

Sri Sri Guru Gaurangau Jayatah
Bhakti Vedanta Institute
Princeton University Harinama
Princeton, NJ Sept. 14, 2013

Our favorite tree was occupied with a makeshift tent to host the evening celebrations of Yom Kippur ^[1] which was on-going for the day from 9:00 a.m. – 8:30 p.m at The Center for Jewish Life Richardson Auditorium in Alexander Hall at Princeton University.

Determined to have our Harinam celebration outdoors, we took shelter under another tree in front our favorite tree. While Sripad Bhakti Madhava Puri Maharaj, Ph.D (Sripad Puri Maharaj) was trying to restring his kartals, Syamasundara das Prabhu on guitar opened Harinam with the rendition of the Pancha-Tattva Maha Mantra followed by the Hare Krishna Maha Mantra. In the meantime, two curious students approached us wanting to know why we meditate. Sripad Puri Maharaj explained that “there are two sides of reality – objective and subjective – and in life itself most of us concentrate on the external, but when we meditate, we focus our mind on the inner world. Meditation helps us to understand that the internal world has an important function also which is being neglected.”



Princeton University students Adam and Spencer (LR) wanted to know why we meditate.

In the meantime, Syamasundara das Prabhu and I continued with Harinaam, which was so rocking that our next little guest did not want to return with his father and could not stop dancing to the rhythm of the Maha Mantra (Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare /Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare), melody. After about 45 minutes of Harinam, another group of devotees from New York arrived and Harinam went on for an additional fifteen minutes or so. Alternating between Sripad Puri Maharaj, Prabhus: Syamasundara das, Surottama das and Chandra das, Harinam was once again absolutely beautiful. Intermittently I distributed some of our brochures.



Breaking to Harinam rhythm



The New York devotees participating in Harinam

Leading up to sanga, the question asked was “can we go back to Godhead in this lifetime. “When Krishna is satisfied with us, He sends us His pure devotee who can utter the Name [Krishna’s holy Name]. That Name with all its potencies is given to us by the pure devotee through the instructions and guidance to properly approach that world of bhakti [devotion]. Through the pure devotee we can gain access to the service world and that’s going back home, back to Godhead. We have to have that sincerity to be able to recognize the devotees and their services. It’s not a mystery. Mahaprabhu ^[2] gave us a practical method,” Sripad Puri Maharaj said. “Everything depends on our dedication and devotion to service. If we can enter into that world of selflessness, selfless service and even self forgetfulness, that’s going back home and that can happen anywhere. You don’t have to die to go back to Godhead. It’s a plane of consciousness...always remembering Krishna, always thinking of serving guru, vaisnavs and then you enter into that world.”

Surottama das Prabhu asked, if you developed that consciousness here, then when you die, do you go right back to Godhead? Smilingly, Sripad Puri Maharaj said, “Why do you want to worry about dying? You can already go back home (to Godhead) before you die. The devotee isn’t worried about liberation. As long as he can have the association of the vaisnavs and can serve guru – he can be in hell or heaven, or even take birth here again and again – he doesn’t care about liberation. He is already beyond liberation.” Sripad Puri Maharaj further explained that the devotee “doesn’t even want to go to Goloka or desire to play with Krishna directly because ultimately that is up to Krishna.” *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam 3.29.13* confirms this:

*sā lokya-sārṣṭi-sāmīpya-
sārūpyaikatvam apy uta
dīyamānam na grhṇanti
vinā mat-sevanam janāḥ*

“A pure devotee does not accept any kind of liberation — *sālokya*, *sārṣṭi*, *sāmīpya*, *sārūpya* or *ekatva* - even though they are offered by the Supreme Personality of Godhead.”

Sripad Puri Maharaj then explains the five different types of Mukti ^[3] (liberation) - *sālokya*, *sāmīpya*, *sārūpya*, *sārṣṭi* and *sāyujya*. This is confirmed in the *Śrī Caitanya Caritāmṛta*, *Madhya-kāṇḍa*, 6.266

“The devotee thinks ‘I am ready to stay here forever if that is what my Lord wants. As long as I can remember You and love You, take birth again in the service capacity, have the company of vaisnavs and my guardian to keep me in connection with You. Your connection is coming through the guardian, not You directly,’” Sripad Puri Maharaj continued. “The devotee is always thinking that ‘I don’t want to serve Krishna directly, I want to serve those that are serving Him.’”

Who is Krishna conscious? Surottama das Prabhu asked. “One who is remembering Krishna, through serving guru and the servants of the Lord,” Sripad Puri Maharaj responded. “There’s no room for any other kind of services. That is pure devotee.” After a brief pause, he said, “If you are to measure purity in terms of the service, as much as you have given up all the other services, except Radha-Krishna’s loving service, to that degree you are pure. You may be a wretched person and know that you are a wretched person but still you want to serve guru and the servants of the Lord, then we accept that person as pure devotee.”

“It seems to be very enigmatic. Looking from a distance, Krishna consciousness does not make sense at all but as you get closer everything makes sense,” Chandra das Prabhu, a first time guest said. “You have to remember there are three things – Exploitation, Renunciation and Dedication,” Sripad Puri Maharaj responded then asked, “do I want to live in a world where I am the master and everything is to serve me and my extended self-beneficiaries such as family and society, or do I want to stand back from everything, just be peaceful in renunciation and not get entangled in anything? Or do I want to utilize all my energy for serving the Lord’s mission with His devotees? We have to make that decision in our life. We have these three choices to make, from that perspective everything is clear—we simply have to make a choice. However, not everyone can do that, and that is when it becomes enigmatic.”

So what allows us to make that choice? Sripad Puri Maharaj asked. He then responded that it will “depend on our *sukṛiti* (good merits) and *srāddha* (faith). Only those who are pure hearted and living a meritorious life, they will be able to have full faith in the devotees of the Lord and serve them without a doubt.” Sripad Puri Maharaj continued that the devotee will say to him or herself, “this is what I am supposed to do and I am going to do that.’ There will be no consideration of anything else. They will give up everything in a heart beat just to serve Krishna, and have full confidence and faith that by doing that everything else will be taken care of.”

After a brief pause, Sripad Puri Maharaj said, “If we can see how we can use everything in the service of Krishna that is the best position. We just have to renounce the exploiting attitude, that’s all. That decision and attitude that ‘I am going to do everything for Krishna’s service’ has to be there, then nothing will take you away from Krishna. There is nothing that does not already belong to Krishna, we just have to recognize that and act in that confidence.” He further clarified, “We are not saying to give up everything and chant Hare Krishna. No, we are saying to stop all your mundane activities, wrong thinking and learn how to utilize whatever you can do for the service of Krishna. Just like when we came to Srila Prabhupada, ^[4] we were scientists, and he said to us ‘use your science to prove that Krishna consciousness is scientific.’ He (Srila Prabhupada) took what good was there and turned it into the service of the Lord.”

Reminiscing of when he first met Srila Prabhupada, Chandra das Prabhu said, “It seems like a long time ago when Srila Prabhupada arrived in America and it also seems like it was just yesterday.” Thinking back of his experiences with Srila Prabhupada also, Sripad Puri Maharaj said, “I remember Srila Prabhupada often said that he was always following the order of his Guru Maharaj (spiritual master) and he therefore never felt any separation from him because he was dedicated to the service of his Guru. Srila Prabhupada centered his whole life on carrying out his Guru’s instructions. He never actually had to feel separate from his Guru. He always felt his Guru’s presence.” Looking back into his mental archive, Sripad Puri Maharaj said, “The most important thing, if we want to be mindful of the Guru, is we have to remember his instructions, what he wanted us to do, and dedicate our life to that. Then we would not have that feeling of separation from Gurudev. My whole life since he [Srila Prabhupada] told me that (use science to prove Krishna conscious *siddhanta*) I have been doing it. So many things had happened to me, I even got separated from the organization he started, still I didn’t stop remembering his order.”



An audience fully absorbed in the details of sanga

Revant, Princeton student

After about thirty minutes of questions and answers, Sripad Puri Maharaj began the day’s discourse on *Jnana-Vijnana Yoga* from chapter Seven of Srila Sridhar Maharaj^[5]’s *Srimad Bhagavat Gita - The Hidden Treasure of the Sweet Absolute*. This chapter focuses on the “Knowledge and Realization of the Supreme.”

*sri-bhagavan uvaca
mayy asakta-manah partha
yogam yunjan mad-asrayah
asamsayam samagram mam
yatha jnasyasi tac chrnu*

“The Lord said: O Pārtha, hear from Me how, with mind attached to Me, the Supreme Lord, linking your consciousness with Me and taking refuge in Me alone, you will without doubt be able to know Me, My holy abode, My opulences, and My associates.”

In explaining the deeper meaning of this verse, Sripad Puri Maharaj said, “The Lord is saying ‘hear from Me.’ But how do we hear from Krishna? Krishna also tell us ‘*acharya mam vijani yat* – I am the Acharya. I am the guru.’ So to hear from Krishna means to hear from Guru. If you are hearing from Guru, you are hearing from Krishna. It’s the same thing and with attachment to Guru, ‘link your consciousness with Me, take refuge in Me.’ Consciousness is your whole concept of life and the platform of attachment. Whatever we are attached to, that’s where our consciousness will be. Where my intention or attention is focused that will be the formative element of my consciousness. That is why Krishna says ‘take refuge in Me.’ Depend on Krishna only and then you will be able to ‘know Me, My holy abode, My opulence and My associates.’ This is the process - meditation, focus and single-mindedness.”

In explaining verse two, Sripad Puri Maharaj said, “Krishna and His power are two different things. The ‘sweetness’ is His own personality. So there’s personality, sweetness, and power also.”

*manusyanam sahasresu
kascid yatati siddhaye
yatatam api siddhanam
kascin mam vetti tattvatah*

“Of countless souls, few reach the human form; of thousands of human beings, very few may try to realize the soul and the Supersoul; and of thousands who have attained such realization, hardly one can actually know Me, Syāmasundara.”

In the commentary of verse four, “...*jnāna*, or knowledge, in the true sense of the word and in accordance with the precepts of devotion, is actually *bhagavad-aisvarya-jnāna*,’ what does that mean?” Sripad Puri Maharaj asked. “*bhagavad-aisvarya-jnāna* means of knowledge of the Supremacy of the Lord – that is real knowledge.”

Sripad Puri Maharaj then went on to discuss the energies of the Lord. “It is not enough to understand that I am not this body but to understand the energies of the Lord: *antarangā* or *chit-shakti* (the internal, divine potency), *bahirangā* or *Maha Maya* (the external, illusory potency) and *tatasthā* or *jiva-sakti* (the marginal potency of the living beings). To understand

how the energies of the Lord are working to produce this material world, how they are working within this world, and to have some appreciation for the superiority of these energies to ourselves, how we are controlled by them, and to appreciate the sacredness of everything once we understand that,” Sripad Puri Maharaj continued. “We need to understand how Krishna is present in all His energies and those energies are not just molecules or something manipulable by scientists. They have their ultimate cause in connection with Krishna, and there are certain mystic potency to all of Krishna’s creation, therefore to recognize it properly not only as some energies but also the distinction in those energies – *antarangā*, *bahirangā* and *tatasthā* energies.”

After reading several consecutive verses of the *Srimad Bhagavat Gita*, Sripad Puri Maharaj said, “the idea here is to see that Krishna’s potency is everywhere, ” which is confirmed in verse seven of the *Srimad Bhagavat Gita* 7.7,

*mattah parataram nanyat
kincid asti dhananjaya
mayi sarvam idam protam
sutre mani-gana iva*

“O Arjuna, there is nothing superior to Me. All existence depends on Me, like gems strung on a thread.”

Verse twelve in that chapter of the *Srimad Bhagavat Gita* says, “Furthermore, know that all things, of the nature of goodness, passion and ignorance, are manifest from Me alone. Nevertheless, I am not in them. They, subordinate to Me, are in Me.” Sripad Puri Maharaj clarified, “these are Lord Krishna’s potencies. We should not see those things as Krishna but rather as subordinate to Krishna, which are the potencies, powers and qualities of Krishna.”

The next topic Sripad Puri Maharaj tackled was the four kinds of people who do not surrender unto Krishna such as “fruitive workers who are comparable to animals because they are always looking for something or someone to eat. Then you have the fallen persons who reject the highest path of devotion. The third kind of persons are those that considers only Lord Nārāyan as worshippable, while they consider Lord Krishna or Lord Rāma as mere mortal.” So what does that mean? He asked his attentive audience then said, “Lord Nārāyan is the *aisvarya* (opulent) form of the Lord. Those who worship the Supreme as God and not in His human form as He appeared as Radha and Krishna, their knowledge is considered covered by illusion. The fourth type of person are the impersonalists.” *Srimad Bhagavat Gita* 7.15 confirms this:

*na mam duskrtino mudhah
prapadyante naradhamah
mayayapahrta-jnana
asuram bhavam asritah*

“These four kinds of wrongdoers do not surrender unto Me: fruitive workers, comparable to animals; fallen persons who take the highest path, devotion, but later reject it, considering it inadequate or worthless; those whose knowledge covered by illusion, Māyā – despite their scriptural study, they consider that only the form of Lord Nārāyana is worshippingable, and they think that Lord Kṛṣṇa, Lord Rāma and other factual forms are merely mortal}; and the demoniac {impersonalists who dismember My form by their arrows of false logic, resembling demons like Jarāsandha}.”

“The modern scientists who are trying to reduce everything to impersonal matter are demonic like Jarāsandha,” Sripad Puri Maharaj said.

Srimad Bhagavat Gita 7.16 speaks of the four kinds of people who does surrender unto Lord Krishna.

*catur-vidha bhajante mam
janah sukrino 'rjuna
arto jijnasur arthartha
jnani ca bharatarsabha*

“O Arjuna, best of the Bhāratas, four kinds of persons have the fortune to worship Me: the afflicted, the seeker of knowledge, the seeker of happiness, and the self-realized.”

Sripad Puri Maharaj delved further to explain that “We may come to Krishna for so many reasons - to solve our problems, our disease or seeking some other benefits, but the fact that we are approaching Krishna, that makes us a devotee. Krishna says that the best of those are those that do not have any particular desire to be fulfilled by His help. Those are the self realized souls who understand the energies of the Lord and their relationship with the Lord.”

Srimad Bhagavat Gita - The Hidden Treasure of the Sweet Absolute, 10.8 says:

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

“I am Kṛṣṇa, 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, *rāgamarga*, and adore Me forever.”

Prasadam was served and honored by all as sanga came to a close.

Harinam Sankirtana ki jai

All Glories to Sri Guru and Sri Gauranga
Srila Bhakti Nirmal Acharya Dev-Goswami Maharaja ki jai
Sripad Bhakti Madhava Puri Maharaj ki jai

Your humble servant
Kushum devi dasi



Srngara Mataji, Sripad Puri Maharaj, Surottama das Prabhu, Bakula Mataji, Prabhus:
Chandra das, Syamasundara das and Nitai das in front of Alexander Hall

^[1] “Yom Kippur also known as Day of Atonement, is the holiest day of the year for the Jewish people. Its central themes are atonement and repentance.” Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia.

^[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] *yadyapi se mukti haya pañca-parakāra / sālōkya-sāmīpya-sārūpya-sārṣṭi-sāyujya āra*

“There are five kinds of liberation: *sālōkya-sāmīpya-sārūpya-sārṣṭi-sāyujya*.

In the purport, Srila Prabhupada explained that “*Sālōkya* means that after material liberation one is promoted to the planet where the Supreme Personality of Godhead resides, *sāmīpya* means remaining an associate of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, *sārūpya* means attaining a four-handed form exactly like that of the Lord, *sārṣṭi* means attaining opulences like those of the Supreme Lord, and *sāyujya* means merging into the Brahman effulgence of the Lord. These are the five types of liberation.”

^[4] His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Srila Prabhupada (Srila Prabhupada) is the founder Acharya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON)

^[5] Om Vishnupad Srila Bhakti Rakshak Sridhar Dev-Goswami Maharaj is the Founder-Acharya of the Sri Chaitanya Saraswat Math in Nabadwip, West Bengal, India.

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