

**Sri Sri Guru Gaurangau Jayatah**  
**Bhakti Vedanta Institute**  
**Princeton University Harinama**  
**Princeton, NJ**  
April 26, 2014

Harinam Sankirtan began with a visit to Frist Campus Center class rooms of Princeton University where we checked out a possible space for our programs. This was followed by a short sit down Harinam while still on the campus grounds. As we head back to the Bhakti Vedanta Institute (BVI) office, Syamasundara das Prabhu, on guitar, with Sripad Bhakti Madhava Puri Maharaj, Ph.D (Sripad Puri Maharaj), Srngara Mataji and Nitai das Prabhu chanted our way through the campus while walking back to the BVI office. That was really ecstatic.



**Srngara mataji, Syamasundara das, Nitai das and Sripad Puri Maharaj**

Opening Sanga Sripad Puri Maharaj suggested for Syamasundara das Prabhu to read from one of the various Math (spiritual center) books. The book of choice was "Sri Guru And His Grace" by His Divine Grace Srila Bhakti Raksak Sridhar Dev-Goswami Maharaj. In this book, the first chapter speaks of the importance of seeking a bona fide guru (spiritual teacher) in order to understand spiritual topic and gain knowledge of the transcendental world. "The key to spiritual life is guru and Sri Krishna," Syamasundara das Prabhu read. "The knowledge that we receive from our gurudeva is not different from that imparted by God Himself... We cannot know anything of the transcendental region by our limited, perverted method of observation and experiment. But all of us can lend our eager ears for the aural reception of the transcendental sound transmitted from that region to this, through the unadulterated medium of Sri Gurudev." This is confirmed in the Mundaka Upanishad (1.2.12):

*tad-vijnanartham sa gurum evabhigacchet  
samiṭ-panih srotriyam brahma-nishtham*

“In order to learn the transcendental science, one must approach the bona fide spiritual master in disciplic succession, who is fixed in the Absolute Truth.”

On page 28 of “Sri Guru and His Grace,” it states that the standard to measure truth or untruth must come “not from a vitiated, vulnerable plane, but from a real plane.” And to realize that, we must have three qualifications: *pranipat* (humbly approach a guru), *pariprasna* (sincere inquiry), and *seva* (service to that higher knowledge). With an attitude of humility, sincerity and dedication we can approach the Absolute Truth, Sri Krishna.

The question on page 31 asks, “What will be the guru’s position?” In response, Srila Sridhar Maharaj wrote, “He will be well versed in the revealed truth not in ordinary information...he must always be practicing spiritual life. His activities are all connected with spirit not with the mundane world. He is concerned with Brahman, the plane which can accommodate everything, the fundamental basis of everything (*brahma-nishtham*), fully dependent on Sri Krishna.” Śrīmad Bhāgavatam (11.3.21) confirms this:

*tasmād gurumṁ prapadyeta  
jijñāsuḥ śreya uttamam  
śābde pare ca niṣṇātam  
brahmaṇy upaśamāśrayam*

“Therefore any person who seriously desires real happiness must seek a bona fide spiritual master and take shelter of him by initiation. The qualification of the bona fide guru is that he has realized the conclusions of the scriptures by deliberation and is able to convince others of these conclusions. Such great personalities, who have taken shelter of the Supreme Godhead, leaving aside all material considerations, should be understood to be bona fide spiritual masters.”

In further reading Syamasundara das Prabhu read, “To receive transcendental knowledge, we must completely surrender ourselves to the real Acharya (spiritual instructor) in a spirit of ardent inquiry and service. Actual performance of service to the Absolute under the guidance of the Acharya is the only vehicle by which we can assimilate transcendental knowledge.”

In this chapter we also learned that "Maya means misconception. We are living in the midst of misconception. Our understanding of the environment is based on a completely misconceived set of ideas and thoughts. We have no proper conception of anything in the absolute sense. Our ideas are all relative." Pages further down explained that "Maya can be controlled only when you are backed up by the higher potencies. She will only then accept being controlled."

Opening the floor for questions, Syamasundara das Prabhu asked, since we are subjects, how then are we the object of Sri Krishna?

"Krishna is the Super Subject. Just like we are subjects of this material world, things of this world are object to us because we have a higher consciousness than the other things of this material world. In the spiritual world Krishna has the higher consciousness than we have, so we are like objects to Him," Sripad Puri Maharaj explained. "If we were intelligent enough we could understand that everything around us is also conscious. In ancient days, they would see everything as conscious – the water, the Sun, Fire, and so on. But when you encounter another living being you consider him/her to be the object of your consciousness, even though they are also subjects. In the same way the super subject is Krishna and we can never become as high as His consciousness, so in that sense, we are the object of His will."

"In our relationship with Krishna, off course, it is one of complete surrender and love. We are infatuated with Krishna and therefore whatever He wills, we are ready to do that automatically," Sripad Puri Maharaj continued. "Just like someone you love intensely, you become tyrannized by them, as Dostoyeski remarked. They can do anything with you. Whatever they ask, you can do. Nothing is too much for the lovers, so in that sense they are controlled or objects of His Will."

The next question "What is the difference between Siksa (spiritual instructor) and Diksa (spiritual initiator) guru?" came directly from chapter two.

"Diksa means getting the mantra (sacred sound, words) and the sacred thread. Having a mantra and having the conception of the mantra are two different things. Depending on the conception of the person who is giving you that mantra, the potency will be there in that name, 'just like the homeopathic globule' as Srila Sridhar Maharaj told.

If the good medicine is there in the globule then you will have the effect when you take it," Sripad Puri Maharaj said. "The potency has to be of proper quality."

"What type of consciousness guru has when he engages us in service also depends on what we know and the kind of conception we have about service that was given to us. How much he is engaged in service will also be the measurement of how much we are engaged in service. If the character of guru is a little bit egoistic or whatever, we will never be able to cross over that threshold when we meet it," Sripad Puri Maharaj continued. "As much purity as we can find in guru, that much will influence us to that degree also. As much dedication and devotion is found in guru, we may also catch that through association, sadhu-sanga."

After a brief pause Sripad Puri Maharaj continued, "Guru Maharaj used to tell us that we have to study the consciousness of guru. Try to understand that consciousness and adopt that in our own life. If you have a good role model, you will have good qualities and character also. Not anything different that any ordinary person would not understand but it's a real blessing to find a natural guru who has all those good qualities of such high standard like in Srila Prabhupada, Srila Sridhar Maharaj, Srila Govinda Maharaja, Srila Sripad Maharaj, and the others in our line" Sripad Puri Maharaj said. "Our gurus have very high standards and to have connection with them is a great blessing, a great impetus for our spiritual life."

To recap our brief sanga, Syamasundara das Prabhu asked, "So Diksa is the formula and Siksa is the medicine?" "Diksa is the formality. Both can be given by the same person but sometimes they may be different," Sripad Puri Maharaj clarified. "Anyone can be Siksa guru because we can learn from everyone, and that person who has most influence over our development we consider them the chief Siksa guru. Everything depends on the heart, but proper conception must be there. Siksa/ Diksa guru can be either male or female. You can learn something from everyone."

As our brief sanga was coming to a close, Srngara mataji requested for more Harinam sankirtan which continued as prasadam was served and honored by all.

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  
(New York)

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[1] Srila Bhakti Sundar Govinda Maharaj, Sevaite-President-Acharya of  
Sri Chaitanya Saraswat Math:  
[http://scsmath.com/docs/govinda\\_maharaj.html](http://scsmath.com/docs/govinda_maharaj.html)

[2] Srila Sridhar Maharaj:  
[http://www.scsmath.com/docs/sridhar\\_maharaj.html](http://www.scsmath.com/docs/sridhar_maharaj.html)

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

[4] Srila Svarup Damodar Maharaj:  
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