

**Sri Sri Guru Gaurangau Jayatah**  
**Bhakti Vedanta Institute**  
**Princeton University Harinama**  
**Princeton, NJ**  
Oct. 5, 2013

Due to some unforeseen traffic incidents on the highway, the New York devotees did not arrive on time for outdoors Harinama but that did not stop us from indoor Harinam. While Srngara Mataji and I prepared the *prasadam taali* (plate) for offering of the bhog to Srila Bhakti Nirmal Acharya Maharaj <sup>[1]</sup> (Srila Acharyadeva), Sripad Bhakti Madhava Puri Maharaj, Ph.D (Sripad Puri Maharaj) opened Harinam with the the Pranam Mantra<sup>[2]</sup> followed by rendition of the Pancha-Tattva Maha Mantra which was then followed by the Hare Krishna Maha Mantra with Syamasundara das Prabhu on guitar. Bhakta Bryan, one of Sripad Puri Maharaja's guests, was given a quick lesson on how to play the kartals as he joined in on Harinam.

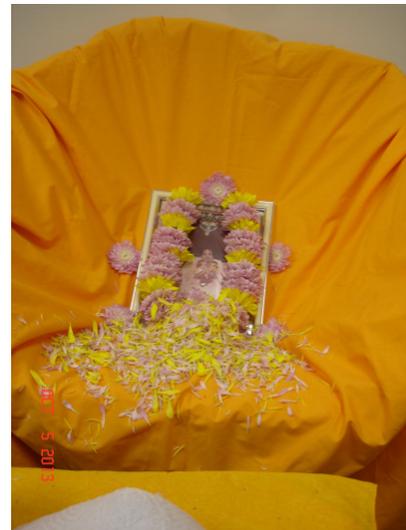


**L-R: Bhakta Bryan, Ved Gupta ji, Rasaraja Prabhu, Sringara Mataji & Syamasundara Prabhu**

Leading up to sanga, Sripad Puri Maharaj described the meaning and significance of Guru<sup>[3]</sup> (teacher) and his appearance. “Guru comes from the higher plane and appears before our eyes to bring us to that higher platform.” He then asked who is Guru and what is the significance of his appearance? “Most people cannot understand why you would worship someone who appears as just another man in such a profound way, or the significance of that worship. Of course they are busy worshipping their own idols of some kind or whoever they have some good impression about. But to worship Guru, that is something beyond the pale.” After a brief pause he said, “We can not truly understand anything without

proper knowledge or higher conception. Our vision is circumscribed by our limited perspective because that is all we know.”

Before getting into the soul of sanga, we offered *pushpanjali* (flowers) to the picture of Srila Acharyadeva while Sripad Puri Maharaj sang Sri Guru-vandana (The Worship of Sri Guru from *Prema-bhakti-candrika* by Narottama Das Thakura) - *sri-guru-carana-padma, kevala-bhakati-sadma / bando mui savadhana mate / jahara prasade bhai, e bhava toriya jai / krishna-prapti hoy jaha ha'te* (The lotus feet of our spiritual master are the only way by which we can attain pure devotional service. I bow to his lotus feet with great awe and reverence. By his grace one can cross the ocean of material suffering and obtain the mercy of Krishna.) He then explained the meaning of each of the verses.



**Sripad Puri Maharaj offering pushpanjali (flowers) to picture of Srila Acharyadeva**

“*Diyva jnana* means transcendental knowledge,” Sripad Puri Maharaj said as he explained that it is given to one who has the good fortune to surrender with faith before Guru. “Guru imparts transcendental knowledge, which is not within the plane of our ordinary conception of mundane perception. Transcendental knowledge is existing already. It’s not something that is manufactured for a particular purpose. It’s the revelation of what is already there for everyone to reclaim, but not everyone has access to that higher plane of knowledge if they have not received the grace of Sri Guru.”

Sripad Puri Maharaj went on to explain that there are different levels of realization and consciousness. Using the psychedelic mushroom as an example, he said, “If you take a certain mushroom, you can experience different realities you have never before experienced without that mushroom. And yet we think that the reality we are now experiencing is

not also a type of mushroom experience!” Smilingly he continued, “It’s all based on mushrooms, or what the scientists now call neruons! “

“There’s a reality which the saints traverse and experience, not through their own endeavors, as I’ve said, but through the gracious revelations of the Lord. The guardians who have properly received that knowledge can distribute it out of compassion to those who otherwise have no access to that knowledge.” Sripad Puri Maharaj continued, “The infinite is not comprehensible to the finite. Yet it is not infinite if it can not make itself known to the finite. The agency through which this transmission is made is called Guru.”

The next topic Sripad Puri Maharaj discussed was *Parampara*. “There is a disciplic succession of teachers, called *Guru Parampara*, who teach that knowledge from one generation to the next, originating from the Supreme Lord Himself. And if that knowledge is lost, then another incarnation comes to restore that line, and in the present age that incarnation is Sri Chaitanya Maharprabhu<sup>[4]</sup> who appeared five hundred years ago in Bengal [India] and revived the knowledge of Krishna consciousness through the process of chanting the Holy Names,” Sripad Puri Maharaj explained. “Mahaprabhu taught that chanting the Holy Names is the ultimate solution to all our problems, especially in this age of Kali, which is a very difficult age of distress, hypocrisy and strife among people.” He further stated that Sri Chaitanya Maharprabhu wants us to “focus our attention on what is really real, our true benefactor – Sri Krishna. One who has received Krishna’s Holy Name is the most fortunate person, especially in this Kaliyuga. Never take the Name lightly. You can take shelter of the Name anytime, not only when you are in stressful and difficult situation. You will realize what a great fortune it is to have when all other things are taken away from you and Krishna’s all auspicious Name is the only thing you can turn to for solace and protection.”

Sripad Puri Maharaj smiling said, “We feel we have so many things to do in this world. Our mind is distracted in so many ways and when we become bewildered by all of that then we think everything is becoming a burden. We become stressed when everything is making a demand upon us. But the missing link in that whole picture is the failure to recognize that I am not the center. Once we understand that this reality is not about me, it is about Krishna, Reality the Beautiful, we must turn our attention there. The basic mistake everyone makes is to forget what is the real center and actual reality of which they are but a part. By forgetting that, we get into trouble. So the Lord again comes to remind us of what is our real purpose in life.” This is confirmed in the *Srimad Bhagavad Gita - The Hidden Treasure of the Sweet Absolute*, 10.8 where Krishna 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.”

In the purport of *Śrī Caitanya Caritāmṛta Antya* 9.142, Srila Prabhupāda writes, “When a person forgets his position as an eternal servant of Kṛṣṇa, he commits many sinful activities, but one who maintains his position as an eternal servant of Kṛṣṇa cannot deviate from the path of morality, religion and ethics. At the present, people all over the world, especially in India, have forgotten their relationship with the Supreme Personality of Godhead and His eternal servants. Therefore the principles of morality, religion and ethics have almost disappeared. This situation is most unprofitable for human society. Therefore everyone should try to accept Kṛṣṇa consciousness and follow the principles of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu.”

“*Jivera swarupa haya, kṛṣṇera nitya das.* (Śrī Caitanya Caritāmṛta *Madhya* 20.108). You are an eternal servant of Krishna. And we can learn how to serve Him through His servants, otherwise how would we know what God wants? We must have faith that Guru can guide us in developing the proper mood, the proper attitude of humility and surrender, in order to render loving service” Sripad Puri Maharaj continued. “We must be trained up in that kind of existence. It is not something that we know how to do automatically, because we are bound by material conditioning which teaches just the opposite things. We learn how to act from the associates that surround us in material pursuits. So to associate with the saints and be willing to learn from them, we can get learn how to think, act, feel, approach, surrender and serve in that higher world of devotion.”

“There are not so many saints in this world. To some degree they are dwindling here in the West but in the East, in India, there we may find such persons. They understand those things better than we do. Their nature, their traditional lives, their culture recognize and value humility, and the worth and value of Vedic knowledge. Here [in the West] we also have our priests and ministers but how much they have realized and understood, that’s another thing, and we have to inquire and examine,” Sripad Puri Maharaj said. “The tradition of India is very deep and

profound... we can get much benefit by studying Vedic teachings and applying our self accordingly.”

Opening the floor to questions and comments, Sripad Puri Maharaja’s guest Ved Gupta ji asked, “Swami ji, We love Krishna, we have full faith in Him, but where are we going wrong? We face so many problems in life.”

“People are always trying to accumulate more for themselves. This is called self aggrandizement, and it is a reactionary existence in which karma comes to exact its price. They believe that progress in this life means how to get more for oneself, but they will ultimately have to pay for what they take. In spiritual life, it’s just the opposite. By giving ourselves,, by sacrifice, we get more satisfaction,” Sripad Puri Maharaj responded. “God is very affectionate and kind to us. He wants us to live with Him as His loving servants. We just have to take ourselevs out of the center and put Him there. Then all problems will be solved. That is called Krishna Consciousness.”

“Meeting Guru is the most merciful thing that happens to the devotee because of the connection Guru has with the Supreme Soul, Sri Krishna. Since we do not have His direct connection, we have connection with His agents. In this case, it’s the Guru who transmits the knowledge from the Supreme Lord to the individual soul, otherwise we do not have a connection,” Rasaraja das Prabhu, a disciple of Srila Govinda Maharaj<sup>[5]</sup>, said. “So we need to look for a proper agent and surrender to him and then the connection will grow by the mercy of the Guru. Without the Guru, it’s like the lotus flower; it will die with the sun so it needs the water to grow it. Genuine gurus are very hard to find. We are very fortunate that we have a connection with Srila Guru Maharaj, Srila Prabhupada<sup>[6]</sup>, Srila Acharya Maharaj. We are like prisoners in this material world and we have to get out and they are the only persons that can help us to get out.” This is confirmed in the *Srimad Bhagavad Gita - The Hidden Treasure of the Sweet Absolute* 4.34, Sri Krishna Himself tells us the method of seeking out and approaching the Guru.

*tad viddhi pranipatena  
pariprasnena sevaya  
upadeksyanti te jnanam  
jnaninas tattva-darsinah*

“You will be able to attain knowledge by satisfying the divine master with submission, relevant inquiry, and sincere service. The enlightened souls who are learned in scriptural knowledge and endowed with direct realization of the Supreme Absolute Truth will impart divine knowledge to you.”

In response, Sripad Puri Maharaj said, “Guru also has his associates. If you want to enter the world of spiritual life directly, its just you alone, and everything else is blanked out. But in concrete wholesome spiritual life, there’s our *guru varga* (the family of gurus) and a whole community of devotees whom we associate with. It’s not just you and God. It’s a whole community of devotees of which you are a part. That is real spiritual life, not just some imaginary, mental connection with God. It’s a tangible and living connection with the spiritual world.”

As sanga came to a close, prasadam was served and honored by all.

Without Sripad Bhakti Niskama Shanta Maharaja’s unrelenting guidance on Srila Acharyadeva’s favorite bhog, prasadam preparation would not have been possible. My humble dandavat pranams to Sripad Shanta Maharaja.



**The opulent maha prasadam prepared and served by Smt. Kushum Devi**

Harinam Sankirtana ki jai!

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

---

[1] Srila Bhakti Nirmal Acharya Maharaj - Successor Sevaite-President-Acharya of Sri Chaitanya Saraswat Math

[2] Pranam Mantra

*pūjya-śrī-guru-varga-vandita-mahābhāvānvitāyāḥ sadā  
paurvāparya-paramparā-prachalita-prājya-pramūrtākṛteḥ  
bhakter nirmala-nirjharasya nibhṛtaṁ saṁrakṣakaṁ sādaram  
vande śrī-gurudevam ānata-śirā āchārya-varyam nijam*

“I bow my head in eternal obeisance to my Gurudev, the best of acharyas, Srila Bhakti Nirmal Acharya Maharaj. He is the ever vigilant, stalwart guardian of the current of pure devotion whose highest form flows from our most worshippable Sri Rupanuga Guru-varga in their exclusive dedication to Mahabhav, Srimati Radharani.”

*prerakaṁ prāchya pāschatya śiṣyānām bhakti-vartmani  
bhakti-nirmalam-ācharyya-swāminam pranamāmy aham*

“I offer my respectful obeisances to Swami Bhakti Nirmal Acharya, who is energetically inspiring all of Eastern and Western disciples on the path of pure devotion.”

[3] Guru is a Sanskrit term for "teacher" or "master" in the Indian culture. The Hindu *guru-shikshya* tradition is the oral tradition or religious doctrine or experiential wisdom transmitted from teacher to student. In the United States, the meaning of "guru" has been used to cover anyone who acquires followers, especially by exploiting their naiveté, due to the inflationary use of the term in new religious movements.

[4] 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.

[5] Srila Bhakti Sundar Govinda Dev-Goswami Maharaj - Sevaite-President-Acharya: Sri Chaitanya Saraswat Math

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

**Giving is the Only Cure for Materialism  
Make an Eternal Difference  
Service Donations  
for  
Princeton Bhakti Vedanta Institute  
<https://ipn.intuit.com/pay/BhaktivedantaInstitute>**