to Guru, vaisnava and Krishna."

In the spiritual world of reality, there are different platforms of consciousness or spiritual development also. The highest is Krishna consciousness or Radha dasya which is the plane called Vrindavan/ Mathura where Krishna is a cowherd boy, taking care of the cows. aBelowthat is Dwarka Dham, where He's a king and has His 16,108 queens. He married 16,108 wives because He's God, He can do something like that. No ordinary man can do that. Dwarka is a more royal type of existence, whereas Vrindavan is a more simple country style of existence. Royalty is not there at all in Vrindavan," Sripad Puri Maharaj continued. "Below those planes of spiritual consciousness, is Ayodha, where Sri Ram is the supreme center, representing the highest ideal of tht plane. Ayodha represents a plane where duty, morality, dharma, all these are found. In Vrindavan, morality is the servant of Krishna. He is above morality, where all the moral duties are meant to serve Him, therefore He's above morality. Morality is meant to serve Him, not to serve any other interest whereas in Ayodha, morality is the highest thing that even Sri Ram must follow. He is faithful, loyal, dutiful, truthful and pure."

If we look at the different pastimes of Krishna and Ramachandra, we will see how these things are reflected in Their lives. In Vrindavan Krishna was like sort-of-a transcendental playboy, whereas Ramachandra would never do anything like that. He was very faithful to His wife, to His father, to the citizens. He was so faithful to the citizens that He had to abandon His pregnant wife for their sake because when Ramachandra was exiled to the forest for fourteen (14) years, His wife (Sitadevi) was kidnapped by Ravan (the demon king of Lanka) causing Her to leave the side of her husband. Because She left the side of her husband, She was not considered a chaste person anymore. The fact that she was kidnapped didn't mean anything to them, the people therefore could not honor Her in the highest position that society was expected to follow, so in-order to appease the moral sense of this society, Ramachandra had to abandon Her. She was exiled from the kingdom to the forest where she and Her two sons - Luv and Kush, were taken care of and educated by the Rsis in the forest," Sripad Puri Maharaj continued. "Like that, different pastimes are meant to express different mentalities that if one can understand the higher mentalities of Krishna's pastimes then he can go into that spiritual domain, whereas if he has more restrictive understanding then he would have to go to the other spiritual planes."

"Below Dwarka is Vaikuntha, where Lakshmi-Narayan reside. Narayan is depicted with four (4) arms and in each hand, He has a different symbol. He is considered the majestic aspect of God. The devotees don't have friendship with Narayan, they worship Him as God. The devotees approach Him 'Oh God, you are the most powerful, magnificent. I cannot even approach you except in a very lowly way.' That kind of mentality of approaching God as God, whereas in the other forms of worship of Ramachandra, He has his brother, Laxman, Hanuman, His friend and so many different relationships they can approach Him, even as their caretaker, their father," Sripad Puri Maharaj continued. "We will not find that in Vaikuntha. We will find only strict worship. Those who worship Narayan follow very strict rules when they are doing worship or religious practices. No deviation is allowed otherwise you are expelled. You are an offender."

"From a spiritual point of view, there's a big difference in the mood, the mentality, the consciousness for the devotees of Ramachandra and those who worship Krishna. But the spiritual world is all of the Theo-centric mentality, which is there throughout whether it be Narayan, Ramachandra or Krishna. The idea of Theo-centrism is there and that's what makes it spiritual," Sripad Puri Maharaj continued. Spiritual reality is dependent upon what is the center of that reality. "Spiritual reality centers upon God and the worldly reality, illusion is centered on the self, ego. So whether we are ego-centrally or Theo-centrally situated, that would make the difference whether our consciousness is developing into the spiritual dimension or the material dimension."

At this point sanga came to an end follow by the most ecstatic Harinam sankirtan in honor of Sri Ram Navami.



Guests: Dorothy, Ved ji, Srngara Mataji with Syamasundara das Prabhu on guitar, Rasaraja das Prabhu on kartals and Sripad Puri Maharaj

A summarized version of the Ramayana as narrated by Shukadeva Goswami to Parikshit Maharaja is included in the ninth canto of *Srimad-Bhagavatam* (*Bhagavata Purana*)



L to R: back row: Guest: Ved ji, Dorothy, Rasaraja das Prabhu with Sripad Puri Maharaj. Front row: Nitai das Prabhu, Middle Row: Matajis: Srngara and Kushum

Prasadam was served and honored by all.



All Glories to Sri Ramachandra
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)

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