

Sri Sri Guru Gaurangau Jayatah
Bhakti Vedanta Institute

Princeton University Harinama
Princeton, NJ June 15, 2013

*prakṛtiṁ svām avasṭabhya
visṛjāmi punaḥ punaḥ
bhūta-grāmam imāṁ kṛtsnam
avaśāṁ prakṛter vaśāt*

Sri Krishna says to Arjuna, “I control My potency of material nature, to repeatedly manifest the multitude of beings, which are helplessly controlled by their natures [acquired through their previous actions].” *Bhagavad-gītā* 9.8.

Today’s *sadhu sanga* was all about science -- science in the sense of explaining how today’s modern scientists are far from understanding the Original Cause, the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

With a cold glass of mango lassi and beginning the *sanga*, Sripad Bhakti Madhava Puri Maharaja, Ph.D. (Sripad Puri Maharaja) asked the leading questions, “Why do you think it is that mathematicians have the highest percentage of theists among all scientists? What do you think it is about mathematics that would lead to a more theistic conception than the other sciences?”

This was first met with surprise by his audience, but Sripad Puri Maharaja explained that this was the conclusion drawn from polling scientists in the various fields of physics, chemistry, biology and mathematics. Then he explained, “Mathematics deals with abstract or ideal entities – numbers – that seem to exist independently from the reality to which they apply.” Thus “two” can equally apply to two oranges, two trees, two clouds or two people. But then, what is “two” in itself? “Many mathematicians ascribe to the existence of a Platonic ideal plane of abstract numbers that is non-material, because the same mathematical relations have been discovered by many widely differing cultures in history.”

Continuing, with some comments from his listeners, he explained, “Georg Cantor, a mathematician who developed set theory, considered absolute infinity (infinity of infinities) to have intrinsic philosophical and theological implications, and even thought that his work on transfinite numbers was revealed to him by God. Because infinity is not a number but a property of numbers, some mathematicians and philosophers do not believe actual infinity exists. Cantor showed that such infinities do exist, for example, even in a line of one inch, because it can accommodate an infinite number of points. For this reason he was often called a pantheist by his numerous enemies, and often suffered severe criticism for many of his ideas.”

Dr. Murali Gopal Prabhu interjected that there may be continuities that are not described in terms of points, such as when dealing with fields. Puri Maharaja replied that “these may also be infinite when mathematically defined. Even in quantum mechanics, the wave function is used to describe probability over an infinite space.” Generally, “the infinite and infinitesimal are regularly used by physicists who employ calculus in their theories.” And it has always amazed scientists how the rational mental formulations of mathematics find application in real world situations.

These ideas naturally lead to more abstract or philosophical thinking. “Naive realism,” Sripad Puri Maharaja explained “is based on perceptions by the senses, which, according to the perceiver, is the only truth.” So in other words, most people, until they start thinking philosophically, are naive realists. “We need to have a proper conception of things because our equations are merely an approximation to what is real,” Revant, a student from Princeton University, and one of Sripad Puri Maharaja’s regular guests said. “Scientists generally do not take account of the role of their own sense of experience,” Sripad Puri Maharaja said, and then asked, “Why should our subjective experiences be beyond the scope of science? Isn’t our understanding of science limited by excluding the role of the scientists in formulating theories based on their perceptions?”



Sripad Puri Maharaja with four guests: Dr. Murali Gopal das, Revant, Sripad Krishna Balaram Maharaja and Sripad Avadhut Maharaja

This incompleteness of science shows up in many ways. As an example, he asked, “How did the DNA molecule arise in the first life?” Sripad Puri Maharaja responded that there’s no way of explaining life from the modern scientific point of view in terms of lifeless molecules. “It is explained in Sankhya philosophy* but not in modern science, because Sankhya takes *purusha* (life) to be a fundamental principle in forming reality along with *prakriti* (matter).” Further delving on the same topic, Dr. Murali Gopal das asked if the scientist can say that the DNA molecule was started as a virus. “They can start from many different points of view, but there’s a missing understanding of what life is.” Using the common backyard grass as an example, Sripad Puri Maharaja said “they cannot make grass using their equation for photosynthesis. They know all the basic elements that are involved, but without the ingredient of life, they simply cannot produce a blade of grass.”

The modern scientific models of life are not only approximations; they are incomplete because they do not explain what life is at all.

As *sanga* got deeper in its scientific journey, Revant asked, “What is life?” In response, another of Sripad Puri Maharaja’s guest, Sripad B.V. Avadhut Maharaja, said “we still do not understand life. There’s a lot more we need to learn and discover.” Sripad Puri Maharaja responded that according to Hegel, life is “the immediate existence of the Absolute Idea...the absolute truth. Life is therefore a superficial or abstract understanding of what is in reality a more profound truth.” Pausing for a moment, he then said that “Life is the unity of subject and object. Therefore, chemistry and physic have nothing to do with life, because they deal only with objective entities. According to the Vedantic philosophy, matter can be explained as the form of undeveloped consciousness. Consciousness implies it is always conscious of something -- an object. However, consciousness itself is the subject. So all life, as a union of subject and object, must be conscious.”

While still keeping in line with the scientific theme, Revant asked what about self-consciousness? “Self-consciousness refers to the consciousness of consciousness.” Sripad Puri Maharaja replied. “Just as consciousness is the awareness of an object, it can also be aware of itself as its object, or self-conscious. This is what we mean by ‘I’ when we refer to ourselves.”

“Everything that is real is always complete with its opposite,” Sripad Puri Maharaja continued as he gave an example that “in order to say ‘blind’, then there must be someone who can see.” Sripad Avadhut Maharaja gave the example, “if we do not have the concept of God, then we will not have atheist.” He then asked if a robot can become conscious. Sripad Puri Maharaja explained that, “No, if it gets into a loop it cannot get out of it unless someone pushes the ‘off’ button.” On the other hand, a conscious or self-determined person has the capacity to judge his condition and get out of the loop.”



Matajis: Bakula and Srngara with Nitai das Prabhu Syamasundara das Prabhu, our kirtan band leader missing from today's Harinama, hence no kirtan at today's *sanga*

At this point of *sanga* prasadam was served though the conversation continued on the various scientific topics and the original scientist, Sri Krishna. After a brief pause, Sripad Puri Maharaja asked of his very interactive audience, "What is the opposite of a universal?" Waiting for the answer, he responded that it is the specific or particular individual. "Everyone understands that fruit is a universal, but how do you get from a fruit to an apple, cherry, and so on?" With the room filled with an attentive audience, Sripad Puri Maharaja said, "Everything has to have its opposite. The universal must exist with the singular, or the concept along with its objective content, but that is generally not understood by modern scientists. Proper science must take cognizance of this truth, and that is what Vedanta is all about."

*aham sarvasya prabhavo
mattaḥ sarvaṁ pravartate
iti matvā bhajante mām
budhā bhāva-samanvitāḥ*

"I am Krishna, the Sweet Absolute, the origin of all. The entire universe of material and transcendental play, activity, purpose, and the *Vedas* and allied scriptures which give guidance—all evolve from Me alone. Realizing this hidden treasure, persons of fine theistic intelligence surpass the mundane and embrace the path of love divine, *raga marga*, and adore Me forever." Sri Krishna says in the *Bhagavad-gītā* 10.8

With two other visiting Maharajas, Sripad B.V. Avadhut maharaja and Sripad Krishna Balaram Maharaja, along with Dr. Murali Gopal Prabhu *sanga* went on a very scientific journey. We all had questions and Sripad Puri Maharaja not only answered all of our questions but also opened up *sanga* to a conversational interaction, during and after *prasadam*. Everyone was so involved in *sanga* that it went past its normal finishing hours (around 3:30pm) until after 5pm today.

Harinam Sankirtana ki jai.

Srila Bhakti Nirmal Acharya Dev-Goswami Maharaja ki jai

Your humble servant,
Kushum devi dasi

*The Sankhya philosophy of Kapila Muni – there are two representatives of Sankhya philosophy: theistic and atheistic. The theistic interpretation considers *prakriti* or matter to be incapable of any activity on its own and thus requires the influence of *purusha* or life for creation, especially the *adi purusha* or Supreme Ishvara. The atheistic version holds that matter can create everything by its own energy, much like the materialistic notion of modern science.