

Sri Sri Guru Gaurangau Jayatah
Bhakti Vedanta Institute
Princeton University Harinama
Princeton, NJ

Nov. 16, 2013

Today's Sankirtan was Hari Katha (preaching). Sripad Bhakti Madhava Puri Maharaj, Ph.D (Sripad Puri Maharaj) led the group of devotees to the beautiful Princeton University campus and after giving us instructions, we were dispersed with some of our brochures to our respective location. For the next hour or so, we had our first taste of Hari Katha Sankirtan. As we were approaching 1:45pm, we head back to the Bhakti Vedanta Institute (BVI) office to begin *sanga*. Just then two guests arrived with one of the brochures Jadu Krishna Prabhu had handed-out during Hari Katha Sankirtan.

After welcoming the guests, Tara and Raghuram Sundar Raj, a physics graduate, Sripad Puri Maharaj explained the meaning and purpose of the Vedanta. "Have you heard about the Vedanta?" Sripad Puri Maharaj asked his two guests and they both responded "yes." The Vedanta explains that "All our knowledge is for understanding *janma dasya* – where everything comes from. People are seeking knowledge in so many different areas, but Vedanta tells us that all knowledge should address this point," Sripad Puri Maharaj said. If we can understand where everything comes from then we can understand what is the purpose of this whole existence."



Clockwise: Revant Prabhu, Raghuram ji, Sripad Puri Maharaj, Prabhus: Syamasundara das and Jadhu Krishna das

The *Vedānta-sūtra* begins, “*Athāto brahma jijñāsā*: one should inquire about Brahman, Spirit. Spirit is the broadest category from which everything else comes. “This whole material world is manifested from Spirit. Spirit (Brahman, which is ultimately Krishna) is *sat-cit-ananda* (eternal, blissful and full of knowledge),” Sripad Puri Maharaj explained then asked, “What is so perplexing about our life here?” After a brief pause, he said, “Everyone is dying but does anyone want to die? Generally people do not want to die, even if someone wants to commit suicide, if you try to push him over the cliff, he will resist because his instinct is to live. Everyone wants to live, but we are all dying here (in this material world).” Using the fish as an example to explain that we are not in our proper element while living on earth Sripad Puri Maharaj said. “We want to live but we are dying like a fish out of water because we not in our proper element. If you take a fish out of the water he will start to die but if you put it back into the water, he will start to live again nicely. So what is our proper element if it is not this world? Sripad Puri Maharaj asked then answered, “That’s Brahman.”

“Next, everyone is looking for knowledge. Why? Because we want to know. When we are born, we do not know anything. We have to be taught, because we are born in ignorance and yet we have this inherent passion to know because our natural state is to be complete in knowledge. We are in an atmosphere which we don’t know and we are trying to know. But is there a plane in which our knowing instinct is satisfied?” Sripad Puri Maharaj asked. “Our original position is that we are full in knowledge and when we do not have that knowledge, we are not satisfied so we are always looking, searching for that knowledge, trying to reach our original state.”

Ananda is the third part of the *sat-cit-ananda* concept of Spirit. “Everyone wants to be happy yet everyone here is suffering either from some disease, old age, death, always struggling or working hard so we can live. There are so many conflicting things in our lives but we still want to be happy. Sometime we may achieve it and sometimes we do not – *sukh-dukh* (happiness-unhappiness), as it is called in Sanskrit. We want to be always happy, *ananda*, without any unhappiness or darkness in our lives,” Sripad Puri Maharaj continued. “Brahman, the spiritual world is described as *sat-cit-ananda* (eternal, full of knowledge and blissful). That is our home where we can feel satisfied, complete. Here in the material world, we have *janma-mṛtyu-jarā-vyādhi* (birth, death, old age and disease).” This is confirmed in the *Srimad Bhagavad Gita - The Hidden Treasure of the Sweet Absolute*, 13.9 where Bhagvan Sri Krishna says:

*indriyarthesu vairagyam
anahankara eva ca
janma-mṛtyu-jara-vyadhi-
dukhha-dosanudarsanam*

“One should be intelligent to see the troubles of these four incidences of life: *janma-mṛtyu-jarā-vyādhī*. That is the whole Vedic system – how to get out of these clutches.”

“Whatever you are going to do in life, still you have to face death. Bhagavad Gita tells us that ‘birth is a fatal disease.’ Whoever takes birth here has to die, so why are we satisfied by living in this world without addressing these problems in life? ” Sripad Puri Maharaj asked. “Veda and the Vedic culture is about how to solve these problems of life and not just become deluded by technological progress, flamboyant lifestyle and all manner of mundane pursuits. People are becoming involved in so many things and are forgetting the actual situation they are in. So sometimes the Lord has to descend to this world to remind us, just like Krishna came, Lord Rama came and also 500 years ago Lord Chaitanya Mahaprabhu^[1] came and he taught *Jiv Jago Jiv Jago*^[2] (Wake up living entity, wake up!). What is your real business in life? Your real business in life is to know these things - how to solve the problems of death, old age, disease and don't be distracted by Maya (illusion).”

“The Vedanta is teaching us the real goal of life. What is that goal?” Sripad Puri Maharaj asked. “That goal of life is called Krishna *prema*, as Mahaprabhu has taught. Develop love for Krishna. Everyone is an eternal servant of Krishna. In the spiritual world everyone is serving the Supreme Lord, Sri Krishna. *Jivera svarupa haya, kṛṣṇera nitya das* – our natural constitutional position is to serve our Lord.” Śrī Caitanya *Caritāmṛta Madhya* 20.108-109 confirms this:

*jīvera 'soarūpa' haya – kṛṣṇera 'nitya-dāsa'
kṛṣṇera 'tṛtasthā-śakti' 'bhedābheda-prakāśa'
sūryāmīśa-kiraṇa, yaiche agni-jvālā-caya
svābhāvika kṛṣṇera tina-prakāra 'śakti' haya*

“It is the living entity's constitutional position to be an eternal servant of Kṛṣṇa because he is the marginal energy of Kṛṣṇa and a manifestation simultaneously one with and different from the Lord, like a molecular particle of sunshine or fire. Kṛṣṇa has three varieties of energy.”

“You may have perfect eyesight, but if there is darkness, no electricity or sunlight what good are your eyes? You may have great health, but if there is no oxygen then what good is your health? It is not our strength that is keeping us alive. Our strength is not coming from us. We are fully dependent, not independent masters of this world. Everyone thinks they are independent but without food, oxygen or water where is our independence?” Sripad Puri Maharaj asked while pointing to a poster on the walls of BVI office that reads: ‘All the scientist is the

world cannot make a single blade of grass.’ They are doing so many experiments but they cannot make a grain of rice or a blade of grass. They can not make our food because it is not just a matter of the combination of chemicals that is involved. How dependent we are and yet we go on as if science will solve all our problems. This is not the solution. The final answer can not be found there,” Sripad Puri Maharaj continued. “Our Gurudev used to tell us ‘dive deep into reality.’ Don’t just stay on the surface of things. We have to dive deep into reality through the process of *bhakti yoga* (devotion to the Lord) as it is explained in the *Bhagavad-gita* to learn to become more Krishna conscious. That is what we are trying to do and practice.”

Raghuram ji asked what is the purpose of the BVI at Princeton University. “We are trying to introduce these ideas of Vedantic philosophy to the scientists to try to resolve some of the problems they are facing, like in biology. There are many problems now in biology that they are confronting that are very difficult for them to solve simply on a materialistic basis such as the DNA proofreading and strict regulation found in even the simplest cells. How is the highly regulated DNA proofreading happening in the body with 100 trillion cells in the body? How can all the quadrillion chemical reactions going on every second be explained in terms of chemistry? Is it nearly impossible,” Sripad Puri Maharaj said. “We understand that consciousness plays a role in every living entity, not only chemicals. Now what that role is, that has to be understood. It has to be studied. It’s a very intricate thing that requires philosophy also, not just chemistry and physics.”

At this point because Sripad Puri Maharaj’s two guests had to leave he suggested for us to offer the *diyas* to Lord Damodara (baby form of Sri Krishna) before they left. Sripad Puri Maharaj sang the *Damodarastakam*^[3] as we offered the lamps. While the two new guests were leaving, two other, now regular guests, Revant Prabhu and Sobha ji, arrived.

Taking a brief pause before beginning sanga, Sripad Puri Maharaj asked how we fared while doing Hari Katha sankirtan. I responded that I had some fairly positive responses, while Jadu Krishna das Prabhu said that most of the students he spoke with were “mostly interested in the game and the concert” to be held later in the evening at the college. Syamasundara das Prabhu said that he also encountered the same issue of the “College game and concert preoccupation,” with those that he had spoken with.



Part of the audience: L- R: Revant, guest: Raghuram ji, Prabhus: Syamasundara das and Jadhu Krishna das

As sanga was about to begin Sripad Puri Maharaj handed out the reading material of Srila B.R. Sridhar Maharaj's *Bhagavad Gita - The Hidden Treasure of the Sweet Absolute*, 7.24 - 26 (How to Achieve the Supreme through knowledge). He first read a verse then we repeated after him. This process was done three times for all the verses.

*avyaktam vyaktim apannam
manyante mam abuddhayah
param bhavam ajananto
mamaavyayam anuttamam*

'My eternal superexcellent nature—My form, qualities, activities and pastimes are all transcendental, but unwise persons cannot know the truth, and they think, "The formless Brahman took birth in Vasudeva's cell as an ordinary human being."

*naham prakasah sarvasya
yoga-maya-samavrtah
mudho 'yam nabhijanati
loko mam ajam avyayam*

"By My sweet will, remaining concealed by My own potency, I am not manifest to anyone and everyone. So the foolish cannot know Me, the son of Vasudeva, unborn and ever-existent in My divine Íyãmasundara form of beautiful feature like a blackish rain-cloud."

*vedaham samatitani
vartamanani carjuna
bhavisyani ca bhutani
mam tu veda na kascana*

‘O Arjuna, I know all living beings of the past, present and future, but no one can know Me in truth.’

In explaining the deeper meaning of these three verses, Sripad Puri Maharaj said, “Lord Krishna is speaking here and He is saying that He has a superexcellent nature which consists of four qualities and activities which are transcendental. Because people see activity in this world, they think that in the transcendental world there cannot be any activity. It must be devoid of activities, form and qualities. That the transcendental world is the opposite of this world, but it’s not like that,” Sripad Puri Maharaj continued. “This world is a reflection of that world where there are form, qualities, activities of The Lord’s pastimes. In this world, the impersonalist thinks that the formless Brahman must have appeared as Krishna. They think the form in which Krishna takes birth is Maya (illusion). But Krishna is saying here in this verse, ‘I have a form. It is not that I am originally formless and take form only in this universe. No, He is saying here ‘I have a form’ I have my own kingdom, associates, pastimes there. But I don’t show that to everyone here all the time, only some of the time. I incarnate here. It’s not that I take form here and when I go back there, I do not have a form,’” Sripad Puri Maharaj explained. “His original Svayam Bhagavan form is there and He takes birth in that form here.”

At this point of *sanga*, there were several questions.

You said that Krishna is a person, doesn’t that mean weaknesses also? Revant Prabhu asked. “Krishna is not limited or dependent. He is unlimited and independent. Krishna has a form like the one we have but His form is Sat-Cit-Ananda - transcendental, infinite. We are finite,” Sripad Puri Maharaj responded. “*Advaitam acyutam anādim ananta-rūpam* - “I worship the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Govinda [Kṛṣṇa], who is the original person—absolute, infallible, with infinite form without beginning or end.”

Brahma-saṁhitā (5.33)

Sripad Puri Maharaj then explained that Sri Krishna has three potencies - internal, external and marginal. “The internal potencies is the spiritual potency of devotion and love. The external potency is material existence, illusionary existence, and the marginal potency is the *jiva* (humans), who can go either way.”

Why do some people choose this or that way of life? Sobha ji asked. “We have freedom - you can love Krishna or not, you have the freedom to choose. Krishna wants your love but He gives us our freedom because love cannot be forced,” Sripad Puri Maharaj responded. “We can either serve Him through *bhakti*

(devotion) or serve Maya, His illusionary energy. He gives us the freedom to choose. Only then can it be called love.”

“Devotees can see Krishna. Krishna is all knowing but one has to surrender to Guru (spiritual teacher) and Krishna to know what is what,” Sripad Puri Maharaj said. “So-called knowledge will led us only into more material entanglement.”

Krishna Katha Sankirtan ki jai.

Prasadam was served and honored by all.

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] 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.

[1] *jīvo jāgo, jīvo jāgo, gauracānda bole / kota nidrā jāo māyā-piśācīra kole
bhajibo boliyā ese samsāra-bhitare / bhuliyā rohile tumi avidyāra bhare
tomāre loite āmi hoinu avatāra / āmi binā bandhu āra ke āche tomāra
enechi auśadhi māyā nāśibāro lāgi' / hari-nāma mahā-mantra lao tumi māgi'
bhakativinoda prabhu-carāṇe pariyā / sei hari-nāma-mantra loilo māgiyā*

TRANSLATION

Lord Gaurāṅga is calling, "Wake up, sleeping souls! Wake up, sleeping souls!
How long will you sleep in the lap of the witch called Māyā?
You have forgotten the way of devotional service and are lost in the world of
birth and death.

I have descended just to save you; other than Myself you have no friend in this world.

I have brought the medicine that will wipe out the disease of illusion from which you are suffering. Take this mahā-mantra-Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/Hare Rāma, Hare RāmaRāma Rāma, Hare Hare."

Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Thākura says: "I fall at the Lord's feet, having taken this mahā-mantra."

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