

Sri Sri Guru Gaurangau Jayatah
Bhakti Vedanta Institute

Princeton University Harinama
Princeton, NJ April 6, 2013

*Harer Nama Harer Nama Harer Namaiva Kevalam Kalau
Nasty Eva Nasty Eva Nasty Eva Gatir Anyatha*

“In this Age of Kali there is no other means, no other means, no other means for self-realization than chanting the holy name, chanting the holy name, chanting the holy name of Lord Hari.”

Lead by Sripad Bhakti Madhava Puri Maharaja, Ph.D (Sripad Puri Maharaja), the New York devotees set out for Harinama, congregational chanting of the holy, all-auspicious and transcendental names of Sri Sri Radha Krsna and Sri Sri Gaura Nitai for the benefit of all at the beautiful Princeton University campus. Syamasundara das Prabhu on guitar began by paying obeisances “*nama om vishnu-padaya, krishna-preshthaya bhutale....*” to His Divine Grace Srila A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada (Srila Prabhupada)*, while Surottama das Prabhu played harmonica and Sripad Puri Maharj joined in on kartals. For the next hour Harinam continued while Srngara Mataji and I distributed our specially prepared pamphlets to an unusually crowded campus. Around 1:50 PM we headed back to the Bhakti Vedanta Institute office for sanga.



Surottama das Prabhu, Srngara Mataji with son Nitai das (showing us the foundation to his first tree house) and Syamasundara das Prabhu

Fear and suspicion are general characteristics of those in the world of exploitation, Sripad Puri Maharaj said as he began sanga. “People in general are more concerned with self-aggrandizement, competition with others and exploiting nature for their own purposes. With that kind of attitude there will be fear and suspicion.”

Then beyond that there is renunciation, self-abnegation and self-sacrifice, that leads to the “plane of bhakti (devotion). Bhakti is in the world of dedication.” Those who are on the plane of bhakti “are not afraid of material energy but rather want to know how to utilize it for its proper function - serving the Lord,” Sripad Puri Maharaja continued.

“Some believe they have to do everything as their duty,” as confirmed in *Srimad Bhagavat Gita*, 8.7:

*tasmāt sarveṣu kāleṣu
mām anusmara yudhya ca
mayy arpita-mano-buddhir*

“Therefore, Arjuna, you should always think of Me, and at the same time you should continue your prescribed duty and fight. With your mind and activities always fixed on Me, and everything engaged in Me, you will attain to Me without any doubt.”

Sripad Puri Maharaj quickly countered “but in Chapter 18 of the *Bhagavat Gita*, Krishna says to Arjuna to surrender to Him. In *Srimad Bhagavat Gita* 18.66, Sri Krishna says:

*sarva-dharmān parityajya
mām ekaṁ śaraṇaṁ vraja
ahaṁ tvām sarva-pāpēbhyo
mokṣayiṣyāmi mā śucaḥ*

“Abandon all varieties of religious duty and just surrender unto Me. I shall deliver you from all sinful reaction. Do not fear.”

“We have to go beyond *jnana* (knowledge) and even duty to reach *saranagati* (complete surrender), which is in the mode of humbly acting according to the Will of our Lord and Master. At this stage of self –forgetfulness we will then have learned how to go far beyond self-aggrandizement,” Sripad Puri Maharaja continued.

How do we teach humility? What does it mean to be humbler than a blade of grass? Grass has a capacity to produce its own biomass that even the greatest scientists in the world can not accomplish. Then why do we think of grass in such a disregarding way? These were some of the questions posed by Sripad Puri Maharaja. “If we can see the miracle that life is, the divine quality of what we call ‘Nature’ then we can begin to be more appreciative of it and recognize that the environment is something greater than myself...and that’s the key to extinguish the mode of exploitation.”

“Humility is essential to have if anyone wants to be Krishna conscious and it must come with some realization, some appreciation of divinity must be manifest,” Sripad Puri Maharaja continued. “People who are not humble will not surrender to Krishna or God -- not so easily.” This is confirmed in the Śrī Caitanya Caritāmṛta Madhya 22.100:

*ānukūlyasya saṅkalpaḥ
prātikūlyasya varjanam
rakṣiṣyatīti viśvāso
gopṛtve varaṇam tathā
ātma-nikṣepa-kārpaṇye
ṣaḍ-vidhā śaraṇāgatih*

“The six divisions of surrender are the acceptance of those things favorable to devotional service, the rejection of unfavorable things, the conviction that Kṛṣṇa will give protection, the acceptance of the Lord as one's guardian or master, full self-surrender, and humility.”

“The Bible says ‘Humble yourself that He may exalt you.’ What is the difference between what the Bible says and what we know from the Vedas?***” Surottama das Prabhu asked, how we can teach humility if we are not ourselves humble? “Merely being humble is not the goal either...that is not real humility. To consider oneself as servant of Guru and the Lord is real humility...and to act in that capacity according to the Will of the Lord.” Sripad Puri Maharaja responded. “Humility without surrender to God is not true humility. To surrender to Krishna means you can act in any capacity, even as a killer, like Arjuna. Why? Because Krishna said to do so and Arjuna acted because he’s a humble friend and servant of the Lord.”

The next quality is tolerance, which is described in the *Śikṣāṣṭakam* (3) where Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu speaks of one “who is more tolerant than a tree.” Explaining the deeper meaning of tolerance Sripad Puri Maharaja said, “We saw that level of tolerance in Lord Jesus Christ. He did not try to escape when they tortured him. Why? Because he was thinking it’s the Lord’s mercy. Tolerance means you should not be concerned with happiness or distress. They are two sides of the same coin.” Happiness is merely decreasing our store of good karma, and distress is decreasing our store of bad karma. He further explained that we achieve tolerance by “understanding that Krishna is behind everything.”

The third “attitude towards Reality” that Sripad Puri Maharaja tackled was honor. “Giving honor and not expecting honor in return may feel very discouraging. How to overcome that,” he asked. “By remembering that Krishna is there...in His name, Form and paraphernalia, by remembering that we are all parts and parcels of Krishna, remembering our relationship with Krishna and accepting that it is all His plan and purpose. It is not all for us. Krishna has to be the center of all and these saintly qualities will automatically come to our life,” Sripad Puri Maharaja continued. “*Kirtaniya Sada Hari*” If one has the proper attitude in life, he can chant properly and then gets

everything...there's no greater achievement for a living being. Krishna, Radha and the Gopis are all present in His Name. This is Mahaprabhu's process for spiritual life."

This is confirmed in Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu's *Śikṣāṣṭakam* 3:

*trnad api sunicena taror api sahisnuna
amanina manadena kirtaniya sada hari*

"One should chant the holy name of the Lord in a humble state of mind, thinking oneself lower than the straw on the street, being more tolerant than a tree and always ready to offer all respects to others. In such a state of mind one can chant the holy name of the Lord constantly."

After a brief pause, Sripad Puri Maharaja said, "These things are not taught in the Western education, yet they are so life changing."

At this point, *sanga* has moved to the question and answer session.

Kushum devi dasi asked, Why are tolerance, honor and humility not taught in the Western way of life? "It's taught in the monastic life but not to the general public because the general public is more concerned with exploitation," Sripad Puri Maharaja responded. "It's taught in Western religion that the goal is to go to heaven, which is another place to go and enjoy, whereas in the Vedic culture, heaven is just another place in the material world. But enjoyment and happiness merely decrease our good karma. It is not eternal."

Amit ji, Sripad Puri Maharaja's guest, asked, How do we awaken that love for God? "By the grace of Guru and Gauranga," Sripad Puri Maharaja answered. "By following the nine process of devotional services under the direction of Guru, as given by Prahlad Maharaja." According to the Śrīmad Bhāgavatam 7.5.23-24

*śrī-prahrāda uvāca
śravaṇaṁ kīrtanaṁ viṣṇoḥ
smaraṇaṁ pāda-sevanam
arcanaṁ vandanaṁ dāsyam
sakhyam ātma-nivedanam
iti puṁsārpitā viṣṇau
bhaktiś cen nava-lakṣaṇā
kriyeta bhagavaty addhā
tan manye 'dhītam uttamam*

"Prahlad Maharaja said 'Hearing and chanting about the transcendental holy name, form, qualities, paraphernalia and pastimes of Lord Viṣṇu, remembering them, serving the lotus feet of the Lord, offering the Lord respectful worship with sixteen types of paraphernalia, offering prayers to the Lord, becoming His servant, considering the Lord one's best friend, and surrendering everything unto Him."

Surottama das Prabhu asked, “If someone is pretending humility, how can they actually become humble?” It’s like someone pretending to be asleep. You can not wake them up...it is up to the individual to want to wake up,” Sripad Puri Maharaja responded.

If everything is illusion, or Maya, then how does the individual karma come into play, Sripad Puri Maharaja’s guest, Revant asked. “Maya, has two syllables, *ma* which mean ‘not’ and *ya* which means ‘that’. So technically it literally means ‘which is not that’, then what is *that*?” Sripad Puri Maharaja asked. “*Vasudevah sarvam iti* - Krishna says ‘I am everything.’”

*bahunam janmanam ante
jnanavan mam prapadyate
vasudevah sarvam iti
sa mahatma su-durlabhah
(Bhagavad-gita 7.19)*

“After many births and deaths, he who is actually in knowledge surrenders unto Me, knowing Me to be the cause of all causes and all that is. Such a great soul is very rare.”

So Maya does not mean that everything is merely an illusion, and therefore there is nothing at all. One must understand that the illusion is to mistaken one thing for another, it is to think that life is not connected with Krishna. Krishna is the absolute truth, and not to know and live in that truth is illusion.

As *sanga* starts to wind down, Sripad Puri Maharaja said that because of “*ahankar*, we think we are the doer when we are all servants of Krishna. Our position is to serve and everything is for His purpose.”

We then all relished prasadam and had kritan again.



L – R: Srngara Mataji, Revant, Sripad Bhakti Madhava Puri Maharaja, Prabhus: Syamasundara das, Surottama. Front Row: Guest: Amit ji with Nitai das.

At the lotus feet of Vaisnava, Guru and Gauranga

Your humble servant,

Kushum devi dasi

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- Founder-Acharya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON).
 - The Vedas (knowledge) are texts originating in ancient India. Composed in Sanskrit, the texts are the oldest scriptures of Vedic Culture, commonly known today as Hinduism.
 - *Bible, American Standard Version (1901)* states: “Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time.”