

Sri Sri Guru Gaurangau Jayatah
Bhakti Vedanta Institute

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Do you read the *Bhagavad Gita*, Sripad Bhakti Madhava Puri Maharaj, Ph.D (Sripad Puri Maharaj) casually asked three of his first timer guests, Sonia Singh, Daata Nath and Taramatie Singh. After they had replied that they are more familiar with the *Ramayana*, he explained that the *Bhagavad Gita* is part of the *Mahabharata*. In the third chapter Sri Krishna is explaining to Arjuna about Karma Yoga - The Path of Action, at the battlefield of Kurushetra. "This chapter is interesting because it talks about how to become independent of the mind and senses – since we are celebrating America's independence this July 4th week," Sripad Puri Maharaj said while waiting for the other invited guests to arrive.

Before delving further, we honored prasadam and Sonia Singh's birthday as Sripad Puri Maharaj explained that "We think we are in control but we are slaves to the senses and mind that drive us hither thither." To illustrate this point further, he said that Arjuna was thinking in terms of his bodily relationships and mental worries arising from them while on the battlefield of Kurushetra, and Krishna was trying to teach him on how to become independent of that. *Bhagavad Gita* 3.1 thus begins:

arjuna uvaca
jyayasi cet karmanas te
mata buddhir janardana
tat kim karmani ghore mam
nijoyajasi kesava

Arjuna said: "O Janardana, O Kesava, if You consider that resolute and determined spiritual intelligence (*vyavasayatmika buddhi*) is better than action in goodness and passion, then why do You engage me in the violent activity of warfare?"

"Sri Krishna explained that by action you can become detached," Sripad Puri Maharaj said, and then asked, "Since none of us can become detached from the actions of our mind, then how, by action can we become detached or independent from the everyday things in life? What else is there aside from our senses and mind?"

"You have to have control," one of Sripad Puri Maharaj's guests, Daata Nath responded. "Yes, but it is more than control. It's how to become independent of the mundane senses and the mind also," Sripad Puri Maharaj explained as he delved into the two paths of bhakti – devotional service.

sri-bhagavan uvaca
loke 'smin dvi-vidha nistha
pura prokta mayanagha

*jnana-yogena sankhyanam
karma-yogena yoginam*

The Supreme Lord replied to Arjuna: “I have already described the two types of faith to be found in this world. I have established that the learned who are aware of the conscious world, and those who are mainly active in the mundane plane, both engage in the (rudimentary) practice of the path of devotion (*sadhana bhaktiyoga*) by respectively following the path of knowledge and the path of selfless action offered to the Lord. Actually, the staircase leading to the land of dedication is one, while only faith is twofold, according to the steps attained by the aspirants.” (*Bhagavad Gita: 3.3*)



L to R: Guyanese singer; Chitra Singh, Mahesh das Prabhu, Sripad Puri Maharaj, Bhakula Mataji and Surottama das Prabhu

At this point of Sanga, four other guests arrived as Sripad Puri Maharaj was explaining about *yajna* (sacrifice), the selfless duty performed as an offering to the Supreme Lord, Sri Krishna. But Sripad Puri Maharaj paused for a while to receive his four other guests.

Chitra Singh, a well-known Indo-Guyanese singer performed the “Beatles” style Mahamantra on guitar while Surottama das Prabhu on kartals. Then Sripad Puri Maharaj’s began the traditional call and response kirtan that began with paying obeisances to Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu by chanting the Panca-tattva mantra, (Jaya Sri-Krishna-Chaitanya Prabhu Nityananda Sri-Adwaita Gadadhara Shrivasadi-Gaura-Bhakta-Vrinda.) and ended with the Mahamantra - (Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare / Hare Rāma Hare Rāma Rāma Rāma Hare Hare).

“*Yajna* is very important...it means doing sacrifice at every moment in life,” Sripad Puri Maharaj said while giving various examples of *yajna* such as offering food, and Harinam, which he explained is *sankirtana yajna*. “These days people do not want to do that (*sankirtan*) because it takes away from their time for sense gratification.” Sripad Puri Maharaj then asked “how precious a grain of rice is? If there’s no food, what would we do? Do we realize how each grain of rice is a gift? “Without the rain, there would be no

rice because the atman (soul) is in the rain that enters into the ground that makes it fertile to produce the rice,” Sripad Puri Maharaj said. “The Amerindian people know that because they do that rain dance, while in India the Indian people pray to Lord Indra^[1] for rain....But in today’s society, they do not know about those sacrifices.” The *Bhagavad Gita*: 3.14 says:

*annad bhavanti bhutani
parjanyaad anna-sambhavah
yajnad bhavati parjanyo
yajnah karma-samudbhavah*

“From food, living beings arise, and from rains, food is produced. From the performance of sacrifice, rainfall ensues, and sacrifice is born of action.”

Surottana das Prabhu said that “in the ‘70’s there was no rain in Hyderabad (he believes) and Srila Prabhupada^[2] took some devotees there and did some *sankirtana* and then the rain came. Srila Prabhupada said the rain came because of the *sankirtana*.” Sripad Puri Maharaj replied that in Kaliyuga just chanting the Mahamantra is enough as taught by Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu.^[3] “By doing *yajna*, the senses, mind and ego do not take the upper hand instead the higher intelligence takes over.”

Sanga has now jumped into the question and answers session. Humans are required to do sacrifice, so what about the other forms of living entities? Bhakula Mataji asked. “Animals can’t...they are instinctive. They have no scriptures,” Sripad Puri Maharaj responded while Revant Prabhu asked, what about animals like the elephant that are known for showing emotions. “They have emotions but there’s no religion in the animal kingdom,” Sripad Puri Maharaj explained.

While on the same topic, Bhakula Mataji asked “would that substantiate eating the animal for food without incurring karma? “Animals can kill each other without incurring karma because of their instinctive nature, but if we humans kill an animal then we incur karma,” Sripad Puri Maharaj explained. After a brief pause, he then added, “one who does not observe rules does not have a religion.” *Bhagavad Gita* 3.4 confirms:

*na karmanam anarambhan
naiskarmyam puruso 'snute
na ca sannyasanad eva
siddhim samadhigacchati*

“Without performing scripturally enjoined duties, one cannot attain knowledge leading to freedom from action and reaction. How can a person of impure heart obtain perfection by abandoning his prescribed duties?”

Chitra Mataji, a first timer guest asked “Why with our level of consciousness do we kill each other.” “Why is there war and so much hatred in the world? Sripad Puri Maharaj reiterated. “It comes down to forgetfulness of what we are – which is so magnificent. We

are each a part of God, Krishna. By forgetting this we are seeing such terrible things happening in life. We have to remove the covering that make us forget our true constitutional nature – that we are all eternal servants of the Supreme Lord, Sri Krishna,” he explained. “There are certain things we can do to help us return to that Krishna consciousness such as *yajna* (sacrifice).”

Surottama das Prabhu interjected that we are individuals with our own desires. “If we are Krishna conscious, if we love God, then where’s the question of desire? We are all part of Krishna and He’s there in everyone. By forgetting this, it is like being lost to the truth and that is darkness,” Sripad Puri Maharaj responded. “We have to be awakened to the truth, the reality and all the problems will be solved. We do not need a lot of solutions, just one solution – Krishna Consciousness.”



L to R back row: Matajis: Sonia (celebrating her birthday today), Taramatie, Chitra, Mahesh das Prabhu, Sripad Puri Maharaj. Front row: Daata Mataji, Surottama das Prabhu and Bhakula Mataji

“Over the years, I have tried to remove the desires and still have not been able to get the realization. How would I know when I get that realization?” Surottama das Prabhu asked. “We cannot remove desires like that. Desires will come and go, you cannot stop them, they are part of the modes of material nature and are more powerful than you are,” Sripad Puri Maharaj responded. “The solution is to try not to act upon them. You need to be detached. They [desires] will keep coming back, but if you keep chanting your Hare Krishna mantra and always remember to serve Gurudev, keep your service first in your

mind no matter how many times you may be momentarily diverted, you will again become refocused,” Sripad Puri Maharaj explained.

Sanga was on a roll at this point with so many questions. Next up was Revant Prabhu who wanted to know if there is a difference between suppressed desire and detached desire. “Our main desire should be to serve Krishna, to become Krishna conscious, and to see Him in everything and everywhere. That is the reality – to become Krishna conscious and see Him in everything,” Sripad Puri Maharaj answered. “Desires will be there because that is our material make-up in this world, but we have to deal with it in a detached way. We have to keep our focus - our hearts set on Krishna, knowing that the Lord is in our heart and remembering that whatever is happening, He is there watching me and He is not going to abandon me.”

As a follow-up question, Revant Prabhu asked, “Is there a difference between serving Krishna and mankind?” Sripad Puri Maharaj enthusiastically responded, “Yes, most definitely. God is beyond our immediate perception. We cannot serve God and man at the same time. God is not Man and Man is not God. Man is not the reality. Krishna is the reality. We have to ask what the absolute is. Krishna is The Absolute Truth, not Man. Krishna is the Ultimate Reality – *isvarah paramah krsnah*, it does not say *isvarah paramah Man!*” The scriptures are not teaching us to serve Man, they are teaching us to serve Krishna and that will solve all the problems.”

In agreement, Surottama das Prabhu said that it’s like watering the root of the plant, which will then nourish the rest of the plant. “There’s a system and that system of reality is Krishna – The Absolute Truth is the controller of everything - *isvarah paramah krsnah*,” Sripad Puri Maharaj continued. “In the *Vedanta Sutra*, it states *janma dasya* – from which everything is born, from which everything comes, and that is the root, Krishna, so if you serve that from which everything is coming, then you serve everything else. If you understand the system, then you understand what to do. If you don’t understand where everything is coming from, then you are missing something, the root, which is Krishna,” Sripad Puri Maharaj explained to his attentive audience. “It is very scientific. It is not sentimental or blind faith. It is based on knowledge.”

As sanga was coming to a close, again, prasadam was served with Bhakula Mataji’s very tasty sorrel drink, followed with some more bhajan by Chitra Mataji.

In support of today’s sanga, Sripad Puri Maharaj read Sridhar Maharaj’s translation of Chapter 3 of the *Bhagavad Gita*.

Srila Acharya Maharaj ki jai
Sripad Bhakti Madhava Puri Maharaj ki jai

Harinama Sankirtana Ki Jai!

Your humble servant,

Kushum devi dasi

[1] Lord Indra, the King of Heaven

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

[3] Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu (1486–1534) is the Avatar of Krishna in the mood of Radharani; the proponent for the Gaudiya Vaishnavas school of Bhakti yoga (devotion to Krishna) and the composer of the Siksastakam (eight devotional prayers) in Sanskrit.