

Sri Sri Guru Gaurangau Jayatah
Bhakti Vedanta Institute
Princeton University Harinama
Princeton, NJ
May 31, 2014

Prabhus: Jayadev Prabhu on mridangam and Syamasundara Prabhu on guitar opened Harinam Sankirtan at the Bhakti Vedanta Institute (BVI) office with Sripad Bhakti Madhava Puri Maharaj, Ph.D (Sripad Puri Maharaj) leading the group. Gita-Govinda devi, Srngara Mataji, Nitai Prabhu, myself and bhakta Steve were also in attendance.



Syamasundara Prabhu, Sripad Puri Maharaj, Jayadev Prabhu & daughter Gita, Srngara mataji

Reading from Srila Sridhar Maharaj's^[1] *Bhagavad Gita – Hidden Treasure of the Sweet Absolute*, Chapter 8, verses 14 – 15:

*ananya-cetah satatam
yo mam smarati nityasah
tasyaham sulabhah partha
nitya-yuktasya yoginah*

“O Pārtha, a person who one-pointedly remembers Me always, in all circumstances, and who, in his relationship with Me (in servitude, friendship, etc.) constantly aspires for My divine association—I am easily reached by such a devotee.”

“Here *ananya-cetah* is translated as one-pointedness -- meaning without the practices of Karma (action performed for the sake of the body and its senses) or Jnana (pursuit of knowledge). Another place where the word *ananya* is used in the *Bhagavat Gita*, is in reference to the *ananya bhak* (unalloyed, pure devotee of Krishna). It means to

be free from the realms of karma, jnana, yoga and all types of endeavors unrelated to Krishna,” Sripad Puri Maharaj explained. “Somehow even when we come to worship Krishna we may have some motives - to be free from our miseries, to have some company, to eat some good food, so many reasons we may have - but to please Krishna without any other motive or desire, simply as a matter of satisfying the Lord, or to serve the order of gurudev (spiritual master) for his satisfaction, this mood is in the line of *ananya bhak*. The spiritual master gives us so many rounds to chant on our beads each day, if we do that, it is our service to guru. That is *ananya bhak* - pure devotion without any other motive. However, doing it as a duty, is not yet perfect consciousness. It is said that perfect consciousness is service beyond duty that is spontaneous.”

“One who works out of duty is called a Karma Yogi but there’s a platform beyond duty that is spontaneous, out of pure relish for Krishna’s name, and when that stage is reached, the name automatically comes to dance on your tongue when you chant,” Sripad Puri Maharaj said. “When there is *ruci*, (taste) the Name comes to dance on your tongue and you can’t stop chanting. When we are chanting with relish we will feel that Krishna’s dancing is making the tongue vibrate the Name. In that stage the mind is automatically fixed or one-pointed. At that time we don’t think about our troubles or that we are Indian, African, Chinese, and so on. One forgets everything else but the Name, in which the *ananya bhak*, only has a relationship with Krishna’s Name,” Sripad Puri Maharaj continued.

“Pure ecstasy is one thing but to be in actual relationship with Krishna, how does one get to that point?” Sripad Puri Maharaj asked then responded. “That, we can only get from one who has a relationship with Krishna. For example, you want to learn how to paint, so you have to go to an artist who knows how to paint. In that same way if you want to establish a relationship with Krishna, you have to find someone who has that relationship. So who is that person who has such a relationship?” Sripad Puri Maharaj asked then responded, “He/she is called Guru. Guru has a connection with Krishna, and we can learn about it from him.” Sripad Puri Maharaj then asked, from where did Guru get his relationship with Krishna? In response, he said, “From his Guru, who received it from his Guru and so on. Therefore we take Parampara (descipic succession) very seriously.”

“The Parampara line we are following is called the Rupanuga Sampraday, followers of Srila Rupa Gosvami, who is Rupa Manjari in the spiritual world. Rupa Manjari is the servant of Sri Sri Radha-

Krishna, who especially serves Srimati Radharani," Sripad Puri Maharaj said.

Learning how to be a servant of guru , establishing a relationship with guru as a servant, is how we establish our serving relationship with Krishna. As much as that relationship is fixed with gurudev, then that much our relationship will be fixed with Krishna. Simply by serving in the worshipable association (*sanga*) of the servants of Krishna, we can also become servants of the Lord. That is the method of establishing a relationship with Krishna.

"First are two things mentioned in this *Gita* verse: remembering Krishna, which is easiest to do by chanting the Holy Names under direction of gurudev and vainavas, and establishing a worshipable relationship with Krishna, which is done by serving the servants of Krishna. The third thing Krishna says is 'aspire for My divine association,'" Sripad Puri Maharaj explained. "We are doing all these things to become Krishna conscious and to establish our relationship on the spiritual plane. We have to follow this process – chanting, serving and focusing our attention on what is our goal (*prayojana*) as given to us by Srila Ragnath das Goswami."

Sanatan Goswami taught us *Sambandha jnana* (what is our position or relationship as servants), Rupa Goswami has given us *Abhideya* (what is the process for reaching the goal) and Raghunath Das *Prayojana* (what is that goal –*Radha dasya*, the service of Sri Radhika, the supreme relisher of Krsna *prema*). Three things: what is our position as servants, what is the process for reaching perfection and what is the nature of that goal," Sripad Puri Maharaj continued. "In other words, we have to know where we are, where we want to go and how to get there. You may have a map all laid out for you, but it won't help until you know first where you are and where on the map you want to go, and the path you have to take to get there."

At this point in *sanga*, Bhakta Steve asked, where on the map we are, is that the specific spiritual path we have chosen, or we are following because of family or ancestry? In response, Sripad Puri Maharaj said, "There may be many circumstances and methods by which we may try to reach our goal, but the most perfect method is to hear from guru, from a proper authority and source otherwise we may be wandering aimlessly." As a follow-up question, Bhakta Steve asked, How do you know which is the proper source or authority? "That is something we have to decide in our heart. Each person will have to determine that in his own heart. 'I am getting directions from so many sources – friends,

parents, teachers, priests, devotees,' so you have to look into your own heart to see where 'I am getting that guidance that is actually telling me what I want to know.' It is our own sincerity and faith that will ultimately guide us to the proper source."



Taking shelter at Sripad Puri Maharaj's lotus feet during *sanga*

"But how can we know if it is correct or not, or if we are cheating ourselves?" Bhakta Steve further inquired. "If it's correct for you, then you will know. Just like when you eat a meal, you know when you are full, nobody has to say 'ok you are full now.' In the same way we know by direct perception when we are hearing the truth," Sripad Puri Maharaj responded. "We should not be foolish or insincere to ourselves. Some people are ready to hear anything from anyone. But we have to be thoughtful, inquisitive, and have some faith. We cannot do anything without faith. Whatever you are doing, you must have some faith in that in order to do it. Faith is not something that can be demanded from you but rather it commands your life. No one can demand faith or honor from anyone, but one may command honor, by their own honorable nature. This honorable nature is explained in the *Sri Siksastakam*, text 3:

*trnad api sunicena
taror api sahisnuna
amanina manadena
kirtaniyah sada harih*

'One who is humbler than a blade of grass, more forbearing than a tree, who gives due honor to others without desiring it for himself is qualified to always chant the holy name of Krsna.'

Sripad Puri Maharaja continued, "When Srila Prabhupada^[2] came to America and I learned about him, I knew he was someone I could trust, because he presented everything with so much conviction in what he was saying about extraordinary things. Of course, many people have conviction in what they are saying, but with Srila Prabhupada it was different. Here was a person with such deep conviction in something that was not about him, but about Krishna, God. I wanted to have that kind of conviction in Krishna. Somehow I was always looking for that."

"You were born in a Catholic family. Did you receive that kind of conviction from the Church?" Bhakta Steve asked. "No. In the Church I was looking for answers to so many questions but nobody could give them," Sripad Puri Maharaja continued contemplatively. "Questions about the soul, why does everybody have to die and wait in the grave before judgment day? Do you come back with the body you had when you died, if you died as a baby? So many things like that I was questioning, but no one had the answers for me," Sripad Puri Maharaj continued. "When I came to Srila Prabhupada I could find answers to all my questions, and more than that I felt a connection, complete faith and trust in him. He told me 'matter comes from life!' I believed him, even though I had been taught as a scientist that life comes from matter. I even spoke to George Wald, a Nobel Laureate, and asked him if he ever considered that 'matter comes from life' although I, myself, did not understand at that time how it happened. Srila Prabhupada said it and I repeated it to this Nobel Laureate. Although he [the Nobel Laureate] was an atheist, after one year, he became a theist and began to chant Hare Krishna. I don't take any credit for his remarkable conversion. It was all Srila Prabhupada's words and mercy that planted that seed, *bija* mantra, in me, and he got it from him through me."

After a brief pause he pointed to a poster that said, 'All the science and scientist in the world together can't make a single blade of grass.' "If you put all the scientists in the world into a laboratory, with all the equipment they want, they will still be unable to make a blade of grass," Sripad Puri Maharaj said, then asked, "What is a grass? It's made of matter. But they can't make that bio-mass with all their science and laboratory equipment. Why? Because that matter does not

come from chemicals. Matter of that nature comes from life. The life comes from within that small grass seed. It doesn't come from matter. Matter is used by that life which is more powerful than the scientist. In that seed is the *atma*, a part of Krishna, and that is the only thing powerful enough to make a blade of grass, just as we find in all the biomass of nature, but the scientists cannot produce any of it. This is a fact. Everyone should know it."

"There are real potencies of God with real effects in the world, but no one appreciates it because we are not taught properly. We are taught all kinds of things and we may even believe they are true, such as Darwinism and so on..." Sripad Puri Maharaj continued. "So many big scientists believe all this, but if you point out what is really happening then they may change their understanding in order to rationally explain the facts. They have to change their minds in order to accept what is really true, instead of some story that they have been indoctrinated to believe is real."

"In the Gita verse we are discussing. Krishna says if we follow these three principles then, 'I am easily reached by such a devotee,'" Sripad Puri Maharaj said then asked his attentive audience, "Can you follow these three principles?" In response Bhakta Steve said he could not follow those three points. "If gurudev gives you a mantra to chant, can you chant those rounds?" Sripad Puri Maharaj asked and Bhakta Steve responded that 'yes' he can. "And can you serve guru or develop a serving relationship toward gurudev," Sripad Puri Maharaj asked. "You mean to serve someone?" Bhakta Steve inquired and then responded, "I don't know." Sripad Puri Maharaj the said, "Everyone is serving someone. If you are working then you have a boss and you have to do what he wants, right? Everyone is serving already, so what is the problem in serving guru?"

"Establishing a serving relationship with guru, following guru's instruction, and aspiring for a relationship with Krishna, the most beautiful person in the whole universe, is the best service we can do." Sripad Puri Maharaj said. "It comes naturally, we want to serve God. We don't want to be God but to serve Him. We find throughout the whole history of mankind, there was always worship of God in one form or another," Sripad Puri Maharaj continued. "We all understood there is a higher Being who is meant to be served and worshipped. Krishna says 'for one who can do these things then he can easily reach Me.' That's all we have to do, just these three things."

Sripad Puri Maharaj then continued to text 15 of the *Bhagavad Gita – Hidden Treasure of the Sweet Absolute*, Chapter 8:

*mam upetya punar janma
duhkhalayam asasvatam
napnuvanti mahatmanah
samsiddhim paramam gatah*

“The great souls who become My associates in My divine pastimes, having reached Me, are never again born into transitory existence, which is the abode of suffering.”

“Not only do you get a life of pure bliss, you get relief from all your suffering, never having to come back to that suffering again,” Sripad Puri Maharaj said. “When the devotees told me ‘you can have a life of *sat-chit-ananda* (eternity, knowledge and bliss), I thought what kind of foolish person would not want to try for that? If somebody came and offered eternity, knowledge and bliss, are you going to say ‘no, I am not interested. I have my job, my mother to take care of or whatever?’”

“Maharaja, does Krishna understand that we are on this plane and that we have these obligations in life? How do you aspire for eternity, knowledge and bliss when we have so many obligations in life?” Bhakta Steve asked. “Krishna understands.. Just like Arjuna who wanted eternity, knowledge and bliss. He said, ‘Krishna I want that’ but Krishna said, ‘No, you cannot have it just like that. You are a *kshatriya* (fighter) so you have to fight this war first.’ Krishna did not say, ‘OK, you can leave everything and go for eternity, knowledge and bliss. You have to fight -- you are a fighter. You take up your duty and do it under My order, under My instruction, then you are serving Me.’” Sripad Puri Maharaj explained. “If you have a family, you have to serve that family as a service to Krishna, to help make them Krishna conscious. You cannot just abandon them to their own devices. You have to help them become Krishna conscious. But how to help them? I have to become Krishna conscious myself before I can help them. Krishna consciousness does not mean giving up everything. It means using everything in the service of Krishna.”

“When I went to Srila Prabhupada, I have a PhD in Quantum Chemistry, he did not tell me ‘oh leave all that and just chant Hare Krishna.’ He never told me that. When he heard I was a scientist, he said ‘you are a scientist, use your chemistry to teach that matter comes from life.’ That’s what I’ve been doing ever since,” Sripad Puri

Maharaj continued. "Use your knowledge, your skills, whatever you have to serve and glorify Krishna. Don't use it for just mundane purposes. Convert your life from selfish, provincial interests to the universal interest. Change your heart, not your position, and follow those processes we have discussed. Anyone can chant the Holy Names of Krishna. There are no hard and fast rules for chanting. Serve gurudev and always think of your highest aspiration."

Prasadam was served and honored by all.



L to R: Bhakta Steve, Prabhus: Syamasundara das, Nitai das, Jayadev das with Sripad Puri Maharaj, Front: Gita-Govinda (Jayadev Prabhu's daughter) and Srngara mataji in the back row.

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)

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

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

DONATIONS
FOR PRINCETON BHAKTI VEDANTA INSTITUTE
<https://ipn.intuit.com/pay/BhaktivedantaInstitute>