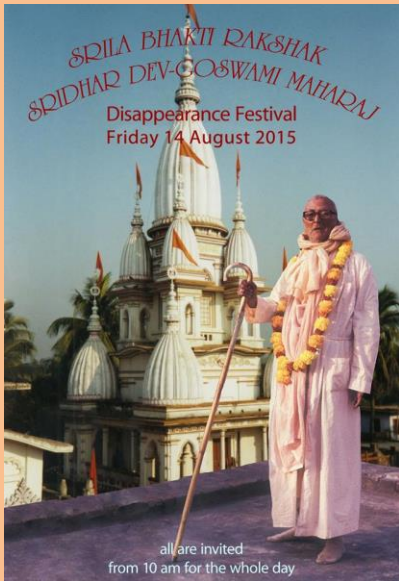


Sri Sri Guru Gaurangau Jayatah
Bhakti Vedanta Institute
Princeton University Harinama
Princeton, NJ
August 15, 2014

Joining Sripad Bhakti Madhava Puri Maharaj, Ph.D (Sripad Puri Maharaj) for Harinam Sankirtan at Princeton's Palmer Square Park were Rasaraja das Prabhu and I. After Harinam, we came back to the Bhakti Vedanta Institute (BVI) office for continuing our weekly program. Today we honored the disappearance day of the Founder-Acharya of Sri Chaitanya Sâraswat Math, Srila Bhakti Raksak Sridhar Dev-Goswâmi Mahârâj (Srila Sridhar Maharaj). Rasaraja das Prabhu led kirtan with "*je anilo prema-dhana koruna pracu - (Sapârşada-bhagavad-viraha-janita-vilâpa)*"^[1] by Srila Narottam Das Thakur, expressing his loving separation from the Lord and his associates. We generally sing this bhajan on the disappearance days of *mahatmas* (great souls). We also celebrated the 50th anniversary of Srila Prabhupada's^[2] arrival in USA aboard the Jaladutta.



Founder-Acharya of Sri Chaitanya Sâraswat Math, Srila Bhakti Raksak Sridhar Dev-Goswâmi Mahârâj



In remembrance of Srila Prabhupada's journey on the Jaladutta fifty years ago, we watched a youtube^[3] video talk by his youngest son, Sri Vrindavan Chandra Dey, given at Netaji Indoor Stadium in Kolkata recounting the last week of Srila Prabhupada's life in Kolkata before setting out for America, and eventually the world to spread the message of Sri Krishna Chaitanya Maharprabhu's^[3] teachings, "Love of Godhead."



Sripad Vrindavan Chandra Dey Jaladuta Yatra Fifty Years Ago

At this point Daniel, one of the guests we met on sankirtan, arrived and wanted to learn more about Vedic culture, since he already knew something about Buddhism. Sripad Puri Maharaj explained that the Vedas, (scriptures of India) belong to India. “The conclusion of the Vedas is compiled in a book called Vedanta, which explains that the Absolute Truth (God) is sentient. The purpose of life is therefore to cultivate the consciousness of God, Krishna, and awaken one’s love of God. This can be achieved by following a particular yoga called Bhakti Yoga (devotional path, the yoga of the heart).” Daniel said he’s very curious to explore about ‘meditation, Buddhism, mind/body consciousness and focusing on calming yourself.”

“We can generally understand that there are three dimensions of existence – the physical, the mental and the spiritual. The spiritual is not the mental. Spirit is a little hard to understand because it is more than mental and the easiest way you can really connect with that platform is through mediation,” Sripad Puri Maharaj explained then asked Daniel if he has heard of the word Mantra, which he responded in affirmative. “Mantra is made up of two words: *mana* (mind) and *atra* (to release). Thus mantra meditation helps release oneself from the mental plane and to bring you to the platform of spiritual existence. On that platform you don’t really need your material mind because it becomes a distraction. It is the mind that creates the whole illusion of material existence, because ultimately our real eternal nature is spiritual.”

Have you heard of the Hare Krishna mantra? Sripad Puri Maharaj asked then responded, “We chant this mantra, which comes from the Vedic tradition. Veda was received at the beginning of the creation by the creator of the universe, Brahma. It has been handed down by instruction for millions of years through a lineage of Acharyas (spiritual teachers).” He continued, “whenever the knowledge gets dissipated for various reasons, then at that time an avatar

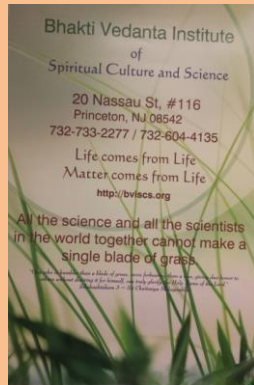
(incarnation of God) comes and reestablishes His teachings. The most recent avatar was Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu and He taught this mantra that we chant." This is confirmed in Srila Bhakti Raksaka Sridhara Maharaja's *Bhagavad Gita - The Hidden Treasure of the Sweet Absolute*: chapter 4 Verse 7, The Path of Knowledge:

*yada yada hi dharmasya
glanir bhavati bharata
abhyutthanam adharmasya
tadatmanam srijamy aham*

"O Bhârata, whenever there is a decline of religion and an uprising of irreligion, I personally make My advent."

"What does spiritual mean?" Daniel asked. "It's tough to imagine with the mind what is there beyond physical and mental," Sripad Puri Maharaj responded. "Yet beyond the physically known and the mental activity of knowing there is a knower - a self with which we directly identify." What has convinced you," Daniel further inquired. Sripad Puri Maharaja replied, "The actual realization itself of what is spiritual. Everyone has a soul, so there's a need for learning how to understand our spiritual identity."

"What is a soul? The soul (*atma*) is the marginal energy of God - an infinitesimal portion of the energy of Krishna. The souls gives life to dead matter which when embodied are called living entities - people, plants, animals, insects - we are all living beings. We are all a small spark of God. It's not merely a matter of chemical reaction that creates life," Sripad Puri Maharaj responded while pointing to the poster on the wall that reads 'All the Science and all the scientists in the world together cannot make a single blade of grass.' The scientist doesn't know how to make something as insignificant as grass in a lab, regardless of all their science and expensive and latest equipment. They will never be able to make a blade of grass simply from chemicals. So even the smallest living entity is not to be misconceived as purely material because something divine is present there. By training and conditioning we don't see the divinity rather we see only the mundanity and that is because of our mind, the way we were taught to think about things, that makes us see it and relate to it in that way. But really there is something much more sacred, more divine, and that we call spiritual. "



Life comes from life.



Sripad Puri Maharaj with guest, Daniel

“In the scriptures the nature of spirit is described as *sat chit ananda* – that which does not have temporary existence. *Sat* is eternal, *chit* means that which is cognizant, and *ananda* means that which is blissful, satisfaction to the highest degree, overflowing with fulfillment. So these three qualities, eternity, knowledge and bliss are the substance of what spirit is. These are not things that we can touch or hold, but still we can experience them,” Sripad Puri Maharaj explained. “We have experiences of our own being conscious, and a certain amount of fulfillment in our life. These are not qualities of matter, these experiences are possible because of spirit. Once the spiritual spark is awakened in the living entity, the more the living entity becomes interested in spiritual things. Cognition is part of our spiritual existence. Animals have cognition also and some enjoyment but they don’t really have the ability to go as far as the human does because we have a greater intelligence for inquiring about these things. This is what we teach, and try to practice and cultivate in our own lives. For those who are interested in this kind of knowledge we encourage them to cultivate the spiritual side of their existence, their spiritual nature and their relationship with God.”

“These are the teaching of the Vedas. They are not something that was made up by men, and is not a sectarian religion but more a way of life and an ontological understanding of our spiritual existence,” Sripad Puri Maharaj continued. “The spiritual world is hidden behind the curtain of illusion of the material world. It’s a matter of clearing up the ignorance or illusion we have of what is really real. There are so many misunderstandings that cover our real knowledge. We take everything for granted, like grass, for example. We think, so what? What’s so significant about grass? But there is a very miraculous process of life that is producing grass.”

“I know that life is magic” Daniel said. “Life is a spiritual phenomenon but they don’t teach you that when you go to the university. They teach you that grass is simply cellulose, oxygen, hydrogen and carbon combined through

photosynthesis. So when students come out of these colleges, they are quite convinced that that's all there is to it. All that is left is making a living, having a healthy life and then dying like dogs and cats in the streets," Sripad Puri Maharaj responded. "What alternative do you have to that?" Daniel asked. "We have to learn the difference between knowledge that enhances the illusion of material life and that knowledge which establishes our real spiritual identity. The real identity is that we are spiritual beings, who have a life in a spiritual world and have a spiritual purpose in life, and spiritual desires to fulfill. Without knowing that we have to suffer the consequences as a result of that ignorance."

"As opposed to accepting a scientific order of the world, how does one begin?" Daniel asked. "People need to have a little scepticism about what is being taught and what the actual reality is according to our best ability to understand things," Sripad Puri Maharaj responded. "As far as I've learned, under the guidance of Guru, from the spiritual literature and philosophy of the Vedas, there is a very clear understanding of how to come to and develop a spiritual world view on the basis of service, dedication, and devotion ."



Rasaraja das Prabhu with Sripad Puri Maharaj and Kushum devi dasi

Prasadam was served and honored by all.



Srila Bhakti Rakshak Sridhardeva Goswami Maharaja ki jai
Srila Bhajkti Sundar Govinda Maharaja ki jai
Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada ki jai
Srila Bhakti Nirmal Acharya Maharaja ki jai
Sripad Bhakti Madhava Puri Maharaj ki jai
Gaura bhakta vrnda ki jai

Your humble servant
Kushum devi dasi
New York

[1] <http://www.vaishnavsongs.com/je-anilo-prem-dhana/>

[2] His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Srila Prabhupada is the founder Acharya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON)

[3] 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.

[4] His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Srila Prabhupada (Srila Prabhupada) is the founder Acharya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON)

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