

Sri Sri Guru Gaurangau Jayatah
Sri Vyasa Puja of Srila Bhakti Svarupa Damodar Maharaja
Bhakti Vedanta Institute
Princeton, NJ Dec. 22, 2012

Saturday's Vyasa Puja was a very intimate gathering of a few devotees to celebrate the 75th Appearance Day of Sripad Bhakti Svarupa Damodara Maharaja, Ph.D., lovingly known as Sripad Maharaj, who worked tirelessly to honor the instructions of his Gurudeva, His Divine Grace Abhay Charanaravinda Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada (Srila Prabhupada), founder-acharya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON).

It is said that seeing Sripad Maharaj's dual qualifications as a scientist and a Manipuri Vaisnava, Srila Prabhupada personally trained him in "spiritual science" and instructed him to preach about the scientific basis of Krishna consciousness, and in Manipur, his birthplace, to make it a Vaisnava state. "You are a scientist, write books and prove scientifically that God is the Supreme Person," Srila Prabhupada instructed thereby giving Sripad Maharaj specific instructions through conversations and letters on how to organize and spread Krishna consciousness throughout the world through science. As stated in the *Bhagavad-Gita* 3.21:

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

"Whatever action a great man performs, common men follow. And whatever standards he sets by exemplary acts, all the world pursues."

The Vyasa Puja celebration began with the offering of bhoga by Srngara Mataji, one of Sripad Maharaj's direct disciple in New York, which then followed with the chanting of Srila Narottam das Thakur's *Sri Guru-vandana*, by yet another of Sripad Maharaja's direct disciple in New York, Syamasundara das Prabhu on guitar, led by Surottama das Prabhu on karatals.



L to R: Sripad Puri Maharaj, Prabhus: Surottama das and Syamasundara das

Following Sripad Bhakti Madhava Puri Maharaj, Ph.D (Sripad Puri Maharaj*), the New York devotees - Surottama das Prabhu his wife, Bakula Mataji; Syamasundara das Prabhu his wife Srngara Mataji and their 6-year old son, Nitai and myself offered *pushpanjali*, an offering of flowers, to Sripad Maharaj. Sripad Puri Maharaj then delved into an audio/visual memorial presentation to honor the “Saint and Scientist,” and the Founding Director of Bhaktivedanta Institute. The web presentation of *Bhagavat-sevarpanam* can be found at:

http://www.bhaktiswarupadamodara.com/bhagseva/bhag_seva_1.html



L – R: 6-years old Nitai, Mataji: Bakula and Srngara

“In the summer of 2006, it was a rare occasion for me that Sripad Maharaj visited my home,” Surottama das Prabhu said, reminiscing about the gentle and humble soul that entered his home a month prior to leaving his mortal body. “I do not remember the details of how it all happened but it was such a wonderful and unforgettable experience.” What was so memorable of Sripad Maharaj’s visit was “the way he began singing (Gây Gorâ Madhur Sware) from the street as he entered the gate of our yard.” In complete agreement, Sripad Puri Maharaj smiled and said, “Yes, he always loved that kirtan.”

Speaking next was Bakula Mataji who said that she was busy making bhoga, when she received a call from Sravanananda das Prabhu to inquire if it would be possible for Sripad Maharaj to come directly to their home from the airport and take a shower at their place. But within a few minutes Sravanananda das Prabhu called again that Maharaj would go directly to the hotel instead before visiting them. “It was such a wonderful experience to have him visit us.” Still savoring her experience, Bakuka Matatji continued, “I felt I have done something good in my previous life to have him come to our home.” In the same excitement Srngara Matatji added that this was also when her husband, Syamasundara das Prabhu was able to wash the lotus feet of Sripad Maharaj, from whom he later took siksha initiation.

Sripad Puri Maharaj spoke of his long standing relationship with Sripad Maharaj, which spans over three decades when they were both disciples of Srila Prabhupada. When Sripad Puri Maharaj took sannyas initiation from His Divine Grace Srila Bhakti Rakshak Sridhar Dev-Goswami Maharaj, affectionately known as Srila Sridhar Maharaj, they were separated, while Sripad Maharaj remained with ISKCON. “Together with Sripad Sadaputa Prabhu, Sripad Maharaja and myself, we officially established the

Bhaktivedanta Institute in 1976 under Srila Prabhupada's guidance," Sripad Puri Maharaj said. Sripad Maharaj was a vasinava and scientist who dedicated his life to fulfilling Srila Prabhupada's order to spread Krishna consciousness throughout the world.

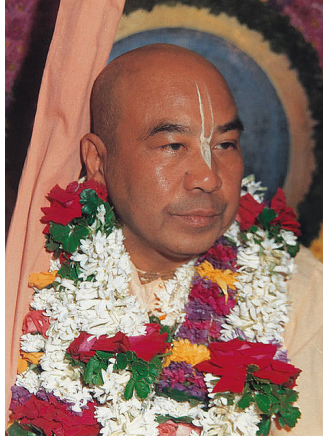
"The *Vedanta-sutra* defines evolution as the journey of the innumerable conscious particles of life (souls) in time and space as they travel from one bodily form to another under the laws of karma (cause and effect)... By careful study of science one can appreciate that consciousness is beyond matter, which is the conclusion of spiritual traditions." Sripada Bhaktisvarupa Damodara Maharaja said in a lecture. "The Vedic literatures teach us that the living being or life is beyond molecules. Its ontological nature is non-molecular, it is spiritual. Therefore modern science needs to incorporate a spiritual dimension by adopting a new paradigm if it is to remain a true science. This required new paradigm will emerge from a sythesis of science and religion."

In pushing the mission forward, Sripad Maharaj has produced and published many books and literatures. He has also developed lasting relationships with leading scientists, thereby enabling him to organized elaborate conferences that brought the scientific community together to hear the message of Krishna Consciousness.

In Sripad Maharaj's "Peace of Mind" lecture he said, "If the mind is engaged properly in the service of Lord Krishna then the mind will become very peaceful and all the other senses will become very peaceful. When there is peace of mind, there will be peace in the individual jiva (living being). In order to have real peace of mind, one must become a perfect Krishna Conscious person. By remembering the Lord's mercy, the mind will become very calm and peaceful."

It felt like Sripad Maharaj's "Peace of Mind" lecture was speaking directly to my lost soul. Personally I have not met Sripad Maharaj but after listening to all this sweet transcendental reminiscing, I feel I have lost so much *amrit*, nectar, in life!

Being Vaisnavas, his parents, Sri Yogendra Singh and Srimati Keinahanbi, named their child Damodara, one of Lord Sri Krishna's Holy Names. Sri Yogendra Singh was a *bhajan* (devotional) singer in the *Nata Sankirtan* tradition. From the very moment of Damodara's appearance on Dec. 9, 1937 in Manipur, India, Sri Yogendra ji filled his ears with the devotional sounds of the Holy Names and pastimes of the Supreme Lord while Srimati Keinahanbi Devi provided her son with a spiritual atmosphere of remembrance and reverence for the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Sri Krishna.



Srila Bhakti Svarupa Damodara Maharaja, Ph.D

Sripada Bhaktisvarupa Damodara Maharaja, Dr. Thoudam Damodara Singh, peacefully left this mortal world on Oct. 2, 2006 during the *Ratrilila* period of Lord Sri Krishna's *Astakaliya lila* on *Vijaya Dasami*, which according to that year's calendar, *Panchangam*, is the most auspicious day of 2006, at the Bhaktivedanta Institute in Kolkata, India, and entered into the divine abode of the Supreme Lord, Goloka Vrindavan, and the association of his beloved Srila Prabhupada who he so faithfully served throughout his life.

We pray that by remembering his lotus feet we may receive a drop of mercy from the ocean of love he had for Srila Prabhupada, in our own service life.

Humbly aspiring for the service of Guru, Vaisnavas, and Bhagavan,
Kushum Devi Dasi