

Sri Sri Guru Gaurangau Jayatah
Bhakti Vedanta Institute
Princeton University Harinama
Princeton, NJ
March 1, 2014

Due to some heavy traffic on the highway, the New York devotees arrived a bit late to the Bhakti Vedanta Institute (BVI) office at Princeton University, however, that did not stop our Harinam sankirtan session from taking place. Just as we were about to begin, a female guest, Monika, arrived. After a brief introductory conversation, Sripad Bhakti Madhava Puri Maharaj, Ph.D (Sripad Puri Maharaj) offered Monika a written form of the Maha Mantra (*Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare / Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare*) to follow as we began. Sripad Puri Maharaj opened Harinam sankirtan (Singing glorification of Sri Krishna's holy name) with the Panca Tattva Mahamantra (*(jaya sri-krishna-caitanya prabhu nityananda / sri-advaita gadadhara srivasadi-gaura-bhakta-vrinda)*) followed by the Maha Mantra. Syamasundara das Prabhu accompanied on guitar while Rasaraja das Prabhu and I played kartals (hand cymbals).

Before diving into sanga, Monika, a post-graduate Environmental and Climate student at Princeton University, asked what is the meaning of the Maha Mantra? "Hare is addressing of the energy, Krishna is the source of the energy and Rama is the potency of His bliss/pleasure," Sripad Puri Maharaj explained. "The best way to meditate is to concentrate on the sound vibration of the words themselves," Sripad Puri Maharaj explained.

Reading from chapter 8, text 4 of the *Bhagavad-Gita – Hidden Treasure of the Sweet Absolute* by Srila Bhakti Raksak Sridhar Dev-Goswami Maharaj (Sridhar Maharaj),^[1] Sripad Puri Maharaj opened sanga. "This chapter is very important: *Tāraka-brahma-yoga - The Merciful Absolute*. *Tāraka* means delivering or raising one to the spiritual plane (*brahman*) through yoga," Sripad Puri Maharaj said then asked why this chapter is called 'The Merciful Absolute?' How does the Absolute Godhead communicate with us? "He communicates with us by revealing Himself to us through our intelligence, our thoughts and through our hearts. He gives us the knowledge by which we can come to him - *teṣāṁ satata-yuktānām*." Bhagavad-Gita 10.10 confirms this:

teṣāṁ satata-yuktānām
bhajatām prīti-pūrvakam
dadāmi buddhi-yogaṁ taṁ
yena mām upayānti te

"To those devotees who are always lovingly engaged in My service, I give the divine inspiration by which they can come to Me."

How does anyone feel their connection with Krishna? Sripad Puri Maharaj asked then answered, “*smaranam* – by remembering, always fixing your mind, by meditating on the Supreme. *Teṣām satata* (always), never deviating. *Yuktānām* means to be joined, connected with. The result of always feeling oneself in connection with Sri Krishna, the Supreme Absolute Reality, and not only always mediating like some kind of mechanical process, but with *prīti-pūrvakam* - with some affection, some attachment,” Sripad Puri Maharaj continued. After a brief pause, he said, “This meditation should not be a means to some other end but simply that ‘I have some affection for that Supreme Person, that realm, that world of devotion.’ It’s a realm that is not within my reach, it’s something that is higher than me, that is why I must approach that higher realm with a very humble and worshipable attitude - *bhajatām* which means in a prayerful, worshipable mood, as something that is sacred, higher than myself. That higher plane we are talking about is not within our finite capacity to grasp because it is so high and we are so low. In other words, the infinite is necessarily beyond the finite.”



Part of the audience - Prabhus: Syamasundara das and Nitai das, Sringara mataji

“How does the finite approach the infinite? If we try to use finite means to approach the infinite, we will not get there, we will only get another finite. Whatever we grab for as finite, we will get something finite only. So how can the finite grasp the infinite? Sripad Puri Maharaj asked. “That’s an entirely different process. We have to submit to the infinite to get His connection and attention because it is by surrender that we understand the infinite properly. Infinite is not that which is in our grasp. If I think it is within my grasp, then it is not the infinite because I am finite. But if I understand that It’s not within my grasp but rather I am within It’s grasp, then we have understood the infinite properly.”

“We want the higher realization, the higher understanding and it’s there but not in the mundane sense. In the mundane sense we can reach and aspire for so many things but how to aspire for that which is not within our reach, that’s the real higher love. We can have that higher love also. It is not that it’s impossible. That is what this *Harinam sankirtan yoga* is about, for one who is constantly engaged in meditation upon the Lord with affection,” Sripad Puri Maharaj further explained. This is confirmed in Srila Sridhar Maharaj’s *Bhagavad-Gita – Hidden Treasure of the Sweet Absolute* 8.5:

anta-kāle ca mām eva

*smaran muktvā kalevaram
yaḥ prayāti sa mad-bhāvaṁ
yāti nāsty atra saṁśayaḥ*

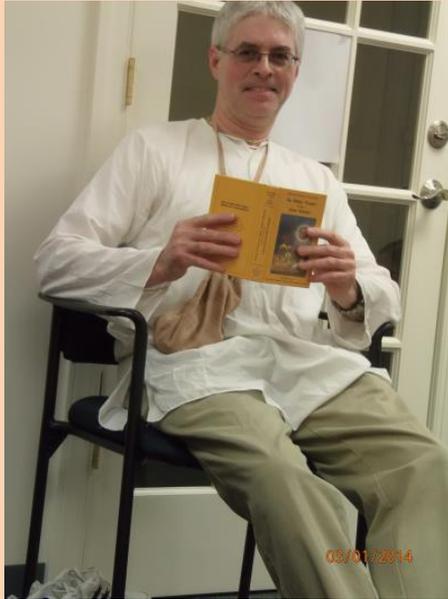
“One who thinks of Me at the time of death attains to My nature on departing this world. Of this there is no doubt.”

How does Krishna communicate with us? Sripad Puri Maharaj asked his attentive audience then responded, “‘*dadāmi buddhi-yogaṁ taṁ* - I give you the intelligence by which you can come to me!’” He continued, “Who has the intelligence of how to get there to Krishna? That is a gift coming from Krishna. It’s a reward for your sacrifice, your meditation, your concentration, your love and affection. He is giving us this *buddhi* (intelligence), otherwise who has the intelligence of how to reach God? It’s not something you can learn at the university. You can learn about God but not on how to reach Him or be with Him. Krishna says ‘*dadāmi buddhi-yogaṁ taṁ* - I give you that intelligence because you have an established relationship with the infinite.’ With the proper mood and attitude everything will come by this process of *bhakti yoga* – ‘connecting with Me with full attention and love through *bhakti yoga*.’ There are many types of yoga. *Bhakti yoga* means to connect with God through love and affection. *Bhakti* means yoga of the heart. Not ordinary love but transcendental love of higher level. We find that if we do perform *bhakti yoga* then our inner fulfillment will come,” Sripad Puri Maharaj continued.

“The Absolute is not impersonal otherwise how are we person and the Absolute is impersonal? Are we greater than the Absolute? No we are coming from the Absolute, therefore, if we are person, then He has to be personal, at least and more...Not an ordinary person like us but He’s certainly personal,” Sripad Puri Maharaj further explained. “He has a consciousness, otherwise where does it come from in us? If we think everything is material then how does matter produce consciousness? How does matter produce the soul? Soul means the seat of consciousness and to understand how consciousness arrives from matter is a very difficult problem. Life is a fundamental principle of reality. It is not something that was created from non-life.”

Pointing to a poster on the BVI office walls that read “Life comes from Life,” Sripad Puri Maharaj said, “We have this poster here that says ‘life comes from life.’ How does life come to be? Scientists are trying to find out what molecules are needed to create life and they even to this day they cannot do it because it’s such a complicated molecule. They (the scientists) cannot figure out how a complicated molecule was formed from simpler molecules and in such a short time, 4.5 billion years. Even that is not enough time to assemble the DNA molecule by chance.” The audience had a good laugh. “They (the scientists) are thinking that somehow matter got together to form life but, no, life cannot be formed like that. They think life is so simple to create from molecules, yet still they cannot even make a blade of grass!” After a brief pause, “Even if you put all the scientists of the world together in one laboratory to make a blade of grass, they can’t do it. They can never do it. They will be scratching their heads. Why can’t they make a blade of grass? Sripad Puri Maharaj asked. “Because it’s not a combination of chemicals or a

laboratory procedure that produces life! Life is producing the organization of chemicals and atoms, not that the organization of matter is producing life. The life in a seed can easily make a blade of grass, but without the life in that seed it cannot do anything. All the chemicals will be there in the dead seed, but it cannot do anything. That grass will never come from it.”



Part of the audience - Prabhus: Rasaraja das and Revant

In further explaining the point, Sripad Puri Maharaj said, “Aristotle taught that there’s matter and form. The scientists understand matter but what is the form of matter? How does it form or come about? That organizing principle of matter -- where does that come from? What is the organizing principle that’s necessary for matter to form in a certain particular way – like a blade of grass? We maybe able to organize matter to produce a computer, but that computer won’t come from the material elements themselves unless there’s an organizing principle. You can take all the parts of a computer, put them in a shoe box, cover it and shake it up - but would you ever get a computer out of that process? You have all the parts there, all the laws of nature and physics are also there, all the components you need, still even 4.5 billion years will not be enough time to make a computer from shaking a box or to produce any kind of organized system.” Sripad Puri Maharaj continued. “Organization is not the cause of life. Life is the cause of organization. The ordering principle, the intelligence that is there, is in life, it is not in the molecule. That organizing information is not present in the modern scientific viewpoint of matter. Today, scientists are now beginning to realize that life is an essential principle of an organism. Life is the essential principle and it is not something that is produced from the subordinate matter. Not that matter is unessential, it is also important but it is not the determining factor in the formation of an organism. This is scientific, because it is based on observations, and not just some fantastic imagination of some ancient people. The deep in mysteries, deep truths about life that have existed for thousands of years that are coming down to us, are now being realized.” Referring to the *Srimad Bhagavat Gita*, Sripad Puri Maharaj asked, “Why are people keeping these

ancient books for so many thousands of years? Why are they preserving the exact language for so many centuries and generations? For what purpose? You will never find books like this being preserved so carefully unless they have some value. The Gita is like the Bible of the Vedic culture. What kind of information is being given to people in these books that they are being given so much value?”



Sripad Puri Maharaj reading from *Bhagavad Gita – Hidden Treasure of the Sweet Absolute*

To further emphasize the validity of the Holy Books, Sripad Puri Maharaj said, “Newton’s ideas have been overthrown by quantum mechanics, relativity, and chaos theory. Those principles of Newton are no longer valid when looked at carefully in the very small, very large, very fast, very slow or in the very complicated. They don’t hold. They are useless, so Newton has long been surpassed, but the Holy Books are still there, for century after century. The Holy Books have never been overthrown because the subject matter they are speaking of is so high. This information is coming down to us, not being produced by us. These books are not a creation or concoction of finite thinking. If the infinite is revealing Itself, there can’t be any mistake there. It’s perfect knowledge. That is why it always speaks the truth to us,” Sripad Puri Maharaj continued. “Truth may be covered for a while by ignorance, but it can never be destroyed by that ignorance. Like the sun can be covered by the cloud, but it doesn’t mean that the sun is going to be destroyed by that cloud. The cloud is very insignificant when compared to the sun. In the same way, our ignorance about the truth is very insignificant when compared to the truth itself, it will always reveal itself somewhere or the other even behind the clouds. Once the clouds of our ignorance disappear, we will be able to know the truth again.”

Sripad Puri Maharaj said that a very important point is being made in this verse by Sri Krishna. “He’s saying for ‘One who thinks of Me at the time of death attains to My nature on departing this world. Of this there is no doubt.’” Generally in the Western/Christian tradition they believed that death is the end. I am born and I die - that’s it. Between birth and death is the only time I exist. Generally they believed that we have only one life. After death, you wait in limbo somewhere until the final judgment, then

you can go either to the kingdom of God or the other kingdom, wherever it is to your final destination. According to that idea, there's one life, then the judgment day where your eternal future is determined," Sripad Puri Maharaj continued. "In the Vedic culture every point in your life has a past, present and a future. Now at the point of death, according to the Christian view, there's no past. There's only the present and the future. At the time of death there's only the past, no future. So they cut out the past at the time of birth and cut out the future from the time of death."

Sripad Puri Maharaj went on to ask his audience, "Why arbitrarily, contingently remove the past or future or at whatever point you want from life? From a universal point of view -- past, present and future are not to be eliminated at any point -- that is called *Trikala* -- the three moments of time. They are not to be tampered with. They are permanent conditions of mundane time. We can't just arbitrarily cut it off and make it go on at another point. Life is non-material, it's a fundamental principle of reality, and it is also eternal. Time is never without a past or a future, it always has a past, a present and a future. Eternal means it doesn't begin or end at some point," Sripad Puri Maharaj continued. "In the *Bhagavat Gita* it is explained that you change your body so many times in one lifetime -- from a baby's body to a youth's body, to an adult's body to an old body. And the scientists will tell you that every seven years or so you completely transform all the molecules in your body to new ones. Similar to the process whereby we eat and we excrete. New matter is coming in and processed by anabolism/catabolism which make up metabolism, building up, tearing down and maintaining the body through that process. What is discarded, that goes out in the waste system of the body. Like that the body is always being rejuvenated."

"Now if you look at the picture of yourself when you were a baby, where is that body?" Sripad Puri Maharaj asked. "It's gone, no longer existing on this planet. It's gone, at least in that form, though its material constituents may exist in some different type of molecules in the environment. You are taking some things from the environment and you are giving some things back to the environment. Within this flux is life; it is like a river, water coming and water going. It's assimilating and eliminating matter, but the river remains. Like that, our life remains although the body is going through all these changes. Even at the time of birth and at the time of death there's a new body that is being manifest and the old body is being discarded and another new one will come. That's the Vedic conception."

Krishna says that this process of *samsara* (cycle of birth and death) can be brought to an end. If we are attached to this world we will definitely come back to this world, but if we are attached to the spiritual world, Krishna says that we will attain to 'My abode.' We will go to that plane where He is existing in His own nature as *sat-chit-ananda* (eternal, full of knowledge and bliss). This plane of mundane nature is temporary, full of ignorance and miseries (unhappiness). We may say, 'I'm OK, you're OK' but that is not always so. Sometimes we can get into very miserable conditions especially if you get old and sick, then you realize the miseries of this plane. *Janma-mrtyu-jara-vyadhi* - birth, death, getting old and disease, getting sick, these are all difficulties of this world, but in that plane it's *anandam* (bliss). So to aspire for that plane is a very nice thing. One with

intelligence should understand that if such place is possible, then why not try to enter there?

“...Of this there is no doubt.’ “Why does Krishna say this?” Sripad Puri Maharaj asked. “ Because we have so many doubts, why should we believe Krishna? Because He’s God! Why would we not believe Him? It’s not something unreasonable. If we apply our reason we can understand how it’s possible. We can understand from our present situation. Why do we feel something is lacking when we are unhappy, ignorant, or face annihilation? This is because these things are foreign to us as spritual beings.”

In closing, referring to Sripad Puri Maharaj clothes, she asked, why do you wear saffron color clothes? Sripad Puri Maharaj answered, “The color orange represents courage. It is for those who have the courage to renounce the material world and take up the challenge of achieving the spiritual world.”

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] Srila Bhakti Raksak Sridhar Dev-Goswami Maharaj - Founder-President-Acharyya:
Sri Chaitanya Saraswat Math

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