

ANANDA RASA RATNAKAR

Selections from Talks and Writings of
MAHARAJSHREE SWAMI AKHANDANANDA SARASWATI
Volume 3



Compiled by
GOVINDANANDA SARASWATI

English rendering by G. Kameshwar

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PARAMPUJYA MAHARAJSHREE
SWAMI AKHANDANANDA SARASWATI

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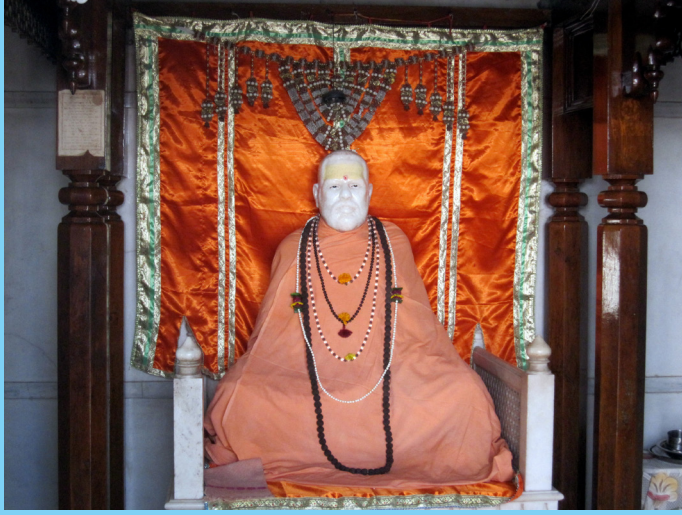
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ॐ



सम्भोगे विप्रलम्भे निरुभयमभयं भाति भूपो रसानां,
विक्षेपे वा समाधौ विहरणनिपुणा ब्रह्मविद्यैव नूनम् ।
इत्थं लोकैरशोकैरनुपदमधिकं भाव्यमानोऽवधूतः,
श्रीपूर्णानन्दतीर्थः पथि पथि पथिकान् नन्दयन् बभ्रमीति ॥३॥

Fearless, Resplendent,

As the King

Of Aesthetics-essence-sentiments

Who is, both,

Apart from,

As well as pervading,

The *rasa*

Of Union, as well, as separation

(from the Divine Beloved) ;

Adept in rambling delightfully

In the state of

Stillness-Absorption (Samadhi)

Or in the state of

Movement-Dispersion (Vikshepa);

Surely

(He is the manifestation of)

Brahmavidya,

(The Knowledge Supreme)!

In this manner,

People, ever so many,

In Chorus,

Are proclaiming, in wonder,

“Oh! Is he an Avadhoota

(A renunciate supreme) ?”

Shri Poornanandateertha (who is such)

Walks from road to road

Delighting

All wayfarers (of the spiritual path)!

Sri Poornananda Teertha Stava, Verse 3

Swami Akhandananda Saraswati

वृष्णात् परं किमपि
तत्त्वमहं न जाने ।
ऊर्वकण्डाब्दे



**Parampujya Maharajshree
Swami Akhandananda Saraswati-j Maharaj**

Maharajshree : A brief sketch

Maharajshree Swami Akhandananda Saraswati was born in Vikram Samvat 1968, on the new moon day of the month of Shravana, in the asterism of Pushya – which corresponds to the Western calendar date of 25th of July, 1911 CE. He was born in a Sarayupaareen Brahmana family living near the banks of river Ganga in a village of name Mahraai, in the region of Varanasi, the holiest place in Bharatavarsha.

His birth was exactly nine months after his paternal grandfather had prayed to Lord Thakur Shantanu Vihari of Vraj, asking the Lord to bless the family with a son. In gratitude, the child was given the name of the Lord, Shantanu-Vihaari.

When his horoscope was cast, the leading astrologers of the day declared that Maharajshree would live only for 19 years. As a consequence, the fear of death drove young Shantanu to the path of spirituality. All the sages and saints that he met told him clearly that they could not tell him how to escape from death, for death comes as preordained by Prarabdha Karma; but they could give him that 'Jnana' (knowledge), by which the fear of death would cease, once and for all. And that is exactly what happened. Deathless Brahman revealed itself in the heart of Maharajshree, by which the dark shadow of death fled far away, for all time to come.

On one occasion, Maharajshree went to Jhusi in Prayag-raj to meet the celebrated saint Sri Prabhudutt Brahmachari. It was here that Maharajshree first met the Supreme-sage Sri Udiya Babaji Maharaj, and he received many clarifications from Baba on questions related to Vedanta. Seeing the steady, non-dual, Self-abidance of Baba, and the unique bliss of his Jeevanmukti, Maharajshree became quite spellbound. Right from the first meeting, he was blessed with Baba's love and affection. Maharajshree's taking up Sanyaas was at the inner prompting of Baba, and he received the vows of renunciation from Jyotish-Peethadheeshwar Jagadguru Shankaracharya Swami Shri Brahmananda Saraswati. Prior to his taking Sanyas, he served for seven years in the editorial board of 'Kalyan' magazine, published by Gita Press, Gorakhpur.

He was first introduced to the study of Srimad Bhagavatam at the tender age of ten by his paternal grandfather. And from that time onwards, right until the end of his earthly sojourn, Srimad Bhagavatam

remained with him as a companion in the manner of a 'heart friend'. His daily Satsang, which was a sharing of the revelry springing from his inner bliss, carried on without break till the evening Satsang of 17th November, 1987. Devotees of Satsang heartily partake the ambrosia of his words even to this day, by means of his books, audio and video recordings.

At 2 AM, Brahmanuhurtha time of 19th November, 1987, corresponding to the thirteenth day of the dark fortnight of the month of Margasheersha, the individual life-force of Maharajshree merged in the Cosmic life-force of Creation, and He became all-pervading.

It was clearly seen in the life of Maharajshree that he had the same love for all people; irrespective of sect or belief, or whether the person was a dunce or a scholar, a woman or man, a young boy or an aged person, poor or wealthy. Whatever desire a person approached Maharajshree with, the person achieved that. Right to the very end, Maharajshree freely handed out all four Purushartha-s (the four objects of human pursuit – viz., Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha), as well as the fifth Purushartha – namely, Bhakti.

The Ananda-Vrindavan Ashram established by Maharajshree in Sri Brindavan Dham, is equivalent to Teertharaj Prayag, the King of the holy river confluences; for here, there is the convergence of Karma, Bhakti and Jnana. The Ashram activities include regular Satsang, service to God-Supreme, service to cows, service to Sanyasis, the study of Shastras in the Veda Vidyalaya, free medical clinic etc. In addition, the tradition of celebrating the birth anniversaries of all the great Acharyas, which was started by Maharajshree and continues to this day, shines as something quite amazing from the point of view of cultural synthesis. Indeed, it is a standout example of the broadmindedness of Maharajshree.

Glory to Maharajshree!



श्रीहरिः

श्रीगणेशाय नमः



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पूज्यपाद मान्यश्री स्वामी अखण्डानन्दसरस्वती - महाभाग विद्वान् और विनम्र मनीषी थे। 'भगवत्कृपासे मुझे सन् १९७२ से १७ नवम्बर १९८७ पर्यन्त उनका सान्निध्य सुलभ हुआ है। इस अवधिमें उनके वचनामृतका मैंने आस्था और अपनत्वपूर्वक आस्वादन किया है। उनकी सरस तथा सरल प्रवचनशैली अवश्य ही अद्भुत थी। वे 'नारायण' - इस भगवन्नामका उच्चारणपूर्वक ही सम्भाषण करते थे। उनके प्रश्नोत्तरकी शैली भी मनोरम थी। अध्यात्मके सुगूढ भावोंको भी सुगम और सरसशैलीमें प्रस्तुत करनेकी कला उनमें स्वभावसिद्ध थी। सन्तों तथा विद्वानोंको वे सम्मान देते थे। वे जहाँ श्रीवल्लभादि - वैष्णवाचार्योंके सिद्धान्तको स्वपक्षको हृदयङ्गम करनेमें उत्तम सोपान मानते थे; वहाँ कश्मीरी शैवदर्शनमें सन्निहित स्पन्दतत्त्वके भी प्रशंसक थे। वे साधकोंको मन्त्रजपके प्रति आस्थान्वित करनेमें दक्ष थे। वे आवश्यकतानुसार व्यवहारकी चर्चा भी अध्यात्मकी चासनीमें पागकर ही करते थे। उनका वचनामृत श्रवणसुखद और मनको विश्राम देनेवाला था।

श्रीभगवत्पाद शङ्कराचार्य - महाभागके द्वारा उद्भासित सिद्धान्तके सम्बन्धमें पूज्यपाद स्वामी श्री अखण्डानन्दसरस्वती - महाभाग कहा करते थे कि विविध दर्शनोंमें औपनिषद - सिद्धान्तको पूर्वपक्ष अथवा उत्तरपक्षके रूपमें जिस प्रकार ख्यापित किया गया है; उसीको श्रीशङ्कराचार्यने युक्ति तथा अनुभूतिसहित सैद्धान्तिक धरातलपर उद्भासित किया है। अतः परम्पराप्राप्त औपनिषदसिद्धान्तका वही स्वरूप ग्राह्य है, जिसे भगवत्पादने ख्यापित किया है। श्रीवैष्णवाचार्योंने ईशादि - उपनिषदोंपर भाष्य न लिखकर मानो मौनरूपसे उसे स्वीकार कर लिया है।

श्री स्वामीजीके प्रवचनोंका स्वान्तःसुखाय आस्था और दक्षतापूर्वक सङ्कलनकर उसे सर्वजनसुखाय 'आनन्दरस- रत्नाकर' - नामसे प्रकाशित कर एवं उसके इंग्लिश - अनुवादके संयोजन तथा पत्रिकाके माध्यमसे क्रमशः प्रकाशनका मार्ग प्रशस्तकर डॉ. श्री स्वामी गोविन्दानन्दसरस्वतीजी ने हमें प्रमुदित किया है।

निश्चलानन्द सरस्वती

स्वामी निश्चलानन्दसरस्वती

श्रीमज्जगद्गुरु - शङ्कराचार्य - पुरीपीठ

११.१२.२०२०



**Shree Govardhan Math Puri Peethadheeshwar
Parampujya Jagadguru Shankaracharya
Swami Sri Nischalananda Saraswati-ji Maharaj**

Shree Hari Prostrations to Shree Ganesha

Pujyapaada Maanyashree Swami Akhandananda Saraswati Mahabhaaga, was a great scholar and sage, endowed with great humility, gentleness. By the grace of God, I was blessed with his proximity from 1972 CE to 17, November, 1987 CE. During this period, I have, with deep faith and a sense of personal belonging, greatly relished his *vachanaamrita* (the ambrosia of his words). His nectarous and simple style of speaking was indeed wonderful. He would always start his speeches by first voicing Bhagavans Name – ‘**Narayan**’. His manner of answering questions was captivating too. His style of communicating even the most intricate, subtle, points of Adhyatma-Vidya in a nectarous, easy to understand way, was something that came naturally to him. He held sages and scholars in great honour. While he considered the Siddhanta (doctrine) of Vaishnavacharyas like Shri Vallabha as being an excellent ladder for getting to a good understanding of one’s own philosophy, he was also all praise for the *spanda-tattva* (principle of pulsation) embedded in the philosophy of Kashmir Shaivism. In enabling Sadhaka-s to develop a firm faith in *mantra-japa*, he was an adept. He would engage in discussions on worldly matters when necessary, but only after soaking these in the syrup of Adhyatma-Vidya. His *vachanaamrita* was joy to the ears, and gave tranquility to the mind.

As regards the Siddhanta that has been brought to light by Shree Bhagavatpada Shankaracharya Mahaabhaaga, Shree Akhandananda Saraswati used to say – ‘The Upanishad Siddhanta that has been declared in the *purvapaksha* (prima-facie argument) and *uttarapaksha* (refutation of the prima-facie argument) in different works of philosophy; these very doctrines have been illumined by Shankaracharya in the landscape of Siddhanta, with clear logic, and based on his profound personal experience. Therefore, only that interpretation of traditionally handed-down Upanishad Siddhanta is to be considered valid, which has been espoused by Bhagavatpada Shankara. The Vaishnava Acharyas, by not writing any commentary on Isha and other Upanishads, have tacitly accepted this.’

Doctor Swami Shree Govindananda Saraswati Ji has, with great faith and skill, collated a selection of discourses of Shree Swami Akhandananda Saraswati for his own inner joy, published them as a book titled as 'Ananda Rasa Ratnakar' (in Hindi language); and has now organized the translation and publication of this in English. By this, he has given us great happiness.

Sd/-

Swami Nischalananda Saraswati
Shrimad-Jagadguru-Shankaracharya,
Govardhan Peeth, Puri
11-December-2020



A humble submission

कथायां पीयूषं प्रवचनकलायां च पटुता।
सुलेखे लालित्यं लसति किल यस्य क्षितितले।
स्मरामि प्रातस्तं भवजलधिभीतैकशरणं
अखण्डानन्दं श्रीगुरुवरमहं ब्रह्म परमम् ॥

(रचयिता : श्री ओंकारदत्त शास्त्री)

He whose

Nectarous quality, in story-telling;

Excellence, in the art of discourse;

Charm, in good writing;

Shines supreme on earth;

He

Who is the sole refuge

Of those who are seized by the fear

Of the ocean of transmigration;

Him

The best of Guru-s, Supreme Brahman

Shree Akhandananda

I contemplate in my mind

First thing, in the waking-up moment of early morn.

(Composed by Shree Omkardutt Shastri)

Some year ago, during the course of my daily studies, I was greatly drawn by a particular essay of Pujya Maharajshree, of title 'Sadhana ki anivaaryataa', which was a part of the book 'Bhakti Sarvasva'. I wrote down the important points of this essay in a separate notebook, for the purposes of my contemplation/meditation.

Thereafter, I continued this as a regular practice. Every week, for my own sake, I began putting together a page of material for contemplation/meditation, extracted from different books authored by Pujya Maharajshree.

During my sojourn in South India, I had the good fortune of coming across the book “*Shree Brahmachaitanya Maharaj Gondavalekar Pravachan*”. This book was a collection of *pravachan* (discourses) of the sage, meant for daily reading. The book was so arranged that there was one page of discourse for each of the 366 days of the year. Upon seeing this, there arose this desire in my mind that a similar collection could be made, of discourses of Maharajshree. The thought was to see if this could be done as a part of the ‘Birth Centenary Smrti’ – as a Satsang-blessing of Maharajshree himself, meant for daily reading by spiritual seekers.

In this manner, the weekly page compilation that I began in 2003, selecting material from different books of Maharajshree, was completed sometime in the beginning of 2010 CE, ahead of the birth centenary of Maharajshree. This collection of 366 pages, extracted from over 80 different books of Maharajshree, was first put together as ‘*Janm Shatabdhi Smaarikaa*’ (A Birth Centenary Remembrance), and then took the form of the book ‘**Ananda Rasa Ratnakar**’.

By the Grace of Pujya Maharajshree, the book was well received by learned readers. However, there also arose a request for an English translation for the benefit of those who do not know Hindi, and this request was persistently voiced.

For me it is a matter of pride that my close friend, Sri Kameshwar, in response to my gentle request, took this task upon himself, and now, the ‘First Volume’ is in your hands.

It is to be noted that Sri Kameshwar has been serving the cause of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi literature for the last many years. Among Sri Kameshwar’s writings, the most peerless offering is one that was released recently; a book titled – “*Essence of the Vedas – ‘Upadesha Saarah’ of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi, with ‘Tattvabodhini’ commentary in Sanskrit by Atmavidyabhushanam Sri Jagadeeshwara Shastri – English translation and notes – G Kameshwar*”.

The English translation of ‘Ananda Rasa Ratnakar’ comes across as a lucid and accurate rendering. You would yourself say this after perusal of the book.

To our greatest happiness, for this ‘Volume 1’ of the book, we have received the Srimukha, most auspicious words of benediction, from **Poorvamnaya Shree Govardhan Math Puri Peethadheeshwar Shrimat Jagadguru Shankaracharya Shree Swami Nischalananda Saraswati-ji Maharaj**. Our countless prostrations to Maharaj-ji.

Auspicious best-wishes for this publication have also been received from Shree Swami Sacchidanandaji and Shree Swami Shravananandaji.

Shri Alay and Shrimati Shilpi Shah (Vadodara) have offered the Seva for publication of all four volumes of this book, in memory of their parents, (Late) Shri Jitubhai and (Late) Shrimati Suhasiniben Shah, who were ardent disciples of Puja Maharajshree. May Puja Maharajshree’s blessings be with them always.

Our great appreciation for the beautiful printing carried out by Sri Rajeev Batra and Sri Ashish Batra.

Lastly, I humbly request learned readers to please let us know any errors that they notice in this edition, so that these may be rectified in the next edition.

Vrindavan
Mahashivaratri, 2021

With humble Pranams
Resorting to the lotus feet of Shri Guru,
Govindananda Saraswati

A brief note on Volume 3

The first volume of the four-volume series of English translation of ‘Ananda Rasa Ratnakar’ was released on 12th of July, 2021 – during the birth-centenary celebrations of Adi Mahant Ji Swami Omkaranand Saraswati Ji Maharaj of our Ananada Vrindavan Ashram. The second volume was released on Sanyas Jayanti Mahotsav of Parampujya Maharajshree Swami Shri Akhandananda Saraswati Ji on 12th of February, 2022. And now, by the boundless compassion of Parampujya Maharajshree, the third volume is being released during the 35th Aradhana Mahotsava of Maharajshree, in November 2022.

As in the previous two volumes, this volume too has a set of discourses that have been selected so as to be of benefit to all seekers, whether it be lay people or advanced Sadhaka-s. The common man will find teachings that will guide him in his conduct of day-to-day life. And the serious Sadhaka-s who are floundering in the whirlpools of bhava-saagara, will find a boat to cross over the ocean of birth and death; with the helmsman being Parampujya Maharajshree Himself!

My friend Sri G Kameshwar, who has translated the book to English, has written an insightful introduction to this third volume of Ananda Rasa Ratnakar. I request the learned readers to go through that, using it as a portal to enter the main treatise.

May the blessings of Parampujya Maharajshree be on one and all!

Vrindavan
Deepavali
24th October, 2022

With humble Pranams
Resorting to the lotus feet of Shri Guru,
Govindananda Saraswati



Translator's Note

An Introduction to Volume 3

Krishna! Krishna! Krishna!

As one delves into the discourses of Maharajshree in this volume of Ananda Rasa Ratnakar (ARR), one is reminded of the 'Presence' of Sri Krishna as experienced and sung by Sadashiva Brahmendra, a Supreme Paramahansa Avadhuta sage of 18th century Tamil Nadu.

गायति वनमाली
मधुरं गायति वनमाली,
गायति वनमाली...

*Sings Sri Krishna,
Wearing a garland of Vrindavana forest-flowers;
Sings He, Sri Krishna, so melodiously...*

पुष्प-सुगन्ध-सुमलय-समीरे
मुनिजन-सेवित-यमुना-तीरे
गायति वनमाली...

*With the good south-breeze bringing the fragrance of flowers
adorning Him;
Being worshipped by sages in the banks of Yamuna River;
Sings He, Sri Krishna, so melodiously...*

कूजित-शुक-पिक-खगमुख-कुञ्जे
कुटिलालक-बहुनीरद-पुञ्जे
गायति वनमाली...

*In the shade of trees, ringing with songs from the beaks of birds
Shuka (parrot faced Shuka the narrator of Srimad Bhagavatam)
and koels;
His curly locks resembling a cluster of thick rain-clouds;
Sings He, Sri Krishna, so melodiously...*

परमहंस-हृदयोत्सवकारी
परिपूरित-मुरलीरव-धारी
गायति वनमाली...

*He who creates a great festival in the hearts of Paramahamsa-s;
He, who wears the all-filling sounds of the song of the flute;
Sings He, Sri Krishna, on the flute, so melodiously....*

This song, and especially the last verse and the words ‘*paramahamsa hr^idayotsava-kArI*’, brings to mind the living presence of Maharajshree, who was ever absorbed in the great festival of Sri Krishna that was taking place eternally in His heart. Indeed, this third volume of Ananda Rasa Ratnakar (ARR), as is the case with the other volumes, is but the bliss of that Ananda-Vrindavana, presented in book form. As a curtain raiser to this festival of Sri Krishna, let us savour a few selections from this volume of ARR. Come! Maharajshree invites us to tune in to the call of Krishna’s flute and follow the path of the Gopika-s....

ब्रजस्त्रियः कृष्णगृहीतमानसाः - ‘*vrajastriyaH krishNagRiheetamAnasAH*’ – *the women of vraja – their minds seized by Krishna....*)¹... Krishna seized the Gopika-s’ minds by means of ‘sound’. Without laying a finger on the Gopika-s, he stole their heart and mind by playing the flute! The flute-sound, thus, emerged as the greatest of thieves! Their minds having been seized by the sounds of Krishna’s flute, the Gopika-s just dropped everything and ran, as if to get their valuable property back. The minds of the Gopika-s were treasuries of many invaluable things, and it was based on the strength of these priceless things that they had been able to stay apart from Krishna. Courage, forbearance, self-control, mindfulness, memory, discernment, shyness, fear, intelligence – all these were gems locked in the treasure-chest of their minds. That mind was stolen, lock, stock and barrel, by the sound of Sri Krishna’s flute. (ARR July 13)

Bhakta-s (devotees of God) should feel happy that *bhakti* has a uniqueness that *tattva-jnAna* (Knowledge of Absolute Reality) does not

1 Srimad Bhagavatam 10.29.4

have. Yes, *tattva-jnAna* frees one from the fetters of birth-death, hell-heaven; but it leaves the current life untouched, letting it proceed as per one's *prArabdha-karma* (predestiny). Whereas, this Mukunda who is at the heart of one's *bhakti*, He just breaks all the fetters of life. Mukunda broke all the chains of Gopika-s. He freed them from the bonds of family and clan; freed them from restrictions of *dharma* and tradition; freed them from their spouses and families – they had no worries about anything of the world. (ARR Sep 19)

So, one needs to connect oneself to Krishna. The 'way of divine love' is very unique. In this, there is no lowliness or servitude; no need to die (i.e., it is not something to be attained after death; you can attain it here and now). Look, come and see for yourself! Come and give your mind to this! And then see whether the world holds any fascination for you anymore! (ARR Aug 25)

अरे विश्व ! मुझे लुभाने का करता है व्यर्थ प्रयास ।
 नहीं जानता मेरे उरमें, दीख रहा प्रियका मृदुहास ।
 भले फूट जाए यह आँखें, पर लखेंगी न तेरी ओर ।
 देख-देख यह नृत्य कर रहा है, मेरा प्यारा नन्दकिशोर !

*O World! Why do you waste your effort
 in trying to entice me!
 You know not that in my heart is seen
 the gentle smile of the loved One!
 Even if it be that these eyes burst,
 in your direction they will not look!
 Look! Look! He is dancing!
 My beloved Nand Kishore!*

Your heart is Vrindavana. You yourself are Nanda and Yashoda. Your mind-movements are the Gopika-s. And there, amidst them, now seen, now unseen, now dancing, now laughing, now speaking, now lying down, now bent, now straight, *sacchidaanandaghana* (the fullness of Being, Consciousness, Bliss), Nanda-nandana (delight of Nandababa), is smiling softly and dancing in your heart! (ARR Aug 13)

Sri Krishna says – 'This body of mine that you are seeing now, is

neither *tamas*, nor an outcome of it; nor is it *rajas*, nor its outcome; nor is it *sattva*, nor its outcome. It is neither *vishwa*, nor *taijasa*, nor *prAjna*. Indeed, this very form of mine that you see, is what is *nirguNa*.¹

The *prAkrut* form (which is of the world); the physical form, made up of five elements of nature, is what is negated (by the term *nirAkAra*). Whereas, this form of mine, not being *prAkrut*, is spoken of as *nirAkAra*. As a matter of fact, it is this very form of mine that is known as *nirguNa-nirAkAra*. (ARR Sep 26)

Krishna says, ‘*why don’t you begin calling out my Name, now and then?*’ People find much joy in *bhOga* (worldly enjoyments). God says, ‘*come to me! I shall give you much more joy than what you get by bhOga!*’ And if people say that they would like to do acts of *dharma*, for *dharma* begets great purity of heart; Bhagavan says – ‘*come to me. I shall give you even greater purity!*’ And if they say – ‘*shravaNa, manana*² gives great knowledge’; Bhagavan says, ‘Come to me! Just see the kind of knowledge that I will give you! *rasAtmaka jnAna* (Knowledge filled with *rasa*).’ (ARR Aug 25)

In your heart, light the flame of the Name. In your heart, play the melody of the Name on the flute; feel the soft-soft touch of the Name; let the fragrance of the Name spread around; look within your heart, as to what *rasa* (taste) the Name is handing out. If you wish to sip the honey of *brahman* (Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute), chant the Name of God. Till today, no saint, no Mahatma, no sage has been born, who has not taken resort to the Name. (ARR Aug 22)

Just as all forms are Bhagavan, all Names are of Bhagavan too... This is the *siddhAnta* (the settled truth). (ARR Aug 23)

प्रविष्टः कर्णरन्ध्रेण स्वानां भावसरोरुहम् ।
धुनोति शमलं कृष्णः सलिलस्य यथा शरत् ॥

When one, thus, through one’s ears receives the sounds [of the Bhâgavatam], the lotus flower of one’s loving relationship with Krishna will wash away all impurities, the same way the autumnal rain cleanses the water of the pools. (ARR Aug 24)

2 *shravaNa: Listening to and understanding the traditional teachings of Vedanta, in the traditional manner, from a traditional Guru.*

manana: Constant thinking, reflection, on the teachings of Vedanta

तस्मात् केनाप्युपायेन मनः कृष्णे निवेशयेत् ।

Therefore, by one means or another, the mind should be fixed on Krishna!

[Srimad Bhagavatam 7.1.32]

Take action – do *japa* (recitation of mantra), *tapa* (meditation), *vrata* (fasting), *pUjA* (worship), *satsang* (spiritual association); whatever be the path taken, the mind should get fixed on Bhagavan alone. (ARR Aug 12)

There is a saying in our village – छिगुनी पकड़के पहुँचा पकड़ लिया – ‘*He caught hold of the finger first and thereafter grabbed the whole hand!*’

This Bhagavan Krishna, this Cowherd Boy! His hand has a very firm hold! Once He catches you, He will not let go! (ARR Aug 24)

Prostrations to Maharajshree! Prostrations to Bihari Ji! Prostrations to the dust of Vrindavan and the waters of Yamuna-Kalindi!

Signing off with the opening line of another song of the Avadhuta sage, Sadashiva Brahmendra :

ब्रूहि मुकुन्देति! रसने! ब्रूहि मुकुन्देति!

Chant the name ‘Mukunda’! O my tongue! Chant the name ‘Mukunda’!

With humble Pranams,

Kameshwar

Chennai

Skanda Shashti, 30-Oct-2022

Approach to Transliteration

To give the reader a better appreciation of the pronunciation of some of the key Sanskrit/Hindi terms that have been used in the original, an attempt has been to transliterate these, and render in italics. The transliteration schema is adapted from the Harvard-Kyoto (HK) convention¹, as follows:

a	A	i	I	u	U	R	RR						
अ	आ	इ	ई	उ	ऊ	ऋ	ॠ						
lR	lRR		e	ai	O	au	M	H					
लृ	लृ		ए	ऐ	ओ	औ	अं	अः					
k	kh	g	gh	G	c	ch	j	jh	J				
क	ख	ग	घ	ङ	च	छ	ज	झ	ञ				
T	Th	D	Dh	N	t	th	d	dh	n				
ट	ठ	ड	ढ	ण	त	थ	द	ध	न				
p	ph	b	bh	m	y	r	l	v	z	S	s	h	
प	फ	ब	भ	म	य	र	ल	व	श	ष	स	ह	

Some freedom has been taken with the above, to make it easier for a normal English reading. For instance:

‘ee’ has been used instead of ‘I’ in a few places (as in *‘jeeva’* instead of *‘jIva’*).

‘aa’ may have been used instead of ‘A’ (as in *‘paramaārtha’* instead of *‘paramArtha’*)

‘v’ used interchangeably with ‘w’ (*‘Ishvara’* or *‘Ishwara’*)

‘jn’ has been used in place of ‘jI’ (as in *‘jnAna’* instead of *‘jIAna’*).

‘m’ or ‘n’ used in place of ‘G’ (as in *‘ahamkAra’* or *‘ahankAra’* instead of *‘ahaGkAra’*)

‘sh’ may have been used in place of ‘z’ or ‘S’ (as in *‘vishNu’*, *‘gaNesha’*, *‘paramEshvara’* instead of *‘viSNu’*, *‘ganeza’*, *‘paramezvara’* respectively)...

‘oo’ may have been instead of ‘U’ (e.g., *‘roop’* instead of *‘rUp’*)

However, transliteration may not have been done for every Sanskrit/Hindi term. For eg, common words like Veda, Atma, Paramatma, Ishvara, Karma, Upasana, Jnana, Avidya etc, may not have been transliterated.

1 For details refer <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harvard-Kyoto>

वृष्णात् परं किमपि
तत्त्वमहं न जाने ।
ऊर्ध्वपडाब्दे

ANANDA RASA RATNAKAR



Bhagavan Sri Nritya Gopal Ji
Anand Vrindavan

बृष्णात् परं किमपि
तत्त्वमहं न जाने ।
ऊर्कवत्ता ॥ १ ॥

Samarth Swamishree Yoganandapuri

Not far from my village, some five miles away, is a village named Sahepur. Swami Yogananda Ji resided there, and spent his time in *svAdhyAya*, *japa*, *pUja*, *dhyAna*, *chintana* (studies, mantra-repetition, worship, meditation, deep contemplation). Swamishree Yogananda's Guru was Shree Swami Nityanandaji, whose Guru was Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa.

Under Swami Yogananda's guidance, I completed a *purashcharaNa*¹ of Gayatri mantra. Swamiji was very pleased with this. Thereafter, he initiated me into a Sri-Krishna mantra. I carried on with the repetition of the mantra faithfully, in the prescribed Shastric manner. Swamiji's directive was that in Kaliyuga, one should do four times the prescribed number of *mantra-japa* to attain the desired results. During the course of my spiritual practice, whenever I became depressed, downhearted, and sorrow-stricken, Swamiji would compassionately enthuse me – 'कैव्यं मा स्म गमः – *Yield not to impotence! Do you feel no success at all in your practice? Hark! The dense darkness of the night of rigorous practice is about to come to an end! Be not under the impression that this darkness is imperishable. Just a few hours of darkness remain. Sun will rise. The heart-lotus will blossom.*'

Once, Swamiji had gone to Karnavaasa for observing the annual *chaturmAsya vrata*². I too went there, along with him. When I was undertaking my spiritual practice, I started to get the feeling that my family members were very worried about me. I conveyed this to Swamiji. Swamiji advised me that all such thoughts were obstacles to one's spiritual practice. He said – "*When the seeker gets close to attaining success in his spiritual endeavour, then the dEvatA-s (deities) start putting up obstacles, taking the form of one's parents, spouse, children etc. One should be alert*

1 Repetition of Gayatri Mantra 24,00,000 times, over a period of time,

2 During the rainy season, Sannyasins observe Chaturmasya and stay at one place for two (or four) months, to undertake rigorous spiritual practice, and to instruct their disciples.

July 1

to these. In reality, your family members are living happily at home. You must not feel any anxiety about them."

Over the years, I had frequent meetings and interactions with Swamiji Yoganandaji Maharaj. When I, barefoot and bareheaded, visited him during the afternoons of high-summer, he would call me inside, saying – *'It is very hot outside. Come inside! Here there is coolness, and coolness alone!'* With a laugh, he would wave me in.

During our interactions, sometimes, he would discuss matters of deep philosophy. During sacred days like Shivaratri etc., he would be totally engaged in prayers and rituals. For Swamiji, his Guru's portrait alone was the abidance of all Gods. He used to offer worship to different Gods such as Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva, Rama, Krishna etc., – all in the portrait of his Guru alone. Sometimes, he narrated the story of Srimad Bhagavata with such simplicity, clarity, sweetness and joy that the listeners would be lost to the world. Swamiji gave me many books that he had written. He used to explain matters of *shAstra* in a conversational style, making it simple and easy to understand.

My own talent, intelligence and ability flowered only due to Maharaj's tutelage, spiritual-initiation, impetus and encouragement. I am remembering him today, with a sense of immense indebtedness.

(Pawan Prasang : p 125-133)



Swamishree Yoganandapuriji Maharaj

Paramahansa Vidyalyaya Parisar shrine, Sahepur, U.P.

‘Awakening’ alone is *sAdhan* (the means of spiritual attainment), and it must be done

The objective of man’s life is the attainment of Supreme-Happiness.

If we cast our eyes on the lives of common people, it is clearly seen that everyone is engaged in some *sAdhan* (means of attainment) or another for the attainment of some desired goal. Even so, they are sad, despondent, and are devoid of the self-satisfaction that should result from engaging in that *sAdhan*. The reason is this. By taking perishable objects to be instruments of happiness, and embracing them, one does not attain real happiness. Real happiness is ‘Paramatma’ alone. Life’s fulfilment is only in the attainment of Paramatma (Self-Realization). And only that life is true, which has the attainment of Paramatma as its goal.

In heart’s interior is Paramatma; and outside is the gross world. And when the heart that exists between these two contemplates on the external world, it becomes of the nature of insentience (non-consciousness); and when it contemplates on Paramatma residing within, it becomes of the nature of pure Consciousness. Sadhana is nothing but the effort that a seeker puts in to extricate the heart from the quicksand of insentience and install it on the firm ground of Consciousness. In this endeavour, one encounters many steps and levels, quite naturally. Many seekers may have already reached certain levels of spiritual attainment in their past lives; and so, in this birth, they need to undertake only such Sadhana that is at a higher level from that attained by them already. This is the reason why there is *adhikAra-bhEda* (differences based on the maturity of the seeker). And that is why different paths are advised for different seekers. E.g., one seeker may identify strongly with his physical(gross) body, and another seeker may identify more with his subtle-body³ (mind, life-breath etc). And even in these, there would be many gradations.

3 *Subtle-body (sUkshma shareera) : The sUkshma shareera is made up of the prANamaya kosha (sheath of the vital life breath), manOmaya kosha (sheath of the mind) and vijnANamaya kosha (sheath of the intellect). It includes the five organs of sense, the five organs of action, the five vital breaths, as well as the intellect.*

Whatever level of spiritual-practice a seeker has passed already, becomes quite easy/natural for him. And his mind does not show any inclination for paths/levels that are currently much farther away. Sages, endowed with Supreme-Knowledge, never object to any kind of Sadhana.

Countless latent-tendencies that are buried in our sub-consciousness since beginningless time, appear in front of us taking a variety of forms. The complete cleansing of such tendencies and impressions is a precondition for attainment of Absolute Knowledge of Reality. To do that '*washing*' is the work of all Sadhana. And until one does not attain the goal of Sadhana, to quit one's Sadhana is cowardice.

It has been observed that one's intensity of engagement in one's Sadhana is in proportion to the depth of one's faith in the Grace of God. If this *jeeva*, who is lost in the slumber of *ajnAna* (ignorance), truly wakes up, he attains rapturous delight finding himself in the lap of God, or in the very Self of God. And all the terrors of the 'seen world' become rootless, and look like mere play. This 'awakening' alone is *sAdhan* (the means of spiritual attainment), and it must be done.

उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत प्राप्य वरान्निबोधत।

Arise, awake, and gaining the presence of sages, acquire jnAna (Knowledge of Absolute Reality)!

(Bhakti Sarvasva : Lekh Sadhan ki Anivarya Avashyakta)

Become the mind's master

Know that you are living under the shade of *kalpavriksha* (celestial wish-fulfilling tree). And there, you become whatever you think yourself to be. Never have a lowly opinion of yourself. Firstly, know that you are Paramatma Parabrahma – *the Supreme-Self, Absolute-Reality* – alone. The second fact is that you are a pure-seer. Thirdly, you are a part of Ishvara! And fourth, you are the driver of your body. So, nowhere and never should you make yourself sorrowful.

Man should never be the slave of his mind. He should be the mind's Master. In other words, the mind should be obedient to man's commands. One doesn't become a Master just like that. Take the case of wealthy people. Of these, one kind is a *wealth-master* and another a *wealth-slave*. If a man has lots of money, but is unable to give it to anyone else, he is but a servant of wealth. He will serve wealth all his life, and then leaving all that wealth unused, he will die. Who knows who will end up getting his hands on that wealth? For one to be a master, one must be in a position of power. A wealth-master is one who exercises a position of authority over his wealth. He who is a master of any material-property has the right to give that property to anyone he chooses. Look here, think about this. Is there anything in this world, which you simply cannot give away to someone else? That thing which you cannot renounce, not give away; that very thing, you will have to renounce, give away, one day. Therefore, it is a total delusion that you cannot give away something. Let me tell you about a day-to-day situation of the world. Take the case of a married couple having some conflict, some argument. In such a case, it is best that the one or the other (or both) be ready to concede to the other. One should not be adamant that one's own mind prevails. Because, the mind is not your master. In fact, the mind is your servant.

If your mind happens to become dominant and makes you insist – '*No, today it shall be as my mind wishes*', then it means that the mind is not your servant. Rather, you have become its servant. In a situation where you have some conflict in some dealings with a second person, then, so long as it is not opposed to *dharma*, it is better that you concede

to the other person – do not insist on having your way. So long as you keep your mind's tendencies very light-weight, you shall suffer no sorrow. In the course of worldly dealings, if you give weight to your mind, and consider the other person's mind as insignificant, it is not correct. After all, his 'mind' is a 'mind' too! Do understand his mind as well! Once in a while, diminish your own mind, and expand the other person's mind!

The proper way of showing respect is that if you have to undertake any work, check with your family members. Take their views. And if their view differs from yours, then do as they say, so long as it does not result in a great loss for you. You are gripped by the ghost of obstinacy, which may spoil you at times. So, you need to be ever alert. The day this ghost asks you to do as your mind insists, you should surely reject that, and do as the other man says. If you make your mind agree to the mind of the other person, it becomes an *amrita* (ambrosia) for you; it does not become a poison, it becomes a medicine.

(Shiva sankalpa sukta : p 65-68)



Steadfastness in one's spiritual practice

Are we not of that genre of people who like to overreach? As regards our Sadhana (spiritual practice), is it not that we view with disfavour those practices that we understand, and are easy to do? *'Whichever is the best Sadhana, I shall do that alone'*, is what we insist. We do not pause to think whether we are competent to do that, or whether we even understand that. For instance, in terms of listening to talks on spiritual topics, we insist that we shall listen to Brahma-Sutra, even though we do not understand one word in it. We shall skip all other steps, and directly go for Vedanta contemplation (inquiry into Supreme-Reality). We do not realize that when we seek to undertake a Sadhana that is above our level (in terms of our qualification, maturity, and capability), we cannot hope to find stability in our Sadhana; we cannot get resoluteness in our practice. As an analogy, take the case of a person who seeks to go to a hilltop. If he is unable to ascend, and makes repeated attempts to jump there directly, he will only end up falling. In the same way, people who attempt a Sadhana that is beyond their current capability, do not attain what they aim for; and failing to get firmness in their spiritual practice, they end up falling.

It gives me great surprise when someone comes to me and says – *'Maharaj! We have been practicing nAma-japa and all that you told us to do, for a very long time. Now, please tell us something that is more advanced.'* What they do not understand is that if one attains steadfastness in one's spiritual practice, then the next steps are also attained automatically. If one is unable to find firm footing on the current ground of Sadhana, how can one attempt to stride forward?

We should weigh our life honestly and see if all that we do is based on thoughts of gaining selfish objectives, or for attaining the Supreme Goal of life (Self-Realization). Will God be pleased by what you are doing? Will your *antaHkaraNa* (heart) be cleansed? Will your life progress on the path of virtue? By merely talking of high things, one gains nothing. Life should get some steadiness and direction whereby one progresses towards *antarmukhatA* (inwardness).

All worldly powers are false; Ishvara's strength alone is true

I wish to tell you that all the powers of this world will not be of use to you. You are surrounded by fear from all sides. Do you have any aide who can extricate you from these fears? What is your strength? Is it your own strength, or that of God, or of your intelligence? Relying on which strength do you propose to overcome all fear? He who goes forward taking the support of God's feet, progresses in life fearlessly. God alone is the remover of all fears. If you have the support of God in your life, you can go ahead without any fear. And if you, instead, rely on the strength of *goondas* (rogues/hoodlums), armed security, or some powerful friends or relatives – then there is the fear that you may end up becoming powerless. All these worldly powers are false.

(Daivi sampadyog : p 1,2,3,5)

The dawn of good fortune

Look, this is Arjuna! His action is this alone – that he is unwilling to fight. Seeing this, Sanjaya says that Arjuna has been possessed by compassion. Sri Krishna says that this is but the lowly weakness of Arjuna's mind. However, Arjuna says that his heart, his very nature, is stricken with fickleness by the taint of *kArpaNya* (pity/parsimony). This confession of his is an outcome of his introspection, his self-examination. Such introspection is an important human responsibility.

If a person, by examining himself objectively, begins to get an idea of his own faults, then it should be understood that the sun of good fortune is about to rise in his life; and that the right path for him is just around the corner.

The nature of *dharma* (virtue) is such that it resides on the chest of man. And *adharma* (vice) resides on the back of man. This has been so declared in the Purana-s (ancient epics). Man is thus unable to see his *adharma*, whereas his *dharma* is visible to him. To see one's own *adharma*, to know one's faults, is a very difficult thing to do.

Arjuna is able to comprehend clearly that he has been invaded by the defect of *kArpANya*, i.e., *ajnAna* (ignorance)⁴. He realizes that as regards *dharma*, his knowledge has wavered. Tell me. Do you ever do such self-examination? If not, then you should definitely do it. This alone is *mAnavatA* (humanness); this is the duty that comes with being a human-being. If, even after careful self-examination, you are unable to recognize what your duty is and what you should desist from doing, then consult your elders. Take their advice, ask them, and they will tell you.

Accordingly, Arjuna consults Sri Krishna. He says – '*Please tell me that which is good for me.*' In this manner, seeking advice from one's elders, and acting as per their counsel, thus gaining from the experience that they have accumulated over all these years, is every man's duty. Now let's look at this business of advice! Even to absorb advice (given by a well-wisher) needs some worthiness, some capability/maturity. Arjuna

4 *Arjuna's delusion of pity/sorrow etc., arises from the root cause of 'ajnAna' (ignorance of dharma, and lack of Self-Knowledge).*

tells Krishna – ‘*I take refuge in you. I am your disciple. Teach me. Make me knowledgeable.*’ Now, that’s good! To learn from someone, one has to be prepared to be subordinate to him.

But one thing is to be noted. Just by going to a Guru or an elder person in a mood of mental surrender, or by voicing one’s surrender, one’s *samskAra*-s⁵ do not get erased straightaway. The old determinations do not drop away in a hurry. For that to happen, a lot of counselling, cajoling and convincing is needed. Take the case of Arjuna. He begins with a declaration of surrender, saying that ‘*I have taken refuge in you*’ (Gita 2.7), and then says later that ‘*I will not fight*’ (Gita 2.9). Such surrender is worthy of ridicule. Until the ego is not eradicated, how is the Ganga of spiritual-guidance to descend? Do explore the interior of Gita a bit. To firmly plant his teachings in Arjuna’s heart, Sri Krishna adopts so many different approaches and reasonings. Such is Krishna’s compassion.

Consider this. If the learner doesn’t accept defeat, why would the preceptor? For the preceptor is explaining *satya* (eternal truth/reality), *paramArtha* (supreme object of life). If the *ajnAni* (ignorant seeker), crushed under the burden of his ignorance, insists on remaining firm in his wrong beliefs, would the Preceptor not be adamant about removing that ignorance? For the Preceptor, the *sadguru*, is Bhagavan Himself; he is full of compassion. Why would he remain indifferent to his disciple’s state of ignorance? Why would he desist from instructing his disciple again and again (till the disciple’s ignorance is erased)?

(Gita mein maanav dharma : p 20-33)

5 *samskAra-s* : mental-impressions, memories, habituations that form based on experiences in the current life and former lives.

For a firm intellect, make your mind taintless

If the intellect is not firm; if it is not true and trustworthy; then it will lead the man on a wrong path. Therefore, in one's life, a firm/stable intellect, firm wisdom is necessary – 'तस्य प्रज्ञा प्रतिष्ठिता' (*His wisdom is firmly established* – Gita 2.57). People trust the words of only such people who are stable. Only if your intellect is firm and stable will it give you proper advice and remain by your side at all times. If your intellect is of a wavering nature, it will leave you, and serve no purpose when needed. It will be subject to *rAga* (attachment) at times, and *dvEsha* (aversion) at times. If a man's intellect/wisdom is not firmly grounded, he may not even believe in Ishvara! If he gets into the company of atheists, then, influenced by their fallacious arguments, he will abandon God. He will have no faith in *dharma*. And when he sees people profiting from *adharma* (vice), he will forsake *dharma*.

Therefore, it is absolutely necessary that one's intellect be firm and stable. This is why Bhagavan Sri Krishna urged Arjuna to have a stable/firm intellect.

Now, say Arjuna asks – '*Maharaj! Where am I to get such an intellect? You may please grant it to me.*' Sri Krishna replies – 'Intellect is an internal object. It exists within the physical body; it cannot be thrust from outside. Adopt such means by which the intellect may be stabilized. The method is this => *keep your mind contented and happy*. The man whose mind is always happy and untainted, has a firm/stable intellect. The intellect of a person with a polluted mind cannot be stabilized. A stainless mind is absolutely essential. It is only an untainted mind that performs *dharma*. If a person has a polluted mind, then even his works of virtue become tainted. Well may you perform *tapasyA* (devout austerity), *adhyayana* (study of scriptures), *dAna* (charity) – but, if your mind is filled with taint or crookedness, then it will render everything tainted. A tainted mind makes the intellect tainted. Therefore, for attaining firmness of intellect, make your mind taintless.

Then the question arises as to what one has to do to make the mind free of taint? To this, Sri Krishna says:

One should be free of the attachment and aversion that arises towards sense-objects. Man should be under his own control. He should not be subject to the power of attachments and aversions.

Your sense-organs should not be uncontrolled, fancy-free. May they be under your power. Behaviour is based on just two things – ‘शब्दोच्चारणं स्फुरणरूपं वा’ – i.e., our thoughts and our speech. If both our thoughts and speech are all right, then our conduct too would always be right.

May our mind be obedient. The usual case is otherwise. We want others to be obedient to our command, whereas our own mind remains disobedient.

If your mind is obedient; if your sense-organs are under your control; if you have no attachment or aversion to anything or anyone; then you may continue conducting yourself in all matters in such manner as appropriate. You will attain serenity, happiness. Your mind will remain happy and unstained; and with the mind remaining joyful and unsullied, no worldly sorrow can even touch you.

(Gita mein maanav dharm: p 40 to 45)



I am by myself; and my God is with me

Mind has three blemishes – *dvEsha* (hatred/aversion), *lObha* (greed), and *mOha* (delusion/attachment). If these defects are not overcome, one's mind becomes weak and fickle. Such a mind cannot be skilful or astute. People who are greedy, deluded, and hostile, also become dishonest, biased and cruel. Such a mind has no strength. It does not have the strength to restrain itself. It cannot remain steady. It is incapable of subtle, intricate thinking. If the mind is primarily anchored around hatred, greed and attachment, then one's life is equivalent to that of an animal. It is by putting a halt to hatred, greed and attachment that the mind becomes endowed with strength. It becomes steady, and skilful in inquiring into the nature of *paramArtha* (highest truth; supreme reality).

Any person whose mind has a great measure of hatred, greed and attachment, is not a true devotee of Ishvara. If you really want to become a devotee of Ishvara, you should renounce these three defects, and apply your mind in contemplation of Ishvara.

There is no activity in this world, which is devoid of mercy, compassion, and paternal affection of Ishvara. Man's mind is usually engaged elsewhere, and is therefore unable to comprehend the compassion of Ishvara in every activity of his.

Sometimes, parting from someone is a gain. Sometimes, one gains even when one loses money. At times, there is gain when someone dies. Being a Sanyasi (renunciate), leading a life of sacrifice, or living in solitude etc., come about in one's life only by God's grace.

Once, I ran away from home, and was going to Chitrakoot. On the way there, I ran into a family acquaintance, who asked me – 'Are you going alone, or is someone with you?'

I replied – 'I am by myself; and my God is with me.'

When we are in the company of people, we do not recognize the presence of God. It is when we are alone that we recognize Him, and know that He is always on our side, ever supporting us. He who has given you a mouth and a stomach, is the same one who has also provided you food to eat. Every impulse and activity of yours is visible to God. So, whatever

be the events in your life, recognize the hand of God in them; take notice of His compassion.

He, who, clearly seeing God's compassion everywhere, even as he experiences the favourable and unfavourable fruits of his own karma, remains head-bowed to God in thought, speech and body; it is such a one who is truly qualified to attain liberation and God's love.

Know that man is not the real doer of any activity in life; it is God alone who is the all-doer. Therefore, when you abuse someone for some act of his, then that abuse goes directly to God. Once, some Pundit said something that did not appeal to my mind and reasoning. Retorting to this, I asked – 'Which fool has stated this?' The Punditji took my Guru's name and said – 'It is he who stated this.' I immediately said – 'Then, it has been stated correctly.' The Punditji quipped – 'Ha! At first, you retorted with abuse. And now, you say that it has been stated correctly!'

In like manner, we are scornful because we consider deeds as having been performed by someone or the other (whereas all deeds are done by God alone). The person who serves you a sweet pudding, also serves you chutney, salt and chilli, by tasting which the deliciousness of the pudding is enhanced. In the same way, God serves us insults, sorrow, destituteness, illness etc., intermittently, in order to break our ego (our 'I'-notion with respect to the body-mind complex).

(Kapilopadesh : p 134-136)

In life, prepare ahead

God has given us a heart so that we may love Him. He has given us a brain so that we may think of Him. With our hands, we may offer flowers to him, garland him. With the feet, we should do His *parikrama* (circumambulation). Use the mouth for doing *japa*, chanting spiritual works, narrating the stories of God. What kind of life is it that is spent wholly on selfish pursuits alone? If you do not do anything at all for Ishvara who has given you a body, heart, intellect, family, pleasures etc., it would be great ungratefulness. You provide for your sons and daughters, your spouse, your physical body – but you have nothing to offer to God?

This body, which is the abode of experiences (pleasing and painful), is perched perilously on the banks of the river of time. There is no saying what the next moment brings. After a fire starts raging, if you start digging a well to get water to put out the fire, it would surely not be a sign of wisdom. The fire can be put out only if water is readily available from an existing well. Therefore, in life, prepare ahead. Hold the staff (stick) of *vivEka* (discrimination) in your hand. Do not give leave to your mind to speak whatever it wishes, eat whatever it desires, or do whatever it wishes to do. What kind of a person is he, who can neither control his tongue, nor his hands, nor his feet? Is he an animal or a human?

Once, in some country, the King made an announcement – *‘I have in my possession, a goat. If any man in this Kingdom manages to feed this goat to a full stomach, I shall give him half the Kingdom, and also marry my daughter to him.’* Many people came and tried their hand, feeding the goat with loads of choiciest of eatables. When the goat ate to the full it would be brought before the King. To test whether the goat’s stomach was full or not, a bowl of greens would be placed before the goat, seeing which the goat would gladly nibble at the greens! And the King would declare – *‘You are not able to fill the belly of a goat, and have come to try and win this Kingdom? Fool! Go thee to jail!’* Many were the people jailed in this manner. Finally, a goatherd came to the court and told the King –

“Please give me the goat. I shall fill its belly to the brim.” Taking the goat from the King, the goatherd retired to his hut. There, the goatherd kept some greens in front of the goat. When the goat tried to eat the greens, the goatherd hit the goat on its mouth with a stick. This went on a few times and the goat became very afraid of being beaten. Next, when the goat showed fear of the stick, the goatherd hid the stick behind him. When the goat saw that there was no stick, it moved forward to eat the greens. And when it did that, the goatherd brought his stick out and smashed it on the goat’s mouth. As a result of such treatment, the goat became so afraid of the goatherd that he kept away from the greens altogether, whenever he saw the goatherd. Now the goatherd took the goat to the King and told him that the goat had eaten to the full. The King took a test of the goat by having a bowl of greens placed in front. No sooner the goat saw that the goatherd was standing near the greens, it went and stood far away from the greens. No amount of coaxing would make the goat eat. Having won this challenge, the goatherd told the King – ‘Neither your daughter do I desire, nor the Kingdom. My request is that you may please release all the people who have been jailed because of this challenge.’

Man’s mind is a goat. As it moves here and there, it starts nibbling this and that. In order to restrain it, one needs to use the stick of *vivEka* (discrimination). Do not let the mind graze like a goat. God has given you a sense of discernment so that you may keep your mind in check, so that your mind/intellect may become cleansed. In this process, it is one thing to restrain the mind from worldliness. But it is a far greater thing to engage your mind constantly in the thought of God. It is when God’s Grace is seen in everything, when life becomes wholly dedicated to God – it is then that Bhakti (true devotion to God) comes about. He, the One who remains ever alert, night and day, in order to protect you – turn your eyes to Him, the Lord Almighty. In place of your desire for money, place God. Money comes to you as per your *prArabdha* (karmic predestiny). Do not worry about it. In the manner of the taste that a lover has for his beloved; or a greedy man has for wealth; when you develop a taste of similar intensity towards God, then there is Bhakti (true devotion to God). Therefore, when you prudently fill your heart with Bhagavan, worldliness will not be

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able to enter your heart. No sooner does the heart become attached to God, *rAga-dvEsha* (attachment and aversion) drops away, straightaway. Then, in every moment of life, in every particle of the universe, God is seen. Then, the *guNa*-s of *prakRti* (the natural traits of goodness, passion, ignorance) pose no obstacles.

(Kapilopadesh : p 137-141)



Disciplined work is *yajna*

One's course of life should be like that of the Sun or the moon. Like them, as you carry on with your life, give something or the other to the world around you. Take, for instance, the breath that we exhale. When you exhale, do you spread contamination or purity? Every person's body constantly exudes subtle elements of emotions such as lust, anger, greed, confusion, infatuation, peacefulness etc. Rays of *samAdhi* (deep, silent, absorption/meditativeness) too emanate from everyone's body. Try and notice what kind of *yajna* (worshipful offering) you do, as you carry on with your daily activity. The moon showers cool moonshine on one and all, as it goes around the earth. The Sun goes around giving light and heat to one and all. What will you give, as you go along your daily work? This life is a *yajna*, and if you connect this with the *yajna* of nature (sun, moon etc), then the whole of life, whole of Creation, is seen and experienced as but a form of worship.

Now, what indeed is a *yajna*? We say that the earth exudes fragrance. But the earth says – 'No, *baba*! I am not the one who radiates fragrance. This fragrance has been given by Ishvara. And that God given fragrance spreads all around on its own.' The sense is that the earth has no pride that it gives fragrance to others. And for this reason, no *pApa-puNya* (demerit or merit) gets attributed to the earth. Similarly, other elements of nature like air or space too do not earn merit or demerit. Whereas, the tongue that we have in our body, does earn merit and demerit. This is because ego ('I'-ness) resides in the tongue. Our ears too earn merit and demerit. When you hear the condemnation or criticism of others for some sin committed by them, then the effect of that sin ends up entering your own heart via your ears. Likewise, any ill intent that arises in your mind, when it translates to action, makes you a sinner. In actuality, it is the mind and ego that attaches us to sin or virtue. Our expectation filled mind, which thinks that something is good and so it desires to have it, and that something is bad and so it does not want it, etc. – it is by this that we earn demerit or merit. Merit and demerit attach to him who has a sense of ego. Whereas, where the mind does not have any expectation/desire,

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where there is no pride/ego of one's existence as a separate body-mind limited being – there, no sin or virtue gets attributed. There, every activity of life becomes a *yajna*.

The eye performs the function of seeing forms. The hands perform work. And the feet perform locomotion. That's what they do. But what is to be seen is whether they are disciplined in what they do. Irrespective of the nature and amount of work you do – whether it be transacting sales/receipts or some mental work such as inquiry/contemplation – doing it in a manner that is within some bounds, some propriety of conduct, some discipline, is what is known as *yajna*. The term *yajna* is not restricted to the ritual offering of oblations into a holy fire.

And when one attains Self-realization (*paramArtha bodha*), understands the core-essence of life, then the very nature of *yajna* changes completely. And of this, Kabir sings – '*Wherever you wander, it is but a parikrama (circumambulation of Divinity); whatever you do is but a pUjA (an offering of worship)*'. From this viewpoint, the whole of one's life becomes a form of *yajna*.

(Vyavahar shuddhi : p 37, 32, 39)

Animosity and *bhagavat-prEma* (love for God) are adversarial

Suffering comes in everyone's life. However, in the face of distress, wise people react in one manner; and the stupid, lowdown people, react in a totally different manner. Take for instance the case of Draupadi. When she was subjected to great torment, she did not say – 'Hey Krishna! Hey *dwArakAvAsin*! Come and kill Duhshaasana!' Draupadi does tear Duhshaasana with her nails; she does not bite him, right? It is as if there is no rancour towards Duhshaasana rising in her heart. She was in great distress, for sure. But the animosity that arises as a result of distress, and the forgetfulness of Atma-Paramatma (one's true Self and God) in the face of such animosity – these did not happen to Draupadi.

So long as there is animosity in the heart, man cannot be a true devotee of God. Why so? It's because animosity is a form of fire; and it burns the very person in whose heart it arises. It does not burn the person against whom the animosity rises. Distress has no opposition to *bhagavat-prEma* (love of God); whereas, animosity and *bhagavat-prEma* are indeed adversarial.

Actually, people end up really suffering because they lose remembrance of God, drift away, and become human wretches. They spend their time thinking of ways to avenge and destroy the person who has caused them to suffer. They do not petition God, who can save them from the suffering. Instead, when you seek to destroy the one who caused you the suffering, you seek to make that person suffer as well. Consequently, 'suffering' affects both sides. In this process, you become a treasury of distress, for you seek to hand out pain. Think of this. If your adversary had no pain, how could he have handed out pain to you in the first place? Now, if you turn around and ask – '*Yes, he has pain, and so has come to give it to me. But, on my part, I do not have any treasury of pain. So, what am I to do?*' The answer is, use what you have. Think thus – '*If he brings fire, I shall bring water. What else can I do? For he has brought fire,*

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which is what he has got. And I have water, so that's what I can bring!
Say, Narayan!

So, it is like this. He who is a *bhakta*, a true devotee of God, remembers God when faced with distress. Whereas, he who is a wretch among men, a wretch of vile deeds, goes around seeking revenge. He searches for the person who has caused him distress. If asked – ‘My dear fellow, if you do find that person, what will you do?’ He says – ‘Well! He has inflicted one blow on me. I shall inflict him two!’ Say, Narayan! This is the kind of person who is known as a *narAdhama* (worst of men). These kinds of men, who have opened a factory for doubling pain, do not resort to the remembrance of God. न मां प्रपद्यन्ते – ‘*They do not take refuge in Me*’ (Bhagavad Gita 7.15)⁶. They do not engage themselves in devotion to God because they are now engaged in the business of manufacturing distress.

(Jnan Vijnan Yog : p 327, 328, 329)

6 न मां दुष्कृतिनो मूढाः प्रपद्यन्ते नराधमाः। माययापहृतज्ञाना आसुरं भावमाश्रिताः॥7.15॥
- *The foolish evildoers, who are the most depraved among men, who are deprived of (their) wisdom by Maya, and who resort to demoniacal ways, do not take refuge in Me. (Translation by Swami Gambhirananda)*

The nature of *bhagavat-kR^ipA*⁷

The secrets of Bhagavan's Leela are known only to Bhagavan and to His chosen devotees who are blessed with His compassion.

So long as the *jeeva*-s in this world are suffering and have not found simple and easy ways to be free from their sorrows, how can God, who wishes the welfare of the whole world, or His chosen devotees (who are vehicles of God's Grace), remain contented? When people at large are unhappy, how can God or His chosen devotees be happy?

In what form does God's compassion manifest?

Surely it does not come in the form of sweets and chocolates.

God's compassion manifests in the form of removal of that which is the cause of our sorrows. In other words, His compassion manifests in the form of removal of our body-identification, elimination of our *ajnAna* (ignorance of our true Self). Indeed, it is this that is Ishvara's compassion.

When Ishvara gives us some occasion for *satsanga* (association with other devotees), then we should realize that He is bestowing His grace/compassion on us. When Ishvara gives us some occasion for *shravaNa* (listening to His stories and teachings), know that His compassion is upon us.

As it happens, we are drifting here and there in the world, without clear thought or understanding. Rarely do we deliberate on what is it that we actually want. If and when this question does arise in our mind, as to '*what is it that we actually wish for*', then know that Ishvara's compassion is with us.

And when we start renouncing our dependence on the world, dependence on external objects, dependence on sense-organs, dependence on sense-experiences, dependence on people, dependence on thoughts, dependence on situations etc., then know that the compassion of the full, boundless Ishvara is descending upon us.

(Shree Shukdevji ka Anupam Jnan : Kalyan Bhaagavataank : p 74-75)

7 *Bhagavat-kRipa : God's compassion/grace*

The fruits of *bhajan*⁸ and *satsang*

The fruit of *bhajan-satsang* is not that one does not face any losses in business, nor that one's family and relatives do not die, nor that one does not lose court cases, or that one does not face a loss of name and fame, or that one does not face any illness. These and such will afflict one and all in accordance with their *prArabdha* (predestiny).

The fruit of *bhajan-satsang* is that even in the face of such challenges, one's mind does not get agitated, and internally, one remains peaceful and courageous at all times.

(Mandukya Agama Prakaran – New edition : p 525)



8 *Bhajan: Acts of devotion/worship such as meditation, japa, kirtan, satsang and reading of holy scriptures*

This world too is a picture gallery

jijnAsu (seeker of knowledge): Revered sir! During meditation, one must surely contemplate on God. But then, it is not possible to meditate all the time. When dealing in mundane matters, how is one to view the world?

Mahatma : Brother! You said that *'it is not possible to meditate all the time'*. It is not correct to say that. Meditation can be done *'all the time'*. And indeed, meditation can be such that *'all the time'* becomes nullified (i.e., one abides in a state where the world and time are devoid of reality). However, if one has no choice but to venture into the world of mundane engagements, then one must make sure to take God along. If you are talking to someone, then talk so gently that it is as if you are talking to God Himself. Do not pay attention to your reasonings or eloquence. Neither should you worry about the how effective your communication is; whether or not it is having the desired effect on the hearer. But do surely see how close you are to God when you speak to anyone. The beauty of your speech does not lie in its sweetness or on the way it captivates the hearer. Its true beauty lies in the way it touches God. *'I am talking to God Himself; for in his heart, there is God'* – this fact has to be borne in mind. Even when one is alone, one should constantly sense the sweet presence of God, and feel His soft, pleasant, touch.

Worldly dealings can be viewed in another manner too. Have you ever been to a picture gallery? Let us say that you visit a gallery where many pictures of some artist are being displayed – paintings of different colours, different scenes, different emotions... Some pictures evoke great pity and compassion; some are comic and make you laugh; some are deeply erotic; some are disgusting; some radiate peace; some display anger; some are frightening! The visitor sees all the pictures, absorbs the different moods, and enjoys all the emotions that he experiences as he sees them. But he knows well that these are all just pictures. One moment he may laugh when he sees a certain picture, or cry when he sees another; but this laughter and crying are but an entertainment, which creates the

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experience of rasa (the taste of particular emotions such as happiness, sorrow, fear etc).

This world too is a picture gallery. All kinds of sights are seen here – some that make you laugh, some that make you cry; but this laughing and crying are both for the purposes of making someone happy. A wise man is happy when he sees these, and does not get besotted with any emotion. Seeing the varied sights of this world picture-gallery, he constantly remembers God, the creator of these pictures and becomes filled with surging-joy. Even as he experiences different sentiments such as sympathy, disgust, anger, love etc., he feels the same kind of *rasa* in all these (i.e., he sees the hand of God in everything). In this world, all objects and happenings are created by God, are connected with God, and are a display of God's art performance. Realizing this truth, one should remain happy. In all situations, remembering God, one should remain absorbed in happiness.

(Sadhana aur Brahmanubhuti : p 33, 34)

The greatness of Sri Krishna's flute

Once, when Swami Ramatirtha had visited Mathura, arrangements were made for a public discourse by him at night time, in some city-hall. During the course of the talk, some people in the audience asked Swamiji about the Sri Krishna's flute, as to what its greatness was all about. Upon hearing that question, Swamiji first became quiet. And then he replied – *“We shall not reply in this place. Come, lets go to the banks of river Yamuna. Now, my mind is not inclined to this discourse in the city.”*

It was a moonlit night! Time was 11 PM. Swamiji left the city, and followed by thousands of people who were in the audience, he went and sat down on the sands in the Yamuna river-bank. There, the people asked him once more – “Maharaj! Please tell us now. What was the greatness of Sri Krishna's flute?” Swamiji replied – “He, the greatness of whose flute you wish to know... Think of this. What kind of power the flute must have wielded that even after the passage of thousands of years since the flute's sounds filled the air, you have all followed me here – men and women, children and elders – all of you, have left all your household chores, and at 11 O'clock in the night, you have come to this sandy isle in the banks of Yamuna River! Oh, how great the call of the flute must have been! Just think!”

The path of Bhakti is special. In other spiritual paths (such as *dharma*, or *yoga*, or *jnAna*), *tyAga* (renunciation) is based on one's own strength. Whereas, in Bhakti, one's *tyAga* (renunciation) and *vairAgya* (non-attachment) arise from the strength of Ishvara! One renounces everything and goes to Sri Krishna, because of Sri Krishna's power. Sri Krishna, playing the flute all the time, drew one and all to Himself!

ब्रजस्त्रियः कृष्णगृहीतमानसाः - '*vrajastriyaH krishNagRihItamAnasAH*' – *the women of vraja – their minds seized by Krishna....*)⁹... Now, the women of Vraja were no ordinary gopika-s (cowherdesses)¹⁰. In the manner in which a ghost seizes some person, or in the manner in which a puppeteer

9 *Srimad Bhagavatam 10.29.4*

10 *Indeed, they are considered the highest of devotees of God, vide Narada Bhakti Sutra*

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drags a puppet by a string, these Gopikas were literally seized by Sri Krishna.

Krishna did not grab any Gopika's bracelet; nor remove their necklaces, or bangles, or girdle, or anklet, or ear-ornaments... These are ordinary things, of low value. He went instead for the most valuable thing, which exists inside the treasure-chest of the heart... He went for the Gopika's mind. And he seized it not by grabbing it with his hands... He seized the Gopikas' minds by means of 'sound'. Without laying a finger on the Gopika-s, he stole their heart and mind by playing the flute! The flute-sound, thus, emerged as the greatest of thieves!

It took the path of the ear, entered within, and there, it stole the treasure in the form of the mind, and ran away from there. Consider this. When a thief enters a house, steals something valuable and then runs out – the people in the house go running after him. Without a thought on what they were doing, or what they are wearing, and without waiting to ask anyone else for advice, they run after the thief to get their property back. In the same manner, their minds having been seized by the sounds of Krishna's flute, the Gopika-s just dropped everything and ran, as if to get their valuable property back. The minds of the Gopika-s were treasuries of many invaluable things, and it was based on the strength of these priceless things that they had been able to stay apart from Krishna. Courage, forbearance, self-control, mindfulness, memory, discernment, shyness, fear, intelligence – all these were gems locked in the treasure-chest of their minds. That mind was stolen, lock, stock and barrel, by the sound of Sri Krishna's flute.

(Raasa Panchaadhyaayi : p 130-133)

Vairagya personified Hanuman, and His ability to overcome all obstacles

Once, during the Lord's incarnation as Sri Krishna, His consort Satyabhama Ji developed a sense of vanity that she was much more beautiful than what Sita might have been. And Sri Krishna's vehicle Garuda, the King of birds, became proud that there was no creature in the world that could fly as fast as him. And Sudarshana Chakra, the weapon of Sri Krishna, became conceited that there was no one who was stronger than him. Now, one of the natural characteristics of Bhagavan is that when He sees his devotee develop a sense of egoism, he breaks that conceit. For, without renouncing one's ego, one cannot be a devotee at all.

One day, Sri Krishna announced that He desired to call Hanuman because he had some work with him. He said – "Well! Hanuman has great love for my form as Sri Rama. So, I shall put on my appearance as Sri Rama. But where will we get a woman as beautiful as Sita who can sit by my side?" Satyabhama thumped her chest and said – 'I shall become Sita and sit by your side, and Hanuman will never know the difference. Am I any less beautiful than Sita!' Sri Krishna agreed, and said – 'Ok! You may become Sita and sit down with me.' Now, who is to go and fetch Hanuman? To do that, Sri Krishna decided to send Garuda. Garuda declared that he would go and fetch Hanuman in a matter of minutes. Also, Sri Krishna gave an order to Sudarshana Chakra that – 'No one is to be allowed to enter Dwarkapuri without my permission.' Chakra got onto the job, and started spinning.

Garuda Ji reached Hanuman's place of stay in the Gandhamaadhana mountain, and said to Hanuman – 'I bring the Lord's command! He wants your presence. Please start right away, and reach Dwarkapuri at the earliest.' Hanuman Ji replied – "Well, that's good. But I am busy now, engaged in offering worship. I shall come after I finish this. Meanwhile, you may leave." Garuda said – "If I leave, then you'll have to come on your own and your journey to Dwarka may take several days. It will be too late. Please sit on my back and I shall fly you over to Dwarka in no time."

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Then they started arguing. Being proud of himself, Garuda started fighting with Hanuman. Whereupon, Hanuman grabbed Garuda with his hand and threw him so hard that Garuda went all the way and fell into the sea near Dwarka. And then Hanuman took one leap and reached Dwarka.

Now, Chakra Ji was patrolling the gates of Dwarka and seeing Hanuman, he said – ‘You cannot enter Dwarka without the Lord’s permission.’ Hanuman replied – ‘The Lord has commanded me and I have come. Why are you stopping me?’ Chakra Ji was adamant – ‘No! I cannot allow you to enter.’ Then Hanuman just caught hold of Chakra Ji and put him in his mouth.

He then went to the palace of Sri Krishna. There, Satyabhama was sitting with Krishna, having adorned herself in the form of Sita. Krishna was holding a bow and arrows and was sitting in the form of Rama. Hanuman came, bowed to Bhagavan Sri Krishna, and asked – ‘*Lord! Who is this lady servant that you have seated next to you?*’” But Hanuman could not speak very clearly because he had got Chakra Ji inside his mouth. Bhagavan Sri Krishna asked – ‘What has happened to your voice?’” Whereupon, Hanuman Ji removed Chakra Ji from his mouth and said – “This chap was throwing his weight around, and was not allowing me to enter Dwarka. And so, I caught hold of him and put him in my mouth.”

This Hanuman, who is *vairAgya* (non-attachment) personified, has the ability to overcome all obstacles and has the greatest speed in approaching the Lord. Other than his favoured deity Sita-Rama, no one else can hold any attraction for him. So much so, that if anyone has the ability to destroy the movement of *kAlachakra* (the cycle of time), it is He, *vairAgya* (Hanuman).

(Manas Darshan : 2nd Edition, p 48-50)

Helping all

Swami Sivananda (of Rishikesh) was staying in Swargashram in the beginning, and later in 'Muni ki Reti'. In his pre-monastic life, he was a medical doctor. He has mentioned that he was born in the family line of the great Vedantic saint, Sri Appayya Deekshita.

Swami Sivananda was of such a pure heart that he was '*a giver*', by nature. When anyone came to him, he would always give that person something or the other. Be it books, money, food – whatever he had, he kept handing them out. One day, a street-food vendor came to him. Swamiji gave the man some books, and five rupees in cash. A gentleman who was present there at that time told Swamiji – 'This man sells *dahi-vada*¹¹, earns money. Why did you unnecessarily give him five rupees?' Swamiji replied – 'Look here! When a mango tree bears fruits, it does not concern itself as to who may eat the fruits. The earth does not declare "X person may walk on me, but Y person should not". The Ganga River does not say "X may drink my water, while Y should not." The sky does not say "X may breathe my air, while Y should not." My friend, we are one with the Universal-Being. Just as the Sun, moon, earth, air, water, or a mango tree does not have any partiality, and all of them do good to one and all; so too, the sages have no partiality and are helpful to one and all. Those who differentiate people as us-and-them, friends-enemies, kinfolks-strangers etc., should not walk on the path of spirituality. Then again, while you should do good to others, there is no need for you to go out seeking people to do good to. Whoever happens to come in front of you, you may see him with a friendly eye, speak sweet words to him, quench his thirst with some cool water....

May God look to their well-being!

Once, a *sEth* (a rich merchant) gave his wife a hundred rupees in cash, as a bunch one-rupee coins kept in a cloth bag. His wife kept the bag

11 *A delicious dish consisting of balls made from ground lentils, which are deep-fried and served in a yoghurt sauce.*

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in some open shelf in the house. After a few days, when she picked up the cloth bag, she found the money missing. She thought that some thief has made away with the money. The *sEth* also searched and inquired, and then he told her – ‘You need not worry. The money is sure to be here at home, somewhere. Had some thief stolen it, he would have surely taken the bag as well. Why would he take the trouble of taking the coins out of the bag? Taking the bag itself takes less time and is much more convenient than taking the coins out and carrying them.’ Well, the matter rested there.

One night, the *sEth* noticed something. A lamp of mild intensity was burning. In that light, he saw a rat emerging from a hole, bringing coins outside. The rat brought out all the one-rupee coins from the hole and kept them in the light of the lamp. And after looking at them, the rat dragged the coins back inside the hole. This happened the next night too, and the next. The rat did this every day. The *sEth* thought about it and decided – ‘Well, the money is here only. I can always take it whenever I want’. One day, when he needed the money, he waited for the rat to bring the coins out. The rat brought out one coin after another, and when he had brought out 99 rupees and had gone back in to get the hundredth coin, the *sEth* pocketed the 99 Rs. The rat came out of the hole, holding the hundredth coin in its mouth. Finding the other Rs 99 missing, he was terribly upset. Writhing in agony, the rat died.

The rat’s plight is shared by worldly people as well. Firstly, the money they accumulate is not theirs. And even when they accumulate the money, they do not manage to utilize it properly – by means of *dAna* (donating it for worthy causes), or *dharma* (virtuous activities), or even by *bhOga* (enjoying it themselves, by spending on pleasures). Their whole life is spent on counting money, and in the end, they squirm and die.

May God look to their well-being!

(Satsang Sudha : p 46-47)

God's Name provides great protection!

Right from the days of my youth, I used to go to *satsang*-s (associating with spiritual people). This was from before I became a Sanyasi. I used to be clad in white attire. And Maharaj! I would eat whatever was provided by providence, and sleep anywhere I could. A temple platform would do nicely as a bed! Rarely would anyone offer a room for a lone traveller.

Once, I went to 'Punjab and Sindh Kshetra' in Rishikesh (a *dharamshala* that offered a place of rest for visiting pilgrims). When I asked for a room, a worker who was present there, asked – 'Room for one, or two, or for four?' I told him that I was alone. The worker replied that as per policy, the *kshetra* did not provide a room for a single person. Hearing this, I shouted out aloud - "*Shree Krishna!*" That's the cry that emerged from me upon being refused a room there. Upon hearing my loud cry, a peon of the *kshetra* came and said to me – 'Your cry of Shree Krishna's name was in a voice that was soaked in *prEma* (love), great devotion, to God. Such a tone is not possible unless there is great *bhakti* (devotion) in the heart. Come, we shall give you a room.'

Yes! Maharaj! Taking Shree Krishna's name once, enabled me to get a room, even though it was against the policy of the *kshetra* to allot a room for just one person. Indeed, God's name provides great protection! People are quite unaware of this.

On another occasion, I was traveling in a bullock-cart, proceeding to the railway station. I was escorting my sister, who was going to her in-law's place. And as was customary, she was wearing a good amount of jewellery. It was night time, and suddenly we were surrounded by a gang of dacoits. Aha! I was a very young boy. But I managed to speak up, and say – "I am the grandson of so-and-so Pandit. So-and-so person in the village nearby is our relative. You people should not rob us." Hearing this, the dacoits said – "We touch your feet, Pundit Ji! Oh! You are the son of our Babaji! The grandson of our elder Babaji! Please forgive us! We did not recognize you. Come with us. We shall escort you to the railway station. Please have no anxiety!"

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Look! The mere mention of my father's name, and my grandfather's name, worked wonders. The 'name' alone did the trick! Right? People should realize that God's name provides great protection. The greatest of troubles are overcome by the power of God's name!

(Jeevanmukti Vivek : p 506-508)



God never quits providing us nourishment!

[Note:

This discourse is in the context of the following verse of Gita:

उत्तमः पुरुषस्त्वन्यः परमात्मेत्युदाहृतः।
यो लोकत्रयमाविश्य बिभर्त्यव्यय ईश्वरः॥15.17॥

But different is the Supreme Person who is spoken of as the Supreme-Self, who, pervading the three worlds, supports/sustains them, and is the imperishable Lord-Almighty.]

एष सेतुर्विधरण - *It is the embankment that serves as the bridge and boundary (Brihadarnyaka Upanishad 4.4.22). The Shruti says that this Paramatma becomes a bridge Himself, enabling the creature drowning in the ocean of birth-and-death to take support and cross over. It is God who manifests as the boundary of Dharma. When the Lord wants to bring someone close to Himself, He becomes his guide, and tells him – ‘Do this; avoid doing that. Eat this; avoid eating that. Conduct yourself thus; do not conduct yourself like that. Speak thus; do not utter that.’ In this manner, God holds his hand and saves him from falling.*

God alone is the bridge; and He alone is the walking-stick to help walk on the bridge. The bridge is there; and there is the walking-stick too. But what if one does not have the strength to walk? Well, this strength too is granted by God alone. It is He who provides nourishment to the body. This physical body is composed of five elements (viz., earth, water, fire, air and space/ether). The body is nurtured via these five elements and needs nourishment in the form of food, water, heat, air, and space. The mind needs nourishment in the form of love. The poet Raskhan has said –

‘जा घट प्रेम न संचरै, सो घट जान मसान’

That heart where love does not pervade, know that heart to be a cremation ground.

Ghosts and ghouls reside in the heart where there is no love. For the intellect, the food is *jnAna* (knowledge). God exists in the form of ***asti-bhAti-priya*** (Existence; Consciousness/Luminance; Love), in the hearts of all beings. By His nature of *asti* (existence), He provides *sattA* (beingness); by His nature of *bhAti*, He provides radiance and awareness; and as *priya*, he becomes *Ananda* (bliss) and nourishes all – ‘*sat-cit-Ananda*’. Were it not for the association with the collective, universal, *asti-bhAti-priya*, an individual’s life cannot proceed at all. Were it not for the universal ‘air’, how can an individual breathe at all?

Paramatma (Supreme-Self), pervades all three worlds, and provides nourishment to all. He never holds back on providing nourishment even in the face of our own unworthiness, as we continue making one *faux-pas* after another. We make mistakes in all that we do – be it walking, speaking, laughing, sitting etc. Even so, Paramatma does not stop providing us support and nourishment. Say, even though we do not pay the electricity bill, He does not cut off our electric supply. Even in the face of all negligence from our side, He does not neglect us. An infant may well beat his mother, scratch her, bite her; while the mother may give the infant a mild slap, she does not stop feeding the child milk. In the same manner, God never quits providing us nourishment.

Given that God is providing nourishment to all three worlds, does His treasury of nourishment get depleted? Is there an ‘outage’ or ‘power-cut’ in his supply of nourishment, in the manner of a stoppage of electricity supply? No! Not at all. God’s treasury does not diminish at all, being *avyayaH* – imperishable, by nature. There is no fear that his treasury may get looted, stolen, for He, Ishvara, is the Lord of all places, all time, all things.

(Purushottam Yog : p 212-214)

When your view aligns with the Master's view, there is pure bliss everywhere

[Note:

This discourse is in the context of the following verse of Gita:

त्वमक्षरं परमं वेदितव्यं त्वमस्य विश्वस्य परं निधानम्।
त्वमव्ययः शाश्वतधर्मगोप्ता सनातनस्त्वं पुरुषो मतो मे॥11.18॥

You are the Imperishable, the Supreme One to be known. You are the great treasure-house of this universe; you are the imperishable one; you are the protector of the eternal Dharma; you are the Supreme, Everlasting Person. This is my belief.]

Be alert to one thing. Do you have a difference of view with that of God, or is your mind aligned with His? Are your thoughts/opinions in accord with that of Ishvara? Is the disciple's experience in accord with the experience of his Guru, or is it otherwise? Is your view in accord with that of Ishvara, or is it not? If you are alert to this one thing, all your sorrows will be erased.

In *jnAna* (knowledge), if you maintain a different view from that of God, then your *jnAna* is false. In love, if you nurture your love as something that is apart from God's love, then your love will not be lasting. If you try to catch hold of any entity other than God, you will not succeed. Do deliberate on your reasonings.

Have you wondered how this world looks in Ishvara's eyes? If you start seeing this world in the same way as it is seen by God, then your 'seeing' is true. And if you are unable to see this world in the same way as seen by God, then your eyes are beholding an absolutely incomplete world; it is not true seeing.

Come, let us mingle our eyes with that of Ishvara and behold the world.

July 18

The Lord said – *“Arjuna! I see that this whole universe is but my form alone.”*

Arjuna said – “Yes, O Lord! Indeed, this whole universe is your form!”

Ishvara – *“Then what is there to fear, O Arjuna? When birth, life and death are all forms of Ishvara alone; when ‘being’ and ‘non-being’ are both but different forms of Ishvara, then what do you fear? Losing what causes you anguish? Why fear death? Why the enchantment of the present moment, which is but a changing thing?”*

When one’s vision settles on God, then, that vision drives away *shOka* (anguish), *mOha* (foolish enchantment; ignorance; bewilderment), and *bhaya* (fear) from one’s life. Look here! Unless you become free of *shOka*, *mOha* and *bhaya*, you will not be happy. And he who is not happy himself, cannot keep others happy. Therefore, it is imperative that you align your vision with that of God. God is indestructible; He is the protector of the everlasting *dharma*; He is the Supreme, everlasting person; the eternal *purusha* (in-dweller). Know Him as He really is; and see the world, the way He sees it. Let your view be in accord with the Master’s, and then notice that there is absolute peace everywhere, pure bliss everywhere!

(Gita Darshan 9 – Chapter 11 : p 54-55)

Enough-enough sir! Say no further, I have recognized who you are!

The greatness of Bhakti (devotion) is that when it enters our hearts, it does not come alone; it brings the *bhajaneeya* (the deity that we are devoted to) along with it.

यस्यास्ति भक्तिर्भगवत्यकिञ्चना सर्वैर्गुणैस्तत्र समासते सुराः ।
हरावभक्तस्य कुतो महद्गुणा मनोरथेनासति धावतो बहिः ॥

(Srimad Bhagavatam 5.8.12)

The immortal deities and all their good qualities constantly dwell in one who has pure bhakti for Bhagavan. However, where are there any good qualities in the non-devotee who chases after external objects, driven by his whims and fancies.

What are the signs by which one may recognize a man in whose heart *bhakti* has arisen? Firm faith and devotion to Ishvara; faith in some inconceivable, infinite, divine, unseen force; having *jnAna* (knowledge) of it, remembrance of it, and love for it – these and such are the signs. Even as such devotion rises in the heart of a devotee, all *devatA-s*¹² come to him, bringing their noblest of qualities. They come not just to see and interact with the devotee, but also to enable him to see and interact with them.

सर्वैर्गुणैस्तत्र समासते सुराः – also implies that the ears begin to listen to good things, the eyes see good things, the nose inhales good fragrances, the tongue speaks good words, the feet walk to good places, the hands do good work – i.e., our life becomes filled with virtuous qualities.

हरावभक्तस्य कुतो महद्गुणा मनोरथेनासति धावतो बहिः – How can virtuous qualities enter the life of those who do not have *bhakti* towards Bhagavan? Such people indulge in groupism, partisanship, whereas God does not do that. Indeed, God is the *sarvAtmA*, the in-dweller/Self of all Creation.

12 Immortal deities such as Surya, Agni, Vayu etc., who

Goswami Tulasidas says : “*sarva sarvagata sarva urAlai*” – God is All; He is all pervading, and He abides in the heart of one and all. When devotion to such a God arises in one’s heart, then *sparddhA* (rivalry), *asUyA* (maliciousness), *tiraskAr* (contemptuousness), and *abhimAn* (pride/egoism) – these four defects quickly cease. *tiraskAr* is that attitude which makes us feel a sense of superiority; it is that which makes us scornfully tell someone - ‘Get away, you lowdown wretch!’

There is a story about the great sage, Jagadguru Sri Adi Shankaracharya¹³. One day, the Acharya was on his way to the temple after bathing in Ganga. Suddenly, seeing a *chAndAla* (an outcaste) and his four dogs coming his way, he told him – ‘*dooram gaacha*’ – ‘move away; keep a distance!’. Upon this, Lord Shiva, who was in the heart of the *chAndAla*, asked Shankaracharya – “To whom are you saying ‘move away’? Do you want this *dEha* (physical body) to move away or the *dEhee* (the living being who abides in the body)? The physical body, mine and yours, is but an *annamaya-kOsha* (sheath of foodstuff); it is made of the elements – earth, water, fire etc., and is the same for all people. Then again, as far as the *dEhee* (living being/Atma) is concerned, there is no distinction at all; it is but one. That being the case, who do you want to move away?” Then the Acharya’s eyes opened. He looked at the *chAndAla* and said – ‘Enough-enough sir! Say no further, I have recognized who you are!’

(Gita mein bhakti-jnAn samanvay : p 33-34)

13 *Adi Shankaracharya was a manifestation of Lord Shiva. This particular story relates to the Leela enacted by Lord Shiva and his own manifestation as Adi Shankaracharya, to convey the teaching that the Paramatman (Pure Consciousness) is same within all beings regardless of bodily distinctions. The teaching is encapsulated in the poem ‘Maneesha Panchakam’, composed by the Acharya on that occasion.*

Essence of right conduct

In terms of our conduct, there are just two points to be kept in mind, and they are quite simple too.

While speaking, take care that if some bitter thoughts arise in mind, you do not voice them. As much as possible, do not speak untruth. Or else your conduct will be contaminated. If truth is such that it is not proper to voice it, then do not speak it. Do not be adamant that 'I shall speak the truth, come what may.' That is not correct. Alongside truth, one should also keep in mind that what you say should be agreeable and well-disposed. Do speak the truth, but ensure that what you speak is beneficial. Do not speak untruth or unwholesome things.

So, be truthful in your speech; speak that which is beneficial; speak that which is pleasant to hear; speak in a measured manner, briefly; and speak that which is appropriate to the occasion. May truth, happiness and knowledge manifest in your speech. Whoever listens to your words should feel happy. Whoever listens to it should gain in terms of knowledge or understanding. Good conduct should be impelled in the life of whoever listens to you. May your words not have violence. May it not be dividing; may it be non-partisan. Thus, the essence of right conduct is that your words should be refined. Your words should have humility and softness. If a situation demands you to speak some harsh words, then ensure that it is said for a good outcome; your speech should be well-disposed. When a doctor does a surgery, he does so for your well-being. May your words not be devoid of wholesomeness. May your conduct become pure.¹⁴

And then there is another thing, a bit difficult; but it is something that you experience.

If you wish to send someone to his death, then your conduct is wrong. If you wish to keep someone immersed in the darkness of ignorance, then your conduct is wrong. If you wish to cause pain to someone, your

14 *Paramatma (God) is of the nature of Truth, Happiness, Knowledge, and Non-duality (sat, cit, Ananda, advaya). Maharajshree is pointing out that Paramatma should manifest in your speech and in your thoughts. (Swami Govindananda Ji, in his exposition on this discourse in YouTube)*

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conduct is wrong. If you wish to break something, create a rift between, say, a married couple, or between brothers, or between a father and a son etc., then your conduct is wrong.

It is not that one needs to be overcareful regarding one's day-to-day conduct. All you have to do is to take care of just two things, two simple things. One, your thinking should be correct; and two, your speech should be correct. If you manage to imbibe these two traits in your day-to-day life, then the whole of your conduct becomes proper. Your wealth will become good; your political-party, community, religion, country, and the whole of humanity will become good, if only you take care not to spoil your mind, and keep your speech good.

Note that when your speech is contaminated, it does not affect the other person; rather, it is your own tongue that gets defiled. If you wish to cause losses to someone, then it is your own heart that will be inflicted with losses. Your heart, which is the most valuable of all your treasures, will become dirty.

May you imbibe this teaching's essence in your life.

(Ishanubhuti – p 93-95)

God's Grace

When a farmer sees a sapling drying up and shrivelling, he gives special attention to it; he gives manure, water, medication to it, nurtures it diligently, and makes it grow. God too does likewise. Just as He loves devotees who are healthy in their practice of devotion, His Grace is also extended to those who become ill from the point of view of spirituality. A mother does not care for and nourish only her healthy child; she also takes care of her sick child. Likewise, God's showers His compassion on one and all.

God's compassion does manifest in man's life. And, indeed, it can be recognized that God's grace has fallen on such-and-such person. If a man starts singing God's name, reciting His name – then know that his link with God has been established. If we start contemplating on the meanings of God's names, start meditating, offer worship, then it signifies that the link of our life has become connected with God.

Baba's benevolence

Let me tell you about the benevolence of sages. Once, a *sEth* (rich merchant) came to Udiya Baba's ashram, hung his coat in Baba's cottage and went away somewhere. It so happened that there was some hundred rupees or more in his coat, and someone stole it. Baba's devotees felt very bad that such thievery could happen in Baba's cottage itself; it was so scandalous. Paying immediate attention, they managed to search for and nab the person who had stolen the money. It turned out that the thief was an employee of the Ashram. While the *sEth* got his money back, the devotees dragged the thief to Baba, and told Baba – "Maharaj! Please dismiss this man from the Ashram." Maharaj replied – "Do you think that this Ashram alone is mine? Is the earth not mine? Hey, this man is ignorant; let me be the one to leave the Ashram. Let this fellow remain here; all of you can remain here – with pleasure. I shall go!"

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People were stunned! Baba was saying that the whole of Creation was His – *'Wherever this fellow resides, he will be living in my Creation! He is in my heart, my mind. So what if he is a thief?'*

You probably realize the effect of these words on the thief. Think! Will the thief not feel as if a hundred pots of water have been poured on his head? Has he been cleansed or not? Yes, his heart was cleansed completely.

(Maanav Jeevan aur Bhagavat Dharam : p 180, 193)



God protects!

There was this friend of mine, a spiritual leader who hailed from Sindh. Once, he had come to Vrindavan along with some 100/150 of his followers. After their visit, they left by train. During the rail journey, the train halted at a small station, where the stop was scheduled for just three minutes. At that time, suddenly a voice spoke up from within his heart, impelling him to get off the train. Obeying that voice, he got down and told all his followers to get off the train within the three minutes of scheduled halt. He told them – “I have an inner prompting that all of us should sit in the waiting-room of this station and have a *satsang*¹⁵. After having a *satsang* of three hours or so, let us have our meals etc., and then proceed by the next train.” All the devotees disembarked from the train promptly. Narayan! When this train left from the station, even before reaching the next station it had an accident and overturned. Now, who prompted my friend to get off the train? It was not as if God had told him that the train will have an accident. What God said was – ‘*Get off the train here, and have a satsang. Discuss about me.*’ In this manner, God prompted His remembrance, and saved the whole group from a disaster.

*

In Vrindavan, there was a renowned sage, Kokil Sai. Once, one of his devotees asked him – “While cooking, when we are adding salt to a dish, a voice from within tells us – *add this much of salt, and the dish will be fine*. Whose voice is it?” Sai replied - “That is Ishvara’s voice. He abides inside. This knowledge, as to how much salt to add to which dish, is given by Ishvara who exists within you. If the in-dweller Ishvara does not share this knowledge; if He does not spread light on things; then the whole world will be rendered blind. No one will be able to comprehend anything at all. He who provides ‘eyes’, abides within us.”

*

Once, a friend of mine went to Gomukh (the source of River Ganga), which is beyond Gangotri. When he stepped into the icy waters

15 *Satsang : a gathering of people, in which spiritual reflection, discussion, meditation, teaching or other spiritual activity takes place.*

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of Ganga to have a bath, an inner voice told him to not stand next to the river bank, but to go further into the river stream, away from the shore. Obeying the voice, he walked in deeper into the waters. Suddenly he saw a humungous slab of ice, several tonnes in weight, sliding down the glacier and flowing swiftly in his direction. Convinced that death was upon him, he closed his eyes and bowed his head. His deep faith in God made him open his eyes and glance up again, and he saw the ice-slab break into two when it was just a few feet away from him. One part of the slab passed him to his left, and the other to his right. And he stood there in between, safe and sound. He could see how God had protected him. His profound experience made him realize how God protects man from even the gravest of dangers.

(Purushottam Yog : p 149-150)



Three things to remember when you have *darshan of Ishvara*

In my childhood, a Mahatma told me three *sUtra*-s¹⁶ that I should remember when I attained darshan of Ishvara.

1. Is Ishvara impelling you towards *vairAgya* (non-attachment) or towards *rAga-dvEsha* (attachments and aversions)? Know that when Ishvara is pleased, He drives you towards *vairAgya*, makes you inward looking; whereupon Ishvara's grace and guidance is palpably upon you.
2. Has your vision of Ishvara been along the lines of that which has been described in the Shastra-s, or has it been along the lines of your own fancy? If the vision is in accordance with your own conceptualization, then it means that your own *vAsanA* (innate predisposition of the mind) is mixed up in that vision. Elimination of *vAsana* can happen only by Shastraic methods. By worldly methods, *vAsana*-s can only be nourished, agitated. Refinement, perfection, is brought about only by Shastraic means. And so, if people say that they will decide on their do's-and-don'ts, food, medicine etc., based on the way of animals, then it is wrong. An idol of *shAlagrAma* stone, of Radha-Krishna, is made only by Shastraic means of carving and consecration. As far as man-woman attraction/love is concerned, it is brought about by natural tendencies and agitations. However, the love of God, Guru's *deekshA*¹⁷, the study of Shastra-s, *satsanga* etc., are all brought about only by the dawning of appropriate *bhAvanA* (state of mind, faith, attitude, feelings). What needs to be seen is this – is your 'experience' of God-vision in accordance with Shastra or is it opposed to it? If your emotional-experience is compliant with Shastraic

16 *sUtra*: Axiom, rule, expressed concisely

17 *deekshA*: A Guru's initiation of a disciple by means of touch or by imparting a mantra or by his mere glance.

methods of spiritual progress, then it is based on God's grace. Whereas, if your experience is opposed to Shastra, then such an experience is not conducive to your spiritual progress; it is not God's grace.

3. For God realization, rather than the physical body and knowledge given by your parents, the body given by the Guru, and the knowledge/sentiments/ideas given by your Guru are far more valuable. The Guru cleanses you and prepares you as a *jijnAsu* (seeker of knowledge); he prepares you to relate to God as His friend, servant, spouse, child etc. If you proceed towards God on the strength of these mental impressions imparted by your Guru, then you will attain true God-realization.

Narayan! Any seeker who adheres firmly to these three rules described above, will find curtain after curtain inside his heart/mind getting lifted; and 'That' (Supreme-Reality) which is inside, will progressively emerge outside. Srimad Bhagavatam has declared that one gets to see the divine form of God; and one gets to converse with God. All these things happen. However, for the person who is not firm in his adherence to this path, the great secret (Supreme-Reality) within him will not emerge and manifest as an actual realization and experience.

And so, my friend! Know that there is nothing impossible to be attained by a seeker who blazes ahead in the path of *sAdhanA* (spiritual practice).

(Purushottam Yog : p 151-153)

‘May we attain goodness in every way’ – thus the Vedas say

The Veda says – *‘May our babies not fall ill; may we complete our full life of allotted years and not die early; may our cattle, horses, elephants not fall sick...’* Why do the Veda-s pray thus?

The intent behind this prayer is that you may develop faith in an Ishvara. To the Ishvara who is prayed to, if your heart develops faith, then, your mind, which is wandering here and there in worldly pursuits will attain some steadiness, some anchorage. Let those advanced spiritual-seekers who are free of desires, remain so. The Veda has prayers for fulfilment of desires too. And why is that? It is to take you closer to God. By bestowing faith in God, rather than on others, you become closer to God. Thus, faithful dependence on God for the fulfilment of our worldly desires is also a valid way to come closer to God.

The Veda-s also prescribe rules on how one should maintain one’s physical body. There are injunctions – *‘Eat this; drink this...’* Only if you keep your body in good health can you dwell on the inquiries of Vedanta. For Self-realization, the realization of the Supreme-Reality, a healthy body and mind is a prerequisite. The Veda says that you can gain proximity to God only if your character is pure. Veda also asks you to get married. Well, the Veda says that the agitations of passion and lust need to be pacified, and if you do not get married, there are a thousand unethical ways in the world for fulfilling your desires, and who knows where all you will stray – resulting in your fall and destruction. And so, it is better that you get tied to one place by marriage, and that too is for the purposes of attaining God-realization alone.

Right! The Veda has also prescribed – *‘Earn money by honest means. Do not gamble.’* If you gamble, a day may come when you will lose all that you have earned. Any and all activities that are of a sensational or agitational nature are prohibited by the Veda. For what reason, pray? So that your mind may remain peaceful. The Veda says – *‘do not inflict violence on anybody’*. For what reason, pray? Because, this too is a means

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for attaining God. If you become angry and resort to violence, then all the fount of peace that you have gathered in your heart by means of your spiritual practice will be destroyed by your anger. Therefore, the Veda has asked us to eschew anger.

Veda is there for changing one's disorderliness into refined conduct. Veda is there for purifying our body and mind. It is for stoking a special feeling that one is worthy of being a human – the conviction that *'being blessed with a human birth, we should definitely strive to attain God.'* It is for this that the Veda speaks of worldly humanness.

The main point is that the Veda's prescriptions are for the purposes of our attainment of goodness in every way, so that we progress towards the path of God-realization.

(Purushottam Yog : p 166-167)



Only by giving it away does wealth provide happiness

Mythreyi : If we obtain this whole earth, full of all its abundant riches, will we attain immortality?

Yajnavalkya : All that will happen is that your life may become similar to the lives of those people who are all endowed with abundance of wealth and property. However, if anyone wishes to attain immortality by means of wealth, the wish is absolutely useless.

Look here! Here, by wealth, it does not imply desires such as – may I get a house, may I get a car, may I get good food, good dresses etc. Let me tell you the real meaning and purpose of wealth.

Wealth is not a *purushArtha*¹⁸ (goal of life) by itself. It is not something that one desires to have for its own sake. It is when we put money to work, give it to someone else, that the money gives us some pleasure/happiness. Without *tyAga* (giving it away), wealth can never give you any happiness.

(From a worldly perspective) If you desire to own a particular Saree, you have to give money to the shopkeeper and buy it. If you wish to eat some spicy snacks, you have to give money to some vendor who sells it. It is only by *tyAga* (giving up), that wealth gives happiness. By mere accumulation, wealth does not ever give happiness. Accumulation of wealth only adds to one's own sense of vanity. Do think about this.

If you don't spend money, will that money (that you have) give any happiness to your son? And, if your son too does not spend the money that he earns or inherits, the money he has will not give him any happiness. Money is such a thing that gives happiness only upon the act of giving it away. It has no other way of giving you happiness. Whether you wish to eat some snacks, give money to a courtesan, get a customized car made for you, build a house, wear fashionable suits and boots – you

18 There are four *purushArtha*-s (goals of life) – viz., *dharma* (live righteously), *artha* (earn wealth), *kAma* (fulfil one's desires), and *mOksha* (attain liberation)

need to spend money. Unless you hand it out, will your money give you happiness? *It won't, it won't, it won't!* Rather, it will only add to your anxieties. Police may come after you, thieves may come to rob you, your own family members may eye your money. People of the world will become your opponents (who wish to seize your money).

तेन त्यक्तेन भुञ्जीथा मा गृधः कस्य स्विद्धनम् ॥
(ईशावास्योपनिषत्)

tena tyaktena bhu~njlthA mA gR^idhaH kasya sviddhanam ||
By giving up that (wealth), enjoy. Do not covet anybody's wealth
(for whose is wealth?).

(Ishavaya Upanishad)

Look. What we have conveyed to you is the settled-theory about wealth as declared by the Upanishad. If you ask – “Surely one can enjoy worldly pleasures by having money?”, the answer is – “Brother mine! Even that is enabled only by giving up (the money needed to buy that experience). You give money to get something from a shopkeeper, you give bribes to some officer to relieve you from some predicament etc. Whatever it is, all this is an act of giving away money. Without relinquishment, money is incapable of giving you happiness. Money lying idle in a locker is a different thing. Money lying in a locker will give you fear for sure; anxiety, for sure; panic, for sure. But it cannot give you happiness.

(Brihadanyakopaniṣad : p 119–113)

It is by *tyAga* that *amR^itatva* (deathlessness) is attained

Question : Is the usefulness of wealth restricted to attaining worldly happiness alone?

Answer : No, its usefulness is not that alone. It has a far greater use. If you hand out money in a Shastraic way, then that *parityAga* (giving of money) can give you even heaven. For instance, you may give out money for performing a *yajna* (ritual fire-sacrifice); you may do *dAna* (donate to worthy people or causes); do *dharma* (use your money for performing righteous deeds); or help poor people.

Most people have the view that poor people alone are entitled to receive *dAna*. Actually, this view is far from correct. This view is based on some foolishness.

We people are from old-school thinking, and so we view all matters from an orthodox perspective. If a very poor man alone is entitled to receive money given as charity, then what about another man who is engaged in some higher contemplations; who is involved in some deep study, and contemplating on some subtle and undiscovered principle of the universe. If such a man is forced to work for wages, or be a shopkeeper, and put up with insults in order to earn his livelihood...If he is forced to listen to ridicule and abuse; or become a prey to deep anxiety on facing monetary losses in his business; then he can no longer engage in his higher contemplations. Whereupon, it is a great loss to the whole universe; and to all mankind. May that day never dawn in the universe, where the world becomes bereft of pure thinkers, or men of great scholarship.

A person who is a scholar of Veda-vidya is engaged in contemplation on matters which affect humanity; on what is for man's good, and what is not good for man. To give *dAna* (charity) to such a scholar gives rise to *dharma*. Thus, *dharma* gives you happiness not only in this *IOka* (mortal world), but also in *paraIOka* (the higher worlds). By happiness of *paraIOka* is meant that happiness which transcends the joys of this outer world; you will be happy even in your inner, subtle, world.

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So, we have seen that it is only by *tyAga* that one gets worldly happiness. Unless you open your fist and hand out your money, you cannot get *dhArmic* happiness. And until the time you do not renounce the very thought of money, you will not attain *adhyAtmic* (inner/mental) happiness. Therefore, it is by *tyAga* alone that one attains deathlessness.

Now, Mythreyi told Yajnavalkya : *'Maharaj! You are going away to attain deathlessness; and are leaving us here in this world of death. (Please know this!) Any object, on attaining which I do not attain deathlessness, that thing – wealth – I will not accept. I have no need for it. That deathlessness which you are set to attain, I too wish to attain that same state of deathlessness.*

Our aim is jnAna (Self-Knowledge) alone. I too should attain the same mindset and experience as what you have attained. May my mind become completely one with yours.'

(Brihadaranyakopanishad : p 114-115)

Our pure and supremely holy state of being!

I shall tell you something now, which was told to me by a Mahatma during my childhood.

Let us say that I was seized by anger, and I felt that my anger was for a correct reason; it was quite proper and justified.

By God's Grace, an hour or two elapsed; and I realized that my anger was actually wrong. Why then did I feel that my anger was quite proper, when it arose first?

Actually, at that time my nature had assumed the form of anger. In other words, my 'Self' had got mixed up with that flight of anger, and the 'Self', being ever-pure and proper, makes whatever it identifies with seem quite proper. When this 'Self' connects with a friend (i.e., as '**my**' friend), then the friend seems wonderful. When the 'Self' connects with some desire, then that desire seems proper and nice, etc. Actually, the goodness or correctness of a thing is not in that thing. It is in the Self that gets mixed up with that thing. Thus, goodness is not in *kAma* (desire), nor *krOdha* (anger), nor *lObha* (greed), nor *mOha* (attachment/delusion), nor in friends, nor enemies, nor *dEvatA*-s (deities), nor even in *vaikunthanAtha* (Vishnu, the Lord of Vaikuntha). Any object that we mix up our 'I' with, appears to be proper and nice in our view. This same fact is applicable to our body and mind too. When we mix up our Self with the body, then all the relatives, associations and afflictions of the body become 'mine'. When we mix up the Self with the mind, then all the thoughts therein become 'mine'.

If, sometime, the sense of clear discrimination dawns in us, and we manage to separate our 'I' (Self) from all else, then such entities with whom we identified our 'Self' with earlier – their death is not our death; their remaining alive is not our being alive; their goodness is not our goodness; their badness is not our badness.

In Sanskrit, the word '*vivikta*' has two meanings – separated/isolated and pure/holy. That alone is pure/holy, which is all by itself – having been separated from all else. And that which is mixed with

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something else, is contaminated. When we mix up our 'Self' with some object, person, body, mind, or some situation, then we become impure.

When we disassociate ourself from everything else, and isolate our Self in such a manner that we realize our non-dual 'beingness' – i.e., that there is nothing at all which is apart from our Self – then that is our pure, supremely-holy, state of being.

Vedanta declares – *'There is only You. Nothing exists apart from you. In waking-state, there exists You alone; in dream-state there exists You alone; in deep-sleep there exists You alone; in samAdhi-state (state of absorption) there exists You alone; in Vaikuntha, heaven, or hell, there exists You alone. Wherever you see, there exists You and You alone! There is no second being.'* This is the teaching of Vedanta.

(Brihadaranyakopanishad : p 175-177)



mukhiyA mukh sO chAhiyE!
(Leader should be like the mouth!)

There is one such thing, upon knowing which all becomes known. The Shruti has stated – *There is one substance – which if you see, hear, inquire into, experience – then, all has been seen, heard, inquired into and experienced.*

If asked – ‘What exactly is all this *dR^ishya* (the world that we see)?’, your response may be – ‘*Let it be whatever it may be!*’ (i.e., it is *mithyA* – illusory. So, why bother about what it is?)

No! You should not dismiss this question and say ‘*Let it be whatever it may be!*’

(*As a seeker wishing to attain knowledge of the Self*) This too should be sought, inquired into, experienced...This too should be known... As to what this world really is.

Actually, men of knowledge frown upon the attitude of ‘*Let it be whatever it may be!*’. If that is the approach that you wish to adopt, then where is your intellect? Where is your sense of discrimination (between the real and unreal; and the eternal and temporal)? Where is your own inquiry? Where is your personal experience? ‘

Listen! When you attain Self-knowledge, then you will know that this whole universe is not in the least apart from your own Self. ‘*sarvam yadayamAtmA*’ – *All this is Parameshwara (God-Supreme); all this Paramatma (The Self, Supreme).*

A King of a country looks to do good for his whole country. A leader of a province cares for the good of the people of his province alone. A certain householder may be such that he thinks that his ‘I’, his body, and his ‘likes’ alone are the most important. And another householder may be such that he cares for everyone in the family.

So, what is the way of the world?

There was an elder in our village, ripe in years. He was a disciple of my grandfather. He was seventy-five years old and I was sixteen. He would drop into our house occasionally, and speak to me about many things.

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I once asked him – ‘Yours is a joint-family of 80 members! You are all living together as one. How is it that you have not broken up? How are you able to make this work as a single family?’

He told me – ‘*Maharaj! The day when even one child in the family has to remain without food, I too do not eat anything at all.*’

मुखिया मुखु सो चाहिऐ खान पान कहूँ एक – ‘*mukhiya mukh sO chAhiyE khan pAn kahun Ek*’ – Meaning - A leader should be like the mouth. The mouth consumes food all alone; but, with a sense of discernment, it provides nourishment to all parts of the body.

So, what one is saying is this...

There exists nothing at all that is apart from the Self. By attaining knowledge of the Self, one attains knowledge of everything.

(Brihadaranyakopnishad : p 142-148)



Without becoming a bonds slave you cannot make someone your subject!

Any instrument becomes a *pramANa* (means of knowledge) only when it throws light on some unknown matter. As regards this Atma (Self); this much is known, that it exists; one knows this much, that 'I am'. But whether this Self is sinful or virtuous; happy or sad; or is it completely unconnected with sin/virtue, happiness/sorrow; is it purely a witness alone; is it a witness of just one body-mind or is it a *sarvAtmA* (the Self of all)? Now, all these things about the Self are not known.

The invaluable-ness of Vedanta is indeed in this, that it tells us:

‘सर्वं यदयं आत्मा’ – *All that exist, are all but one's own Self*. This *sarvAtmabhAva* (abidance in this knowledge of the All-ness of the Self), does not come about easily to anyone.

The Upanishad tells us that – ‘Other than you, there exists no other thing at all.’ In other words, Upanishads have come about only to tell us that ‘*Indeed, you alone are all!*’ In order to realize this truth, one has to disengage one's mind from small things; one has detach one's Self.

It is for this reason that Shastra-s have raised a question – ‘For attaining *tattvajnAna* (knowledge of supreme-reality), is *tyAga* (renunciation) needed at all or not?’

Notice this! Whenever you remain holding on to some small object, your mind will be constantly thinking about that very object. For acquiring a bigger object, it is necessary to let go of the smaller object.

Say, we announce – ‘Look! I have got hold of this handkerchief, and am keeping it in the confines of my fist.’ Now, yes. Indeed, everyone understands that the kerchief is in our fist. But we do not pause to think that we too are now tied with that kerchief. We are bound with it.

This is the state of the world. If a person establishes control over another person, he too ends up being subject to the control of the other person. Without becoming a bonds slave you cannot make someone your subject!

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If you wish to tie up some wooden sticks with a rope, do you think that the sticks alone are tied up? No! When the sticks are tied up, the rope too gets tied to the sticks.

Thus, where there is any association with duality, along with that association there is bondage for sure.

(Brihadaranyakopanishad : p 108-110)



Realization of the Ultimate Truth!

Who or what is Parameshwara? On this question, if the viewpoint of Veda-Vedanta is not clarified, then no one may get a true understanding of who (or what) is Ishvara (Lord Almighty).

In this world, there are many great religions, for sure. But there is a distinction between these and the philosophy enunciated in the Veda. While other religions believe in the existence of God, they believe God to be existing somewhere up there, in seventh heaven, abiding distinct from Creation. They believe that God is formless, and that He never manifests with any form. In contrast, as per the Vedic philosophy, God is the potter – i.e., the Creator (of the pot) – as well as the clay (that the pot is made of). When one understands that the building-material and the builder are undifferentiated (i.e., the material cause and the intelligent/instrumental cause of the universe are one and the same), then one realizes that it is God who is manifesting Himself in the form of the cosmos. It is God who has manifested Himself as *sR^shTi* (Creation). When you accept this doctrine as true, then, you cognize God as being present everywhere; and in the realization of reality, one attains realization of the ultimate truth.

Look here. Unless God is not present at all times, his worship is not possible at all times. Do not be under the illusion that, by your own strength, you will begin seeing God everywhere. This mental push of yours will not serve any purpose – we (sages) know this. Where is such strength in your mind that you can push it to connect to God at all times?

Secondly, if God were not present in all places, then, by your own mental power, will you be able to constantly think of God at all places? No, you won't be able to!

Thirdly, if God were not present in the form of all, then, by your own mental power, would you be able to constantly remember that All are (forms of the One) Paramatma, Supreme-Self?

The reality is that Paramatma is present at all places, at all times, and as all forms. This has to be cognized and carefully understood, once and for all. Just as different ornaments of gold, such as a necklace, or a bangle, or an earring, are all but objects of gold...Once that is cognized, then it

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is good...However, if this gold is not recognized, then one will see all as different objects, and the poor fellow (who is seeing multiplicity) will be destroyed as a consequence.

If God is recognized, carefully, but once; then wherever we go, whatever we see, whatever we speak, and whatever we do – everywhere, at all times, in all forms – day and night – one is offering devotion to God. When one is alive, all is God; when one dies, also, all is God! In this world, all is God; and in the worlds hereafter, also, all is God!

(Adhyatma Ramayana : p6, text 18,19)



Three layers of sorrow

One day, in Kashi, I went to the house of a Panditji, who was known to me before. When I went there, he had gone out somewhere. Mataji (Panditji's wife) alone was there at home. I was meeting her after a gap of some seven or eight years. And sometime in the interim, she had lost a son, young in years. No sooner did she see me than she just burst into tears. After some time, she remembered the wedding of another son of hers, which too happened in the interim years. And telling me all about it, she was smiling in happiness. After that, the topic turned to the forthcoming wedding of her daughter, and signs of anxiety started showing on her face... This then is the state of mind of people nowadays. There is no orderly sequence, no consistency, no deep deliberation... It just spills about like random ripples in a dirty pond.

When it comes to sorrow, the reality is that our sorrow can be overcome only by our own self. No other person can overcome it for us. That is because sorrow is not outside the body or pertaining to the body. It is inside the mind. There, the only medicine that can be effective is the '*tonic of reasoning*'.

Sorrow has three layers.

The first is: '*The causes/instruments of sorrow*'.

The evil and materialistic people of the world are busy putting their heart and soul in trying to overcome/eliminate anything that causes distress. But the reality is this. The total eradication of the causes of sorrow is absolutely impossible. Heat/cold, disease/death, poverty/insult etc., have always existed in the world and they will always be there. Hoping to annihilate these and live happily thereafter is merely a dream, far removed from reality. This is a design that generations after generations of people have tried, but could never accomplish; and, indeed, never will it be accomplished.

The second layer of sorrow is: '*Thought-forms of sorrow*'.

As regards the people who are engrossed in tackling the first layer of sorrow, trying to fight the everchanging causes of sorrow – such people will find it impossible to stop the flow of sorrowful thoughts. To

prevent thought-forms of sorrow from surfacing in the mind is possible only for such people who are devoted to renunciation, and are free of all attachments. These people, by means of *bhagavat-smaraNa* (constant remembrance of God) or *yOgAbhyAsa* (controlling the mind by the fruition of the practice of Yoga), render their thought-forms constantly filled with God, or silence the mind.

The third layer of sorrow is: *dukhAbhimAn* (identifying with sorrow). Do not, under any circumstances, allow the association of your Self with sorrow. Do not ever think that – ‘*I am in distress*. This approach is easy and practical for every contemplative person. It is our acceptance of sorrowfulness that gives a platform for sorrow to exist. Resorting to courage, one should totally reject sorrow (as being nothing to do with our Self). In reality, there is not even a trace of sorrow in our Self. Atma (Self) cannot be touched even by a shadow of sorrow. By means of *satsang*¹⁹ and *vichAra*²⁰, attaining knowledge of the pure nature of the Self is the sole means for total cessation of sorrow.

(Sadhana aur Brahmanubhuti : p 126-127)

19 *satsang: Engaging oneself in spiritual pursuits, by means of associating with spiritual people, discussing spiritual matters, listening to spiritual topics etc.*

20 *vichAra : Deep contemplation on what is the reality of one's Self, and that of all existence*

वृष्णात् परं किमपि
तत्त्वमहं न जाने ।
ऊर्वकः ॥ १०६ ॥

Swami Shree Prempuriji Maharaj

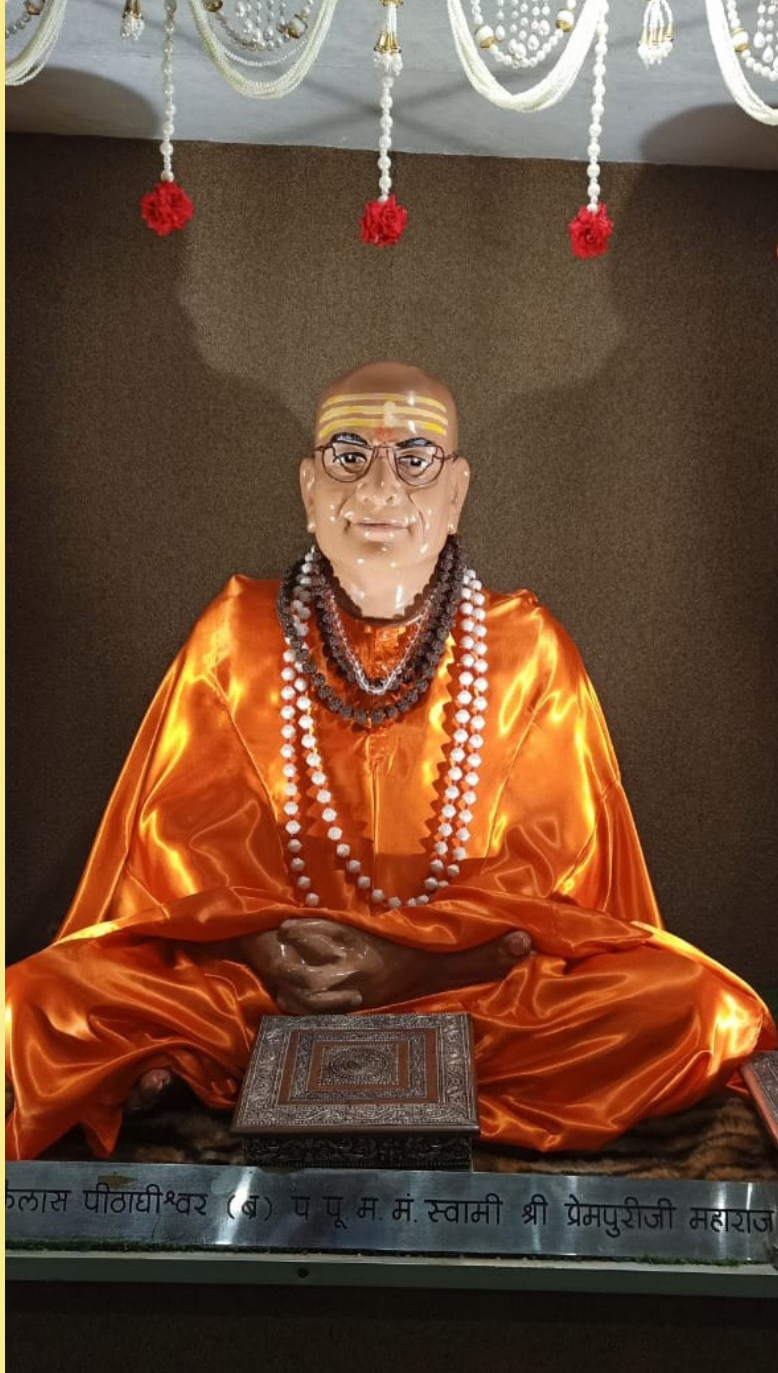
It was during the *daivi-sampad teerthayatra*, where we had chartered a special train for a pilgrimage across many parts of India... We reached Mumbai, where we had an invitation from *satsang* lovers of Premkutir, the Ashram of Swami Prempuriji Maharaj. Swami Shree Prempuriji himself came to receive us at the station, and we were all very happy to come to Premkutir. In the morning *satsang*, I too delivered a discourse. I shared a rendering of *tattvajñāna* (knowledge of divine truth) as seen from the point of view of Shankara-Vedanta, which was greatly liked by Swami Prempuriji. Swamiji delivered the Presidential address, and I was very pleased by his depth of thought and clarity of speech. Right from that time, we became very close.

I was distantly acquainted with him earlier, having met him once or twice. I had also heard that he was sometimes critical of people and would even scold them roundly. It was for this reason that I had been hesitant to go near him.

It was only when we became close and developed a heart-to-heart connection with each other that all the hearsay-based misunderstandings that I had been carrying earlier, vanished into thin air in the manner of camphor sublimating. Swamiji was of such a nature that even his anger was meant for the good of others; his admonishment had affection; his hardness had a fluidity, with hidden sweetness. He was surely a singular and clear-sighted *mahāpuruṣa*²¹. In merely a moment, he could test and assess any entity.

Swamiji knew well the greatness of renunciation and non-attachment. His grandfather had become a Sanyasi, and lived in Kashi. Till the age of eight, Swamiji lived with him, in his service, and also engaged himself in the pursuit of learning. Later, Swamiji acquired deep knowledge of Advaita-Vedanta from his *sadguru*, Shree Prakashananda Puriji Maharaj of Kailasa Ashram, Rishikesh. Even so, as the veil covering the Self remained unremoved, the intense yearning (for liberation) that gnawed him rendered him sleepless. He decided to remain without food for three days and then surrender his body into the waters of Ganga. On

21 *mahāpuruṣa: great man; great soul.*



Swamishree Prempuriji Maharaj

Prempuri Adhyatma Vidya Bhavan shrine, Mumbai

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the third day of his fasting, an old Sanyasi granny came to him. She had a shining face. Her voice, abounding with blessings, had a power that was majestic and impactful. In a deep, profound, tone, she conveyed an *upadEsha* (spiritual advice) : ‘... *Bondage is unreal; Atma (Self) is the (sole) unopposable Reality. Thoughts such as – ‘Liberation (mukti) is attained, or that it comes from elsewhere, or that it takes time to attain etc.,’ are all valid only if mukti is a separate object, far away, which takes time to attain. In reality, the Self, which is indicated by the absolute non-existence of bondage, is what is mukti.*

I shall come to you again. And when I come, you may show me ‘bondage’; and I will then show you ‘liberation’. The reality is this: All is You. Self is all. The difference of bondage and liberation is but an imaginary thing; it is not real at all.’

Having said this, the renunciate granny disappeared. And Swamiji’s eyes opened to the Truth and he experienced supreme peace.

Swamiji had firm faith in Upanishadic doctrine alone. As a person, he was bold and had a strong determination. Even in his old age, Swamiji’s personality had an unimpaired majesty and impact; and could instil faith and love in the hearts of others.

The life of a *jnAni* (Self-realized sage) works itself out as per the maxim of ‘*dagdha ratha nyAya*’ (the principle of the ‘burnt-out chariot’). During the course of the Mahabharata war, Arjuna’s chariot had been completely burnt by the fire-arrows of Karna. However, the chariot remained operative because it was being regulated by Sri Krishna. But when the war got over and Sri Krishna dismounted from the chariot after asking Arjuna to get down first, the chariot just collapsed in a heap of ashes. No chariot, no horses, no whip, no reins... The life of a *tattva-jnAni* proceeds in the manner of ‘*dagdha ratha nyAya*’. While the dawn of Self-realization burns down the doership and *karma* of a *jnAni* instantaneously, his life goes on by the effect of *prArabdha karma*²² (i.e., while the *jnAni* himself has no body-identification, doership or proclivities, his life goes on till *prArabdha karma* is exhausted). When the *prArabdha karma* is exhausted, the *jnAni*’s bodily life comes to an end.

(Pavan Prasang : p 94-102)

22 *prArabdha karma: The portion of karma that is destined to fructify in this very birth.*

Start a factory of *sadguNa*-s!

Upon failing in your attempt to control your *kAma-krOdha-IObha* (desires, anger and greed), if you turn around and say – ‘*Its ok! Let it be as it may!*’, it is but a sign of weakness of your mind. In one’s spiritual practice, one should not give any regard to such a thought. Malice towards a foe, affection for one’s friends, infatuation for one’s family – all these are defects, *durguNa* (bad qualities), which should be given up. But how is one to relinquish them? Very few people pause to think about this.

Truly, what you need to do is to make the following determinations:

- I will not trouble anyone
- I will not inflict violence by my thoughts, words, or actions
- I will not cause loss or injury to anyone

If you make such a determination, then, even if you occasionally become subject to anger or aversion, if you hold firmly to your principle of not causing harm to anyone, then there will no channel for your anger or aversion to go forth.

The first point is this... One should restrain one’s defects, bad qualities, from being carried out in action. If you feel a deep mental attachment to someone, then let it be. But do not allow that attachment to translate to partiality in your behaviour. Let not your affection impel you to grant some favour to your friend by dishonest means. Let not your attachment escalate to such an extent that for the sake of your friend, you engage in deceit, treachery etc., to cause losses to a third person. If we begin to grant undue favours to a friend, it means that our ‘attachment’ has set off on a bad path. So, we should make sure that we do not allow our attachments and aversions to lead us to bad ways.

The second point is that one should develop the power to swallow and digest the *kAma-krOdha-IObha* that may arise in the mind. (How does one make these digestible?) You should completely avoid bad qualities such as – *speaking ill of others, hearing bad things, and intentionally letting the mind indulge in bad thoughts...* Cook the defects of the mind and make it edible. For this, it is necessary to convert them into an edible form – make a jam (pickle) out of them; add a bit of sugar, a pinch of

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salt, and some ghee. Adding sugar implies that one should mix some sweetness into one's mind. Adding salt implies that one should sprinkle some laughter and light-heartedness into one's mind. Adding ghee implies that one should make the mind soft and smooth. Make your mind so soft that it becomes incapable of any sort of violence. It is only the hardened mind that indulges in violence. If the mind remains soft, how can it be violent towards anyone else?

Thirdly, if there is bitterness in the mind, give it the company of sweet people.

So, keep these three points in mind.

1. Let alone causing grievance to others, do not cause harm even to yourself. Harm not yourself, nor others.
2. (Cook, make a jam of, and) Digest the defects of your mind.
3. Whatever good qualities you lack, do borrow them by keeping the company of good people. Borrow virtues from others, and then learn how to manufacture these virtues in your own house, your mind. Multiply these virtues ten-fold and hundred-fold, and return them to the world around you. In your own house, start a factory of *sadguNa-s* (virtues).

(Vivek Kijiye : p 280,281)

May there be no animosity amongst us!

[Note:

The Shanti Mantras are prayers for Peace (Shanti) found in Upanishads. Also, they are usually recited at the beginning and end of religious rituals and discourses.

This essay of Maharajshree is a selection from his discourse on Kathopanishad, focusing on the final part of the Shanti Mantra of the Upanishad. The Shanti Mantra of that Upanishad is:

*OM saha nAvavatu | saha nau bhunaktu | sahavIryaM karavAvahai
| tejasvi nAvadhItamastu | mA vidviShAvahai ||*

Here, the teacher and the student pray together, that:

Om!

Together may we two be protected (in our studies)!

Together may we two enjoy (our studies)!

Together may we perform (our studies) with focus and vigour!

May what has been studied by us be filled with the brilliance of Knowledge!

May there be no animosity amongst us!

Om Peace, Peace, Peace.]

‘मा विद्विषावहे’ - May we not have animosity towards one another, for animosity is an act of arson. Indeed, *dvEsha* (animosity) has a very special aspect that the people who engage in *dvEsha* fail to understand. (Let’s understand that with an example) Take the case of a driver of a railway engine, a coal-fired steam engine. Even though he is inside the hot engine environment all the time, the driver does not even feel the heat. He has got so used to the heat that it means nothing to him anymore. Now, *dvEsha* (hatred) is a fire. What those who indulge in *dvEsha* do not understand is this: fire burns the fuel first, and only then does it heat or

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burn something else. A wood-stove burns the wood first, and then only heats the vessel containing water; and the water becomes hot only after that. Animosity is such a fire, which first burns the heart where it rises; it burns it to ashes. Ask yourself a question. Do you ever find your heart stoked with the fire of animosity towards another person? If the answer is yes, then before worrying about the person at whom your ire is directed, you should worry about your own self first, protect yourself from your own fire. It is for this reason that we are asked not to have *dvEsha* towards anybody else.

In order to attain *brahma-jnAna* (knowledge of Absolute Reality), to know the Paramatma (Supreme-Self) who abides in all hearts in the same manner, it is imperative for one to cleanse one's own heart and make it pure. Your heart is the most valuable of all treasures. If your heart is safe from contamination, then *dharma* (righteousness) will enter your heart; *bhakti* (devotion to God) will enter your heart; and so will *jnAna* (Self-knowledge). On the other hand, if your heart itself is burnt out, then how can all of these come your way? **The outer-body burns by fire; and the inner-body (mind) burns by animosity. Therefore, in order to protect your body, your *antaHkaraNa* (mind) and Atma (Self), you should keep your heart free of animosity.**

Thus it is, that there is the practice of saying 'Shanti' (Peace) thrice in the beginning of an Upanishad – '*Om shAntiH ! shAntiH !! shAntiH!! May our gross-body be at peace! May the subtle-body be at peace! May the causal-body be at peace!*'

By the gross-body being at peace, what is meant is this – *when you sit down to listen to an elucidation of Truth (e.g., listening to the Gita), or to deliver a discourse on Truth, then may you sit firmly. May you not fidget repeatedly; may you not look here and there; may you not chit-chat with others; may you not make gestures... (i.e., Sit in one position, avoid distractions).*

By the subtle-body being at peace, what is meant is – *do not send your mind shopping; do not send your mind to your neighbour's house... (i.e., focus your mind; avoid distractions totally).*

By the causal-body being at peace, what is meant is – *To annihilate the ajnAna (ignorance)²³ that the causal-body comprises, may you listen to this discourse on Truth with complete attention.*

Thereby, 'Om shAntiH ! shAntiH !! shAntiH!!'

Whereas, if the body is fidgety, the mind is restless, and when there is no desire to annihilate *ajnAna*, will listening to this discourse serve any purpose at all?

(Kathopanishad : p 11-12)



23 *ajnAna or avidyA – ignorance of the true nature of the Self and of the manifest universe.*

Obedience

One should deliberate on every *dharma* (action, as enunciated in the Shastra-s) as to how it helps in removing *ajnAna* (spiritual ignorance) and help in attainment of Self-Knowledge.

To act according to one's own *vAsanA* (proclivity / mental predisposition) is one thing. And it is another thing to act in obedience to the direction of some higher authority. In the case of a person who disobeys the instructions of elders, it is clear that the *vAsanA*-s (proclivities) in his mind are very strong. The evidence of such a state of mind is in his disinclination to obey the injunctions of Shastra (scriptures), God, Guru, or elders; acting according to the desires/*vAsaNa*-s arising in his own mind, and saying that 'I am self-governed'. Hey! He's not self-governed; rather, he is ungoverned, perverse. While you are not in the control of any other entity, you are not under your own control either. When your mind pushed you into a ditch, you willingly fell in.

When a man becomes unrestrained, his habits will gradually deteriorate. For instance... Your sense of discernment will tell you that 'do not make such-and-such statement'; but you will say it. You have made up your mind that you will not beat a certain person; yet, when you become angry, you may beat him. You may have made a resolve that you will not eat such-and-such thing; but when that thing comes to the table, you end up eating it. The intellect will say one thing, and the sense-organs will act to the contrary. This happens because you have not learnt obedience; you have learnt obstinacy, self-wilfulness. Now, you are under the control of your sense-organs. The mind of a person who acts in obedience to the directions of others will be under his self-control; whereas, he who is defiant to authority, disobedient to others, will be unable to have his mind under self-control. Therefore, for attaining *vAsanA-nivR^itti* (overcoming one's innate proclivities) and for *antaHkaraNa-shuddhi* (cleansing of one's mind and heart), obedience (to proper authority) is very necessary.

Note, however, that even in obedience there is a control-check. Let us say that your superior officer orders you to do something. Are you to obey that order or not? If such a question arises, then the test

to determine the answer is to ask whether the order is legal or not? Is the order constitutionally valid? If your superior officer issues an order asking you to do something, some auxiliary work, which is in violation of the constitution and the law, then such an order is not worthy of being obeyed. If you say that the officer will then dismiss you from service, then, brother, he who is a *dharmAtma* (man of virtue) will surely be *nirbhaya* (fearless).

So, the touchstone of obedience is this... That *vEdavAnI* (words of the Veda-s), which is *apaurushEya* (not of human conception); which is the divine, eternal 'Constitution', the eternal law... If the directive you are given is in conformance with the Vedavani, then it is fit to be obeyed; and that which is violative of the Vedavani, is not. Now, as regards the proper procedure and the purpose behind ancient customs and different *dharm*-s prescribed in the Veda-s, we²⁴ shall tell you.

Listen. This 'obedience' is of such a nature that it will, by itself, lead you to *tattvajñANa* (knowledge of Absolute Reality)²⁵ in the end. How? By this method, that by obeying the injunctions of the Veda-s and your Guru, your obedient mind will gain the ability to grasp the knowledge of Absolute-Reality. You have accumulated this whole wealth, which is of the nature of obedience. This obedience too shall take man to the gateway of that Absolute-Reality.

(Kathopanishad Pravachan – 1 : p 19,22,23,24)

24 By 'we' is meant *shrOtriya brahmanishTha-s* : those who are well versed in the Veda-s, and are established in brahman.

25 *Tattva* is defined as *anArOpita nAma-rUpa-AkAra* : The reality that is free of any superimposition of name and form.

The necessity for a *satsangi* to be very vigilant

A *satsangi*²⁶ does not feel any inadequacy in himself. He is quite happy to eat cold, dry *rOti*-s, and he's just as happy to eat hot *roti*-s with lots of *ghee* spread on them. Happy to wear simple clothes, and happy to wear nice clothes as well. In actuality, a wealthy man is he who has got wealth in the form of God and sages. The others – i.e., those who carry burdens in the form of bundles of currency-notes, loads of diamonds, pearls, gold, silver etc., – may well, in a rush of adrenaline, seized by egoity, say – '*who is there who is as happy as we are?*'; but in their heart of hearts, they remain a vexed, grumbling, sad lot. In their vicinity, there is no such thing as 'peace'.

Look here. If you have a firm belief that the person whose *sanga* (association) you seek is a true sage, then do not bother about examining his surroundings – (i.e., do not be worried about who he meets, what he does, what he likes etc.) Look at him, and look at God (with the faith that God is in his form as well). Let your perspective and faith be firm.

Then again, if you happen to place your faith in some person (based on your own impulse), and then find that his association is not a good one, then know that such a person is not a sage at all. When his very company seems to you to be a bad one, then I would strongly urge you to disassociate yourself from him totally – leave him; not for a moment should you remain with him.

A note of caution... Among *satsangi*-s, there should not be any attachment to one another. Because, if they start looking to each other and develop closeness, then they will try and leverage their friendship for gaining this and that...

Therefore, a *satsangi* should love Bhagavan alone. Let him remain in *satsang* and listen to elucidations on *bhakti* and *jnAna* until such time as his mind likes to. Let him continue serving his Guru until such time as his mind has a liking for offering service. Indeed, let him continue his

26 *satsangi: One who attends satsang; one who participates in gatherings of people who meet for some spiritual purpose*

association with the sage. Then again, if he finds that the association with the Guru is a distraction in his pursuit of *paramArtha-jnAna* (Knowledge of supreme-reality), a hinderance in his gaining experience of *advaita-akhanDa* (abidance as the unbroken, non-dual Being), then he may quit that association as well. No Guru, no disciple. Bhagavan Sri Shankaracharya has clearly said – ‘*When one becomes established firmly in paramArtha (the supreme goal, namely, Self-Abidance), then the physical association of Guru-Shishya, sEvaka-sEvya (servant-Master), should not remain. One may remain absorbed, delighted, in the poise of one’s own Self.*’ Truly, *paramArtha-sthiti* (the state of Self-abidance) is quite remarkable; it defies definition.

Indeed, it should not be the case that ‘निकले थे हरि भजन को ओटन लगे कपास’ (Proverb: Literally says ‘*We set out in quest of God, but became busy spinning cotton.*’) Having renounced one’s mother, father, sister, brother, wife, children, money, house; having detached oneself from everything around, one set off for satsang, and lo, one ran straight into Maya on the way itself and got caught in the web of worldly attachments all over again! This Maya (unreality) of *dvaita* (duality) will not let go, unless one renounces duality totally. Yes, as a *satsangi*, you may surely interact with other *satsangi*-s, have conversations on spirituality. But do not be under the impression that the other *satsangi*’s association is imperative for you – that you cannot do without him.

Therefore, a *satsangi* has to be extremely careful and vigilant, about his own self as well as about his association with others. His attention should not shift from *satsang* and move to something else.

(Anand ullas : p 88, 89, 90, 91, 220)

***kshamA* (Forgiveness) is the means to cut down *samsAra*²⁷**

Looking at a person, one can make out what path he is on, and where he will reach. Those who walk on the path of advancement take the ‘good path’; they tread very carefully, watching every step they take. And those who are on the path of decadence/decline, walk carelessly; and in quick pace, they keep falling down. Now, he who does *sandhyAvandana*²⁸ properly, respects Ishvara *prasAda*²⁹, contemplates on Ishvara, has faith in the words of the Guru and Shastra – such a person goes up; and he who does bad deeds, goes down...

Ishvara, out of great compassion, has bestowed man with *kshamA* (forgiveness, forbearance). Know that this *kshamA* is not a sign of weakness; rather, it is an indication of strength / ability. Even when you have the capacity to punish a wrongdoer, if you forgive him instead and tell him – ‘Go, my dear fellow! May good be with you!’, then the matter ends right there. Therefore, the way to cut down *samsAra* is not by *danDa* (punishment); rather, it is by *kshamA* (forgiveness). The word *kshamA* has the connotation of *sAmarthyA*³⁰ (strength) as well as *anukampA* (mercy).

Say, who is there who does no wrong?

You would have heard this story from the life of Jesus Christ. Once, a large crowd gathered near Jesus. Upon his enquiry, they said – “A great sin has been committed and the sinner has been caught. As per law, this sinner should be stoned as punishment. That is the judgment that we have decided upon. And so, the punishment will now be carried out.’

Jesus said – ‘All right. Now, if you will, please listen a bit to what I have to say. *He that is without sin among you, let him cast the first stone.*’

When they heard this, all hands froze. And one by one, they all went away.

27 *samsAra: Cycle of worldly existence; cycle of birth-death transmigration*

28 *sandhyAvandana: An obligatory religious ritual that is to be performed every day*

29 *prasAda : sacred food distributed to devotees after being offered to God*

30 *kshamatA indicates ‘ability’, ‘strength’, ‘capacity’.*

[Now, Maharajshree takes up the question of why most people are not forgiving by nature. If people were to recognize their own shortcomings, they might be more forgiving of the defects of others. But people do not recognize their own inadequacies at all. Maharajshree explains why this is so]

In this world, there can be no one who does not have both, virtue and vice, in his person. What happens is that we do not usually recognize the vices, the inadequacies, within us. Now, why is that?

The reason is this. Within all of us, there is '*brahman*', the Absolute-Reality, supreme and pure. Unbeknownst to us, *brahmabhAva* (the absorption in that self-existent Being, *brahman*) is at work inside us all the time. That is why every person thinks very highly of his own work and his own beauty. He thinks of his own intellectual acumen as being the greatest. No one thinks of himself as being bad, even a bit. Whereas, he may well think of others as being bad-hearted.

Even if it happens that he thinks of another person as being decent and cultured, he would consider the other person's intelligence to be slightly less than his own, surely. So much so that even when it comes to our Guru, if we find that he does something that, to our mind, is not quite right, we say that – 'Oh, our Guru is very innocent by nature. He is not worldly-wise.' It is as if our understanding of the matter is better than his. This happens because of our relating to that *pUrNatA* (perfectness, completeness, fullness) within us, quite unknowingly.

(Vibhuti Yog : p 55-57)

My agony, my heart's anguish

There is something from my heart that I wish to share with you; something that causes me a lot of pain; something that I agonize over. It is this... People who have no belief in *karma-samskara* (religious rituals prescribed in Shashtra) for atonement of sins/depravity, or do not perform these atonement-rituals even if they have some belief in them – such people are not on the right path of life.

Just as *vyabhichara* (moral offence) is a *karma*³¹; just as uttering falsehood is a *karma*; just as stealing is a *karma*... And, say, a man keeps on committing such immoral *karma*, whereby his very life becomes of the nature of depravity, his mind becomes filled with a community of defects... If such a man does not perform any *karma* for atonement and for removal of his defects, and instead takes a stand (a pseudo-*bhakta* stand) that he is leaving it all for Ishvara to take care, and that Ishvara would do whatever He pleases. Or else, if the man (taking a pseudo-*vedanti* stand) says that – ‘Hey! I Let the *antaHkaraNa* (four-fold mind) be as it may! Leaving it as it is, I remain untouched by it all, being just the witness, the seer, in reality.’ Well, so long as the person (the pseudo-*bhakta*) remains in *Ishvara-bhava* (engaged in acts of devotion to God), or (the pseudo-*vedanti*) remains in *sAkshi-bhava* (existing as an indifferent witness) it is fine. But the moment he rises from that state of emotion, his detrimental qualities of *kAma* (lust), *krOdha* (anger), etc., will rise again; these depravities will raise their heads and the kind of wrong activities that used to get impelled earlier as a result of these defects will now happen all over again.

This situation can be remedied only when we deliberately perform acts of virtue (as prescribed in Shashtra) to counteract the defects of thievery, dishonesty, lies, impropriety, immorality etc., which has entered our lives. It is only by firmly installing virtue in our being that we can cleanse the defects existing therein.

Narayan! You must clearly understand that those people who tell you that ‘you are merely the seer, a witness, and you can ignore the

31 An act performed by a person, for which he/she is responsible and accountable for, and for which he/she will have to experience the fruit as bestowed by Ishvara

impropriety/immorality that is seen in your life, for you have no association with these' – well, such people are taking you on a wrong path.

Those defects that you have wilfully brought into your life cannot be erased by leaving it to the care of Ishvara, or by sitting idly in the belief that you are just an unconcerned witness. If you have brought a serpent home and are raising it, and you decide later to remove it from your home, then you need to put in the required effort to do that. Similarly, the vices that you have brought in and have reared in your life will not go away by your remaining a mute spectator. Not at all.

Therefore, for overcoming the defects of your *karma*, it is imperative that you do *satkarma* (good karma). If you do virtuous karma, then:

1. Sleep, sloth, negligence/inattention and such other characteristics of *tamOguNa* (qualities of ignorance, inertia) will be eliminated.
2. Your accumulations from dishonest means, the violence that you do, the lies that you utter – all these will get erased.
3. Impropriety, immorality and such other defects arising out of indulgence in sense-pleasures will be erased.
4. Impurities in one's speech will be cleansed.
5. Whatever *karma* you do, will be pure.

Thus, when you start performing the right *karma*, properly, then these five defects will be eliminated. And by the elimination of these defects, the pain and sorrows that arise as a consequence of these defects will cease; such sorrows will not come at all.

(Dainik Jeevan mein Gita : p 80, 81, 82)

In order to rectify faults, remedial steps need to be taken

To toss one's defects into the womb of the past is not a sign of wisdom; to say that these defects are from my previous birth, or that such-and-such person is the one who taught me this etc., is quite wrong; or to say that 'we have got these demerits from our parents', is wrong too. Indeed, it is we who have constantly seen all kinds of wrong acts, repeatedly lent our ears to listen to all kinds of ill-deeds, and have thereby, on our own volition, absorbed these flaws in our life. Bad traits first enter your sense-organs, then your minds, and then you become tangled with them. So, you need to introspect, and ask – "Am I tainted by defects? Or am I free of them."

You do not even recognize your enemy (viz., your own defects); and yet you say – 'What can he do to me?' In order to rectify faults, remedial steps need to be taken. In case there are faults in your way of life, do not ignore them in the belief that these are but minor flaws, and '*what can they do to me?*' There is an ancient teaching – '*An enemy, a disease, a spark of fire, sin, a baby snake, or a King – never consider them to be trivial, for they are packed with great power within.*'

Let Ishvara remain in his abode, wherever He is; let *brahmajnAna* (knowledge of Absolute Reality) remain in the tomes of Vedanta; let *asangata* (non-attachment) remain in the house of Yogi-s... However, if you really desire to refine this human life of yours, you must first understand the nature of human faults; you should understand your enemy. There can be no *brahmajnAna* (knowledge of Absolute Reality), no *svarUpa-sthiti* (firm poise as the Self), without correcting one's faults.

There is a Raja Saheb (a King) who is my devotee. Some friends of his, foreigners, came to him and said – 'Please go and ask your Swamiji if he is agreeable to our request. Please tell him that if he agrees not to interfere with our day-to-day conduct of life – what we eat, drink, the way we live etc., – then we are willing to go to him to take spiritual guidance, learn *brahmajnAna*, practice yoga and meditation.'

Take that! What kind of a Guru would agree to that? When there is a deep desire for disciples, roaring like a lioness from the depths of one's heart, some guru may even say – 'It does not matter whether you have faith in God or not; come, I shall teach you meditation.' Some may even say – 'You may eat and drink just as you please, live as per your fancy! You may engage in impropriety, immorality etc., just as you like; it really doesn't matter... Come! We shall initiate you into *brahmajnAna* (knowledge of brahman)!'

So, my friend, the fact of matter is this... It is only when one desires to acquire a lot of disciples and make money that one says such things. Without worldly selfishness, no Sadhu-Mahatma will say or do such things.

We have no hesitation in exposing anything for what it truly is; we do not shrink from calling a spade a spade.

(Dainik Jeevan mein Gita : p 87,88,89)



This is a wrong act; don't do it!

The Gita puts a question – ‘Who is the actuator of your lifestyle and activities?’

You may note that when you are advancing in the path of thievery and dishonesty, it is *lObha* (greed) that is sitting inside you and directing your activities; where is any thought of Ishvara at that time? When you engage in activities of murder, mayhem, violence, it is *krOdha* (anger) that is governing your life. And when you engage in improper, immoral acts, then it is *kAma* (desire/lust) that is driving your life.

I shall tell you a true story. There is a man, known to me, who had intense dislike for his own wife. Because of this, he became very ill-tempered and lost all sleep. To find a cure, he went to a doctor, a psychiatrist. That doctor told him – ‘You are having all this trouble because you have great dislike for your wife. I suggest that you keep another woman.’ Then that man started going with another woman. And when his enchantment to that woman became known to his wife, she lost her mind, and became quite insane. As it happened, by sheer coincidence, she too consulted the same doctor that her husband had consulted. The doctor advised her to keep another man. Unwilling to follow that advice, she went and spoke to her husband, and then, the both of them came to me together, and told me what the doctor had prescribed as remedy! Well, the husband had fallen, but the wife was saved. How? Because, her mind had *dharmasamskAra* (a dharmic, moral, bent of mind).

The *samskAra* of *dharmā* (a dharmic bent of mind) causes pain in one's mind when one does something wrong. This *dharmā* is an unknown friend that we have; a friend that we do not know of, see, recognize. If *dharmā* resides in your heart, and if you begin to do a wrong deed, ‘*dharmā*’ will warn you from within, telling you – ‘*this is a wrong act that you are embarking upon; don't do it.*’

Actually, in the form of ‘*dharmā*’, it is Parameshwara (God Supreme) who sits in your heart and stops you from committing acts of deceit and dishonesty, impropriety and immorality, violence and ill-will.

The fact of the matter is that Ishvara needs some medium, some door, for providing impetus. I am telling this in a general manner of speaking. E.g., Ishvara will make you see; but it is through the medium of the eye that he will give you the capability of sight. Ishvara will enable knowledge of odours in you; but He will grant that via the medium of the nose. He will give you the knowledge of sounds; but through the medium of the ear. He will give you love; but through the heart. In the same way, Ishvara will give you true guidance; but that will be through the medium of *dharma*.

If there is *dharma* residing in your heart, then, accepting that *dharma* as a medium for His appearance, Ishvara will tell you – ‘*This is a wrong act; don’t do it!*’

(Dainik Jeevan mein Gita : p 40, 41)



Ripe Mahatma!

These Mahatma-s are so ripe and mellow, that they say a ‘bravo’ here, a ‘bravo’ there, being quite happy everywhere. Whatever they face, they find it joyful. For instance – say, a Mahatma had gone to ‘X’ person’s house for food. And ‘X’ brought some dry *rOti*-s and *moong-daal* (lentil soup) and placed it in front of the Mahatma. Whereupon the Mahatma was very pleased. He thought – *‘How thoughtful and good this man is! He has my health in mind, and so he has offered a very simple meal. He sees me as an ascetic, and not as a taste-relishing foodie. I feel so happy! How very nice! How very nice!’*

On another day, the Mahatma visited a ‘Y’ person’s house for food. There he was served delicacies like *kheer-puri*, *halwa-pakOdi* etc. And the Mahatma said – *‘Look! Just see how much love they have, that they have made so many delicacies for me!’*

The Mahatma was happy on both occasions!

In contrast to the Mahatma, there was another person ‘Z’, who faced the same situations. When served with dry *rOti* and *daal*, he exclaimed – *‘Ram! Ram! Ram! Are you such a pauper that you are feeding me just roti and daal?’* Feeling very hurt and angry, he let lose a string of invectives. And when he went to the other house where he was served *kheer-puri*, *halwa-pakOdi*, he burst out – *‘What do you take me for? Do you think I am a taste-relishing foodie? A glutton?’* And so, ‘Z’ created unhappiness for himself in both places!

Such is a man’s mind that it can choose its mood. If it wants to be happy, it can choose to make happiness in all situations; and if it chooses to be unhappy, it can create unhappiness anywhere. There is no happiness or unhappiness inherent in worldly happenings. It is the attitudes and moods that fill the mind within, which manifest themselves outside on every possible excuse. If there is unhappiness within, it raises its head on every possible excuse; and if there is happiness inside, then the fragrance of happiness spreads outside in all situations. Indeed, nothing is outside us. Man projects his own nature outside, be it for suffering or for happiness!

Catch hold of Paramatma!

You may know that the silkworm is a creature that weaves a web of silk by itself, where it gets trapped and dies as there remains no exit path. Worldly people too are like the silkworm. They weave such webs near themselves... Webs of attachment – *‘I cannot live without my mother; I cannot live without my children; I cannot survive without my wife; I cannot live without my husband; I cannot live without money; we cannot live without our house – etc.’* But if you really see, they can surely live without these and such. That’s right, isn’t it? These people weave such a web with their minds that they get trapped in them – they get caught in webs of their own creation!

The point to note is this... This heart of ours is not meant for catching hold of small-time things! It is meant for catching the greatest of all things; it is meant for catching hold of Paramatma (God; Supreme-Self)!

(Kathopanishad Pravachan – 2 : p 68, 82)

Why does God show partiality?

By means of Bhakti (devotion), two things can be attained. One – knowledge of the real nature of God. And two – freedom from the clutches of worldly *rAga-dvEsha* (attachments and aversions), *IrshyA* (jealousy), *mada-mOha* (arrogance and delusion) ...

It is the nature of the mind that it cannot have two thoughts at the same time. Either there will be the thought of Ishvara, or there can be worldly thoughts.

Once, Radharani was very distressed, and was crying. Sri Krishna asked her – ‘Beloved! Why are you feeling so sad?’ She said – ‘*My Lord! My heart, in which you are residing, became distracted with the thought of your other lover. Her face appeared before my mind’s eye. With you being there, in your very presence, if my heart makes space for reflecting on the image of my co-wife – then where is my love for you? If I had true love for you, then why should I even have a single thought of anyone else?*’

This then, is the nature of Bhakti.

In Bhakti, when we meditate on God, then God’s form fills our heart; and when we develop true love for God, then the worldly bondages of *rAga-dvEsha* etc., disappear. That is why Bhakti is valued so highly. For even God becomes subject to Bhakti’s control.

So, there is just one way to get God under one’s control. And that is –

सत्त्त्रियः सत्पतिं यथा

In the manner of chaste women bringing their good husbands under control

(Srimad Bhagavatam 9.4.66)³²

32 मयि निर्बद्धहृदयाः साधवः समदर्शनाः । वशीकुर्वन्ति मां भक्त्या सत्त्त्रियः सत्पतिं यथा ॥

The way a gentle husband acts according to the wishes of a chaste and devoted wife, I am controlled by pure and equal minded pious souls who, in their hearts firmly being attached to Me, engage in devotional service. (<http://www.srimadbhagavatam.org/canto9/chapter4.html>)

Just as a chaste wife brings her husband under her control, in the same manner when the meditation on worshipful God begins to happen properly in our heart; and our mind becomes free of worldly thoughts; and what remains is God and God alone; then, in whatever form we think of God in terms of his acts or appearances, God's presence manifests before us in the form of those very acts and appearances. This is the greatness of Bhakti. Indeed, this is the glory of devotion in a devotee's heart, that it can do with God whatever it wishes.

Prahlada was born in a family of *daitya*-s (demons). However, when devotion to God dawned in his heart, God did not give any thought to his being a *daitya*; rather, he guarded him in the embrace of His protection.

So, in reality, the marvels and oddities that are seen in the behaviour and character of God are not indicative of any partiality or favouritism on His part. The fact is this => The image of God that reflects in the mirror of devotion in a devotee's heart – that reflection, which is the abidance of God that Sri Krishna speaks of in the Gita, where He says:

ईश्वरः सर्वभूतानां हृद्देशेऽर्जुन तिष्ठति।

O Arjuna, the Lord resides in the region of the heart of all creatures
(Gita 18.61)

That God, who shines in a most subtle form in the silent-space of our inner-being (heart), gets captured by means of *bhakti* (devotion); and then, overpowered by that *bhakti*, He acts in his devotee's favour.

(Prahlad Charit : p 24,25,26)

One way or the other, connect yourself with God!

There was a Mahatma in my neighbourhood in Vrindavan, who everyone used to call as 'Kathiya Baba' because he used to wear a cod-piece made of 'kATH' (wood). In his Ashram there was a practice that whatever articles (food etc) are received on any given day, have to be used up the same day; nothing should be saved for another day. Scores of Sadhu-s used to stay with Baba, and he had a large number of followers as well.

One day, his cook got the idea that Baba must be keeping gold coins hidden in his wooden cod-piece, because he kept the cod-piece tied to his waist at all times. So, one day, he mixed poison in Baba's food, with the thought that when Baba died, he could make away with cod-piece. Baba ate the poisoned food; but Baba was so accomplished a sage (siddha-mahatma) that the poison got digested by him. Baba digested it like normal food and said nothing about it to the cook. After a few months, when a large group of Sadhu-s were to be given food, the cook happened to mix excess of salt in the food. Upon this, Baba called the cook and told him – *'Rasoiya (cook) Maharaj! The other day, you mixed poison in my food, and I digested it. But today, you have mixed excess salt in the food for the Sadhu-s. How can they digest this food? So, please do us a favour, and go away from here.'* On the day that the cook poisoned Baba, Baba did not dismiss him from service. But the day he mixed excess salt in the food for Sadhu-s, Baba showed him the door.

So, Narayan, God is of such a nature that He has no fear of death; no fear of being cheated; no fear of suffering. Anyone may come to Him, in any which way, and God will do only good for him. Never will God do anything detrimental to anybody.

Of Sadhu-s, it is said:

साधू ते होय न कारज हानि ।

One's cause never suffers at the hands of a Sadhu

[Ramacharitamānas]

A Sadhu never harms anybody's cause. Even the thought of causing harm to someone does not arise in a Sadhu's mind. If such is the nature of a Sadhu, will Ishvara ever wish to cause any loss or harm to anyone? It is not possible at all. That is why it is said that one way or the other, connect yourself with God!

तस्मात् केनाप्युपायेन मनः कृष्णे निवेशयेत् ।

Therefore, by one means or another, the mind should be fixed on Krishna!

[Srimad Bhagavatam 7.1.32]

Take action – do *japa* (recitation of mantra), *tapa* (meditation), *vrata* (fasting), *pUjA* (worship), *satsang* (spiritual association); whatever be the path taken, the mind should get fixed on Bhagavan alone.

(Prahlaḍ Charit : p 62, 63, 64)



Look! Look! He is dancing! My beloved Nand Kishore!

Come, we shall connect you to Ishvara! You know why? Because there is no suffering of any kind in Ishvara. All is happiness and happiness alone. The attainment of Parameshwara (God-Realization) is not just about the attainment of peace and restfulness; it is not just about relaxation, *samAdhi* (absorption in inner contemplation), or delightfulness; rather, after the annulment of the entirety of *anartha* (worthless and harmful things of the world), the attainment of *paramAnanda* (Absolute Bliss) comes about only as a result of God-realization.

You may think that since your Atma (Self) has no attachments whatsoever, you are good to go. No! It is only when *your mind* becomes free of all worldly attachments that you are good to go! The realization that the Atma is attachment-free is attainable by means of Yoga and Sankhya. But the power to free the mind from all worldly attachments is attainable only by means of *bhakti* (devotion).

Come! Take a peek into the courtyard of Nanda-baba! It is evening time. Nanda-baba is sitting on the pial (the platform outside the entrance of the house, where one can sit and relax). He and Yashoda-*maiyya* are gazing lovingly at their little angel, the dusky, beautiful Krishna! There he is, the little Nanda-*nandan* (beloved of Nanda-baba), with his little face and mouth, beautiful little teeth, angelic smile, soft and tender hands and feet, a beautiful girdle adorning his waist, a lovely little baby-dress, jingling anklets, beautiful bracelets... There, in the courtyard of Nanda-baba, Gopika-s are clapping their hands in rhythm, and Nanda-nandan, Shyam-sundar, toddler Krishna, is dancing in joy!

In *prEma* (divine love), there is no need for the mind to be constant and anchored. To love, and to make the mind one-pointed, cannot take place together. In love, one has to forget oneself and attain union with one's beloved. Here, one does not set about to erase one's ego; rather, the ego gets totally dissolved in one's beloved. And what remains is just Paramananda (Supreme Bliss) and Paramananda alone. Here, in *prEma*,

Bhagavan is not *achala* (stationary, silent, still). Rather, here, we have a dancing God! Spell-bound, innocent, Ishvara, is dancing – forgetting his *Ishvaratva* (God nature). And Gopika-s, forgetting their *jeevatva* (human nature) are making Ishvara dance!

Your heart is Vrindavana. You yourself are Nanda and Yashoda. Your mind-movements are the Gopika-s. And there, amidst them, now seen, now unseen, now dancing, now laughing, now speaking, now lying down, now bent, now straight, *sacchidaanandaghana* (the fullness of Being, Consciousness, Bliss), Nanda-nandana (delight of Nandababa), is smiling softly and dancing in your heart!

अरे विश्व ! मुझे लुभाने का करता है व्यर्थ प्रयास ।
नहीं जानता मेरे उरमें, दीख रहा प्रियका मृदुहास ।
भले फूट जाए यह आँखें, पर लखेंगी न तेरी ओर ।
देख-देख यह नृत्य कर रहा है, मेरा प्यारा नन्दकिशोर !

O World! Why do you waste your effort in trying to entice me!

You know not that in my heart is seen the gentle smile of the loved One!

Even if it be that these eyes burst, in your direction they will not look!

Look! Look! He is dancing! My beloved Nand Kishore!

(Shri Krishna Leela Rahasya : p 3,5,8, 12, 13, 14)

Gems strewn in Bhaagavata-Darshan !

Do your *sAdhan-bhajan* (devotional practices) in the proper manner : People often say that God is *Ashutosha* (easy to please); that He is quick to shower His Grace; that He becomes happy in no time. Hearing this, people renounce their home and hearth and set off to attain God. And when they start rolling the beads of their *japa-mAlA* (rosary), even as they complete just half a round, they look around to see if God is coming now or not. And when God does not come even after rolling the rosary many times over, they become disheartened. **For this reason, one should bear in mind that God is difficult to attain.** Otherwise, people will assume that God-realization is as easy as breeze and therefore they may go for a cheap bargain. Meditation (*dhyAna*) and devotion (*bhakti*) is not a bunch of straws that someone can pick up and hand over to you. For that, one needs to do *sAdhan* (spiritual exercises), *bhajan* (devotional activities) and *abhyAsa* (diligent practice). That which is proper and true can be attained only by means that are proper and true. That is why a spiritual-seeker has to do his *sAdhan*, *bhajan*, *anushThAn* (ritual worship) etc., in the proper manner.

Those who forsake God and love some other, are fools. It is said in the scriptures that God's eyes streams with tears of love for His devotees; that He lies down, resting His head on His devotee's lap, and is consumed with happiness; that He sits down to meditate on His devotee! Aye! In reality, may God be just as described; may He lick-clean His devotee's love, and shower His entire love on His devotee. Where else will we find such a God, who is so good-natured, so loving to His devotees, so generous, such an essence of beauty and sweetness, such a treasure-house of virtues! Those who forsake God and love some other, are indeed fools!

Beneficial anger! Look here! He who walks in the spiritual path should not fall prey to anger etc. For these negative emotions become road-blocks in his spiritual path. However, this rule does not apply to someone who has attained God-realization. For such a person, the occasional anger that he displays should not be viewed as a fault or a shortcoming on his part. For the God-realized sages have transcended the level of being a

sAdhaka (a seeker, still engaged in spiritual practices); and therefore, any anger that surfaces in their life is but an expression of God's wish, and any such incidence of anger will be for the welfare of someone or the other. If you examine the life of *R^ishi*-s, this will be seen very clearly. When the sages voice a curse, it does look like an expression of anger on the face of it. But even in that curse, there will only be God's Grace; it will be filled with the sap of goodness.

Whatever God does, He does it purely for our welfare: Actually, we find fault with something that God does only when we lack a full understanding. If we delve deeply into the matter, we will find that there is no reason at all to find any fault with anything that God does. Because:

सा देवो यदेव कुरुते तदेव मङ्गलाय

Whatever God does, in that alone does great good to us accrue.

(Bhagavat Darshan – 1: p 4.31 / 4.39 / 4.43 / 4.53)



I shall do *bhajan*³³ alone!

One day, the emperor of Vijayanagar was strolling in his terrace, along with a minister of his. The minister was a man of great intelligence and wisdom, and the emperor and the minister were having a conversation that '*the impossible becomes possible by means of Ishvara-upAsana (God worship/meditation)*'. At that time, Sridhara Swami, a young lad of 16 or 17 years of age, was walking on the road below. He was carrying his shoes in his hand, and these shoes were seen to be filled with oil. The emperor's eyes alighted on this strange sight. 'Who is this person?' asked he. 'He is some Brahmin's son', replied the minister. 'Bring him here!' said the king. 'Why is he carrying oil in a shoe?' he asked. The lad was summoned, and was asked about his strange act. The youth, Sridhara Swami, replied – 'I had gone to procure oil. The vessel that I had was not big enough, and so, after it got filled up, I poured the remaining oil in my shoes.' 'What a profound idiot!' said the emperor. He then asked his minister whether *Ishvara-upAsana* had the power to make this fool into a man of great learning? 'Yes!' replied the minister. 'Indeed, by *upAsana*, it is possible', he said.

'All right!' said the King. 'Make him one.'

The minister initiated Sridhara into the mantra of Bhagavan Narasimha, (mantra) taken from the *nR^isimha-tApini upanishad*. Sridhara Swami began meditating on the mantra in the prescribed manner, properly. The minister made provisions for the care of Sridhara's parents; the government would provide for all their needs. One day, Sridhara was performing his spiritual-practice, and he noticed an egg falling down from a bird's nest above. The egg broke and a baby bird was seen. This tender little hatchling was somehow alive, and was seen to open and close its beak from time to time. The hatchling was hungry and thirsty, and its mother was nowhere to be seen. Now, who was to provide this flightless baby with food and water? The hatchling was taking deep breaths. Sridhara was looking at it and thinking – 'This baby-bird is sure

33 *Bhajan: Acts of devotion/worship such as meditation, japa, kirtan, satsang and reading of holy scriptures.*

to die, anytime now.’ And then he noticed two houseflies nearby, fighting with each other. At that time, the hatchling happened to open its beak, and the two fighting houseflies fell inside the bird’s mouth, after which the bird closed its beak. In this manner, the hatchling got its food!

Sridhara Swami was wonderstruck on seeing this, and thought – ‘Arey! This hatchling has no wings and no mother. Wherefrom has this food come into its mouth? Who made these two houseflies fight with each other at that time? All this is the Leela (play) of Ishvara! And so, why should I have any worries about providing for food and other needs of my parents? Why should I have any anxiety about my next meal? I shall do *bhajan* alone! He who has provided food for this baby-bird, will provide food for me too!’

Thereafter, Sridhara completed his *anushThAna* (spiritual-practice). Lord Narasimha was pleased with his devotional practice, and by His grace, Sridhara Swami was blessed with the complete knowledge of Srimad Bhagavatam.

It is said:

व्यासो वेत्ति शुको वेत्ति राजा वेत्ति न वेत्ति वा ।
श्रीधरः सकलं वेत्ति श्रीनृसिंह प्रसादतः ॥

The proper meaning and message of Srimad Bhagavatam is known to Vyasa and Shuka. Whether Raja Parikshit knows or not, is a matter of doubt. But, by the Grace of Lord Narasimha, Sridhara Acharya knows the meaning and message of Srimad Bhagavatam in-toto!

(Purushottam Yog : p 214-215)

This is no way to attain God!

Know this for certain that those who wish to get entry into the *darbAr* (royal audience) of Ishvara, the Lord-Almighty, will be unable to gain entry unless they renounce their identification with the *sthUla-shareera* (gross-body) and take on a *bhAvamaya-shareera* (a body that is filled with devotion). For, is this body consisting of flesh, bones, and excreta, worthy of being taken inside the great hall of God? Absolutely not.

Once, some five or six of us had visited a Mahatma. All of us were seekers of God, practicing spiritual disciplines and devotion. During the course of conversation, the Mahatma, in a fit of joyousness, told us to ask for any boon we wished. In our whole group, there turned out to be just one person who sought a boon, and he said that he wished to attain vision of God without any preconditions; and that he wanted it here and now.

The Mahatma said – ‘well, that’s fine. If you want Ishvara to appear right now, then Ishvara will be coming presently. Sit down peacefully’. Having said this, the Mahatma started doing *sankeertan* (singing songs of devotion) and *prArthana* (prayers). It was the banks of the holy river Ganga, night-time, moonlight was in full blossom; the whole atmosphere was filled with a divine feeling, and it felt as if Ishvara would surely be coming. We too became alert. After some time, the Mahatma announced – “Hark! Ishvara has now arrived, and is ready to grant His vision. There are no preconditions. You do not have to undertake any discipline, devotion, *japa* (repetition of holy mantra), *tapa* (performance of austerities), or *dhyAna* (meditation)... You can remain just as you are, and you will have His *darshan* (vision). But Ishvara is conveying a note of caution. He says – ‘This man has not done any *sAdhan-bhajan* (spiritual practices). When I give him a vision of myself, he will lose all his *puNya* (accumulated merit). And so, in this life of his, there will remain no means that will give him happiness. He will become a leper, his body will languish in a gutter, and people will spit on him. Tell him that this is what will be his state after he has a vision of me. Now, is he ready to have my *darshan*?’

Narayan! After listening to these words of the Mahatma, that boon-seeking man became rather hesitant and shaky. He said – ‘No! No! Please wait a minute. Let me think it over a bit.’ The Mahatma asked – ‘What is it that you really want?’ That man replied – ‘I was under the impression that when I get a vision of God, people will have great respect for me, put me on a high pedestal, and that I will be offered worship. I never knew that I would become a leper instead!’

So, Narayan! Even after attaining God, man only wishes to adorn his own body. He desires to convert God into a garland and wear Him on his own body of flesh and bones. He desires God only for the sake of his own physical body. It is verily this body, upon which the ‘I’-ness of man is attached, which is a road-block to attaining God. In reality, we desire to attain God only for the sake of our own pleasure, sense-enjoyment, and satisfaction. This is no way to attain God. Irrespective of whether you wish to attain *sAkAra-Ishvara* (God with form) or *nirAkAra-nirguNa-Ishvara* (formless, attribute-less, God), to rise above the ‘I’-ness attached to one’s body is a must. Without renouncing the ‘I’ from the body, how is it at all possible to connect with God?

(Purushottam Yog : p 227-228)

The truth of Bhakti : *Bhakti grows every moment!*

In the path of *bhakti*, *sarva* (All) is of the nature of Bhagavan. Therefore, upon the dawn of real *bhakti*, when *bhakti* of the form of the ‘*Knowledge of All*’ rises, then the devotee sees his own *ishTa-dEva* (favourite form of God), his own Lord-Almighty, manifesting in the form of *sarva* (All).

Look! Whatever is seen outside is but the form of Paramatma (God; Supreme-Self). And whatever thought-forms arise within oneself are also but forms of Paramatma. This understanding is the worship of God in the form of *sarva*. In this manner, the experience of essence-oneness of all that is inside and outside is what is *bhakti*.

Many people get the feeling that whatever *bhakti* they have got is the maximum extent of *bhakti*; i.e., there is no *bhakti* beyond that. And so, when they hear of any *bhakti* that is higher than what they have, they do not understand it.

Look here! There are all kinds of *bhakti*! Doing *nAma-japa* (recitation of the names of God) is *bhakti*. Offering worship to God is *bhakti*! Doing *satsanga* (associating with spiritual people) is *bhakti*. Doing *dhyAna* (meditation) is *bhakti*. Restlessness to attain God is *bhakti* too. And leaving it to God – saying ‘*Lord, please reveal yourself to me if and when it pleases you*’, is also *bhakti*. Restlessness is *bhakti*, and surrender is *bhakti* too. Seeing God as being of a particular form is *bhakti*, and seeing Him as being the in-dweller in All is also *bhakti*. And, seeing ‘All’ as being the forms of Paramatma is *bhakti* too.

Therefore, do not be under the mistaken notion that *bhakti*’s extent is limited to what you personally experience now. Do not think small of *bhakti*. Know that whatever you are *not doing* now is also *bhakti*! Bhagavan is not limited to what you know of Him. Whatever you do not know is Bhagavan too! So, do not restrict *bhakti* and Bhagavan to the limitations of your notions and render it into a ‘belief’ or ‘cult’.

While the extent of *bhakti* and Bhagavan that resides in everyone's mind is indeed good and true; the *bhakti* and Bhagavan that exists beyond one's own understanding is also real and true. Therefore, without having *rAga-dvEsha* (attachment or aversion) towards anyone or anything, abide firmly in the path and substance of *sAdhanA* (spiritual practice) that you are engaged in, and go forward. Do not deny the existence of truths beyond your current practice and experience, in the belief that there lies nothing at all beyond that.

This, indeed, is the truth of *bhakti* – '*bhakti grows every moment*'. Do not say that 'it is limited to this.' And what about Bhagavan? Well, He is beyond *bhakti* even. Do not impose any restriction! As one's heart progressively blossoms; as one's eyes open up more and more; as one's understanding of *bhakti* and Bhagavan goes on evolving, keep accepting the truths that you progressively realize. Then you will go forward, for sure.

(Purushottam Yog: p 244-245)



The *bhakti* of *saguNa-Ishvara*³⁴ happens by the primacy of God's Grace

A simpleton villager went to some Mahatma, and prayed – “I would like to chant the Name of God. Please tell me some simple Name.” The Mahatma told the villager – “Keep chanting the Name – *aghamOchana*, *aghamOchana*...” The word ‘*agha*’ means ‘sin’; and the word ‘*mochana*’ signifies ‘one who releases (from)’. The villager left, satisfied. But, by the time he reached his village, he forgot the first letter ‘a’. And he began chanting ‘*ghamOchana*, *ghamOchana*’, as he got on with his work of ploughing the farm.

One day when he was chanting ‘*ghamOchana*’ while ploughing, Bhagavan Narayana, who was sitting for his lunch in Vaikuntha, broke into laughter. On Goddess Lakshmi asking him the reason, He said – ‘Today, a devotee of mine is chanting a Name that does not feature in any Shastra at all!’ Lakshmiji said - ‘Then, I would like to see him and listen to what Name it is that he is chanting!’ So, both Lakshmi and Narayana went to the farm where the simpleton was working. Bhagavan Narayana did not approach the devotee himself; he hid in a ditch nearby and sent Lakshmiji to speak to the devotee.

Lakshmiji asked the villager – ‘Arey! What is this ‘*ghamOchana*, *ghamOchana*’ that you are chanting?’ She asked him once, twice, thrice... But the farmer did not reply at all. He thought that if he bothered to reply to Her, the chanting-flow of the Name will get interrupted. When Lakshmiji persisted in asking him again and again, at end, he became angry. He was a boorish villager after all. ‘Go away, go! I am taking your lord and master’s name’, he said. Now Lakshmiji got worried that this man may have recognized her. ‘Arey! Do you know my husband? Where is he?’, she asked. Again, after persistent questioning by her, quite annoyed, he replied – ‘He is in a ditch! Now, just go away from here!’ Now Lakshmiji

34 *saguNa-Ishvara* : Lord Supreme, endowed with qualities like omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence, compassion etc.

was convinced that she had been found out. Then, Lakshmi and Narayana revealed themselves to the villager, in their form-divine.

Thus, even though the villager did not know the difference between ‘*aghamochana*’ and ‘*ghamOchana*’, Bhagavan felt that ‘*what this villager is chanting is also my Name, indeed!*’

In this manner, the *bhakti* of *saguNa-Ishvara* is not based on the primacy of the doer (devotee); rather, it is based on the primacy of the Grace-bestower, Bhagavan. And when He sees some devotee taking his Name lovingly, even if it be in a broken, impure, incorrect manner, His heart melts in compassion to meet this devotee.

So, the sense of what I say is this – “*Do chant God’s Name!*”. That ‘*this is God’s Name*’, is all that you need to know. This has no relation to the inner nature and significance of that Name...

(Naam Mahima : p 17-18)



The amazing gains of chanting God's Name

There were two brothers in Punjab, both *sEth*-s (rich merchants). The elder brother had great devotion towards Mahatma-s, whereas the younger brother was opposed to them. The elder brother had this deep anxiety as to how his younger brother may become a bhakta (devotee); how was he to be uplifted?

One day, a tall and well-built Punjabi Sadhu (monk) came there. The elder Seth told the Sadhu – ‘Maharaj! Somehow or the other, please do something to advance the welfare of my younger brother.’ The Mahatma said – ‘All right! Get him to meet me sometime!’ And quite by chance, they met. Mahatmaji told the younger brother – ‘Hey Seth! Listen! Chant the name of Bhagavan Ram!’ The younger Seth replied – ‘I don’t take anyone’s name etc.! I am happy by myself.’ Mahatma said – ‘No! You have to take Ram’s Name. Otherwise, I will strangle you to death.’ Becoming quite annoyed, the Seth said – ‘I will not take Ram’s Name, even if you kill me.’ To which the Sadhu replied – “There! There! It’s done. The name of Ram has surfaced in your mouth! Now, take careful note of my advice. Do not sell this Name for any price, for it is priceless!” Having advised him thus, the Sadhu went away. Many years later, when the Seth died, the messengers of Yamaraj, the Lord of Death, took him to Yamapuri, the world of Yamaraj. Yamaraj told the Seth – ‘You have taken Ram’s Name only once in your life! Now, relinquish that Name and take whatever you want in exchange for that; and then go to hell for experiencing the fruits of your karma.’ The Seth, remembering the Sadhu’s advice, told Yamaraj – ‘Please give me whatever consideration you think right.’ Yamaraj looked at his price-ledger as to what could be paid for that Name, but nothing was written there. So, he took that sinful Seth to his own master, Lord Indra. Indra too could not state what the right price was. And so, the three of them went to Brahma. Brahmaji too expressed ignorance and they all went to Lord Shiva. Lord Shiva said – ‘Well! It is my very nature to chant the Name; and it goes on spontaneously! And so, I am unable to put any price to it.’

As a result of this experience, the sinful Seth's intellect became refined and subtle, and his defects too got erased. He declared then and there that – 'I shall remain here itself, chanting the Name of God! I will not wander here and there anymore.' Then a palanquin was brought there, and the Gods – Shiva, Indra and Yamraj sat on it, and making the sinner Seth sit alongside, they went to the presence of Bhagavan Vishnu. Now, Vishnu Bhagavan was simple and innocent. Thinking that this Seth must be some great Bhakta, Vishnu got up from his throne. Approaching the Seth, he embraced him, and took him to his throne and made him sit by his side.

Now, the question put to Vishnu was this. The Seth had, in his life, uttered Lord Ram's Name just once, and that too in a fit of annoyance. So, what was price to be paid in exchange for it? Vishnu Bhagavan said – "Brothers! Look here. Now, this man has attained me." Yamaraj said – "This man has committed any number of sins. How is that to be accounted for?" Bhagavan said – "After attaining Me, he cannot go anywhere; no more suffering the fruits of his sinning etc. For that, indeed, is the rule in my abode!"

(Naam Mahima: p 19-21)

God's Name, being of the nature of Supreme-Bliss, is *brahman* itself

There was a *sAdhaka* (spiritual aspirant) who stayed with me. One day, he came to me and said – “Maharaj! I have been doing *nAma-japa* (recitation of God's Name) for a very long time; and nothing has happened. I would like to give up the *japa*.” I advised him not to do that. But he was not willing to listen to me, and was adamant in his resolve that he would give up the *japa*. Then I said – ‘All right, then! Give it up.’ He went away after declaring that he had quit *japa* now. He came back some fifteen or twenty minutes later and said – “Maharaj! This *japa* is not dropping off.” I told him – “No! You cannot take God's Name anymore. It is forbidden for you.” After one hour or so, he became very disconcerted, started weeping, and declared that without *japa* it was not possible for him to live.

‘Arey! But you were saying that nothing much has happened because of *nAma-japa*! Well! This *japa* seems to have done so much for you that you are powerless to leave it! Is this not the fruit of *japa*? The fruit is that this *japa* has travelled from your tongue to your *antaHkaraNa* (mind); and there, in the mind, it has got glued; attachment has developed.’ (Take a worldly analogy) Let's say that a husband tells his wife – ‘Ever since you have come into my life, there has only been sadness. I was happy earlier. Please go away, wherever you wish.’ And when the wife prepares to leave, the husband comes, hands folded, and catching her feet, he pleads – “No! Please don't go. I cannot live without you.” So, what has happened? This is what is called ‘attachment’.

So, Narayan! Once there develops a relationship with God's Name, the relationship is such that it can never be broken! Divorce is not possible! So much so, that even if one attains *brahmajnAna* (Knowledge of Absolute Reality) and thinks that the *japa* of Name may be given up, it is seen that the tongue moves on its own; the *japa* goes on spontaneously. The Name sticks – just as *parabrahma-paramAtmA*³⁵; just as our in-dweller Self can

35 *Absolute Reality; Supreme-Self*

never be separated from our being; in the same manner, God's Name, which is of the nature of Supreme-Bliss, cannot leave us and go.

Then again, some people (expressing difficulty in doing *japa* of God's Name) say that their senses do not comply. Say Narayan! When you get properly engaged in *nAma-japa*, your eyes will turn inwards, wanting to see the form behind the Name; your ears will hear the sound of the Name; your skin will touch and feel the Name within; the tongue will relish the taste of the Name; the nose will sense the fragrance of the Name. So, what is the Name really? It is a *chintAmaNi* (celestial, wish-fulfilling gem). It is a '*nAma-chintAmaNi*'.

Sniff its fragrance, taste it, see its form, touch it, listen to its steady sound; become one with it. God's Name has come to us, to give us everything. It is not a mere name; it is *amruta* (the ambrosia of immortality). It is Bliss; it is *brahma-svarUpa* (the form of brahman, the Supreme Reality).

In *upAsana*³⁶, one meditates on the continuity of *brahman* (Formless, Non-dual, Absolute Reality) in the seen-world of objects. The proper procedure of *upAsana* is the conviction that '*nAma-brahma*' (the Name-Brahman) is truly Brahman itself. How so? Supreme-Bliss, which is the very nature of Brahman, can be experienced by us in God's Name. This is a truth that is stated in *shruti* (Veda; Upanishads). That is why, God's Name, being of the nature of Supreme-Bliss, is Brahman itself.

(Naam Mahima: p 45-46)

36 *upAsana*: Worship, Meditation, Deep contemplation;

God's Name will follow your mind's orders

Do you have misunderstandings and quarrels in your house? If so, what's happening, really? Let's say there are two people at home. The first person wants the other person to act in accordance with his (the first person's) mind. The two persons are of two minds. Their minds are distinct. A woman has her mind; a man has his mind; there are two minds. At some time, they may be in agreement and be of one mind; at other times, they exist distinct from each other. And when one person wants a second person to act as per his mind, and the second person does not wish to do so, then there arises a conflict between the two. All domestic disputes are of this nature alone. So, whatever be the relationship between two people, it is best to carry on with an agreement of minds. Yes, no two people are of the same mind; and when there is a disconnect between the minds, conflicts arise.

So, if there arise any such conflicts in your home, press down your own mind, and let the other person's mind prevail. Go in accordance with desire of the other person. And, if needed, the other person can also suppress his desire. So, he who suppresses his own mind and acts in accordance with the other person's mind, will be able to remain in joy; his domestic life will always be harmonious and happy. Otherwise, he will have to face daily doses of pulls, pushes, stresses.

Now, let us turn our mind towards our beloved God's Name. He, the Name, will never drive you to go in accordance with His own mind! On the contrary, He will always act in accordance with your mind. So, if you ask the 'Name' to sound louder, the Name will say 'Aye! Aye! Louder I shall be!' If you say 'Faster!', faster he will be!

There is a story of a boy and a girl who met each other before their proposed wedding. The girl asked the boy what sort of a wife he would like to have. The boy said that he wished to have a wife who would speak if asked to speak, and be silent when asked to remain silent. Whereupon the girl said – 'Sir! What you should do is to buy a good radio and install it in your house. What you need is a radio, not a wife! Surely a girl will speak her mind at times, sing when she has a mind to, conduct herself as per her

mind. She too has a mind of her own! That she should act only according to your mind – how is that possible?’

However, we can state one thing to every boy and girl – that if they plant God’s name in their hearts, then that Name will follow whatever they say. If they say ‘O Name! Dance!’, it will dance. If they say ‘O Name! Sing!’, it will sing. If they say ‘Be quiet!’, it will remain quiet. It is as if the Name is obedient to the mind’s wishes. And while being yielding and obedient all the time, one day the Name will swallow up the mind totally! This too is a part of the scheme of followership. When the Name settles in your heart, it will draw unto itself the entire attention of all your sense-organs.

(Naam Mahima: p 46-47)



Without taking resort to God's Name, no one has become a Mahatma, ever

I used to go for *darshan* of Mokulpur Baba. He would say – ‘Come, I shall give you something to eat.’ Maharaj, Baba used to have *chivda*³⁷ with him. He would mix some *chivda* in curds in one cup and add a dash of salt; in another cup, he would mix some *chivda* in curds and add a bit of sugar; and in the third cup, he would add some *chivda* to milk. *Chivda* is one – but due to the peculiarities of curds, salt, sugar and milk, the different servings are of different taste.

Narayan! In the same way, Brahman is One; happiness is One. But which happiness do you want? Do you wish to have to have the happiness of eating grapes, or of eating some spicy snack? Likewise, in *nAmOcchAraNa* (chanting of God's Name), you can have different kinds of joy. You can have the joy of chanting fast; or of chanting nice and slow; or of chanting loudly; or of meditating on the Name. God's Name is like wax in your hands. You can mould it into a toy of any shape. Name is such a soft and supple entity, such a flexible thing, that you can see it in the shape of Rama, or Krishna, or Shiva; just as you wish! Everything is possible with the Name! It is because of this that our Mahatma-s have said – ‘Name is *paramAnanda* (Supreme-Bliss); Name is *madhu* (honey)’, in the sense that taking the Name makes a man revel in bliss.

In your heart, light the flame of the Name. In your heart, play the melody of the Name on the flute; feel the soft-soft touch of the Name; let the fragrance of the Name spread around; look within your heart, as to what *rasa* (taste) the Name is handing out.³⁸

If you wish to sip the honey of *brahman* (Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute), chant the Name of God. Till today, no saint, no Mahatma, no sage has been born, who has not taken resort to the Name. Without taking resort to God's Name, no one has become a Mahatma, ever. So

37 *Chivda: Chivda is a delicious snack mix made with flattened rice, spices, dry fruits and nuts*

38 *Here, Maharajshree is pointing out that all the sense-organs are drawn inside the heart, by the power of the Name.*

much so, that after attaining *brahma-jnAna* (Knowledge of Absolute Reality), if there remains God's Name in one's life, then that *brahma-vidyA* (Knowledge of Brahman) is blessed with a living husband; without the Name, it is a widow. In other words, God's Name is *brahma-vidyA*'s auspicious emblem of good-fortune.

(Naam Mahima – p 48,49,53)



We people do not consign God to some seventh heaven!

By means of *jñAna* (Knowledge) that is distinguished by *shraddhA-bhakti* (faith and devotion), one attains the realization of *saguNa, sAkara Ishvara* (God, who is endowed with form and has infinite auspicious qualities). And by means of *shuddha tattva-jñAna* (pure knowledge), one attains knowledge of the formless *brahma-tattva* (reality of brahman), which is devoid of all qualities and distinguishing characteristics. And all these paths have their own, distinct, *prakriyA* (processes) and *sAdhanA* (means of spiritual realization).

But one may walk in the path of *sAdhanA* only when one has non-attachment towards external objects! One needs to have some amount of distaste towards them! So long as the mind does not have a desire for liberation; so long as it does not have a desire to know the Truth; so long as one is not restless to attain the Supreme Goal of life, what can poor *sAdhanA* (spiritual effort) accomplish?

Now, look here. As far as *nAma-sAdhanA* (practice of continuously chanting God's Name) is concerned, there are no prerequisite qualifications needed. Even so, if one does *japa* of the Name along with a feeling of faith and devotion, then that would be the icing on the cake! Actually, even without faith and devotion, the Name has the same power as is there in God.

We people do not consign God to some seventh heaven!

Look here. Atma (Self) is realized within one's 'I'; and God is realized within '*tat*' ('That'), i.e., within the whole of Creation. And in Brahman, there is neither 'I' nor 'That'; it is all-transcendent, self-effulgent (self-evident), and the substratum of all.

Whereas, of Bhagavan, or Ishvara, we say:

It is that which is 'I', as well as 'This', 'That' and 'You'. Bhagavan is He, whose *nirguNa-rUpa* (the form that is devoid of all qualities and distinguishing characteristics) is *brahman*; Bhagavan is He, whose form

endowed with supreme powers³⁹ is Ishvara; Bhagavan is He, who takes the form of Jeeva (individual self) for his own enjoyment and control⁴⁰; and for the elaboration of his (vastness of) Leela (sport), Bhagavan himself has manifested in the form of this variegated universe. Take the case of a fruit, say, a pomegranate. Although the fruit is one, yet, we distinguish between skin, pulp and seeds of the single fruit. Similarly, it is One God who is manifest in the form of this entire Creation.

For us, all people are forms of Ishvara. We believe that an atheist too is Ishvara; and so is a believer. A follower of an *Acharya-sampradAya* (traditional system and teachings of an Acharya) is also Ishvara; as is someone who is not a follower. For us, India, Pakistan, China, USA, are all but forms of Ishvara.

Narayan! This view of ours about the nature of Ishvara makes our heart so beautiful, so pure, so unbiased, so even-handed; and fills us with an experience of *sat-cit-Ananda*⁴¹ that has no limits whatsoever!

Just as all forms are Bhagavan, all Names are of Bhagavan too... This is the *siddhAnta* (the settled truth).

(Naam Mahima : p 14,15,16)

39 *Omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence, supreme compassion and infinite auspicious qualities*

40 *Jiva is that form of Bhagavan, which he has for his enjoyment (of the experiences of the universe, pleasant and unpleasant). Jiva is subject to limitations based on his karma, and is under the control of Bhagavan. Bhagavan controls the whole universe in accordance with the principles that he himself has established.*

41 *Sat-cit-ananda – Eternal existence; Consciousness; Bliss*

It is through the ear that Bhagavan likes to enter your heart.

Any and every human being in this world; well, not just humans; birds and animals as well; also, deities and demons; indeed, every single living creature desires *rasa*⁴². For everyone desires 'taste'. Without getting some taste of happiness, man does not feel motivated to proceed with any activity. Even if one drags oneself somehow, forces oneself to engage in some activity, one develops no faith or dedication to that activity if one experiences no *rasa*. It is only when a man develops faith in his heart that he attains firmness of purpose. Similarly, it is only when there is aspiration in the heart that a man puts in some effort. Our Mahatma-s knew the reason why people are drawn towards worldly pursuits. It is because they get *rasa* from it. Some people get *rasa* from money, some from their family life, some from sense enjoyments, and some get happiness only from engaging in black-market activities. These people rarely turn to God. What this means is that they are devoid of the taste of *bhagavad-rasa* (the taste of God).

राम कहने का मजा, जिसकी जुबान पर आ गया
मुक्त जीवन हो गया, चारो पदारथ पा गया ॥

*He whose tongue acquires the relish of uttering the Name 'Rama'
Liberated in life is he,
All four aims of life has he attained!*

Just as your mind has a proclivity towards money, lust and sensuality; in the same manner, develop a fondness for devotion to God.

Now. How can such a craving for God arise in our heart?

Some proclivities arise in our minds on account of 'seeing' repeatedly, and some because of repeatedly 'hearing'. Here, it is by

42 *Rasa is the aesthetic flavour, mood, feeling, which is experienced (tasted) by the mind because of any external or internal impetus.*

means of hearing that we have to fill our heart with the proclivity for God-consciousness and devoutness. For it is *through the ear* that Bhagavan likes to enter your heart. In Srimad Bhagavatam, there is this verse:

प्रविष्टः कर्णरन्ध्रेण स्वानां भावसरोरुहम् ।
धुनोति शमलं कृष्णः सलिलस्य यथा शरत् ॥

When one, thus, through one's ears receives the sounds [of the Bhâgavatam], the lotus flower of one's loving relationship with Krishna will wash away all impurities, the same way the autumnal rain cleanses the water of the pools.⁴³

Entering through the passage of the ears, Bhagavan alights upon the Lotus of *bhAva* (devotion) in the heart, and at first cleanses the impurities that are there in the heart. So, Narayan! People who love cleanliness, clean up every place they go to, cleanse every object they touch. Bhagavan too has long practice of staying in *ksheera-sAgara* (milk ocean), abiding in a lotus. He is used to being in pureness and softness. When He enters the heart of a *jeeva* (man), he notices that there is so much dirt here; the dirtiness of ever so many desires and proclivities. How is this to be cleansed? And so, to cleanse this, Bhagavan stokes a desire for Himself in the person's heart.

Believing in God, praying to Him morning and evening, reciting His Name, etc., is a different matter. And relishing the *rasa* of connecting with God, and suffering sorrow in the absence of God, is another matter altogether.

There is a saying in our village – छिगुनी पकड़के पहुँचा पकड़ लिया – ‘He caught hold of the finger first and thereafter grabbed the whole hand!’

This Bhagavan Krishna, this Cowherd Boy! His hand has a very firm hold! Once He catches you, He will not let go!

(Raas Panchadhyayi : p 1-4)

43 Translation source: <http://www.srimadbhagavatam.org/canto2/chapter8.html>

Bhagavad-rasa will take you towards Bhagavan

Just as worldly people, believing the world to be a haven of happiness, engage in worldly pursuits in order to experience pleasure, *rasa*⁴⁴, and taste; if instead, they engage themselves in like manner, to listening to *Krishna-kathaa* (stories of Krishna), Krishna will implant a *vAsanA*⁴⁵ (longing) for Himself in their hearts. It is *vAsanA* alone that can cut down another *vAsanA*.

People cry for their children; no one cries for God! So, God says, '*why don't you begin crying a bit for me?*' People call out their child's name, the whole day long. Krishna says, '*why don't you begin calling out my Name, now and then?*' People find much joy in *bhOga* (worldly enjoyments). God says, '*come to me! I shall give you much more joy than what you get by bhOga!*' And if people say that they would like to do acts of *dharma*, for *dharma* begets great purity of heart; Bhagavan says – '*come to me. I shall give you even greater purity!*' And if they say – '*shravaNa, manana*⁴⁶ gives great knowledge'; Bhagavan says, 'Come to me! Just see the kind of knowledge that I will give you! *rasAtmaka jnAna* (Knowledge filled with *rasa*).'

This *bhagavat-kathA* (stories of God) exist for the purposes of making *rasa* flow in our hearts. For cutting down worldly *vAsanA*, *vAsanA* for God should rise in our heart. But then, it is seen in the world that people apply themselves to *bhajana*⁴⁷ (devotion to God) for a few years

44 *Rasa is the aesthetic flavour, mood, feeling, which is experienced (tasted) by the mind*

45 *Vasana: Subtle desire; a tendency created in a person by the doing of an action or by enjoyment; it induces the person to repeat the action or to seek a repetition of the enjoyment; the subtle impression in the mind capable of developing itself into action; it is the cause of birth and experience in general; the impression of actions that remains unconsciously in the mind. (Source: Yoga Vedanta Dictionary, by Swami Sivananda)*

46 *shravaNa: Listening to and understanding the traditional teachings of Vedanta, in the traditional manner, from a traditional Guru.*

manana: Constant thinking, reflection, on the teachings of Vedanta

47 *Bhajana : Worship (of the Lord); praise (of the Lord); taking refuge (in the Lord). (Source: Yoga Vedanta Dictionary, by Swami Sivananda)*

and then revert to worldly pursuits thereafter. Why does that happen? It happens because they do not experience *rasa* in God! Spiritual practices such as thinking about God, understanding scriptures, doing meditation etc., are one thing; and experiencing the *rasa* of Ishvara is quite another thing.

In one's life, it is important that *rasa* of Ishvara arises. For if that does not happen, and if one gets some other pleasurable thing in the world, then one tends to abandon Ishvara and go over to the other thing. He, in whose life *Ishvara-rasa* does not arise, does not become a devotee of firm faith. His attitude of mind, his love for God, will not be of a lasting nature.

The primary purpose of *bhagavad-kathA* is to produce *rasa* in us; the *rasa* of *shraddhA* (faith), *bhakti-rasa* (rasa of devotion), *prEma-rasa* (rasa of love), and *bhagavad-rasa* (rasa of Bhagavan). Once the *rasa* of Bhagavan enters your heart, you will begin realizing the divinity whose name is Krishna! One needs to connect oneself to Krishna. The '*way of divine love*' is very unique. In this, there is no lowliness or servitude; no need to die (i.e., it is not something to be attained after death; you can attain it here and now). Look, come and see for yourself! Come and give your mind to this! And then see whether the world holds any fascination for you anymore!

Well, it may also be that you feel that your heart harbours no love for the world. If so, thump your chest and look within; examine your heart closely. If you really feel no love for anything in the world, then I can declare in one shot – '*Ok! There's nothing more to do! Your non-attachment itself will grant you liberation!*' However, if your heart still has *rasa* for the world, love for worldly things; then a change of *rasa* is needed; *bhagavad-rasa* is needed. That (*bhagavad-rasa*) will take you towards Bhagavan!

(Raasa Panchadhyayi – p 7,8,9)

Not abandoning anyone is what is *kR^ipA* (Compassion)

Once, when there was *brahma-charchA* (discussion on matters of Vedanta) going on with Udiya Babaji, I asked him – ‘Maharaj! What is *kR^ipA* (compassion)? Brahman is *nirguNa* (attribute-less), *nirvikAra* (unchangeable). Then what and how is Brahman’s *kR^ipA*?’ Baba replied that ‘not abandoning anyone is what is *kR^ipA*’ – अपरित्याग लक्षणा कृपा (non-abandoning is the sign of compassion). Brahman exists within one and all in the form of one’s *AtmA* (Self) – be it a moving entity or a stationary object, sentient or insentient. Brahman abides in all forms, moving as well as stationary. It is indeed the *kR^ipA* of Paramatma that in the face of whatever anyone might say, Paramatma has never let go of anyone; never abandoned anyone. Even in the most sinful being living in hell, it is Paramatma indeed who abides as his Self.

Look, I have heard this story about Sant Kabir. Kabir was once asleep in his cottage, along with his family. Late at night, some man knocked on his door. Kabirji opened the door. The visitor announced on his own that he was a robber, and that the police were after him. ‘They will kill me. Please protect me from them’, he pleaded.

Now, what was Kabir Saaheb to do? His cottage did not have much space. Even so, he told the robber – ‘My daughter is sleeping there. Go and quietly lie down near her. Keep silent. I shall then do whatever is needed to be done.’

The policemen arrived and knocked on Kabirji’s door. Kabirji opened the door. The policemen asked – ‘Who all are there at home? A robber has come near this very place. Is he hiding anywhere here?’

Kabir Saheb said – ‘Please see for yourself. My house is open for you to search.’ The policemen began looking around, and saw a man and a woman sleeping. ‘Who is this man?’, they asked. Kabir ji said – ‘He is my son-in-law.’ Hearing this, the policemen went away from the cottage.

Now, if anybody were to say that one should utter falsehood, if need be, and protect a criminal in this manner, then that would be very

wrong. If people were to act like this, then law and order system will collapse.

However; In Srimad Valmiki Ramayana, Bhagavan Shree Rama says that '*satpurusha-s (sages) offering protection to those who seek their refuge is not to be considered as a censurable act*'. Irrespective of what kind of person the supplicant (seeking refuge) is, to offer him protection is not wrong. Even if others blame him, the sage should not pay heed to their censure. Because sages know that Paramatma – who is the eternal-existence, consciousness, bliss, non-dual reality – has never let go of anybody (God is in one and all).

(Srimad Valmiki Ramayanamrit : p 264-266)



Man must not commit suicide under any circumstances

In the great battle of Ramayana, Rama and Ravana were facing each other. In that battle, on one occasion, Ravana shot a fierce *shakti* (a spear of tremendous power) at Lakshmana, who fell down unconscious. However, Rama launched such a fierce attack on Ravana that the Rakshasa-King became terror-struck and ran away from the battle-field.

Seeing Lakshmana lying unconscious on being struck by the shakti weapon of Ravana, Rama became distraught, and began lamenting excessively.

Look here. By this heartrending wail of Rama, His intense love for Lakshmana is very evident. Secondly, it is a lesson for all of us as to how a brother should love his brother. There is one more thing. If, on occasion, your mind is visited by sorrow and delusion, you should remember that sorrow and delusion are not permanent. No emotion is such that it comes and stays forever. It comes and goes. Therefore, man should resort to discernment, and avoid getting carried away by the flood of emotions.

Actually, these emotions of *kAma* (desire), *krOdha* (anger), *lObha* (greed), *mOha* (delusion) are of such a nature that when a person's 'I' gets mixed with them, the person becomes *kAmamaya* (of desirous nature), *krOdhamaya* (angry nature), *lObhamaya* (greedy nature) and *mOhamaya* (delusional nature). However, when man stands apart from the rapid current of emotion and abides in the natural state of his Self, then he is able to see the harmfulness of the baggage of emotions.

That is why the Valmiki Ramayana points out in many places that man should not get overwhelmed by emotions of sorrow and despair and try to end his life. Man must not commit suicide under any circumstances. Because, if he remains alive, occasions of happiness will surely come sooner or later in his life.

So, seeing Lakshmana lying unconscious in the battlefield, Rama was very distraught. Thereupon, Sushena (the physician) told Rama – 'Maharaj! Please abandon this sense of excessive anxiety'.

Thereupon, on Sushena's advice, Hanuman went to the Himalaya to get the *sanjeevani* herb. Unable to locate the specific herb, he broke the whole peak and carried it to the battlefield. Sushena located the life-enabling herb and administered it to Lakshmana. No sooner was Lakshmana administered the medicine that the *shakti* (spear) fell off from his body, and he sat up, free of any ailment. Rama hugged Lakshmana to his heart and tears of love rained from his eyes.

(Srimad Valmiki Ramayanamrit : p 296-297)



Mind's Faith

Do not entertain notions such as - *'May this man come in front of me, and may that man never appear before my eyes'* ... May he who comes in front of your eyes, come; and may he who goes away, go.

Once or twice, I have been a victim of strong false-notions. In our village there were some people of whom I thought that if I were to see their faces first thing after I woke up, my whole day would be filled with problems. So, look what happened...

If I came to know that these people had come and were chatting in my house, I would not get up from my bed, even if I was awake, until they left. So, this is something from my life that I narrated.

There was another such notion that I had. There was a particular bull that we owned. Now, I got this notion that if I saw that bull's face first thing after I woke up in the morning, then I would gain some money that day. In fact, this was based on actual experience. So, I was firm in my belief that if I see this bull's face in the morning, I was certain to make money. And so, I became quite attached to that bull.

Now, what happened is this. My sister was getting married. And the family she was being married into was a very respectable one; and they were our relatives as well. Somehow, those people came to know of this bull, and the gift of fortune that it possessed. So, they asked us to give that bull to them. Now, try and understand. Would we not be loath to part with the bull? Anyway, we gave them that bull. But in my mind, I felt the pain – *'Alas, alas! This divine bull of our house, which was blessed with the grace of Goddess Lakshmi, has now gone out of our hands!'* We felt miserable.

As is evident, our minds were seized by such *rAga-dvEsha* (attachments and aversions).

The fact of the matter is that the mind has faith in something, a belief, an attitude. And wherever you get faith, whatever you believe in, that's it!

What happens is that man encounters some undesirable experience or the other during the course of a day, and some desirable

experience as well. And swaying with the experiences of our mind, we form mental associations of desirables and undesirables.

However, the correct approach is that you should not form associations of *rAga-dvEsha* based on the perception of your sense-organs. रागद्वेष वियुक्तैस्तु (Gita 2.64)⁴⁸. Whatever comes in front of you, let your eyes see, and move on. The function of *jnAna* (consciousness/knowledge) is only to throw light on objects and move on. Do not cling on to them.

(Saankhya Yog – new edition – p 657-658)



48 रागद्वेषवियुक्तैस्तु विषयानिन्द्रियैश्चरन्। आत्मवश्यैर्विधेयात्मा प्रसादमधिगच्छति॥2.64॥

But the self-controlled man, moving among the objects with the senses under restraint and free from attraction and aversion, attains serenity, self-poise.

...this is what is life

As regards the existence of Ishvara, it is said that the *pramANa* (proof; authority of knowledge) is *shRuti* (Veda) [i.e., it is the Veda that points out who Ishvara is]. Now, if there is something right in front of us and yet we do not recognize it, then how will a *pramANa* help?

Let me tell you a story. Once upon a time there was a man 'X', who, upon his father's death, found a cash-box among his father's belongings. This cash-box was filled with glittering stones – ever so many of them. He was overjoyed, and thought – 'Ah! My house has so many diamonds! I am a very rich man!' Now, 'X' had an uncle who had a jewellery shop, and so 'X' took one stone from that cash-box and showed it to his uncle. 'What is the market value of this diamond?', he asked. The uncle had one look at that stone and realized that it was quite worthless. But he thought – 'If I tell X that this stone is worthless, he may not believe me.' And so, he told X – 'Son! I am now an old man. My eyes are not so sharp anymore, and it is my sons who are quite skilled in evaluating gems and jewels. Now, why don't you work with them for six to eight months and learn all about diamonds? Then you can evaluate your diamond yourself.'

X agreed and started working with his uncle's sons. After putting in a lot of hard work, he became proficient in the art of evaluating diamonds. He then opened his father's cash box and took out one precious stone. Upon examining it, he realized that it was just a piece of glass, totally worthless. He took out another stone, but that too was the same. And so was a third. Finally, he threw out the whole bunch of stones into the trash-bin.

So, Narayan, this world, which we think is quite distinct from *parabrahma-paramAtmA* (God), and which we consider to be of great value... Well, it is only so long as we do not know how to inquire into what the world is in reality, that we believe this world to be valuable. If we learn to distinguish between the real and the counterfeit, then this world that seems to be of such great significance will be seen to be worthless. All life is inevitably followed by death. All love has betrayal hidden in it. Alas, this is what the world is. Veda Bhagavan says:

अश्वत्थे वो निषदनं पर्णे वो वसतिः कृता । (Yajurveda)⁴⁹

The Ashwattha (Peepal tree) is your home, and your residence is on its leaves...

Just as dew drops hang on leaves, and with a mild shaking of the leaf, they fall down – this is what is life.

One day a gentleman came to me and asked – ‘Look here, sir. This Creation (world) is palpably visible to my eyes. How can you say that Creation is *mithyA* (unreal / illusory)?’

I clarified – “I don’t think I would have ever said that ‘form’ is unreal and that the ‘eye’ is real! It is you who believe the eyes to be real and wish to see the world as unreal! In other words, it is when the perceiver ‘mind’ is negated (i.e., known to be unreal) that the world of objects gets negated.

So, for attaining knowledge of the Supreme-Self (Paramatma), it is not sufficient just to negate the ‘seen world of forms’; one has to renounce the seeing ‘eye’ and seer ‘mind’ as well.

(Mandukya Karika Pravachan – vaitathya prakarana : p 20-23)

49 Shukla Yajurveda, Kanva Samhita, Adhyaya 13, verse 80; Oshadhi Suktam, Verse 5

The experience of Mahatma-s

[Note:

Since January 1984 CE or so, Maharajshree discontinued delivering formal discourses, and mainly conveyed his teachings in a Q&A format. Devotees would gather in a satsang and ask questions, and Maharajshree would give his clarifications. In one such satsang, a devotee posed a question that spoke of there being some fifty or so tattvajna-s (knowers of Truth) in the world, and of those tattvajna-s who are pURNa-prajna (have attained complete realization) etc. The following excerpt is Maharajshree-s response to this question.]

A *tattvajna* (sage; knower of Supreme Truth; knower of the essence of things) does not know or consider himself to be a *tattvajna*. For he is *tattva* (Supreme Reality) itself. In his eyes, he is Brahman himself; not a knower of Brahman. Brahman is not a *daNDA* (sacred wooden-stick) that a sage grasps and becomes a *daNDee* (sanyasi who carries a *daNDA*). There (in *tattva-jnAna*, Knowledge of Supreme-Reality), there is only the removal of *ajnAna* (ignorance). Therefore, in a *tattvajna*-s view, there are no 'others'. Indeed, for him, all 'others' are people in a dream.

What happens is this. Faithful devotees, who do not know *tattva*, but believe in the existence of *tattvajnAna*; in the view of such devotees, the world may have, say, around 10, 20 or 50 *tattvajna*-s (knowers of Supreme-Truth). As an analogy, let us take the case of women. In the world, there are millions of women; but one's own mother is indeed so special that one may consider her to be the greatest woman. Similarly, in whoever one's faith settles on, one gets the firm belief that – 'He is a *tattvajna*'.

That is why there is no reason for reposing one's faith in every other person as being a *tattvajna*. In the eyes of a *shraddhAlu* (trustful devotee), there is only one Mahapurusha (great *tattvajna*) in the whole world; whereas, in the eyes of a *tattvajna*, there is none. For the *tattvajna* is *tattva* itself.

Therefore, there is no need for you to lose hope. For you are Brahman yourself; indeed, everyone can become Brahman, because, that is what one really is. All are Brahman.

So, inquire about your true Self. Know your Self.

If you need to believe in someone as a *tattvajna*, then repose that belief in your Guru; and if you wish to nurture *tattva-dR^isTi* – i.e., you wish to see the true essence of reality – then, see everyone as being of *tattva-rUpa* (i.e., all are Reality itself, in essence).

Actually, if one goes around reposing belief in every other person as being a *tattvajna*, then one may miss the whole point (of one's search of the Supreme-Truth). One may begin comparing these different persons and say that 'he is greater', 'he is lesser'; one may have lived a long life, and another may have died young... Such a scheme of thinking is but related to the world (and not to Brahman).

Therefore, repose your trust in your own Guru as being a *tattvajna*; and know that your Guru, as well as you yourself, are both *tattva-svarUpa*⁵⁰ in reality; Brahman, appearing in bodily form.

(Anand Vaartaa : p 23-24)

50 *In true essence, you and your Guru are not different; not apart. You are but that One; the Supreme-Reality, Brahman.*

Baba! Drop the doubts from your heart!

The Shastra-s say that if you are doing *japa* of a mantra and have doubts about the efficacy of the mantra, then you will not get the fruits of the *japa*.

संदिग्धो हि हतो मन्त्रः

Slain is the mantra, whose japa is done with a doubting mind!

For we do not do *japa* with firm faith in the mantra. If you are worried as to whether the mantra is effective, or might it have undesirable consequences; for a mind that has such a doubt, there would be no fun in *japa* itself. If you have to remain alert and vigilant all the time; if you are worried whether you will be duped etc.; then, how can you have commitment and faith? That is why the Gita declares '*samshaya*' (doubting) as the greatest of defects – संशयात्मा विनश्यति (Gita 4.40).

For one who has a doubting mind, neither this world nor the next nor happiness nor peace exists. That is why Sri Krishna says – 'Arjuna! Cut asunder the doubts of your heart!' – छित्त्वेन संशयं⁵¹ ... Rise, stand up! Work out your way forward! Do *sAdhanA* (spiritual practices). Do *tapasyA* (austerities, penance). It is because of *ajnAna* (ignorance of the Self) that your heart has such a doubt. The greatest work that *jnAna* (Knowledge) does is that it makes a man free of all doubts.

In worldly experience, we see that one has faith in one's friend, and doubts and suspicions about one's foe.

Now, look! See what *jnAna* (Self-Knowledge) does! *jnAna* tells you – "Where your foe may take you, I am there as well; and where your friend may take you, I am there too! *Baba! Drop the doubts from your heart!*"

51 तस्मादज्ञानसंभूतं हृत्स्थं ज्ञानासिनाऽऽत्मनः। छित्त्वेन संशयं योगमातिष्ठोत्तिष्ठ भारत॥4.42॥

Therefore with the sword of the knowledge (of the Self) cut asunder the doubt of the self born of ignorance, residing in thy heart, and take refuge in Yoga. Arise, O Arjuna. (Translation by Swami Sivananda)

jnAna tells you – ‘When you die, I alone exist! And when you are alive, then too, I alone exist! Since the truth is that I am never apart from you, why do you rear this snake in the form of doubts?’ In happiness, in misery, in war, in the forest, in friends and foes, in heaven and hell, it is this (Self) alone that exists – the One, undivided *sattA* (Existence; Reality), which remains perfect and full. You cannot get separated from it and go away any-which-where! Then what is there to fear? Sin, merit, happiness, misery, this world, next world – what? *TattvajnAna* (Self-Knowledge) burns all these doubts and dilemmas to ashes. Wherever we are, however we are, whatever we are, whenever we are –in that very manner, as that itself, in that very place, at that very time, we are one with Paramatma (Omnipresent God-Almighty; Supreme-Self). Such is the great good fortune and supreme-peace that *jnAna* (Self-Knowledge) bestows on us; as a result of which the darkness of ignorance is totally erased from the mind.

There is nothing in life that grants more happiness than this (*jnAna*). Therefore, my friend, become Arjuna yourself! One etymology of the name ‘Arjuna’ is - अर्जुन करनेवाले – i.e., ‘*he who acquires*’. So, acquire knowledge about Paramatma; acquire *jnAna* (Self-Knowledge).

(Vibhooti Yog: p 313-14)

वृष्णात् परं किमपि
तत्त्वमहं न जाने ।
ऊर्ध्ववत् । ७५

Sri Haribabaji Maharaj

Of this, there is no doubt, that Sri Haribabaji Maharaj is alive even today; he is present everywhere, in the form of *brahman*, *Ishvara*, *AtmA* and *virAt*⁵². He is of imperishable nature.

An amazing aspect of his life was that he did not allow even a moment in his life to be wasted. He would say that defects such as negligence, inattentiveness, lack of self-control etc., should not set foot into one's life.

His life was characterized by humbleness and childlike simplicity. He would do any and every task himself, and no task was too small for him. He could sit the whole day long, without any strain or distraction. Indeed, he was the perfect example of a person having no pride. At the same time, he would not even lift his eyes to see any person of pompousness, pride, boastfulness. He attached no significance to the worldly stature and fame of any person.

The kind of *guru-nishThA* (absolute faith in one's Guru) that could be seen in him, is very difficult to find elsewhere. By the Grace of his Guru, Swamishree Sacchidananda Giri, Baba could attain unswerving *brahma-nishTha* (poise in Brahman, the Absolute Reality).

Sri Haribabaji's day-to-day life was filled with the radiance of tremendous spirit, high-purpose and hard work. When he saw 700 villages in the Gangetic plains (near Anupshehar, UP) being regularly submerged by the annual floods of Ganga, affecting the lives of tens of thousands of villagers and cattle, he decided to take matters into his own hands. Taking a spade and a basket, he started to build a dyke. And soon crowds of villagers joined him. In just ten months, a dyke, 23 miles long, was constructed, which would have otherwise costed crores of Rupees to build. He infused the whole work with the spirit of divinity. He considered all articles (the sand, the stones, the implements) to be God Himself, and all work as service to God; and he would tell so to others.

52 *virAt* : Macrocosm; the physical word that we see; the Lord in His form as the manifested universe. (Source: Yoga Vedanta Dictionary by Swami Sivananda)

A wonderful aspect of his character was that he would never give an ear to words of censure about anybody. If anybody started to speak ill of someone else, Baba would say – ‘Take the Name of God; or else go out and do some work.’

In his life, it was tangibly seen that he always lived with one great Mahatma or the other. By staying in the tutelage of great Mahatmas, flaws such as arrogance and pride do not raise their head in one’s life. He did not hesitate to bow down and touch anyone’s feet. He embraced one and all. He loved cleanliness. He used to say – ‘Let your heart be filled with God. In this world, God alone is faultless.’

He would say – ‘The urge to fulfil one’s *sankalpa* (resolve) is a characteristic of worldly people. In the case of Sadhu-s, it is better that their *sankalpa* is not fulfilled. Where one’s own *sankalpa* is not fulfilled, there, the *sankalpa* of one’s beloved Lord is fulfilled.’

Although the propagation of moral values and virtuous conduct was dear to him, he preferred to spend his time purely in *bhagavad-rasAsvAdan* (relishing the taste of the Divine Name). He had no proclivity for dwelling on the past or the future, or for preaching, or for performing social-work. He knew that a dog’s tail cannot be straightened, however much you try. To keep oneself immersed in blissful-God and in His *rasa*⁵³ is indeed the attainment of success in life.

He used to say that Mahatma-s were immortal even in terms of their physical body. Their being visible or invisible is but a play of ‘hide and seek’. His gentle smile, the quiver of his lips, his loving glance, the touch of his lotus-hands, his sweet words of speech – all these are visible to us even now, as if he is still here with us. The canopy-shade of his softness and compassionate lotus-hands, are ever intent on the protection and welfare of all devotees, even now.

(Paavan Prasang : - 166-177)

53 *Rasa is the aesthetic flavour, mood, feeling, which is experienced (tasted) by the mind because of any external or internal impetus.*



Swamishree Haribabaji Maharaj

Haraibaba Baandh shrine, near Anupshahr, U.P.

Message of *satsang*

I shall tell you a message from Bhagavad Gita... The dedication with which a trader has to apply himself for the purpose of monetary gains; the dedication with which a pleasure-seeker has to apply himself for the purpose of obtaining objects of pleasure; and for a *dhArmika*, who sincerely executes the dictates of the *karma-kANDa*⁵⁴ of the Veda, the extent of articles, helpers, hard-work needed for the performance of *yajna-yAga* (fire-sacrifice rites) ... If you take the combination of these, viz.:

- Effort put in for earning money
- Desire for object-pleasures
- Discipline and efforts put in for performance of acts of *dharma*

If such desire, effort and discipline is put in for the attainment of Parameshwara, then this very '*sAdhan*' (device) becomes '*lagan*' (love/devotion). They say that he has become wholly dedicated to God.

What happens is that the proclivity for attainment of worldly pleasures is transformed into '*prEma bhakti*' (highest form of love of God). The decorum, rules and regulations of dharmic life translates into 'attentiveness/vigilance', which helps in cleansing the impurities of one's mind. The effort involved in money-making becomes transformed into '*lagan*' (love of God). If such a change of attitude and consequential transformation does not come about for everybody, one need not rue (because a spiritually mature seeker is quite rare).

Spiritual-life is all about purity. *kAma* (worldly-desires, lust), *krOdha* (anger) and *lObha* (greed, covetousness) are doors to hell; they render the heart impure. तस्मादेतत्रयं त्यजेत् (– '*Therefore, forsake these three – kAma, krOdha and lObha*' (Gita 16.21).

एतैर्विमुक्तः – free of these defects, walk on this (spiritual) path, and perform activities that are for your eternal good.

54 *karma-kANDa: The section of the Vedas that relates to the performance of rituals and sacrificial rites for material benefits or for liberation.*

My Swamiji (Master) Sri Yogananda Ji used to say – ‘Look here, son. Earlier, you were by yourself, and you were free to do as you pleased. Now, you have joined me. And so, if you do any wrong things hereafter, it will not only bring you a bad name, it will damage my reputation as well. So, keep your character and conduct pure.’

So, never forsake the effort to keep your life pure and stainless – this is what is the key message; it is the message of *satsang*, message of spirituality, message of Gita, and the message of Upanishads.

If someone encourages you or impels you to take the path of impurity, then consider this... Impurity can be found anywhere and everywhere. If, even after coming to *satsang*, you pursue and gather impurity alone, then what indeed have you gained? The purity of life gets its shine only from *satsang*. Actually, *bhakti* and *jnAna* manifest fully only in a pure heart. Where the heart is not wholly pure, they do not manifest. Thus, the meaning of spiritual life is this – *just as you wish to see your house, clothes, and your body to be free of dirtiness, you should also wish to see your mind as being spotless and shining. Spiritual life is indeed an expression of purity and radiance.*

(Dainik Jeevan mein Gita : p 123-125)

Our *vAsanA*-s are the cause of our misery!

In my younger days, I was very fond of telling others the right thing to do. If, based on my considered view, something appeared the right thing to do, then I would not hesitate to tell, even to elders, what to do and what not to do. But then I came to realize that my advice did not have the desired effect. Even those who were very close to me did not change their ways following my advice, what then to speak of others?

In those days, I was doing *sAdhan-bhajan* (spiritual practices). And so, the inclination for *brahmacharya* (absolute purity of conduct) was quite strong in me. Once, to a person who was very close to me, I advised – ‘Give up eating red-chillies.’ And he said – ‘All right. I shall do as you say.’ He quit eating red-chillies for a month or two, after which he resumed eating. I then made him promise that he would never eat red-chillies anymore. He said – ‘Well! Red-chilly is not something that man cannot live without. And so, here! I take an oath that I will not eat red-chillies ever again.’ He made this pledge and kept away from red-chillies for a few months, after which he resumed eating them.

Now I told him – ‘If red-chilly happens to come to your plate on its own, say, as a part of some dish served to you, then you may eat it. But do not specifically ask for red-chilly – because when you do that, I feel disconcerted.’

Look! Surely these are just experiments! Such a small thing, this... Giving up eating red-chillies... Even this could not be done. Why talk of not eating, he could not give up even asking for it. From that day onwards, I stopped giving any advice to that person. I only tell myself – ‘This tendency for giving unsolicited advice to others is what is my problem... Actually, whether the other person desists from doing the wrong thing, or continues in his old ways, depends purely on his own nature.’

Sometime ago, I read in ‘Parasbhag – Parasmani’ publication that if you experiment with a dog’s tail by putting it inside a straight pipe for twelve years, and then take it out, the tail curls up all over again. People

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traverse their own paths, at their own pace. Everybody has his or her own independence of gait. This business of reforming others limits a man's vision to one person, or one family, or one community or practice. What we need to do is to make our vision very bright, very pure, and very broad.

(Anand Ratna : p 167,168,169)



Do *bhajan*!⁵⁵

There was a deaf man, who used to visit a Mahatma, and they had a way of communicating with each other. Once, the Mahatma told him – ‘Do *bhajan*!’ Somewhat afraid that this might involve neglecting family life, the deaf man asked the Mahatma – ‘My wife loves me very much. My son and my daughter-in-law, too, have great love for me. How can I leave them?’

The Mahatma asked – ‘Shall I show you how much they love you?’ The deaf man said – ‘Please show me.’

The Mahatma said – ‘I shall cure your hearing impairment now. You will be able to hear perfectly well. When you return home, do not tell anyone about this. Continue behaving as a deaf man.’

The man returned home. When he asked for some water, his daughter-in-law, displaying respect, came and gave him some water to drink. When walking back from there, she told her husband – ‘This old man refuses to die. He makes me run the whole day long.’ The son said – ‘And he is hoarding all the money, sitting upon it like a snake. It is only when he dies that will we be able to live a comfortable life.’ And the deaf man’s wife said – ‘What you say is quite correct. The old man should now go and see God’s home.’

In this manner, within a day, the old man came to realize and understand that no one in the house loved him. They were giving him fake respect, purely out of the desire for his money.

Now, he went again to the Mahatma and said – Mahatma Ji! You have shown me everything! In this world, everybody is wedded only to selfishness. Now, I am able to understand your instruction and order to me, to ‘Do *bhajan*!’

55 *Bhajana : Worship (of the Lord); praise (of the Lord); taking refuge (in the Lord).*
(Source: *Yoga Vedanta Dictionary*, by Swami Sivananda)

Firm resolve

Let this fact sink firmly into your mind – ‘*Firm resolve is the abode of God.*’ If, instead, you fall a prey to the arguments of a *tArkika* (dialectician; logician), he will lead you astray. If you worship a Salagrama⁵⁶, they will tell you that the Narmadeshwar⁵⁷ is superior. If, instead, you worship Narmadeshwar, they will tell you that Sri Rama is superior, as Shiva himself offers worship to Rama. If you are devoted to Rama, they will tell you that Sri Krishna alone is *shODasha-kalA pUrNa* (i.e., Sri Krishna is the only perfect-incarnation of Lord Narayana, as he alone has all the sixteen divine qualities of God). If you catch hold of Krishna, they will tell you – ‘Oh! Krishna is but an *avatAra* (incarnation). The *avatAree* (the one who incarnates) is Sri Narayana!’ Or they may make your mind wander in areas of *nirguNa-nirAkAra* (attribute-less, formless Reality). The *tArkika*-s will not allow you to settle on any one principle. Therefore, do not get caught in the web-trap of argumentation. Stand firm in the place where you have cast your faith based on the teachings of your Guru and the *shAstra*-s (scriptural words of authority). Faith, when it matures, becomes a divine-elixir. And if faith is not strong, it becomes poison. If you keep changing your object of devotion, then your faith will never become steadfast. Therefore, for a *bhakta* (devotee), ‘firm resolve’ is essential. Not allowing anyone’s arguments to sway your mind – that is ‘firmness of resolve’.

(Anand Rathna – p 56, 16)

56 *Salagrama* : Also called a *shaligram*. It is a particular variety of stone collected from river Kali Gandaki in Nepal, which is traditionally worshipped as a form of Lord Vishnu

57 *Narmadeshwar*: Also called as *Banalingam*. These are special stones found in the river Narmada, which are worshipped as a form of Lord Shiva.

The two grinding stones of a flour-mill

It would not be untrue if we say that we do, sometimes, get angry with others. And sometimes we may feel a rush of sensual desire. But then, in such circumstances, we should keep two things in mind. If you do happen to be seized by *kAma-krOdha* (lust / anger), let it be; but do not let your intellect lend it any support, and do not allow the momentary lapse to be translated into action.

By their very nature, *kAma* and *krOdha* manifest only after their arrival. One is not able to anticipate them before they come. All right, then. Let us say that they have come. Now what? Well, as soon as you cognize their presence, pulverize them to powder.

How is one to pulverize them? By means of the two grinding stones of a mill. And what are these two grinding stones?

The first grinding-stone is this – *Do not let the mental lapses to be translated into action*. E.g., if anger comes, do not utter abuses; if lust comes, do not indulge in immoral acts; if greed or avarice comes, do not indulge in thieving or dishonesty... Treat such mental aberrations like you would a dream; if it surfaces in your mind, let it dissipate there itself.

The second grinding-stone is this – *Let not your mind/intellect extend any justification or support to such lapses*. Do not think that a good thing has come to mind. Think that something bad has surfaced in the mind. Consciously notice the mental lapses when they occur, and apply a brake... Bind them with shackles.

This is meant for this very life. If you are spiritually minded, then, Narayan, these two things are for you. To prevent *kAma-krOdha* etc., from appearing in your mind is not within anyone's control. But to allow it, or stop such a mood from being translated into action, is within one's control. Becoming angry with someone is one thing and slapping him is another thing. Your hand is in your control; it moves as per your will. So, if anger comes, let it be. But, do not let go of the control that you have on your hand. Do not raise your hand and strike the other person because of your anger. Also, mentally/intellectually, do not justify or support such an

emotion. *In this exercise of pulverizing bad thoughts, one grinding-stone is the 'intellect', and the other is 'action'.*

Then again, anger is acceptable in some situations. One may become angry with one's disciple or child. This is to correct them and bring them to the right path. This is meant for their welfare. If the welfare of the disciple or son is the motivation in one's heart, then, such anger will not be harmful for the one who is angry. When your heart is driven only by the desire to do good, and when you are holding on to goodness yourself, and if the anger that you display towards another person is for the good of that person, then, such anger cannot be to your detriment in any manner. In this way, we can shackle *kAma* and *krOdha*; one, by means of intellectual discernment, and the other, by means of not allowing these emotions to get translated into action.

(Dainik Jeevan mein Gita : p 190,191,201,202)



The whole world will become good for you!

As per our Sanatana Dharma, in life, one does experience occasions of non-violence; and then again, at times, one encounters violence as well. It is to be noted that ‘*vihita himsA*’ (i.e., violence that is sanctioned by scriptures) is not considered as ‘*himsA*’ (violence); this is the rule of Sanatana Dharma. The constitution of our country permits hanging persons who are convicted for some very serious crimes; for in this, the driving motivation is ‘welfare’ (welfare of the state; the execution of justice). The state of mind that is conducive to God-realization is called as ‘*ahimsA*’ (non-violence); and in worldly activities, both violence and non-violence exist.

So, brother! Let there not arise in one’s mind, any inclination to intentionally cause harm to someone else. One should pray to God – ‘O Lord! May I not cause any hurt to anybody, even inadvertently’, for such a state of non-violence can be attained in one’s life only by God’s grace.

Gita (10.5) says that the spirit of non-violence comes to us only from God⁵⁸. It is He who gives it to us. By what sign should we realize that God’s grace has manifested in our heart, and that we recognize it? We should realize it when even the thought of causing hurt to anyone else does not arise in our mind, even in a dream.

Let me share a story. Once, there was a King. He would occasionally tour his capital city. During such tours, he noticed that when he was in front of a particular shop, he felt an urge to arrest the shopkeeper and award him the punishment of ‘death by hanging’. This happened every time he passed in front of that particular shop. One day, he had that shopkeeper summoned to his court, and he asked him – ‘My dear fellow! Why is it that in your case, I feel an urge to award you capital punishment?’ The shopkeeper replied – ‘O Maharaja! Please pardon me for my crime. The fact is that in my shop, I sell sandalwood logs. Nowadays there is no

58 अहिंसा समता तुष्टिस्तपो दानं यशोऽयशः। भवन्ति भावा भूतानां मत्त एव पृथग्विधाः॥10.5॥

Non-injury, equanimity, contentment, austerity, charity, fame, ill-fame; (these) different kinds of qualities of beings arise from Me alone (says Sri Krishna).

market for sandalwood, and so my business is in very poor state. I often get the thought that the day the King dies, there will be a lot of demand for sandalwood, and all my inventory will be sold out in one day!’

So, my friend, this is a matter of reciprocity; a mirror effect! When your mind has ‘*himsA*’, the man in front of you also gets ‘*himsA*’ in his mind. So, if someone speaks words of abuse to you, then look within your heart – ‘Did I commit any mistake? Did I do or say something that caused this person to become angry?’

Actually, the biggest mistake we make is to consider the world to be real, and as something which is apart from us. This is *avidyA* (ignorance of reality; erroneous knowledge). And then, in this illusory world, to have notions that ‘this is good; that is bad’ etc., is the second mistake. To think of someone as being good and then getting attached to him; or to think someone as being bad, and so hating him; this is the third mistake.

A true *sAdhaka* (seeker of the Supreme-Reality) is one who constantly examines his own self, picks out every single error lurking in his heart, and erases them. And a *samsAree* (worldly man) is one, who constantly looks for defects in others; he keeps pointing out their faults.

Look here, brother! If you are under the impression that you can correct the faults of others, you are mistaken. This is such a big world, having so many people, who have so many faults! If you set about trying to rectify the faults of other people, you will be at fault yourself. This Creation, which has been in existence since beginningless-time, has seen so many incarnations of God; so many saints, faqirs, Acharyas, religions, sects... Has there been any reduction at all in the faults of the world? My friend, till today, this dog’s tail could not be straightened at all.

If instead, you start rectifying the faults that exist in your own self, then the whole world will become auspicious and divine for you! On the other hand, if you set about to cleanse the world, who all will you go about convincing and correcting? You will pass away in the attempt, and the world will not improve even a bit. This is the blunt truth.

(Daivi sampad yog : p 39-43)

Truth is a protective armour for man!

Paramatma is the imperishable-*satya* (i.e., it is the eternal reality, truth, non-dual existence). The world is a perishable-*satya* (i.e., a temporary reality). Followers of Vedanta philosophy know Paramatma to be *satya*, and the world to be *mithyA*⁵⁹ (unreal) i.e., a Maya⁶⁰ form. Now, if you would like to adopt *satya* in your life, then try and hold on to *satya* and disregard *asatya* (unreality; untruth).

If, instead, you begin to catch on to *asatya*, then *satya* will slip out from your hands. Therefore, it is necessary to have an attitude of renunciation towards *asatya*. Let whatever falls off, fall off; let whatever comes, come. Let *asatya* remain in a state of disregard; remain indifferent as and when it comes-goes. '*Sadhu! Whatever comes-goes is Maya!*'⁶¹

For *satya*, one needs some sacrifice, some courage, and one needs to put in some effort. He who cannot put in any effort cannot become a *sadAchAree* (man of virtuous conduct). On every turn, saying 'Who is to do this? Who is to put in so much toil?', will just not do. One should have the strength to be able to bear heat and cold, hunger and thirst, abuse and humiliation...

Let me share a story. There was a dacoit, of name Raakab. One day, he went to some Mahatma and said – 'Maharaj! I can't do all that is needed (for a life of virtue), but please tell me just one instruction that I may follow.' Mahatma replied – 'All right. From now on, make it a practice to speak truthfully.' The poor, stupid, dacoit agreed to follow the Mahatma's advice.

Now, he decided to steal a horse that belonged to the King. With this in mind, he went to the royal stable. The watchman stationed there asked him – 'Who are you?' The man replied – 'A dacoit!' The watchman thought – 'This must be the King's man. No dacoit will announce himself to be a dacoit.' And so, the dacoit made his way into the stable, and choosing

59 *mithyA* : False, unreal, illusory

60 *mAyA*: The illusory power of Brahman; the power that projects the illusory universe

61 साधु, आवे जावे सो माया : A saying of Kabeer.

the best horse of the King, a pure-white stallion, he stole it and rode away. After a while, the robbery was discovered and the soldiers of the King swung into action to seek out the horse and the dacoit. Meanwhile, the dacoit reached some place where a *satsang*⁶² was in progress. Reaching there, he tied the horse to a tree, and went and sat down in the *satsang*.

The soldiers tracked him down, and asked him – ‘Who are you?’ He replied – ‘I am a dacoit.’ The soldiers asked – ‘A dacoit, are you? So, what have you plundered?’ ‘I have stolen a horse that belongs to the King’, said the dacoit. Now, the soldiers thought – ‘If this man is really a dacoit, he would never admit that he is one. He is perhaps a Mahatma, with divine powers. Sitting here in the *satsang*, he has come to know that the King’s horse has been stolen and that we are looking for it.’ Thinking in this manner, the soldiers bowed to the dacoit and said – ‘Maharaj! If you have such clairvoyance, please tell us where the horse is.’ The dacoit replied – ‘Look! You will find the horse tied up to a tree that is over there.’

When the soldiers went in the direction pointed to, they found a tree to which a horse was tied. But the horse did not look white in colour. To their eyes, it appeared to be black. So, they decided that this was some other horse, and they left the place, leaving that horse and the dacoit behind.

Such is the glory of truthfulness. Indeed, truth is an armour of protection for man.

(Daivi sampad yog: p 22, 50, 51, 52)

62 *Satsang: A gathering of people, listening to a religious discourse, singing bhajans, or discussing spiritual topics.*

Whatever work you do, do it respectfully

If a man looks solely to his own selfish interests, and cannot even imagine a state that is free of *vAsanA*-s (proclivities) and sense-pleasures, then, how can he ever understand Ishvara? What he will assume is that Ishvara too is likewise and has created this world only for some selfish purpose of his own. Such a man cannot give up his fault-finding nature. He who cannot do any work that is not motivated by some selfish desire, will not be able to understand another person's *nishkAma-bhAva*⁶³ either.

Once, there was a group of eagles who were fighting over some carcass of flesh and bones lying on the ground. A flock of swans happened to fly above the spot. Noticing them, the eagles thought – 'Oh! These swans seem to be stronger than us, and may well snatch the bones from us.' And so, the eagles grabbed whatever bones they could and started to flee. Seeing this, the swans said – 'O Eagles! Fear not! We are birds from Manasarovar! We are eaters of lotus-stalks and oyster-pearls. We have no interest in your meal of meat and bones!' However, the eagles flew away. For they could just not believe that the swans would not snatch their meal from them.

One who does not perform *nishkAma-karma* (desireless action) is of the view that – 'Just as I do every activity of mine with my self-interest in mind, so must be the case with everybody else.' In the view of such people, 'there are no *satpurusha*-s (virtuous people) in the world. Everybody is self-serving. Everyone is devoted to worldly enjoyments.'

But when a man begins to perform *niskAma-karma*, he thinks – 'Just as I am not self-seeking, others too can be non-selfish in their actions.'

Actually, he who does not walk on the path of selflessness can never perform any noble task.

Then again, there are some people who realize that they are doing some wrong or unethical activity; and yet they continue doing it. Arrey! When the defect is noticed by you, why do you do it?

The inference is this – 'Whatever work you do, do it respectfully'.

63 *nishkAma-karma: Desireless action; an action performed without any expectation of fruits or results*

And then there are people who continually deplore the work that they are involved in and criticize it openly. Such people are actually living in hell even now, and will surely go there after death.

People who lack faith are also devoid of any sense of discernment. Being faithless, and not taking advantage of the experiences of one's elders, is a great folly.

Jain sages have said – 'One who has no faith, has actually bid goodbye to *jnAna* (Knowledge)'.

And in Ramacharitamanas, Goswamiji has said:

मुनिन्ह प्रथम हरि कीरति गाई। तेहिं मग चलत सुगम मोहि
भाई।।

*Sages have sung the glory of Sri Hari in the past; it will be easy for me to follow that very path.*⁶⁴

An old man told a youth – 'Eating opium causes disorientation of mind'. And the youth said – 'I will eat and find out.'

For a person lacking discernment, there is delay in acquiring the knowledge and experience, which is actually available here and now... And there is also the strain and pain that one undergoes, needlessly.

(Karma Yog: p 205,206,207)

64 English rendering from Sri Ramacaritamanasa published by Gita Press, Gorakhpur

Mind is an extraordinary ghost

I shall tell you a story. Once, a man tamed a ghost, a genie, and made it his servant. (It may be noted that) This is a fictitious episode. The genie told the man – ‘Give me work to do. I shall obey your command and do whatever you ask me to do. So long as you keep giving me work, I shall keep doing it. But, if at any point in time, you do not make me work, then I will eat you up.’

The man told the genie – ‘Go to such-and-such place; go to ‘X’ foreign country, and fetch me such-and-such thing.’ The genie got that thing in no time. The genie began chasing the man for more and more work. Whatever work the man assigned, however difficult it may be, the genie completed it in a minute or two, or maybe five or ten. And it kept demanding for more work.

Now the man was stricken by fear that the ghost would eat him up. So, he ran to a Mahatma and sought his guidance. The Mahatma said – ‘All right! Fear not! Ask the genie to fetch you the longest bamboo stick in the whole world.’ The man ordered the genie to get him such a stick. The ghost searched all over the world and finally brought a really long bamboo stick. Then, as advised by the Mahatma, the man asked the genie to erect the stick very firmly on the ground, so that it cannot be uprooted. The genie did so. The Mahatma then advised – ‘Now, tell the genie that until you order otherwise, he should keep on climbing up and down this bamboo stick, non-stop.’ The genie was thus kept busy and with that the fear of the genie was eliminated totally.

This mind of yours is no ordinary genie; it is an extraordinary ghost. What you need to do is to give it some support, some bamboo-stick to be occupied with. At those times when you are not putting your mind to some work, let your mind climb up and down the bamboo-stick,

your spinal column, your *sushumna*⁶⁵, your six *chakra*-s⁶⁶, your Bhagavan (i.e., in *nAma-japa*⁶⁷), your Vrindavan, your Goloka, your Vaikuntha, your sacred place of pilgrimage – may your mind stroll in, climb up and down, this Shyam-Sundar (Krishna).

When work beckons, do it. But remember that whenever your mind is idle, it will make you shaky and unstable; it will drag you and throw you in some ditch, some useless things, some good-for-nothing indolence. Therefore, have a divine support-framework in your heart, wherein your mind can happily roam around and get back to work afterwards.

(Yogah karmasu kaushalam : p 50-51)

65 *sushumna* : The important psychic nerve current that passes through the spinal column from the Muladhara to the Sahasrara or the thousand-petalled lotus, through which the Kundalini is made to rise through the Yoga-process. (Source: Yoga Vedanta Dictionary, by Swami Sivananda)

66 Centres of psychic energy in the human body

67 Repetition of God's Name

The way to happiness lies in the cessation of desires

All the world's grains, gold, cattle and women will not satisfy the mind of a man whose heart is seized by desires. Never does passion die down by being indulged in; on the contrary it grows all the more, like fire when oblations of ghee are made into it. (*Srimad Bhagavatam* 09.19 v 13,14)

Knowing that the pleasures of this world and the next are all *asat* (temporary and unreal), one should neither think of them nor indulge in them. One should realize that thinking of such things is the cause of this worldly existence of continued birth-death transmigration; and that the indulgence in such pleasures leads to perishing of Self-Knowledge. He who understands the inner-truth about these sense-pleasures and keeps away from them is a true knower of the Self. (*Srimad Bhagavatam* 09.19 v 19,20)

If anyone in this world believes that fulfilment of desires leads to happiness and peace, then his belief is totally false! Fulfilment of desires can never give peace and happiness. It is only by cessation of desires that peace and happiness can be obtained.

Let's say that two persons are traveling together. When they come to a village, one person is feeling thirsty and the other is not. The thirsty man asks for a rope and a vessel from the villagers, draws water from a well, and feels satisfied after drinking that. The other man feels no thirst and so, he is already satisfied. Without undertaking any effort, he is in the same state of satisfaction that the thirsty man obtained by putting in effort and work.

The inference is that there are two paths, one is desire-fulfilment and the other desire-renunciation. Now, if you are on the path of *sAdhana* (spiritual practice), then think whether you feel happy by fulfilling your desires or by renouncing them? Where do you obtain *rasa*⁶⁸? What suits

68 *Rasa is the aesthetic flavour, mood, feeling, which is experienced (tasted) by the mind because of any external or internal impetus.*

your taste better? Think about this! If you find relish in fulfilment of desires, then you are bound by desires and are held captive by the bondage of desired-objects and desired-people. And if, on the other hand, you find relish by renunciation of desires, then you can find happiness without getting caught in the quicksand of worldliness.

Narayan! All happiness that people get can only be obtained by the cessation of desires. No one can be happy by the continued existence of desires. As regards those whose desires are fulfilled; they too find happiness only upon cessation of desire arising after obtaining the desired object. And those who renounce desires, they too find happiness only upon cessation of the desires. The way to happiness lies in the cessation of desires, not in their fulfilment. We need to have control over desires! For that, there is a need for undertaking *sAdhanA* (spiritual effort) in our life, surely!

The sense of saying this is this... (Firstly, have faith in your chosen path) Have faith in your Guru; have faith in your *Ishta-deva* (particular form of God that you are devoted to); have faith in the *mantra* that you have been initiated into. And then, in your life, exercise restraint on your activities; have restraint on your enjoyments; have restraint on your sense-organs; have control on the situations you face; get a hold on the happiness and sorrows you face... And by controlling your life systematically in this manner, you will succeed in transcending the need for control (by attaining indifference towards all desires and aversions).

(Mandukya Pravachan : Aagama Prakaran, new edition p 527,528,529)

For leaving vices, acquire virtues

Now, have a look at this. Just now, a person has asked the following question. He asks – ‘When we try to give up some vices, our minds dwell on these even more; whereas when we give up *bhakti* (devotion to God), it goes away completely.’

Well, this is cent-per-cent true, something that we actually experience. And the reason for this is this. The *samskAra*-s (mental impressions and tendencies) that we have been carrying since time immemorial have been filled with so many vices that when we begin to give them up, they cling on to us and say – “*Hey! I am your mate from life after life. My fragrance, my imprint, is indelibly stamped on your heart and mind. You may well wish to leave me, but I have no intention of letting you go, for goodness’ sake!*”

Vices comes naturally, whereas *Bhakti* does not come by itself; *bhakti* needs to be worked upon. One needs to practice it. For *sAtvika-sukha* (happiness that is pure) one has put in the required effort to practice goodness, whereas no effort or practice is needed for enjoyment of *rAjasika-sukha* (pleasures of passion) and *tAmasika-sukha* (pleasures of sloth, ignorance and darkness).

Indeed, *bhakti* doesn’t come easily. We need to exert ourselves for *bhakti*, and foster it in our life in accordance with the guidelines of Shastraic traditions and by learning from our Guru. And so, if we let go of it, it will just drop off easily. Whereas vice is something that is existing in our life from before. This being the case, to relinquish vice would entail enormous effort.

And our badness cannot be merely wished away. If we declare that – ‘All right, then. I hereby give up this vice’, it does not mean that the said vice will go away. Nor will it go away merely because we resolve to give it up.

Actually, for giving up vice, one has to acquire virtue.

Say, there is a man who is addicted to gambling. One day, he makes a resolution that he will not gamble anymore. Great! He’s done a good thing. But then, he finds the next day that he is having nothing

to do, and the proclivity to gamble rises again and again in his mind and troubles him till he gives in and goes back to gambling. One is unable to give up gambling even after resolving to do so. So, what is one to do? Well, the time that you have been spending every day on gambling should be filled up with some other purposeful activity. Fill that time by worshiping God, doing *japa* (recitation of mantra), performing acts of charity, going to temples etc. The time that you had fixed for gambling, if you fill it up instead with some other good activity, then your gambling will let go of you. If you do not fill your time with good work, if you do not resort to virtuous activity, then vice will not go away just by your act of giving it up. For that, one has to undertake some great work; that then is the secret of how to give up vice!

(Jnan Vijñan Yog : p 184-185)



Extraordinary Cure

[Note:

The eleventh canto of Srimad Bhagavatam is known as the Mukti-skanda. In this, at the very beginning, there is a section where Rshi Narada relates a conversation between Raja Nimi and nine Yogis who were known as Navayogeshwars. These were nine sons of Sri Rishabha Deva, one of the incarnations of Lord Narayana. The Navayogeshwars were all masters of Self-Knowledge.

Once, King Nimi, wishing to know the dharmas pertaining to the devotees of the Lord, put some questions to the Navayogeshwars. This dialogue between them is known as the Nimi-Navayogeshwar samvaada.

Today's discourse of Maharajshree pertains to this dialogue.]

At the outset, Raja Nimi expressed to Navayogeshwars, his desire to know about 'Atyantika kshEma' (Supreme Good;). 'Atyantika' refers to the 'ultimate', beyond which there is nothing, and 'kshEma' means 'supreme welfare'.

To this question of Nimi, Kavi, one of the nine Yogis, replied:

मन्येऽकुतश्चिद्भयमच्युतस्य पादाम्बुजोपासनमत्र नित्यम् ।
उद्विग्नबुद्धेरसदात्मभावाद् विश्वात्मना यत्र निवर्तते भीः ॥

(Srimad Bhagavatam 11.2.33)

I hold that by worship offered to the lotus feet of Achyuta, where no cause of fear from any quarter dare show its head, the man caught up in this samsAra, his mind ever afflicted by reason of his identifying his body with the Self, is totally freed from fear.⁶⁹

69 English rendering taken from 'Srimad Bhagavatam – Translated by N Ragunathan' Vol-2, published by Vighneshwara Publishing House, Madras.

King! The constant, continuous, worship of the lotus feet of Achyuta, the Lord who never leaves the heart of his devotees, is the '*Atyantika kshEma*' in this world, and it is absolutely free from fear. This is my definite view. Even those people, whose minds are afflicted because of attachment to the physical-body, home and other lowly, unreal, material-objects; even such people are totally freed from all fears as a result of the worship of the Lord's feet.

Actually, while discussing any disease and its related cure, four questions need to be answered.

1. What is the cause of this disease?
2. What is the nature of this disease? (How does it manifest itself? What are its symptoms?)
3. What is the medicine that cures this disease?
4. What are the signs, indications, that the disease has been cured?

In response to King Nimi's question on '*Atyantika kshEma*', Mahatma Kavi explains that '*Atyantika kshEma*' lies in the cure of '*bhava rOga*', the disease of repeated birth and death in the material world.

Q) What is the cause of *bhava-rOga*?

A) '*asadAtmabhAvAt*' – identifying one's Self with *asad-vastu* (unreal, transient, material, non-self) is the cause of *bhava-rOga*. The non-self (body-mind assemblage) is something which has no real existence; it will die; it will betray you; it is changing all the time. And if you repose your faith in this (non-self), believing it to be 'I' and 'mine', then you will face only sorrow. You identify your Self with this body, which consists of the assemblage of gross-body, subtle-body and causal-body. You identify your Self with this body, mind etc., which you believe to be 'I', 'mine'. Know that these are *asad* and deceitful. There is no certainty when they will leave you. This wrong identification of the Self with the body-mind is the root cause of this *bhava-rOga*.

Q) What is the nature of this disease? What are its symptoms? What is the suffering that you experience?

A) You may say – '*Maharaj! We are not suffering at all. It is you who keep on saying 'suffering', 'suffering'! We are*

happily earning, eating, enjoying. It is you who narrate spiritual stories to us and insist that we are afflicted by great suffering. When we hear that, we sometimes feel a sense of doubt that perhaps what you say may be true.'

But the fact is that you are suffering '*udvigna-buddhEH*' – your mind is afflicted by stress, agitation, distress, total restlessness. Take the case of a lunatic who is locked up inside a house. The lunatic will jump and down, looking at every window and opening, to find some way out. Your mind is like that lunatic. Your mind, which is confined within your heart, is restless to make its way out – through the eyes, nose, tongue, ears... If the mind were at peace in the heart, why would it be restlessly seeking to run out? Your intellect, your faculty for reasoning, has gone berserk. You are afflicted by insanity. This is the nature of *bhava-rOga*.

- Q) Now, what is the cure of this disease?
- A) The medicine is '*achyutasya pAdAmbujOpAsanam*': Look within your heart, and offer worship to the lotus feet of Bhagavan Achyuta, who is abiding there; in other words, fix your mind in the remembrance of God. In your heart, there is the lotus feet of the Lord, which is soft, juicy, fragrant and unattached. Catch hold of that. Just as one squeezes a medicinal-herb and extracts the *rasa* of medication, sip the *rasa* from the lotus-feet of Achyuta in your heart. This is the medicine for *bhava-rOga*.
- Q) What are the signs, indications, that the disease has been cured?
- A) The sign is this. There will be no fear anymore. '*akutaschit-bhayam*' (no fear from any quarter) and '*vishwAtmanA yatra nivartatE bheeH*'- (fear will vanish in its entirety). No fear anymore. So, the worship has two results. One: (During the course of the *upAsanA*) There will be no fear from any quarter. Two: (As a result of the *upAsanA*) Fear will vanish in its entirety; in other words, one attains *mOksha* (liberation from the cycle of birth and death).⁷⁰ In this manner, for

70 Maharajshree explains that '*akutashchit-bhayam*' indicates that the *upAsanA*

bhava-rOga, this disease of insanity of intellect, worshipful meditation on the lotus-feet of Achyuta in one's heart is the real 'Atyantika kshEma'

(Mukti Skanda : p 70-74)

(worship/meditation) is free of fear. When one is meditating on the lotus feet of the Lord, there is no cause for fear at all. Like a child holding on to his parent's finger has no fear of anyone, one who holds on to God's feet feels no fear from any side. Thus, during the time of Sadhana, when one is engaged in upAsanA, there is no fear at all. And 'vishwAtmanA yatra nivartatE bheeH' is indicative of the fruit of this upAsanA. As a result of the constant upAsanA, fear vanishes totally; in other words, one attains liberation. (Fear exists only in duality. As a result of fixing one's mind on the lotus-feet of the Lord in one's heart, duality vanishes. The enlightened sage then sees the whole of Creation as 'vAsudEvaH sarvam iti' – 'All is Vasudeva', and there is no 'other' to fear.)

Worship of one's ego

Worship of one's ego: Whatever worship we offer, it all comes around to the fact that we are actually worshipping our own self. Let me share an experience. When Mahatma Gandhi passed away, I was in Jabalpur. I heard the news of Gandhiji's demise on the radio. Felt very sad. The *dhArmik-sabha* (the assembly of dharmic discourse) turned into a *shOk-sabha* (gathering of mourners). Everybody offered tributes.

The next day, the local newspaper carried a full-page poetic tribute to Gandhiji, which I read. It was a poem of sorrow and was, indeed, a very beautiful poem. But then, upon reading the poem, my mind took a spin. Sometimes one's brain goes in the reverse direction. My thoughts ran – "This poet, who has written this poem upon Gandhiji's demise... Upon writing this poem, would the poet have felt happy or sad? Actually, he would have felt a rush of pride that he had written such an excellent tribute to Gandhiji, such a fine poem! Rather than offering flowers of condolences to Gandhiji, he was garlanding himself with the happiness of a writing a wonderful poem!"

Actually, this *aham-puja* (worship of ego) just cannot cease until one attains *brahma-jnAna* (Knowledge of the Non-dual, Absolute Reality). Till you attain Self-Realization and directly experience yourself as being the Non-dual *parabrahma paramAtmA* (Supreme Brahman, Supreme-Self), you will even wish to have Ishvara as your servant too – so that He may act according to your wishes. Whatever feels right to our mind, God should act accordingly. Now he should give sunshine, now some cold, now some rains! Just as we desire. Thankfully God has hidden himself a bit from us, otherwise we would have chewed his ear off with our words of advice!

Insufficient *sAdhan* (spiritual-effort)

We desire happiness from material objects. But then, the efforts that we undertake for the attainment of worldly happiness are found to be insufficient. How will the efforts yield happiness?

Let us say that you have a very big pond, as big as ‘Bhopal ki taal’. You wish to perform an act of goodness by sharing the water of the pond with others. And so, you pick up a blade of grass from the banks of the pond, dip that grass-piece in the pond, and sprinkle the water from that grass-piece on the world and exclaim – ‘Look! I am sharing the water from my pond so generously!’ Is this really an act of generosity? Is this large-heartedness? Is this really an act of *dharmā*?

The fact is this. When pride of *dharmā* raises its head, sin also comes along.

(Mamekam sharanam vraja : aham ki puja : p 35),
(Aparyapt Saadhan : p 88)

Two kinds of ‘knowing’

jijnAsu (Seeker of knowledge): Maharaj! Tell me a way by which my heart may be made pure, my faults may be erased, and I may engage myself non-stop in *bhagavad-bhajan* (worship of God).

Mahatma: Brother! Purification of heart, defect elimination, and worship of God are not three different things. As much bhajan as you do, so much is the measure of fault erasure, and the heart too gets cleansed in the same measure. And with that, *bhajan* too increases, more and more. You asked me for some solution. But let me ask you a question. Do you actually believe your faults to be faults and see them as such?

jijnAsu: Bhagavan! Whatever acts have been defined by Shastra-s as sin, whatever the saints and sages have called as wrongdoings – such as uttering lies, outbursts of anger, violence etc., - these I know to be immoral and wrong. Even so, I end up doing them.

Mahatma: Brother! ‘Knowing’ is of two kinds. One is shallow, superficial knowledge. The other is inner-knowledge. What we know by hearsay or by looking at others, is only superficial knowledge. Look! Everybody knows that uttering lies is a sin, lying is harmful etc. While they hear and speak of this, in their hearts they still have faith in falsehood. When facing any worldly matter, they may see that speaking the untruth is gainful, whereas speaking the truth may cause losses. Had the value of truth become firmly imprinted in their hearts, they would have sought profits only by resorting to truth; and would have the conviction that untruth is harmful in every way. But then things are just the reverse. So, the mere speaking or hearing of something as being a wrongdoing does not constitute the realization that ‘bad is actually bad’.

Let us say that you are sitting here, beneath a thatch-roof. If a snake happens to fall down on your lap, would you go and ask someone what you should do? Or, would you keep sitting and deliberating on the course of action to be taken? You would do neither. Without losing a moment, you will throw the snake away in a single jerk. Why do you act thus? There is just one answer. You know that the snake will bite you, and that the snake will cause you harm. In the same way, you should know about the

harm arising from speaking untruth etc. If this knowledge is clear, if you firmly believe that these are sins, and that they will cause you harm, and that you will have to reap the fruits of this wrongdoing by experiencing the tortures of hell, and that God will be very displeased by your acting thus, then you will never intentionally commit any misdemeanour. And if by chance you happen to commit a misdemeanour unintentionally, you will feel bad about it; you will atone for it and take care not to fall prey to such a lapse again. Therefore, the way to eliminate faults in one's self is to first recognize them for what they really are – namely, immoralities and defects. And make a determination that these can only be harmful to you.

Actually, we do not know character-faults for what they are. We do not recognize them. Instead, we get enamoured by them, and if not externally, we do adopt them internally. Learn to recognize and reject these faults. If you renounce them sincerely, they will flee, and never return.

(Sadhana aur Brahmanubhuti : p 28,29)

Receiving the sweet touch of His hands, you shall attain the purpose of life!

jijnAsu (Seeker of knowledge): Bhagavan! I do have faith in God. But, at times, even if I try to stop them, worries do come and surround me. How do I eliminate them?

Mahatma: Pray to God! That's it. With a pure heart, offer yourself to Him, surrender to Him. Whatever He does, let it happen. Whatever He makes you do, do. Surrender all your desires, hopes, at His feet. '

Look at Him! How beautiful His face is; how sweet His smile; how loving His glance; how soft His nature! Pouring His compassion on you, extending His long-long arms, He wishes to embrace you, press you to His Heart. The Ruler of the three worlds is acting as your equal; and with your well-being ever in His heart, He wants to be your friend and stay with you always. And you do not want to keep Him! This is your great misfortune.

My friend! This life is wasting away. Place your head on His feet and make your life successful. Place all your burdens at His feet. In fact, you need not even give a thought to your own life and its burdens. All you need to do is to promise to God with a sincere heart that "I am yours!". He considers you His own, and as soon as you say this, He will accept you in His heart. Receiving the sweet touch of His hands, you shall attain the purpose of life!

Upon true surrender, worries do not come. If they do come, it means that your surrender is not complete. Else, you should take it that these worries have been sent by God; and for the surrendered-mind, the worries do not appear to be worries; they too seem to be manifestations of divinity.

If anxieties come, submit them to God, again and again. Pray to God – "O Lord! You are the prime-mover of this whole of Creation! In mere sport, you direct this whole show of the world. My breath, body, mind etc., and whatever here is associated with me, are all but a part of the world. To operate these machine-parts of my body-mind, and to operate me, you do not have to put in any special effort, and the fact is

that it is You who is operating all this. This being the case, the ego that rises in my mind, saying – ‘I am responsible for myself’ – please, destroy this, and make me your own in all respects.”

If we pray thus, with a sincere heart, He will certainly embrace us to His heart, one day or the other. Then there will be no more worries. Basically, depending on the extent and sincerity of the surrender, the worries are inversely proportional – i.e., the more the surrender, the less the worry.

(Sadhana aur Brahmanubhuti : p 35,36)



Jeeva's birth and Ishvara's incarnation!

Does *jeeva*⁷¹ have birth and death or not? The settled opinion (of Vedanta) is that *jeeva* is not subject to birth and death. That's because the *jeeva*, by its *svarUpa* (nature) and *tattva* (reality) is but the Paramatma (Supreme-Self); indeed, *jeeva* is Brahman (Supreme Reality) alone. But, due to *avidya* (ignorance) the *jeeva* cognizes birth and death in itself. Until such time that the *jeeva* does not realize its true nature as Brahman, the (unreal) appearance of birth and death within itself (the seemingly endless cycle of birth and death) will continue.

Ishvara too, by nature and reality, has no birth and death. But he does manifest Himself (in this world) by means of His Maya⁷². Just as *jeeva* is associated with *avidya*, *Ishvara* is linked with Maya. Call it His inconceivable power, or call it His Maya-shakti; and it is due to this that God appears to be an entity who is subject to birth and death. So, just as a *jeeva* is born and dies as a consequence of *avidya*, Bhagavan has birth and death as a manifestation of Maya, or, say, Leela⁷³ (His sport)!

Look here. Brahman has neither any *avatAra* (incarnation) nor *janma* (birth). *Ishvara* has *avatAra*, and *jeeva* has *janma*. Thus, in *vyAvahArika-satta* (worldly, illusory, transient reality) both exist. The manifestation of *jeeva* is spoken of '*janma*' (birth), and that of *Ishvara* as '*avatAra*' (incarnation). Under the sway of *vAsanA*⁷⁴, *jeeva* is born. And *Ishvara*'s advent is due to His Leela (sport), as an act of compassion for the upliftment of *jeeva*-s.

So, Narayan! When *Ishvara* incarnates, he has all the qualities that any *jeeva* has. Whatever virtues and defects are there in a *jeeva*, are seen to be there in *Ishvara*'s *avatAra* as well. You need have no fear about

71 *Jeeva: Individual soul having a distinct self-notion, who believes that he is a doer and enjoyer.*

72 *Maya: The illusive power of Brahman; the power that veils His reality and projects the unreal Universe.*

73 *Leela: Play; Sport; the cosmos looked upon as a divine play*

74 *vAsanA: Proclivities, subtle desires/inclinations embedded in the mind that induces action; the impression of past actions that remains unconsciously in the mind and is the cause of birth/death experience.*

this. Why so? Because *jeeva* has good and bad qualities on account of *avidyA*, and Bhagavan has it because of His Leela. While these qualities cause bondage in *jeeva*-s, they do not cause any bondage to Ishvara; in fact, they are seeds of liberation. The sense is that by contemplation of Bhagavan's *leela*-s, *jeeva*-s attain liberation.

If you so desire, let me describe some of these attributes in the context of Sri Krishna. Whatever can happen in any *jeeva*'s life, happened in Sri Krishna's life too. That's because *jeeva* and Krishna are but two different manifestations of one single, self-same *tattva* (reality) – the *jeeva* due to *karma*, and Ishvara due to *leelA*.

Take 'fear'. Sri Krishna, by His Leela, ran away from battle and so got the name '*raNacchODarAi*'. By the Leela of *kAma* (sensual desires), he fathered children. By the Leela of 'anger', he tied up Rukmi. I can tell you instances where Krishna exhibited the Leela of *mOha* (attachment; delusion), got married, indulged in gambling... In the *dashama-skandha* (tenth canto) of Srimad Bhagavatam comes the story of Narada visiting Dwaraka, where he saw Krishna being simultaneously present in the houses of all his wives. He was wielding a sword in one house, bathing his horse in another, giving gifts of charity in a third place, performing *yajna* (fire-rites) somewhere, dancing somewhere, singing somewhere; and, as an old man, he was teaching music and dance in some house. Well may you ask – '*What? Is God subject to ageing? Can He become an old man?*' Why not? If he is born and has a childhood, he will also age and become an old man. All this is His Leela! But this cannot be understood by worldly people, who do not inquire properly into the truth...

(Ishanukatha : p 71-72-73)

The *prEma* of Gopika-s is true *prEma*!

This *bhakti* (devotion to God) that is there... This *bhakti* is what contributes to proper conduct and progress of man's life. Without *bhakti*, man remains stuck somewhere or the other. Attachment (*rAga*) and delusion (*mOha*) have been afflicting one's *antaHkaraNa* (mind/heart) across countless births. If you do not direct this yearning for attachment towards God, you will fall into some ditch, for sure. Because one's heart just cannot remain without expression of attachment towards something or the other.

Now, any discourse on *prEma-bhakti* (love) has to be heard with great caution; for man, on hearing anything about *prEma* (love), immediately links it to worldly love. If one were to equate God's Love with worldly love, then however sacred the discourse may be, it gets polluted in the listener's heart. Therefore, do not attach your heart to the world; rather, attach it to God. This is not some truth of philosophy. This is the medication for transformation of one's heart. By *bhakti*, one's heart changes, gets purified.

Indeed, it is the compassion of Vaishnava sages that they have transformed *kAma* (lust) into *prEma* (love). They connected God with *prEma*. When *kAma* gets linked to God, it does not remain as *kAma*; it becomes *prEma*. Wherever sensual-enjoyment reigns supreme – there, even *prEma* (love) becomes *kAma* (lust). And where the lover's "I"-sense gets burnt at the altar of God's love, there the *prEma* (love) is absolute-pureness and fullness of love. In actuality, *prEma* is a method of dissolving one's sense of 'I'. This is a unique elixir, which totally melts one's ego.

For attaining such *prEma*, one needs to explore where to attach one's heart. We need to bring the heart of some pure *bhakta* (devotee of God) into our own heart. We need to absorb the *samskAra*-s (mental impressions and tendencies) of some pure devotee. If you wish to love God in the manner that Gopika-s did, then you need to do *dhyAna* (meditation/ contemplation) of Gopika-s. By that *dhyAna*, love, like that of Gopika-s, will enter your heart. This is known as *rAgAnugA-bhakti*⁷⁵.

75 *Raganuga bhakti: The devotion of those who are desirous of attaining the state*

The love that Gopika-s had for Sri Krishna was not motivated by the desire that *'we should get happiness from Sri Krishna'*. Their love was driven by the feeling that *'Sri Krishna cannot feel happy without us. He loves us so much, ever so much... Without us, how can he get a wink of sleep? How is he managing to eat? How is he to find any peace? Who is there to take care of his comforts? Alas! Alas! He does not reveal his mind openly to anyone other than us; he is so self-conscious and shy.'*

Gopika-s are concerned with Krishna's distress. They have no thought about their own distress, their own happiness. Therefore, the love of Gopika-s is the fullness of love.

(Uddhav vrajagaman : p 416, 417, 420)



of love experienced by Gopikas, who had unquenchable thirst for Sri Krishna's love, and were immersed in that love.

Bhagavan is not *janmAbhimAnI*⁷⁶ and *vyayAtmA*⁷⁷

Regarding *avatAra* (incarnation of God), you may note that Bhagavan does have a physical body; but then, even though he takes birth (and has a body), he is omnipresent. Whereas, a *jeeva*⁷⁸, upon birth, becomes a *janmAbhimAnI* and remains an *alpajna* (one with limited intelligence and knowledge). What is the sign of *janmAbhimAna* (identification with body as the Self)? Beliefs such as '*I am a man, I am a Hindu, I belong to such-and-such community ...*' etc., is *janmAbhimAna*.

The *jeeva*, upon taking birth, identifies with his body-form; whereas, an *avatAra*, even upon taking birth, remains unborn. He has no sense of identification with the form that is born.

Now, look at it from another angle! If someone asks you - *how can there be a birth of nirAkAra (formless)*? As a reply to this question, let me give you a tip, a short argument. Tell me, is *jeeva*, *nirAkAra* (formless) or *sAkAra* (having form)? Well, *jeeva* (the individual soul) is definitely formless! All schools of philosophy are of the view that the *jeeva* is not this form that has hands, feet etc. Then, how is it that the *nirAkAra* takes on a body? Well, that's because of *vAsanA*⁷⁹. Now, that which can be accomplished on account of *vAsanA*, can it not be accomplished without having any *vAsanA*?

So, '*jeeva*' is one who takes birth because of *vAsanA*; and Ishvara is one who takes birth without having any *vAsanA*. He who is born due to

76 *janmAbhimAnI* : One who identifies with birth and death. A being who believes he is born and will die. He identifies his Self with the body, and has doership and enjoyership

77 *vyayAtmA* : Perishable, Decayable, Changeable; that which changes with time. Also, one with limited power of knowledge (God is not a *vyayAtmA*. He is *avyayAtmA* as described in Bhagavad Gita 4.6)

78 *Jeeva*: Individual soul having a distinct self-notion, who believes that he is a doer and enjoyer.

79 *vAsanA*: Proclivities, subtle desires/inclinations embedded in the mind that induce action; the impression of past actions that remains unconsciously in the mind and is the cause of birth/death experience.

the sway of *avidyA* is a *jeeva*; and He who takes birth with no *vAsaNa* is Ishvara. Meaning, even upon taking birth, the birthlessness of Ishvara is not affected.

Now, note one more thing.

Any *jeeva* would be afraid of death, for sure!! In other words, *jeeva* is a *vyayAtmA* (perishable self). Whereas, Ishvara, even upon taking birth, does not become a *vyayAtmA*. Ishvara is *avyayAtmA*⁸⁰. This is the difference between a *jeeva* and Ishvara.

When a *jeeva* is born, he superimposes the death of the body as something that will happen to him. He identifies himself as the body, thinking – ‘I was a child; I became a youth; I became middle-aged. I have become an old man; I will die’, etc. So, the *jeeva* identifies with *vyayAtmA* (perishable self). Whereas, Ishvara has no identification with *vyayAtmA*. This then is the difference between *jeeva* and *avatAra*.

(Avatara Rahasya – p 10,11)

80 See Gita 4.6

It is through Mukunda that there is a unique joy to *jeevanmukti*⁸¹!

‘Mukunda’ means – ‘He who grants *mukti*, liberation’. Now, the people of the world keep saying that they want *mukti*. The question is this. How can one grant liberation to someone who does not have any bondage?⁸²

- Q) So, do you want liberation from your bondage to money?
A) No, Maharaj!
Q) Ok. Do you want freedom from family attachment?
A) No, Maharaj!
Q) Then what do you want freedom from?
A) What we want is that we should not be reborn. We should not have to experience hell or heaven after death. We want liberation from any bondage that arises after we die.
Q) Arrey! What about the bondage before death? The fetters of wife, husband, family, friends etc. Do you wish to be freed from these chains or not?
A) No, Maharaj! They are ok as they are. It is post-death that we are concerned with. May we not have any bondage after we die.

So, that is the way of the world. Man is chained to money, family, kith and kin; but he gives no thought to these attachments.

Look, this *mukunda-prEmā* (love of Krishna) is something marvellous. For one thing, it makes you totally forget ‘hatred’. He whose heart is filled with love of God does not bear hatred towards anyone or anything. He considers everything to be God’s things; and he finds every object of his beloved (God) to be loveable. Next, on account of *prEmā*, one does not have any apprehension or suspicion that one may be betrayed. By *prEmā*, one loses fear. There is no fear of serpents; no fear of this world or next; no fear of anxieties or confusions; no fear of *dharma* or *adharma*.

81 *Jeevanmukti: The state of liberation attained even while one is alive*

82 *Maharajshree is asking this sarcastically. He implies that worldly people do not recognize their own attachments and bondage.*

The Shastra-s speak of *ashTa-pAsha* (eight kinds of bondage), which fetter man as he goes about his daily life. These are – *ghR^iNA* (aversion), *lajjA* (shame), *bhaya* (fear), *shankA* (scepticism/doubt), *nindA* (censure / disapproval), *kula* (attachment to a group based on some common cause or interest), *jAti* (attachment to a group based on birth and lineage) and *sheela* (good character and modesty). Man hates someone; is suspicious of someone; fears someone; feels ashamed on meeting someone; criticises someone... In some situations, his family and clan is his main concern; in another situation, he takes great care that his conduct does not transgress accepted social norms or personal boundaries. In some situation he is concerned about his caste and community, and in another he is concerned about conforming to handed-down traditions and duties arising out of one's *varNa-Ashrama* (family line and stage of life).

However, when *prEMa* comes, it washes everything away. It just uproots these eight concerns from one's heart and throws it away. Meerabai has sung:

मेरे तो गिरधर हाथ बिकानी, होनी होय सो होय रे।

I have sold myself into the hands of Giridhar Gopala! Let whatever happens, happen!

This is what is *jeevanmukti*! This is the unique joy of *jeevanmukti*!

Bhakta-s (devotees of God) should feel happy that *bhakti* has a uniqueness that *tattva-jnAna* (Knowledge of Absolute Reality) does not have. Yes, *tattva-jnAna* frees one from the fetters of birth-death, hell-heaven; but it leaves the current life untouched, letting it proceed as per one's *prArabdha-karma* (predestiny). Whereas, this Mukunda who is at the heart of one's *bhakti*, He just breaks all the fetters of life. Mukunda broke all the chains of Gopika-s. He freed them from the bonds of family and clan; freed them from restrictions of *dharma* and tradition; freed them from their spouses and families – they had no worries about anything of the world.

(Yugalgeet : p 34-35)

The love of Gopika-s is a secret-love!

Once, a person died and reached the portals of Vaikuntha. Finding the door closed, the man called out aloud – ‘Hey Bhagavan! Please open the door for me.’

A voice from inside, asked – ‘Why? Why should the door be opened for you?’

The man said – ‘Maharaj! I carried a rosary (*japa-mAlA*) in my hands throughout my life. I applied *chandana* (sandalwood paste) on my body, *cchApa* (sacred symbols branded on the body), *tilaka* (auspicious mark on the forehead)... For your sake, I did this and I did that... I constructed this temple... I constructed that *dharma-shAlA* (rest-house for pilgrim) ... If the door to Vaikuntha is closed for me, who else will ever come to Vaikuntha?’

The voice replied – ‘Yes! You did do all these! But you did this in full public knowledge. So, it has become polluted. The newspapers have reported your acts of virtue. Have you brought any secret thing, any secret gift for me? Something that I alone will open and see – as to what my dear devotee has brought for me? Arrey! You have got all your exploits published by the Press, and have enjoyed the name and fame that resulted from that! You have already extracted and enjoyed the fruits of all your good deeds. Have you brought anything secretly for me? Anything that you have hidden from the world?’

The man said – ‘No Maharaj! I have brought nothing secretly.’

The voice from Vaikuntha said – ‘Then you may return to the world. When you come back, bring something secretly for me.’

The sense of this story is this. The love of Gopika-s (for Krishna) is a secret-love. No one, other than the Gopika-s themselves, understands that love.

For us, Rama, Krishna... are all one and the same

We hear of this Englishman who came to India; and he said to a Hindu – ‘Brother! I hear that you Hindus have many Gods. Can you show bring me pictures of your different Gods? Let me see what each looks like, and I shall choose any one God that I like.’ So, Maharaj! The Hindu man brought many pictures! The Englishman saw a picture of Shiva, carrying a *trishUla* (trident); Vishnu, holding a *chakra* (discus); Sri Rama, having a bow and arrows; and Krishna, holding a flute in his hands. The Englishman said – ‘I like this flute-playing Krishna more than the other Gods! I shall keep this picture.’ The Hindu asked – ‘Why do you like this picture more?’ The Englishman replied – ‘The other Gods carry weapons – trident, discus, bow and arrows... That means that they have enemies, for fear of whom they are carrying weapons at all times. This Krishna alone is playing the flute of peace! He has no enemies! He has no fear of anyone! He is ever immersed in joy, soaked in *rasa*!’

This then was the case with the Englishman. But for us, Rama, Krishna etc., are all one and the same.

(Yugalgeet : p 24,25-27,28)

Ishvara-prEma⁸³ is pAramArthika-prEma⁸⁴

To divert one's thoughts from the world and take it towards Paramatma, one needs to contemplate on the distinctiveness of God, and love of God. If you instead say that '*what is in the shop is what is there in the banks of Ganga as well*', then you will never leave the shop and go to the banks of Ganga. However, if you say that '*oh, the shop has too many distractions; there is so much happiness in the banks of Ganga*', then you will go the banks of Ganga.

So, those who tell the *samsArI* (worldly) people that 'All is Brahman', actually end up stopping these people from *leaving the shop*. As regards *samsArI* people – *vairAgya* (dispassion; non-attachment) has not come about; worldliness and seeds of desire have not gone away; restlessness to realize Ishvara has not come about; and yet, if they say that '*All is that (Brahman)*', it is quite meaningless. Well may they accept that the '*my spouse is that brahman alone; son is that alone; wealth is that alone...*' But they will not be ready to accept that '*the enemy is brahman alone; poverty is brahman; death is brahman; separation from one's loved one is brahman...*'

For attaining true realization of brahman, it is necessary to take the support of *savishEsha*, *saguNa*, *sAkAra Ishvara* – i.e., an Ishvara who has form; who has infinite virtuous qualities; who is distinguished by his unique attributes... And leaning on that support, one should turn one's *vAsanA*-s (proclivities) away from the world and bring them into the *paramArtha-path*, the path that leads to liberation. The gain derived by those who tread in this path does not lie in any premature belief that 'All is brahman', where, they believe that all is same; and wherever they are stuck now is indeed the same as the goal, and so, one may stay put here itself. Their actual gain is their belief in God and heaven, for attaining which they do *dharma*; their belief in *brahma-loka*, for attaining which they do some *upAsanA* (worship; meditation); their belief in *gOIoka/vaikunTha*,

83 *Ishvara-prEma: Love of God*

84 *paramArthika-prEma: Love, that is of the form of the highest goal that a man attains in life.*

for attaining which they make their minds one-pointed... Indeed, to get out of the place where they are stuck now, they need the support of some greater force.

Just parroting 'All is brahman', 'All is brahman' serves no purpose. Therefore, my dear man, it is necessary that one understands the extraordinariness of Ishvara, and love Him.

So, what is so special about Ishvara? It is like this. On the one side, our heart yearns to love Him; and on the other side, He pulls us towards Himself. We are pulled by His slanting side-glance of love; His soft smile draws us; the jingle of his anklets pulls us; the melody of his flute pulls us; He pulls the minds of His devotee to Himself. This is the pull of love.

Look here. Why is the man-woman love of this world called as true love? Why not call the love for food or gold as true love? The answer is this. While you love food or gold, food or gold does not love you back. So, your love for food or gold is just one-sided love. However, the love of a man and a woman is reciprocal, and therefore double in quantum. So, in comparison to the love of wealth (*artha-prEma*), the love of *bhoga* (sense enjoyments) gives more *laukika-sukha* (worldly happiness)⁸⁵. And love of *dharma* (*dharma-prEma*) gives both *laukika-sukha* (happiness of this world) and *pAralaukika-sukha* (happiness of heaven). Whereas, the highest-love (*pArmaArthika-prEma*) is *Ishvara-prEma* (love of God). This gives happiness in birth, death, togetherness, separation, world-annihilation, whatever. It gives happiness at all times, at all places.

(Yugalgeet : p 250,251)

85 Of the four purushArtha-s (*dharma, artha, kAma, mOksha*) *kAma* gives more worldly happiness than *artha* (wealth).

This too is a stratagem for reaching God!

People in this world are feeling distraught and distressed; and are crying for money, wife, son, grandchildren etc. Actually, if they deliberate on their own conduct, they would die of shame. But then, instead of sincere self-evaluation, they think highly of themselves. And it is this pride about their own greatness that keeps them going. If God had not bestowed this pride upon them, they would have died.

It is for bestowing happiness on the sorrow-stricken people of the world that God manifests Himself. In the genus of human-beings, in order to give *rasa* (elixir of happiness) to men, he is born as the Nandanandana, the beloved child of Nanda-baba. He is born in order to connect Himself to our *rasa* of love⁸⁶, so that we too may love Him.

What do worldly people do, though? People who actually desire to attain Self-Knowledge, pure-love of God, are far and few; and even such as these that do exist want their attachments to the world to remain intact. They want to row the boat and drop anchor at the same time.

You may have heard this story. In Banares, some *panda*-s (priests) consumed a lot of *bhang* (herbal intoxicant) and sat on a boat. They decided to go by the boat to Chunar, and see the fort there. They were ten *panda*-s, and they began to row the boat together. And they rowed the whole night. When morning dawned, they saw a man coming to the river bank to have his bath. They asked him, 'Brother! What place is this?' The man said – 'This is Banares, Dasashvamedha Ghat.' The *Panda*-s exclaimed – 'You are lying! We have been rowing the boat the whole night!' The man replied – "O good people! Indeed, you may have been rowing the whole night. But you have not pulled the anchor of the boat out of the water!"

Analogously, the *snEha* (attachment) one has to the world is the 'dropped-anchor'; and prayer, study, worship, meditation etc., is the 'rowing of the boat'. The intoxication of worldly-delusion is so high that one remains tied as-is, where-is. *snEha* means 'getting stuck; glued'. So, one remains stuck, as-is, where-is.

86 *Our snEha-rasa (attachment) is towards worldly objects. In order to divert that to Himself, God is born as a human, Krishna.*

Then comes Krishna Bhagavan. And why does He come? If you are crying for some worldly thing, or for money, or family, or for name and fame; or you are crying for sense-pleasures, or for accomplishing some work...If you are crying for such worldly ends, Krishna comes dancing, singing, playing the flute – blowing the bugle, so to say – calling out *'Come! Come! I will give you so much fun, the like of which you would not have seen in your life!'*

And He will draw your mind towards Him. When your mind is drawn towards anyone, if you desire someone, you will go near that person. If desire for God dawns in your heart, then you will go and attain God. To attain God, this too is a stratagem, a way.

(Yugalgeet : p 72,73,74)



Be very merry!

There is a story that appears in Ananda Ramayana.

Once, after Sri Rama's coronation in Ayodhya, a particular memory of Ravana kept coming to his mind. The scene was the terrific battle that He had fought with Ravana, wherein he kept cutting down Ravana's heads; and in his mind's eye he saw the cut-heads roaring in laughter as they flew up in the sky. Even as Rama sat in his Royal throne, this memory kept surfacing in his mind, and it disturbed him so much that he issued a Royal-decree that forbid all laughter in His kingdom.

When laughter totally ceased in Ayodhya, all men, *devatA*-s (deities) and *dAnavA*-s (demonic foes of *devata*-s) etc., - all became distressed. They all went together to Brahma Ji and prayed to him to rescue them from this crisis, for laughter is a natural characteristic of one and all.

Look here. Remaining constantly in distress, wallowing in ignorance, constant sleep, constant crying etc., is not in anybody's nature. Because the nature of '*sat*' that manifests in human life, is devoid of birth and death. This is the very nature of the Atma (Self). Similarly, '*cit-svarUpa*' (the nature of Consciousness, inherent in Atma) is free of 'ignorance' and '*Ananda-svarUpa*' (the nature of bliss, inherent in Atma) has no 'sorrow'. Therefore, a man, by his very nature, can be happy all the time; but he cannot be constantly in sorrow.

So, heeding to the prayer of *devata*-s etc., Brahma came to Ayodhya and entering a Peepal tree (with his subtle-body), he took over the tree form. And then all the leaves of the tree started laughing. And whoever came near to the tree to witness this laughter of the leaves, was seized with laughter himself and burst out laughing. This mood spread everywhere and soon the whole of Creation was filled with laughter.

Sri Ramachandra was taken aback to hear of this large-scale transgression of the Royal-decree, and he ordered his soldiers to capture anyone who was found to be laughing. And then he went to find the tree that caused it all, whereupon Brahma manifested in front of Rama and

said – ‘O King! Laughter is the natural *dharma* of all beings – *devata-s*, *dAnavA-s*, humans. How can anyone live without ever laughing?

Now, Sri Ramachandra had to agree, and say – ‘O men! Be very merry! Do enjoy loads of happiness! May all be filled with *jnAna* (Supreme-Knowledge; bliss)!’

(Srimad Valmiki Ramayanamrita : p 298)



Why hasn't the *vimAna*⁸⁷ come?

Do you really want to know *satya* (the pure and absolute Truth) or not?

As things are, you have no clue about where your next step is going to take you. You are spending your life in dense darkness (of *mOha*, delusion, and *ajnAna*, ignorance). Therefore, one needs the guidance of a *sadguru*; a Self-realized sage who sees all as the One reality; a *sadguru*, who, by his divine eyes, knows our previous life, our future, and our current state of spiritual competence. We need a *sadguru* who can prescribe different *sAdhanA*-s (spiritual practices) to us, based on our stage of spiritual development; and then, it is imperative that we follow his advice and perform the prescribed *sAdhanA* diligently.

You have lost yourself in the garbage-bin of the external world... In money, in name and fame – and God knows where else you have lost yourself. Just look around and see how people are ending up losing themselves!

In Ayodhya, there was a very noble *satpurusha*. Once, he told his disciples – “Listen! When I die, a *vimAna* (air chariot) will come down (from the world of God) to take me. Vimana bells will clang, and I shall ascend the *vimAna* and go away to the abode of God.” And then, after some days, the *satpurusha* passed away. Neither did any *vimAna* come, nor did bells clang. The disciples said – “Our Guruji’s words cannot go wrong. Why hasn’t the *vimAna* come?” With this question in mind, they approached another sage, who also lived in Ayodhya. The sage came and contemplated on the reason why the *vimAna* hadn’t come. And even as he contemplated, his eyes rested on a berry tree in the vicinity, which was full of berries. The Mahatma looked at the branches intently and asked the disciples to pluck a particular fruit, a ripe berry, from that tree. The disciples plucked and brought that fruit to the Mahatma. The Mahatma asked them to crush the fruit. When the disciples crushed the berry, a

87 *vimAna*: An air chariot; in the context of this discourse, a celestial air-chariot from Vaikuntha, the abode of Lord Vishnu.

worm that was inside the berry, died. And when the worm died, bells jangled, a *vimAna* came and took the soul away.

Look here. Whether this is a true story or not is not important. The message of this story is as follows. We have scattered our 'I'-ness across our physical body, from the tip of our toe nails to the top of our crown. We need to draw inside (our heart) our sense of 'I' from all sides, and become so subtle that the 'I'-ness goes outside once more and pervades all space. This is the real nature of *sAdhanA*.

So, firstly get hold of your 'I', and dissolve it in its core-essence, the elements that constitute 'I'. Become one with it (with the underlying Brahman, Paramatma) and then see – *Creation is happening; the created world is being maintained; all Creation is getting dissolved; Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh are manifesting and are getting dissolved; but you are not dying.*⁸⁸ This is what is Self-Realization. Right now, you are in the clutches of the external world; if you do not exert your power and extricate yourself from this attachment, how can Self-Realization come about? 'नायमात्मा बलहीनेन लभ्यः।'⁸⁹ – 'This Self cannot be attained by those who lack strength!'

(Vyavaharashuddhi : p 167-170)

88 *Atma/Paramatma is existing eternally. And all creation, stay, and dissolution is a motion picture that is seen to be happening within Paramatma. This picture is but a temporary 'cinema' projection on the screen of the immortal Self.*

89 *Mundakopanishad 3.2.4*

Four things about *samsAra*, which we realize by experience

There are four things inherent in the *samsAra* (world), which we come to know by experience.

1. Whatever one comes into contact with in this world, yields only sorrow in the end. If the contact is with an enemy, then it hurts immediately; if the contact is of a friend, then the damage happens later. But both of them will make you suffer. Therefore, both *rAga* and *dvEsha* (attachments and aversions) are causes of suffering. This then is the first experience about the world – ‘that it is sorrowful, in reality’.
2. The second experience about this world is that it is transient; it is subject to changes. Here, sometimes, one encounters disaster; and enjoys wealth at times; there is birth, sometime; and death, sometime. The world changes all the time; it is transient. This then is the second experience in regard to this world.
3. The third experience about this world is that every single object has its own unique make, its own seed or gene. Two faces are not alike. Whatever mould God has made in this cosmos, is unique and distinct from any other; there is some difference or the other between every object. Everybody and everything comes with its own uniqueness, and goes away taking its uniqueness along. One should not attempt to erase this distinctiveness of things.
4. The fourth thing about the world is regarding the people who have attained God-realization, realization of the core-reality, the supreme-truth; for these people, the world holds no value. The things that worldly people hold to be of high value, to attain which they apply themselves the whole of their life; to Self-Realized sages, these things are

but a child's play. For one who has seen Parameshwara (Lord Supreme), the world is a changeful scene, in the manner of dreams.

Indeed, all things in the world are changing all the time. Ishvara alone does not change. He is the *paramArtha-vastu* (Supreme Reality; Supreme, Eternal, Being). One should submit one's mind totally to Ishvara, at all times and at all places. In other words, whether it be a forest or the battle-field, remember God at all times.

तस्मात्सर्वेषु कालेषु मामनुस्मर युध्य च।

Therefore, at all times keep Me in the mind and fight as well!

(Gita 8.7)

One should have such love for God that even when He cuts one's throat (i.e., even when He is making us go through such a painful experience in life), we see Him to be so loveable. And when He kisses, surely, he appears loveable too. Whatever it may be, may one see no faults in God; rather, may one see Him always as an infinite treasure of virtues. When Ishvara is giving us pain, at that time, seeing His presence, if one feels horripilations of bliss; this is how love should be! Right?

(Yugalgeet : p 1-4)

It is this very form of mine that is known as *nirguNa-nirAkAra*⁹⁰

There is a story that is narrated in *pAtAla-khaNDa* of *padma-purANa*.

One day, Lord Shankara came to Lord Narayana and prayed that he wished to have darshan (vision) of Sri Narayana's real *svarUpa* (form; nature) as *nirguNa* (attribute-less), *nirAkAra* (formless), *nirdharmak* (without any special characteristics), *nirvikalpa* (without the modifications of the mind).

Lord Narayana replied – “Not now. But when I manifest myself and live in Vrindavan, come to me then.”

So, one day Bhagavan Shankara came to Vrindavan. And what does he see there? He saw the two-fold form of Radha-Krishna. At times the dark form of Sri Krishna turned into the fair form of Radha, and at times, the fair Radha turned into the dark-hued Krishna. Lord Shankara saw the *gaur-shyAm* (fair-dark Radha-Krishna) duo sporting in Vrindavana, and He paid his respects to them.

Sri Krishna asked – ‘So, what brings you here, O Lord?’ Sri Shankara replied – ‘Sir! You had invited me to come to Vrindavan, where you said that you would give me darshan of your *nirguNa-nirAkAra* form. Please grant me that darshan now.’

Sri Krishna laughed and said – ‘Well, that is this very form of mine, which you are seeing now. This is my *nirguNa, nirAkAra* form!’

Shankar Ji asked – ‘Maharaj! That which I am seeing with my own eyes, palpably; how can that be *nirAkAra* (formless), pray? And that which is within the grasp of my sense-organs and experienced as such, how can that be *nirguNa* (attribute-less)? How am I to believe that the *nirguNa-nirAkAra* form of yours is this one?’

Bhagavan Sri Krishna said – ‘Ok! Tell me the characteristics of Brahman (Absolute Reality)’. Shankar Ji said – ‘Brahman is *nirguNa*.’ That

90 1) *nirguNa*: Without *guNa* – i.e., without the attributes of *sattva, rajas, tamas*;

2) *nirAkAra*: Formless

which is beyond the qualities of *sattva*, *rajas*, *tamas* is known as *nirguNa*. In other words, *nirguNA* is:

- that which is not subject to the states of *jAgrat* (waking), *svapna* (dreaming) and *sushupti* (deep sleep);
- that which is not *vishwa*, *taijasa*, *prAjna*⁹¹;
- that which is not subject to the *mUDhatA* (forgetfulness; dullness), *vikshiptatA* (distractedness; unsteadiness of mind), and *samAdhi* (absorption; state of oneness with the object of meditation).

Sri Krishna said – ‘This body of mine that you are seeing now, is neither *tamas*⁹², nor an outcome of it; nor is it *rajas*⁹³, nor its outcome; nor is it *sattva*⁹⁴, nor its outcome. It is neither *vishwa*, nor *taijasa*, nor *prAjna*. Indeed, this very form of mine that you see, is what is *nirguNa*.’

Upon which, Shankara said – ‘But then Brahman happens to be *nirAkAra* (formless)’.

To which, Bhagavan (who was in the form of Krishna), replied – ‘Which form? The *prAkrut* form (which is of the world); the physical form, made up of five elements of nature, is what is negated (by the term *nirAkAra*). Whereas, this form of mine, not being *prAkrut*⁹⁵, is spoken of as *nirAkAra*. As a matter of fact, it is this very form of mine that is known as *nirguNa-nirAkAra*.

(Vibhuti Yog : p 321-322)

91 *Vishwa, taijasa, prAjna* – Consciousness that is identified with the states of waking, dream and deep sleep respectively; correspondingly, the consciousness that is identified with the gross body, subtle body and causal body respectively.

92 *Tamas*: Ignorance; inertia; darkness; perishability.

93 *Rajas*: One of the three aspects or component traits of cosmic energy; the principle of dynamism in nature bringing about all changes; through this is protected the relative appearance of the Absolute as the universe; this quality generates passion and restlessness.

94 *Sattva*: Light; purity; reality.

[Note: The definitions of *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas* have been taken from the book ‘Yoga Vedanta Dictionary’ by Swami Sivananda of Rishikesh.]

95 Krishna’s real form, as also that of Radha, is *chinmaya* (the stuff of pure consciousness); it is not the physical form made of nature’s elements.

svajana-nishThura-janArdana **(Janardan – He who is strict on his own people)**

Come, listen to the real meaning of ‘Janardan’!

‘jana’ means ‘jagat’ (world). He who gives difficulties to His own devotees, and gives happiness to those who do not have allegiance to Him, is known by the name ‘Janardan’; meaning, *svajana-nishThura* (He who is hard on his own people). He will keep his own people poor, and make outsiders wealthy. This is Narayana’s nature; Krishna’s nature. (And if you say) *‘This Krishna has not given his own devotee food that is enough to even satisfy his hunger; and He serves a feast to this other man, who is a devotee of a different God! Wow, O wow! And this ‘other’ devotee has come for just one day! (And yet Krishna is partial to him!)’ ...*

Well, this is what one calls ‘*svajan nishThura*’ (hard on his own people).

What is the implication of being ‘*svajan nishThura*’? Well, *svajan* is our own man, right? He is with us always – in happiness, in sorrow, in union, in separation... The devotee is with Janardan for all time. So, (Janardan decides to) suppress his devotee’s *vAsanA*-s (proclivities); accustom him to the practice of *tapasyA*⁹⁶ (hard austerities), to the practice of *titiksha*⁹⁷ (endurance), to the practice of *samata* (equipoise; balanced state of mind), to the practice of *mauna* (silence); always keeping an eye on the aim– *may good qualities, virtues, blossom in my devotee’s heart....* This is the significance of the name ‘Janardan’ – meaning, ‘He who is hard on his own devotees’.

Once, a man who was ‘our own’ and another man who was an ‘outsider’, started fighting with each other. The Master came there. If the Master takes the side of his own man, the outsider will abuse the Master

96 *Tapas: Purificatory action; ascetic self-denial; austerity; penance; mortification. (Source Yoga Vedanta Dictionary, by Swami Sivananda)*

97 *Titiksha: Bearing with equanimity the pairs of opposites, heat and cold, pleasure and pain, and respectful and disrespectful treatment; endurance (Source: Yoga Vedanta Dictionary, by Swami Sivananda)*

as well. Whereas, if the Master puts down his own man, the fight will be over. This is what is called – Janardan! If the Master had no faith in his own man – *that he would remain 'my own' even if he is 'pressed down'* – how would the Master have suppressed him?

So, from a '*bhakti-bhAva*' (devotion) perspective, Janardan means – 'He who subjects his own people to harshness, and gives pleasures and comforts to others'.

From a Dharmic perspective, Janardan's meaning can be derived as – 'जनान् दुष्ट जनान् अर्दयति – '*jana*', here, means '*dushta jana*', evil people. '*ardayati*' means '*crushes*'. He who crushes evil people, those who commit *adharma*, the *daitya*-s etc., is known as Janardan.

Now, what does Janardan mean from the perspective of Jnana (Absolute Reality)?

'*janA*' means Maya-Avidya. जनयति जगत् इति जनाः। जनां अविद्यां अर्दयति इति जनार्दनः। He who destroys *avidyA*, *mAyA*, is known as Janardan. This is the meaning from the perspective of Jnana (Knowledge of Absolute Reality).

(Vibhuti Yog: p 416-417)

This *Ishvara* is hiding in your *marma-sthAna*⁹⁸

The story of Hiranyakashipu, the *daitya*⁹⁹ King, is narrated in the Purana-s¹⁰⁰. Bhagavan Narasimha, the man-lion incarnation of Lord Narayana, killed Hiranyakashipu and saved the child Prahlada. Prahlada, the son of Hiranyakashipu, was a great devotee of Narayana. When Prahlada's son, Virochana, was born, the *daitya*-s indoctrinated him that his father Prahlada had behaved contrary to the code of the *daitya*-s. They told Virochana – 'So, dear child! You must accomplish what your father could not do.' Virochana asked them what he should do. They told him – 'You must kill the one who killed your grandfather. You must take revenge.'

Virochana was seized with fear. Upon which, the *daitya*-s reassured him, and said – "Have no fear! On your side, there is a very strong device. And that device is this. Narasimha had granted a boon to Prahlada, saying – 'O Prahlada! I will not slay anyone who is born in your family-line.' Therefore, Virochana, you are invincible. Bhagavan Narayana will not kill you! And so, you should kill him!"

So, Maharaj, Virochana took up arms and attacked Bhagavan Narayana. Seeing him, Bhagavan became afraid, and thought – 'I cannot kill him. And so, he will cause me a lot of trouble.' So, Bhagavan took to his heels and fled from place to place. He went to *svarga* (heaven), to Vaikuntha etc. Wherever He went, Virochana was right on his heels, pursuing him with a mace in his hands. When Narayana could find no place where he could hide in peace, He thought a bit and decided – "Yes! I shall now hide in such a place where Virochana cannot find me." With this thought, Narayana went and sat in Virochana's Atma (Self). Now, Virochana searched for Narayana all over the world, but did not look for Him in his own Self, and so he could not find Him at all. And so, Narayana's

98 *Marma-sthana* : A secret, mysterious, vital place or spot; Spiritual Heart

99 *Daitya*: The *daityas* are a race of *asuras*, descending from *Kashyapa* and his wife, *Diti*. They were enemies of *Deva*-s. At times, they are referred to as demons.

100 *Purana*: Epics, where ancient, spiritual, tales are narrated

perplexity ceased; whereas Virochana was seized with the torment of having to hunt down Narayana.

Now, who is Virochana? The word '*rOchana*' is derived from '*ruchi*' (taste / desire). He who has '*ruchi*' for the world is called Virochana. One who is seized by desires – 'I want this; I want that; I want such a garden; I want such fruits; I want such a house; I want such-and-such pleasures' etc; such a person is known as Virochana. Now, when Virochana could not find Narayana anywhere despite searching for him high and low, he concluded that Narayana had, out of fear, run away somewhere.

The reason for narrating this story is this... Ask yourself – 'Where is Bhagavan hiding?' Now, all of you are *jijnAsu*-s (seekers of knowledge); you know the essence of Veda-Shastra; and so, I feel some trepidation in referring to you as Virochana! But, at the very least, one should get an understanding of where Narayana has hidden Himself. '*guhyam*' – that which is your *guhya* (secret, mysterious, mystical, concealed) place; your *marma-sthAna* – this Ishvara remains hidden in your *marma-sthAna*!

(Kathopanishad Pravachan – 2: p 188-189)

If the ‘moolah’ is one’s own, giving it away is so much fun!

We folks, when we hear someone hold forth a bit on any topic, or read something written by that person, we can make out whether the ‘moolah’ he gives there is his own, or borrowed.

Arrey Maharaj! If the moolah is one’s own, giving it away is so much fun! We are giving away one purse today; tomorrow, we shall hand out another one! Whereas, if we are handing out stuff that we have borrowed from others, we would be rather restrained. The worry is, if we give this today, what will we have for tomorrow? Then, Maharaj, one repeats the same stuff – discourse after discourse.

When I was seventeen or eighteen years old, I would go seeking the *satsang* of Sadhu-s wherever I could find them. And so, once I ran to Chunar. There, in a place called ‘Durgakhoh’, there was a Mahatma of name Ekalinga Swami, who hailed from South India. When I went there, we got engaged with a discussion on Gita. Then the Mahatma gave me two commentaries on Gita. These were rare books, and I have not come across them anywhere else, afterwards. One of the commentaries had the title ‘स्वयं विमर्श भाष्य’ (*svayam vimarsha bhAshya*); it was a Sanskrit commentary, written in Bengali script. The other commentary was titled ‘स्वयं प्रकाश भाष्य’ (*svayam prakAsha bhAshya*). The first one was in the form of *manana* (contemplations; reflections) on the verses of the Gita. The second one was based on the philosophy that the verses of Gita are like the *kalpa-vrikhsa* (wish fulfilling tree); if you read the Gita, the Gita will start revealing its meaning to you, on its own.

Later, I studied other commentaries – Shaankara Bhaashya, Madhusudhani, Shankaraanandi, Tilak, and Jnaneshwari. Afterwards, I studied the commentaries of Sri Ramanujacharya, Madhwacharya etc. Reading all these, I could see that all the Mahapurusha-s (great sages) speak so well. And the views articulated by each one of them is perfect, if we see them from their respective viewpoint. From the perspective of their own philosophy and beliefs, what each of them says is absolutely

correct. Nothing, anywhere, is refutable. We understand the rationale of each of these views.

If you believe Ishvara to be *saguNa* (having qualities, attributes), and you read Shankara Bhashya, you will not be able to understand it. Similarly, if you believe Ishvara to be *nirguNa* (devoid of attributes), and you read Ramanuja Bhashya, you will not be able to understand that as well. For each comes from a certain viewpoint. If a photograph is clicked from a certain angle, and you do not look at it from that angle, how will you get a proper appreciation of it? Similarly, if you do not get the angle of each of these views of Gita, you will not be able to get an understanding of the nature of Ishvara as articulated by each of them.

(Dhyan Yog : Praak-Kathan 9-10)



I want joy!

Once, I was sitting by the banks of Ganga, in Swargashram, Rishikesh. It was a moonlit night. A friend of mine came there and said to me – ‘Swamiji! I don’t have any attachment in this world; I do not desire anything; I am ready to cast off this body too; but I want *Ananda*; I want joy!’

I said – ‘Are you saying this with all honesty?’ And he said that he was absolutely honest; that it was the absolute truth. I said – ‘All right. Sit down.’, and he sat down in front of me, in proper Yogasana.

I said to him – ‘Ok! Will you do what I ask you to do?’ ‘Yes, I will’, said he.

I then said – ‘And so, here’s what I want you to do. This desire for joy that you have; I tell you to give up that desire.’

He declared – ‘Done. I renounce it. I have done as you said to me. I have given up the desire for *Ananda*.’

And then, Maharaj! First, his body started trembling a bit; then some tears fell down from his eyes; and then his body started shining like the full-moon in the night sky. Maharaj! He became so *samAdhistha* (absorbed in the Self) – what can I tell you! For forty-five minutes or so, he sat there, in that condition. And I sat there with him. After that, when he emerged from *samAdhi*, he said – ‘I have obtained a glimpse of *Ananda*! I have understood what *Ananda* is like. This is *Ananda*!’

Actually, these desires that one has – these desires are the concealers of *Ananda*.

Let me tell you a story. Brahmaji made ‘Aah’ as a part of Creation. Surely you know ‘Aah’. The whole world goes about moaning ‘Aah! Aah!’ (Alas! Alas!). So, when Brahma created ‘Aah’, she turned to Brahma and said – ‘Father! You have given birth to me. Now, please get me married to somebody!’ Brahma said – ‘My daughter! The whole world is there. Marry anyone you wish!’ So, there she went, Maharaj! But no one was willing to marry her. Everyone said – ‘Who, in his right mind, will ever marry Aah?’ She then returned to Brahma and told him that no one – just no one – was willing to marry her. Brahma then covered her face with a veil of ‘cha’

and told her – ‘Go! People will now find you desirable.’ When the veil of ‘cha’ got added to ‘Aah’, her name became ‘*cha-aah*’ or ‘*Chaah*’, meaning ‘Desire’¹⁰¹. Now, people started giving her a place in their heart.

Truly, it is desire that causes sorrow. Rejecting the ever-at-hand, ever-pure, all-knowing, ever-free, *sat-cit-Ananda-ghana*, *parabrahma*, *paramAtma*; rejecting our own Self; the desire for the unattained is what is creating sorrow in our life. This is what is called as *mrityu* (death). This (desire) is what is *asat* (non-reality), *acit* (non-consciousness, inertness), and *dukha* (sorrow; non-joy).

(Dhyan Yog : p 65-66)



वृष्णात् परं किमपि

तत्त्वमहं न जाने ।

ऊर्ध्वपडाब्दे



**Parampujya Sri Poornananda Teertha
Brahmamurti Sri Udiya Baba-ji Maharaj**

ANANDA RASA RATNAKAR



तस्मात् केनाप्युपायेन मनः कृष्णे निवेशयेत् ।

*Therefore, by one means or another,
the mind should be fixed on Krishna!
[Srimad Bhagavatam 7.1.32]*

*Take action – do japa (recitation of
mantra), tapa (meditation), vrata
(fasting), pUjA (worship), satsang
(spiritual association); whatever be the
path taken, the mind should get fixed
on Bhagavan alone.*

*Maharajshree:
August 12 - Ananda Rasa Ratnakar*

'Ananda Rasa Ratnakar' is a collection of Hindi writings of Maharajshree Swami Akhandananda Saraswati, structured as a daily reader. Extracted from over 80 books of Maharajshree, this collection of 366 articles is meant to be read one per day of the year. Released during the birth centenary celebrations of Maharajshree in 2010, the book has been well received by learned readers.

On the persistent request of devotees, an English translation of the book was decided to be brought out, in four volumes. For me it is a matter of pride that my close friend, Sri Kameshwar, in response to my gentle request, took this task of translation upon himself, and now, the third volume, covering articles from July to September, is in your hands. It is to be noted that Sri Kameshwar has been serving the cause of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi literature for the last many years. Surely, this English rendering has been possible only by the Grace of Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi, Brahmamurti Sri Udiya Baba, and Parampujya Maharajshree.

May this book, a vehicle of Bhagavat Kripa, bring joy to all readers and propel them forward in their spiritual journey.

Swami Govindananda Saraswati, Vrindavan

