

Sri Sri Guru Gaurangau Jayatah
Bhakti Vedanta Institute
Princeton University Harinama
Princeton, NJ
August 16, 2014

Today we have set out for Princeton University's campus with the new Bhakti Vedanta Institute (BVI)'s brochure but because of the summer holiday break, there were mostly weekend visitors site-seeing at the campus. Sripad Bhakti Madhava Puri Maharaj, Ph.D (Sripad Puri Maharaj) then decided to send us each in separate directions to distribute the new brochures. At 2 PM we came back to BVI's office for sanga.



Syamasundara das Prabhu with Sripad Puri Maharaj and Ved ji Gupta

Sripad Puri Maharaj opened sanga with The Pancha Tattva Mahamantra followed with a very enthusiastic rendition of the Hare Krishna Mahamantra. Syamasundara das Prabhu accompanied him on guitar, while Sripad Puri Maharaj's guest, Ved ji Gupta, and myself clapped as we celebrate Janmasthanami (appearance day of Lord Sri Krishna), Srila Prabhupada's^[1] appearance day, which is celebrated the day after Janmasthanami and the annual inauguration day celebration of the Bhakti Vedanta Institute two years ago at Princeton University.

In recapping the birth of Sri Krishna, Sripad Puri Maharaj said, "Krishna was born of Devaki and Vasudev in a prison cell. They were locked up by Kamsa. He was afraid that the 8th child of Devaki would kill him as was predicted, and therefore he wanted to kill that child instead of being killed by that child. He did not trust that Devaki would bring that child to him, so he locked them up so he

would be sure that when the 8th child comes he would destroy him. By Krishna's mystic powers, Lord Sri Balaram was transcendently transferred from the womb of Devaki to Rohini, one of Vasudev's wives, who was taking refuge at Nanda Maharaj's residence. When Krishna was born, by His mystic power, Vasudev was able to escape from Kamsa's prison with baby Krishna, crossing the Yumana river to Vrindavan, there he delivered Krishna to the arms of mother Yasodha and Nanda Maharaj. In that way Kamsa was thwarted and ultimately he was destroyed by Krishna Himself as it was predicted."



Vasudev taking Krishna across the Yamuna



Sri Krishna's bathing ceremony

"All the wonderful activities of Krishna in Vrindavan with His devotees are described in the *Srimad Bhagavatam*, especially the 10th Canto. His teachings are given in the *Srimad Bhagavat Gita* to His dear friend Arjuna and so many pastimes with His relatives are explained in the Mahabharata. Like that we have some historical knowledge of Krishna and the transcendental nature, qualities, personality and activities of the Lord," Sripad Puri Maharaj explained. "By the mercy of Mahaprabhu^[2] and Lord Nityananda, we were able to understand the true purpose of the teachings of the *Bhagavat Gita* given by Sri Krishna."

Krishna says in the *Srimad Bhagavad Gita* 18:66,

*sarva-dharmān parityajya
mām ekaṁ śaraṇaṁ vraja
ahaṁ tvām sarva-pāpēbhyo
mokṣayiṣyāmi mā śucaḥ*

"Give up all kinds of religion and surrender to Me alone. I will liberate you from all sins, do not despair."

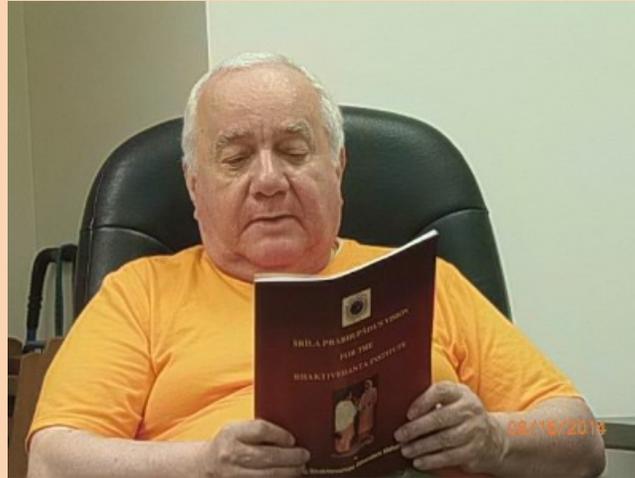
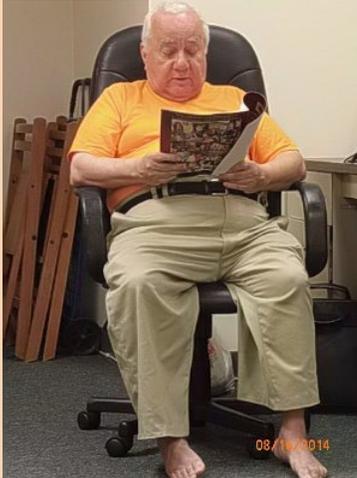
“Krishna tells Arjuna ‘surrender to Me,’” but nothing is told of what does that ‘surrender’ mean. What happens when you surrender to Krishna or what do you do after you surrender to Krishna or how to proceed from there,” Sripad Puri Maharaj continued. “Mahaprabhu came to teach that part – what to do after you surrender to Krishna and what type of life should we lead. That is found in the teachings and life of Mahaprabhu. He came in the form of a bhakta (devotee) to teach us how a surrendered devotee should live his or her life in the mood of surrender and service. Krishna and Mahaprabhu are both very valuable teachers to us and we offer all respect to Them as non-different forms of the Lord.”

After a brief pause he continued, “Srila Prabhupada is a most important person for us because he came to tell us these things. These are all there in the Vedic *Shastras* (scriptures) since thousands of years ago not known to us, but by the mercy of guru (spiritual master) these things become manifest to so many people. These teaching were then distributed all over the world by the incredible mercy of Srila Prabhupada,” Sripad Puri Maharaj explained. “So much energy he has because he was empowered by Krishna to go all over the world, even at an advanced age, to preach Krishna consciousness, the message of Mahaprabhu. We are especially grateful to him because without him we would have no contact with Krishna. So in his honor, and because we are closely associated with him at the Bhakti Vedanta Institute, we have his name in our name.”

Sripad Puri Maharaj then read one of Sripad Bhakti Swarupa Damodar Maharaj’s (Sripad Maharaj) Vyasa Puja offerings to Srila Prabhupada, where Sripad Maharaj addressed Srila Prabhupada as “my lord and master” while begging for “shelter” at his lotus feet. The offering continues, “The influence of the modes of nature, only your divine mercy can cleanse. Fortunate are those whose hearts were touched by your gentle glance. The revealed scripture enunciate the spiritual master to be non-different from Krishna. Krishna in spiritual master’s form showers blessings upon His devotees. Gurudev, I have nothing to offer but beg please bless me so I may sing your glories birth after bith.” The importance of guru is confirmed in the *Sri Caitanya Caritamrita, Adi-lila, 1.47*:

*shiksha guruke ta jani krishnera svarupa
antaryami bhakta shreshtha ei dui rupa*

“One should know the instructing spiritual master to be the Personality of Kṛṣṇa. Lord Kṛṣṇa manifests Himself as the Supersoul and as the greatest devotee of the Lord.”



Sripad Puri Maharaj reading from *Srila Prabhupada's Vision for the BVI*

“Through this Krishna Consciousness movement, every person in this planet, regardless of religion, community, nationality can participate. It’s a universal platform wherein people are to be educated in the science of the soul, consciousness and life’s mission. For the first time in the cultural and spiritual history of the world everyone can be united under the banner of Mahaprabhu’s movement. This is the greatest gift given by the most magnanimous person in the 20th century for the well-being of everyone on this planet,” Sripad Puri Maharaj said. In another quote from Sripad Maharaj, it reads, ‘The disciple lives eternally with the divine instructions of the spiritual master. Those divine instructions are his constant guidance and friend.’ He then went on to say that “this is really the sum and substance of Sripad Maharaj’s life.”

In a letter to Sripad Maharaj (9/30/75), Srila Prabhupada explains BVI’s mission. “The institute will be primarily for those who have not entered our temples. The subject would not be different from what is taught in our temples. There will be no difference between our temples and the institute but the institute will be officially for the general mass. There will be a formal education and they will get degrees. It will be open for everyone including those who have already entered our temples.’ So Prabhupada’s idea about the institute should be educational,” Sripad Puri Maharaj continued. In several other letters to Sripad Maharaj, Srila Prabhupada gave detailed instructions on how to set up BVI and the subject matter to be discussed. The letters also stated that there should be an ‘exam’ implemented at the end of each course. The degrees given would be in the equivalent of bachelors, masters and so on so forth. Srila Prabhupada letters further stated that “all branches of knowledge must be studied strictly in the context of Krishna Consciousness” with the “Vaisnava university taking authority from the *Srimad Bhagavatam*.”

In 1977, Srila Prabhupada wrote, “We have formed BVI for organizing scientific presentation of Krishna Consciousness. This party is our preaching arm in which we will be able to destroy the bogus speculation and cheating which goes on under the banner of science.” In the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.1.1, it states:

*janmādy asya yato 'nvayād itarataś cārtheṣv abhijñāḥ svarāt
tene brahma hṛdā ya ādi-kavaye muhyanti yat sūrayaḥ
tejo-vāri-mṛdām yathā vinimayo yatra tri-sargo 'mṛṣā
dhāmnā svena sadā nirasta-kuhakaṁ satyaṁ param dhīmahi*

“O my Lord, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, son of Vasudeva, O all-pervading Personality of Godhead, I offer my respectful obeisances unto You. I meditate upon Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa because He is the Absolute Truth and the primeval cause of all causes of the creation, sustenance and destruction of the manifested universes. He is directly and indirectly conscious of all manifestations, and He is independent because there is no other cause beyond Him. It is He only who first imparted the Vedic knowledge unto the heart of Brahmājī, the original living being. By Him even the great sages and demigods are placed into illusion, as one is bewildered by the illusory representations of water seen in fire, or land seen on water. Only because of Him do the material universes, temporarily manifested by the reactions of the three modes of nature, appear factual, although they are unreal. I therefore meditate upon Him, Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who is eternally existent in the transcendental abode, which is forever free from the illusory representations of the material world. I meditate upon Him, for He is the Absolute Truth.”

“Sripad Maharaj sacrificed his life in carrying out this order of Srila Prabhupada and met with so many successes that the enemies of truth felt threatened that he would take from them the delusions that they so cherished,” Sripad Puri Maharaj said. “Sripad Maharaj and Srila Prabhupada nicely explained what is the purpose of BVI and what is the foundation on which all of this was based.”

It the *Srimad Bhagavad-gita*, 3.21 Sri Krishna says:

*yad yad ācarati śreṣṭhas
tat tad evetaro janaḥ
sa yat pramāṇam'kurute
lokas tad anuvartate*

“The masses follow the ways of great men, following the standards they set.”

After a brief pause, Sripad Puri Maharaj continued, “On our own we have absolutely nothing, no ability, no strength. Day by day we are existing somehow going on and praying that somehow Krishna will continue to provide His mercy

so that we can continue the humble mission of trying to preach this message of Love of God – the whole essence of the teachings of Vedanta. Not to get some knowledge but to know what is the purpose of life and that purpose in life is to develop spiritually in love of God, Sri Krishna.”

“People are living in this world but they don’t really know what is the purpose of their life. There are so many things that one can do in this world. Krishna has given this world with so many things that one can become distracted by but one should not be distracted by all those things because all of them are simply manifestations of the glories of Krishna,” Sripad Puri Maharaj explained. “We are not to become distracted by His glories but rather we are only to admire the Lord and love Him because of His glorious nature. Krishna is telling us to ‘not be distracted by all My glories. Surrender to Me. Have your relationship with Me and love Me; there you will find the highest satisfaction.’”

“‘*Krishna-prema-pradaya te...*’ Mahaprabhu came only to teach that, to understand the desire of the Lord and what would please Him. The devotees of Mahaprabhu teach us that process that the Lord Himself showed us in His own incarnations. Krishna as well as Mahaprabhu, why do They incarnate?” Sripad Puri Maharaj asked then said. “To teach these things to the people who don’t know what they are here for. So when the Lord’s devotees are taking up that process that He Himself has to come to teach, the Lord takes notice of such devotees who are trying to serve Him and satisfy His desire. That type of pure serving mood is what is called *Prem*, ever desiring to satisfy the desires of the Lord.”

And so sanga came to an end.

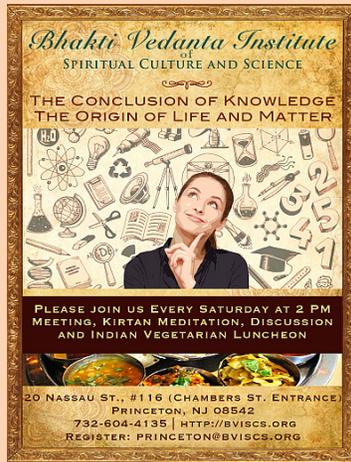
Sri Krishna Janmastami ki jai
Srila Prabhupada ki jai
Bhakti Vedanta Institute ki jai

Prasadam was served and honored by all.

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)



The cover of our new pamphlet

[1] 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.

[2] 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.

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

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