

# New York City Festival Report

Staten Island, New York: July 1, 2007

[The following report was written by Sripad Ramacandra dasa Adhikari, a senior disciple of Srila Narayana Maharaja, and president of Srila Narayana Maharaja's large New Delhi Temple. Jayasri dasi, a resident of New York and young disciple of Srila Narayana Maharaja, also contributed to the content:]

The New York City Bhakti-yoga Festival took place at the Staten Island Hindu Temple on July 1, 2007. During this beautiful one-day festival, about 300 devotees from all over the U.S. and other parts of the world (London, Guyana, Kazakhstan, India), came to hear from Srila Gurudeva. The program was held on what was supposed to be a rest day on his way to Germany, but because of his causeless mercy he decided to bestow his grace upon New York City.

Before Srila Gurudeva began his discourse on "The Essence of Srimad-Bhagavatam", he requested Sripad Ramacandra dasa to give an introductory talk. During his speech, Ramacandra dasa told the audience that wherever Srila Narayana Maharaja is present, the spiritual abode of Vrndavana and Navadvipa are also present.

After this, on behalf of the New York-New Jersey society of Srila Gurudeva's followers, Sripad Bhumipati dasa welcomed Srila Gurudeva to New York. Bhumipati dasa, a senior disciple of Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, noted that some of the members of the audience were disciples of Srila Prabhupada who knew him (Bhumipati) before he received the association of Srila Gurudeva. He told them that if they would all simply take a look at all of the nonsense he has shed from his life as a result of his association with Srila Gurudeva, they could see that Srila Gurudeva is not different from Srila Prabhupada himself.

Srila Gurudeva introduced his discourse by saying, "If a man is healthy, wealthy, and has a wonderful family, what is the use of doing bhajana to Krsna"? He then requested Sripad Dandi Maharaja to speak on the importance and necessity of devotion to Krsna (bhakti), after which he began his own talk.

Srila Gurudeva began his discourse by first offering his humble obeisance unto the lotus feet of his own Gurudeva, His Divine Grace Srila Bhakti Prajnana Kesava Gosvami Maharaja, and to his siksa-guru, His Divine Grace Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada. He further glorified Srila Swami Maharaja, and told the audience that by his Gurudeva's mercy and especially by the mercy of Srila Bhaktivedanta Swami Maharaja, he is now on his 26<sup>th</sup> world preaching tour. He said that Srila Swami Maharaja performed a miracle by opening temples all over the world – even on mountains, in the midst of oceans, and in the forests.

He said that Srila Swami Maharaja was his bosom friend, and that he has served Srila Swami Maharaja since 1946. He added that Srila Swami Maharaja called him in his last days and, with loving tears in his eyes, requested him to take care of his disciples in the future. He also requested him to give his Samadhi.

Srila Gurudeva also mentioned that Srila Swami Maharaja has written over 100 translations and commentaries of the books of previous acaryas, and that these books are now printed in many languages throughout the world.

Srila Gurudeva said that for our real benefit we should take shelter of Srimad-Bhagatavam, wherein it is stated that eighty-eight thousand sages assembled at Naimisaranya and prayed to Srila Suta Gosvami: “You are the disciple of Srila Sukadeva Gosvami. Please tell us what one should do in order to make his soul happy, and please tell us the essence of all scriptures.” They did not ask how the body can be happy.

We think that we are this physical body, but actually this body is a bag of blood, stool, urine and many similar things. We are not this body. One day we must become old, and one day we have to give up this body. Whatever we are collecting in this world, like wife or husband, children, money, or anything else – nothing will go with us. If we cannot take anything from this world, why are we working so hard from morning till evening like donkeys?

So, the sages asked about the soul’s happiness, and Srila Suta Gosvami replied:

sa vai pumsam paro dharmo  
yato bhaktir adhoksaje  
ahaituky apratihata  
yayatma suprasidati

[“The supreme occupation (dharma) for all humanity is that by which men can attain to loving devotional service unto the transcendent Lord. Such devotional service must be unmotivated and uninterrupted to completely satisfy the self”].

The natural dharma of all living entities is selfless and perpetual devotional service (bhakti) to Sri Krishna, Adhoksaja (He who is beyond material sense perception). Only then will the soul be pleased. God is one without second, and bhakti is the real religion. Although we practice bhakti with our senses, it is the religion of the soul. In this human form of life, if we do not realize the relationship between the soul and the Supersoul, our life goes in vain. Srila Rupa Gosvami, one of the most intimate associates of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, has given the perfect definition of pure bhakti:

anyabhilasita-sunyam, jnana-karmady-ana vrtam  
anukulyena krsnanu-silanam bhaktir uttama

[“Uttama bhakti is the cultivation of activities that are meant exclusively for the benefit of Sri Krsna, in other words, the uninterrupted flow of service to Him, performed through

all endeavors of the body, mind, and speech, and through the expression of various spiritual sentiments (bhavas). It is not covered by jnana (knowledge aimed at impersonal liberation) and karma (reward-seeking activity), yoga or austerities; and it is completely free from all desires other than the aspiration to bring happiness to Krsna." (Sri Bhakti-rasamrta-sindhu 1.1.11)]

Srila Gurudeva requested Sripad Madhava Maharaja to discuss this verse, and then he personally explained it further. He said that all people in this world want to be happy, and they have made a combined effort for this purpose. They have created United Nations for world peace, but this endeavor was of no use. No one wants suffering, but suffering comes. We do not know the real method of attaining happiness.

In Kali-yuga, this present age of quarrel and hypocrisy, life is very short. At most one lives for one hundred years. Most of this life is wasted in sleeping, eating, making a career, maintaining a wife or husband and children, and fighting diseases. Even many followers of all religions, like Christianity and Islam, talk about how to live in this world.

Our material advancement seems quite marvelous and wonderful. Technology has become so advanced that it seems that the entire world has come within the palm of our hand; that is, we can communicate with anyone, anywhere, in a moment, or fly anywhere in a matter of hours. Nowadays all material conveniences are just a 'button-push away from us'; they are available simply by pushing a few buttons. And medical science can even transplant our hearts.

But what is the effect of this wonderful material advancement? It has increased the lust and hunger of the body, and it has decreased the appetite of the soul - love. In general, no one even knows who lives in one's neighborhood.

The inventions of science could not find the soul and the creator of the soul. Many scientists and others say that the world is created from nothing, and this is also the theory of Buddhism. But 'nothing comes from nothing'. There is a Creator and He has a very beautiful form. He is infinite and His creation is infinite. If we subtract infinity from infinity, infinity remains.

The Supreme Personality has a human-like form. The Bible states, "God created man after His own image," and the Koran states: "Ina laha kalaka mensuratihi – Allah or Khuda has a form, and from that form He has created man." There is only one God, and He is called by different names according to geography. G-O-D. He is the Supreme Personality. He is the Supreme Generator, Operator, and Destroyer.

Lord Sri Krsna has mercifully given us this human body, by which we can attain the highest goal of life: love for Krsna.

labdhva su-durlabham idam bahu-sambhavante  
manusyam artha-dam anityam apiha dhirah  
turnam yateta na pated anu-mrtyu yavan

nihsreyasaya visayah khalu sarvatah syat

[After many, many births and deaths one achieves the rare human form of life, which, although temporary, affords one the opportunity to attain the highest perfection. Thus a sober human being should quickly endeavor for the ultimate perfection of life as long as his body, which is always subject to death, has not fallen down and died. After all, sense gratification is available even in the most abominable species of life, whereas Krsna consciousness is possible only for a human being. (Srimad-Bhagavatam, 11.9.39)]

Even demigods want to obtain the human life to understand the soul and the Supersoul. This world is not ours; we are refugees here. We have forgotten Sri Krsna, and therefore we are in this world as refugees.

We must take shelter of a bona fide spiritual master in order to attain love for Krsna. The spiritual master must be well-versed in the essence of all the scriptures, he must be expert in clearing the doubts of his disciples, he must have realized God, and he must be totally detached from the material world. Such a spiritual master can give us the realization that we are eternal servants of Krsna and that we are not of this world.

To attain pure bhakti, one must refrain from meat eating. The word MEAT is made up of ME + EAT, which means, "If you eat me, I will eat you in your next birth." In Hindi, meat is 'mam-sah', which means the same. If we kill someone, he will take revenge.

Chanting the holy names of Sri Krsna (harinama) is most powerful, especially when it is given by the bona fide Guru. We must therefore take shelter of Sri Guru and harinama. Krsna has invested all His power and attributes in His holy name, so chant the holy names continually and be happy forever.

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