

Sri Sri Guru Gaurangau Jayatah
Bhakti Vedanta Institute
Princeton University Harinama
Princeton, NJ
September 5, 2015

Joined by guest, Dorothy, Rasaraja das Prabhu began Harinam Sankirtan at Princeton's Palmer Square Park while I handed out our brochure intermittently. After Harinam, we came back to the Bhakti Vedanta Institute (BVI) office for the afternoon talk with Sripad Bhakti Madhava Puri Maharaj, Ph.D (Sripad Puri Maharaj).



Rasaraja das Prabhu, young Harinam dancer, Dorothy distributing our brochure to passer-by

“What is the difference between spirit and soul?” guest Dorothy asked. “The soul is also spiritual,” Sripad Puri Maharaj responded then asked if she ever heard the phrase ‘spirit soul’ which refers to “the direct or immediate perception of spirit.”

Her next question was, who is Lord Ganesha. “Ganesha put the Vedas in written form as the secretary of Srila Vyasadeva. He is considered to be the remover of obstacles in both material and spiritual pursuits, but removing material obstacles is meant for the purpose of achieving a higher platform of God realization, not for gaining material wealth and fame as many people misunderstand,” Sripad Puri Maharaj responded. He then explained to his second guest, Lucinda, a student of ‘gratitude yoga,’ that kirtan is a singing meditation using mantras in

call and response chanting. It becomes easier to meditate when you are singing in a congregation because when you are sitting and meditating alone it becomes a little difficult to keep your focus, so by chanting together it is a lot easier to mediate. Kirtan meditation gives focus to the mind and the heart.” He went on to inform that “We also teach about Vedanta, the Bhagavat philosophy of bhakti yoga, the ancient spiritual tradition of India.”

At this point we began kirtan led by Sripad Puri Maharaj.



Amit ji, Rasaraja das Prabhu. and Sripad Puri Maharaj during Harinam kirtan



Guests: Dorothy and Sobha during Harinam kirtan

Delving right into his regular talk, Sripad Puri Maharaj said, “Today we are celebrating Janmasthanmi (Lord Krishna’s birthday), a very special occasion. Krishna is an incarnation of God or an avatar. He is the original Godhead (*Adi Purusha* - original person) from whom everything else is coming but in this world He appears at a special time to benefit the people, especially in *Kali-yuga*

(Age of Ignorance, hypocrisy and strife), about five thousand (5,000) years ago in India. He appears only once in a day of Brahma,^[1] the world creator, in His original form as Krishna." Pointing to the pictures on the wall of Sri Sri Gaura Nitai, he said, "These are the avatars of Sri Krishna Chaitanya Mahaprabhu^[2] and his brother Sri Nityananda Prabhu. They appeared a little over five hundred (500) years ago in Bengal. This incarnation is especially to teach the chanting of the Maha Mantra (great-mantra) - *Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare / Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare.*"

"Chaitanya Mahaprabhu came to teach the chanting of the Holy Names of God, for awakening and cultivating the consciousness of God within us. In *Kali-yuga* because of ignorance, people are becoming less and less interested in cultivating that consciousness of God within themselves, so Mahaprabhu offered us a very simple process called Harinam Sankirtan (congregation chanting of Krishna's Holy Names)," Sripad Puri Maharaj explained. "You don't even have to be in a temple or a church. You can be under a tree, walking down the streets, wherever you want to be and just chant the Holy Names. That is what is recommended for this age of *Kali*. I call it WWW - Worship Without Walls. That is Mahaprabhu's mission for this age of *Kali*. We have lost so much interest in God and gained interest in so many other things to divert our attention from the most real thing of all."



Sri Krishna Chaitanya Mahaprabhu and Sri Nityananda Prabhu.

After a brief pause, he said, "Just like the seasons (Summer, Winter, Fall, Spring), the universe has its seasons and they are called *yugas* (age/epoch). You have *Satya* (1,728,000 years), *Treta* (lasts 1,296,000 years), *Dwarpa* (lasts 864,000 years) and *Kali*. We are living in *Kali yuga* which is like the winter and last for 432,000 years. Each *yuga* has its specific age and characteristics in which incarnations of Krishna appear in different forms."

Sripad Puri Maharaj said, "As a child, coming from a Catholic background, I once complained to my parents, 'you say you believe in God, but why do you only remember Him on Sundays?' People who understood God would spend their whole time thinking about Him. How could they give such little importance to something so significant?" Sripad Puri Maharaj said. "One who can actually understand that there's something like God or have actual faith in that, why then give such little importance to it? Why only one hour a week? Why not twenty-four (24) hours a day instead of all the other things that people are concentrating on? "

"When one comes to spiritual life, as we still find in India at least, it is important to find *guru* (spiritual teacher). *Guru* is a person who comes to teach us about God by his words and by his living example. *Guru* teaches us how to awaken our connection, through *bhakti yoga* (devotional service), to Krishna." Sripad Puri Maharaj explained. "The idea of God is one Who is the center of all life, of the whole universe. Then what is the relationship of the spiritual and the material worlds to that center?" Sripad Puri Maharaj asked then responded, "It's like this: if you have a whole cut into pieces, then the combined pieces of that whole are only meant to express that whole. The pieces themselves do not have the same significance as the whole in the sense that each piece is only meant to complete that whole. The pieces are not the whole in themselves but each piece belongs to the whole in order to be what it is. So the piece is known by the whole. For example, a piece of pizza gets its identity from the whole pizza that it came from."

"Similarly we are part and parcel of the whole in which Krishna is the Complete Whole. Our identity is determined by what that whole is. We cannot identify ourselves as a separate isolated entity. That kind of misunderstanding characterizes what we call the material world. But there is no such thing as us and God as completely separate beings. We are integral parts of God but not on the same level as God. We are the energy (*Shakti*) and He is the energetic source," Sripad Puri Maharaj continued. "We are *Jiva-Shakti* (infinitesimal portion of energy). God is the infinitely great and we are the infinitely small. God is both the largest and the smallest otherwise He would not be complete. If God is the complete infinitely greatest, He must be the infinitely smallest also. We are all part of that whole, that infinite completeness, therefore the infinitesimal and the infinite are both existing in Krishna. It's not that He is impersonal or some indeterminate light (energy). He is personal. How is it that we are persons and God is not personal? Impossible!" Sripad Puri Maharaj said laughingly.

"Where does life come from" Sripad Puri Maharaj asked. "Can we put molecules together to create life?"

“Life is God,” Lucinda responded. Sripad Puri Maharaj replied, “God is the source of life, that’s why we are here. You are born from a person, not from an impersonal object like a rock. Scientists think we all came from rocks, which is insane,” Sripad Puri Maharaj said laughingly. “They believe that, they teach that in colleges and universities and you get a degree if you accept those things. We don’t accept that. We accept that life comes from life and person comes from person therefore there must be an original person and that’s called the *Adi Purusham* (first person), Krishna, and from Krishna we are coming.”

“In the *Brahma Samhita*^[3], Lord Brahma has exclaimed ‘*govindam adi-purusham tam aham bhajami*’ (I worship Govinda, the Primeval Lord). In the *Brahma Samita*, Lord Brahma has also described in detail about the nature of Lord Krishna. We are the subordinate person and Krishna is the superordinate person,” Sripad Puri Maharaj explained. “We are the servants of Krishna but people think of themselves as separate identities from others and from God and in that separateness they try to dominate one another because all are fighting for something separate based separate interests. In that struggle for existence there’s no remembrance of how we are harmoniously meant to serve the whole of which we are parts, so the system of *bhakti yoga* (devotional path) is given to awaken that consciousness, devotion, dedication, and expression of the heart-felt love of God.” This is confirmed in the first verse of the *Brahma Samhita*:

*chintamani prakara-sadmasu kalpa-vriksha-
laksavriteshu surabhir abhipalayantam
lakshmi-sahasra-shata-sambhrama-sevyamanam
govindam adi-purusham tam aham bhajami*

“I worship Govinda, the Primeval Lord, the First Progenitor Who is tending the cows, yielding all desires, in abodes built with spiritual gems, surrounded by millions of purpose-trees, always served with great reverence and affection by hundreds of thousands of Lakshmis or Gopis.”



Mother Yasodha bathing Sri Krishna

“How is that connection to be made or experienced in our lives?” Sripad Puri Maharaj asked, then responded, “There’s a science, a systematic process for that and it’s called *bhakti yoga* in the *Srimad Bhagavat Gita*. It not only explains how to get there but it also explains the pitfalls, traps, *maya* (illusion), what are the causes of those illusions and how do we extract ourselves from those illusions,” Sripad Puri Maharaj said. “All the details, what is *sudha bhakti*, *karma*, *jnana*, devotion, exploitation, renunciation -- all these subjects are explained in a deep way in the *Srimad Bhagavat Gita*, clearly, scientifically and systematically. It’s a very important book and anyone can apply its principles in their lives regardless of their religious background.”

“People may think of God in many ways, but how do you connect with Him. God is one though He may appear in so many different forms, but how to establish that connection as well as understand what not to do is most important,” Sripad Puri Maharaj explained. “Unfortunately, in schools they don’t teach these things. The *Bhagavat Gita* is considered as a Hindu scripture but it’s a scientific book about God, soul, the material world, time and actions and reactions. To understand that there is God and what is our relationship with Him, with that divinity, is the main thing.”



With that, the instructive talk came to an end. Prasadam was served and honored by all.

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] A day of Lord Brahmā lasts for one thousand *chatur- yugas** and his night is of the same duration. Persons who know this have the true conception of day and night (One *yuga* {age} in the time calculation of the demigods equals the four *yugas* or one *chatur- yuga* in the time calculation of man, or 4,320,000 years.)

[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] *Brahma Samhita* - http://bhaktiswarupadamodara.com/sri_brahma_samhita.html

Donations for the Princeton University Sankirtan Mission
<https://ipn.intuit.com/pay/BhaktivedantaInstitute>