

**Satsanga with Sri Swami Viditatmananda Saraswati**  
**Arsha Vidya Gurukulam**  
**Bhaja Govindam – Verse 1**

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saaYesiÚihTekal enih nih r]it fikÁkr[e

*bhajagovindaà bhajagovindaà govindaà bhajamüòhamate,*  
*samprāpte sannihite kāle nahi nahi rakñati òukāi karaëe.*

Worship Govinda, worship Govinda, worship Govinda, oh deluded mind!  
(Intellectual pursuits such as) rules of grammar will not save you at the  
time of your death.

*Òukāi karaëe.* In Sanskrit, the verbal root *kā*, in the sense of *karaëe*, means to do. This is an aphorism in the *dhātu pāta*, a list of the verbs provided by Pāëini. It is symbolic of all the aphorisms of grammar in the pursuit of the knowledge of grammar. Here, the knowledge of grammar stands for any intellectual pursuit. Thus, *òukāi karaëe* represents the various intellectual pursuits in life.

*Nahi rakñati*, does not protect. The accomplishments in various intellectual fields do not serve to protect you. When?

*Samprāpte sannihite kāle.* *Samprāpte* means very well obtained. *Kāla* means time or death. *Samprāpte sannihite kāle* is when the appointed time draws near, or when death arrives. At that time, none of these intellectual accomplishments will protect you or save you.

**Every pursuit in our life is a pursuit of freedom**

What kind of protection is being talked about here? It is protection from death itself. Everyone wants to be saved or protected from the very idea of death. No one likes death; death represents all my grief, all my sorrow, all my sufferings, isolation, and fear. Therefore, what one is seeking is freedom from death. If we analyze our pursuits in life we will appreciate that we are all seeking freedom from death. Nobody ever wants to die. One always wants to perpetuate existence, live for a day more. Even though I may be a totally useless entity in this world, I do not think so. People may say, "The time has come, why don't you quit?" But I will not want to quit. Why? Because I have a natural love for life, a natural love for existence, a desire for immortality.

We are all seeking freedom from bondage, dependence, and smallness. Seeking freedom from death is one way of expressing that freedom. It appears as though everyone is going in different directions, seeking different things. One wants to be wealthy, another wants to be powerful. What one is looking forward to, somebody else wants to get rid of; one wants to be famous, another wants to renounce fame, and while one wants power and position, yet another is seeking to be free from them. What anyone is doing in life seems to be different from what everyone else is doing, but each one is seeking the same end in life.

Everyone is seeking to be protected, seeking to be saved, seeking to be free. If everyone wants to be free, how are they doing different things? Different people have different concepts of freedom and each one pursues freedom according to his or her notions. That is why in the very pursuit of freedom we wind up, more often than not, with more bondage and more entanglement.

### **All our pursuits only create new bondage**

Everything that gives me freedom also creates some bondage. I build a house thinking that I will be free, but then I find that the very house binds me! The very thing that I pursued in order to gain freedom, does give me some freedom, but also gives me a certain other kind of bondage. When I do not have a job, I set about looking for a job. Then I get a job, but find that I have to leave for work early in the morning every weekday. I lose the freedom of getting up late in the morning! I have to pay a price for everything. That seems to be the nature of everything in this world. We are not saying that it should not be this way. All of these things, a job, a house, or a car, are required in life and do have a place in our lives. They contribute something to our life, but the point is, do they have what we are seeking? Are they capable of providing what we are looking for?

Every happiness is accompanied by some unhappiness, burden, or responsibilities and every gain is associated with some loss or price. That is the reason why we do not seem to get what we want. We are pursuing freedom from death, ignorance, and unhappiness. Through our various pursuits, we are seeking to be saved from something. We are seeking *rakṣānam* or protection from mortality, ignorance, and pain or suffering. That is why Çré Çai karācārya says *nahi nahi rakṣati*. He asks us to think about what we are seeking to accomplish, and then inquire into whether what we are doing can truly enable us to accomplish our goal.

Suppose you want to go to Chicago, which is west of Pennsylvania, and you take a highway that goes east, will you ever be able to reach your destination? Similarly, will these various pursuits enable you to accomplish what you are seeking in life? The answer is *nahi nahi rakīati*, all these accomplishments will not provide you what you are seeking. They will not give you the freedom or the immortality or the happiness or the joy that you are seeking. Çré Çai karācārya is pointing out here that what all human beings are seeking is universal. Since everybody is seeking freedom, there is one common solution to the human problem. What is the solution? It is, "*bhajagovindaà bhajagovindaà govindaà bhajamüòhamate*".

### **Seeing the impermanent as permanent is delusion**

*Müòhamate, müòha mati.* A *müòhamate* is one whose *mati* or perception is deluded, one who does not know what one is seeking and, therefore, is not aware of the real purpose of life. *Moha* or delusion is *aviveka*. *Viveka* is discrimination, seeing a thing for what it is. The opposite of discrimination is *aviveka* or *moha*. It is also called *adhyāsa*, superimposition, which results in seeing one thing where it is not, *atasmin tad buddhiù*. In Vedānta, *moha* is seeing that which is not there, or seeing something to be different from what it is in reality, e.g., taking the rope for a snake, or seeing happiness where it is not. Seeing the impermanent as permanent is delusion, just as taking the permanent to be impermanent is also delusion. In the same way, seeing the non-self as the self is delusion, as surely as seeing the self as non-self is delusion. Therefore, the true purpose of life is gaining freedom from *moha*.

### **'I' consists of the Person and the Personality**

Who am I? That which I call 'I' is a complex entity consisting of two aspects, a person and a personality. In the same way as an actor consists of his person and his costume, within me, there is both a person and a personality. My mind and intellect form the personality. This body is part of the personality. Associated with the personality is the person, who is a simple, conscious being, the I. However, I do not discriminate between the person and the personality, and therefore, these two are lumped together. If I do not know the identity of the actor playing a beggar, I may take him to be a real beggar. What we call 'beggar' is really the attribute of the costume and not of the one who is wearing that costume. When one does not know this, one takes both to be one entity, when, in

fact, they are two. The ignorant person may feel that there is a beggar and may even go ahead and give him a penny.

### **The limited personality is mistakenly regarded as 'I'**

As in the example of the actor and his costume, there are two entities in the 'I': the person and the personality. The personality is the costume that the 'I', the person, is wearing. We do not have that *viveka* or discrimination and, therefore, take ourselves to be this personality. Each one of us takes ourselves to be a limited individual. Having taken myself to be a limited being, just this body or this limited personality, I am constantly struggling to become free from this limitation, this smallness. This is the story of our life. Therefore, Çré Çai karäcärya says *müòhamate*. It is not only the old *paëòita* who is *müòha* or deluded. Each one of us is deluded.

### **Taking the person for the personality is delusion**

We do not even have to make an effort to be deluded; we are born deluded. In the Gëtä [7-27] Lord Kâñëa says, "Hey Arjuna, all beings, at the time of birth itself, are deluded about their true nature, *sarvabhütäni sammohaà sarge yänti parantapa*".

I do not know what my true nature is. Everything that I do is an attempt to become free from my sense of limitation. The question is of whether this sense of limitation is real. Am I really limited? Vedanta says that the 'I', the person, is not limited. It says, *tat tvam asi*, you are already that free and limitless being, the whole being that you are seeking to be. Taking the free self to be bound is delusion and taking the whole being to be small is delusion. This body is a costume, a dwelling place, and the mind, an instrument given to me. The body and the mind are given to me to perform various functions. They are the non-self, and to take them to be me, the Self, is delusion.

You are a simple conscious being, free, complete, and whole. This is the true nature of the Self. You take yourself to be bound, to be small, and to be limited, but it is not the truth about you. It is merely a notion. Why does that notion arise? It is because you take the body, the mind, and the personality to be the Self.

I find that the body is mortal, and, therefore, I take myself also to be mortal. As a result, I seek to be immortal by perpetuating the existence of this body. I find that the mind is small, its abilities are limited, its skills are limited,

and its accomplishments are limited. Therefore, I seek to become free from that sense of limitation by making my mind limitless. I keep accumulating a variety of information and knowledge thinking that I will become all-knowing. I want to control more people, I want more strength and more energy so that I may become omnipotent, all powerful, and I want to become immortal at the level of the personality. This is a futile effort. Regardless of what I do, the body can never be made immortal. What is born is definitely going to die. Regardless of what I do, I can never become omniscient. My knowledge is always going to be limited.

### **Govinda is the Person, my own Self**

What should I do? *Bhajagovindaà bhajagovindaà govindaà bhajamüòhamate.* *Bhaja* means worship. *Bhajagovindam* means worship Govinda. What is Govinda? Govinda is that freedom, the wholeness, the immortality, and the totality that I am seeking. In common usage, Govinda means Lord Kåñëa. The word *go* means cow. The one who protects the *go* is Govinda, *gam vindati iti govindaù.* The Lord was a cowherd, so he was called Govinda. It seems to be said here, may you worship Çré Kåñëa, but the word *go* has several other meanings as well. When we analyze the meanings of the word Govinda, we understand that, in this context, Govinda means the limitless Self.

Another meaning of the word *go* is *påthvé* or earth. Lord Kåñëa is called Govinda, the protector of the earth, in his incarnation as a *varåha* or boar. It is said that Hiraëyåkñå, the *asura*, took the earth and went into the *raså-tala* or waters. When the earth disappeared the people were upset and approached the Lord and asked Him to save the earth. So the Lord appeared as a *varåha*, battled Hiraëyåkñå, killed him, and brought the earth back from the waters. Lord Kåñëa is thus Govinda, the retriever of the earth.

*Go* can also be taken to mean the sense organs. Govindaù, then, is the one who impels the sense organs, the one who enlivens the sense organs, or the one who directs the sense organs to perform their appointed functions. For example, take the fan, which rotates in the presence of electricity. We can see the movement of the blades, but not the electricity which causes it. Similarly, we observe the functioning of our organs of action and our organs of perception, but while we may not perceive it, Govinda alone enables the the various faculties to perform their various functions. The Kenopaniñad [5] says:

yÜaca=n\_yid<yñ vâg\_yi\* tç

tdv äü Tv<iviī nēkyiddmpaste 5.

*yad vācānabhyuditaà yena vāg abhyudate*  
*tad eva brahma tvaà viddhi nedaà yad idam upāsate*

May you understand that Brahman is that (Consciousness) which is not revealed by speech, but by which (Consciousness) the speech is revealed. This (deity) which (people) meditate upon is not (Brahman).

The Self that is Govindaü is that which cannot be revealed by speech, but because of which speech is revealed, that which cannot be seen by the eyes, but because of which the eyes are able to see, and that which cannot be thought of by the mind, but because of which the mind thinks.

The word *go* also means speech. In this sense, it means the one who is behind all speech. Govindaü is the one because of whom all speech occurs, and because of whom words have the ability to reveal their meanings.

Thus, the name Govinda is not necessarily limited to Çré Kāñëa. In a broad sense, it means the Self, the truth or the Consciousness. It is the happiness that is behind every name and form and, indeed, that which is behind everything in the creation. That Self is Govindaü. Therefore, Çré Çai karācārya says, *bhajagovindaà bhajagovindaà govindaà bhajamüòhamate*, may you worship Govinda, which is your very Self. It is not only your Self, but the Self of all. May you realize that it is not what you are seeking at the moment. It is not to be found in the pursuit of intellectual or material accomplishments. What you are seeking is to be found in this Govinda alone.

### **Seeking Govinda is the purpose of life**

What is the purpose of life? *Bhajagovindam bhajagovindam*. Seeking or knowing Govinda is the purpose of life. *Samprāpte sannihite käle*. Why is death mentioned here? The one to whom this is addressed, the old *paëòita* who is close to death, does not understand the importance of time or of priorities. This is called *pramāda* or inadvertance. It is an involvement with something other than which the situation demands. Of course, this does not mean that grammatical rules or secular achievements are condemned. Rather, it is their inappropriateness that is shown here. When you are dying, you should be preparing for death.

The *jéva* has come in the human form in order to accomplish a certain purpose, but we come here and get distracted by so many fascinations and

attractions that we forget the reason why we are here. It is like taking a scenic route on the way to our destination and getting distracted along the way. A story is told to illustrate this. Once upon a time, a king made an announcement to all his subjects that on a given day, he would be available to them throughout the day. The citizens could come and ask for whatever they wanted, and he would fulfil their desires. On that day, he was in a house on top of a hill in a beautiful garden. All the people in the kingdom started coming in the morning to see him. They had to pass through the great big garden to reach his home. In the garden, they found shops selling clothing and jewellery, they found restaurants, games, shows, entertainment etc. The people were distracted by all these wonderful attractions, and that entire day, not even a single person managed to reach the king's house. This is an example of *müòhamatiü*. They were all distracted, deluded and lost. They came there in order to see the king and fulfill their desires, but got lost on account of these other fascinations on the way. They lost sight of their priorities. The Bhajagovindam is a reminder that your journey has to be in keeping with your objectives.

### **No other pursuit gives us what we are seeking**

Every accomplishment holds a lot of fascination for me, only, when I get it, I find that it is not what I was looking for. There is another story that shows what a human being does in the various pursuits of life. It is of a time when Lord Rāma and Sétādevé had come back from Lanka, having conquered Rāvaëa. One day, they were going for a walk, and Hanumanji was following them. In reminiscing about the olden days, and how Hanumanji had served them, Sétādevé was so pleased with Hanumanji that she took off a beautiful pearl necklace that she was wearing, and gave it to him. After a while, Sétādevé heard some cracking sounds coming from behind, and when she looked back, she saw that Hanumanji was cracking open the pearls one by one in his mouth. She was surprised and asked him what he was doing. "I am looking for my Rāma," he replied. Hanumanji was cracking open each pearl, looking to see if Lord Rāma was there, and not finding Lord Rāma in it, throwing it away. Similarly, we are also searching for Lord Rāma or Govinda in each of our pursuits; searching for that freedom, that happiness, or that immortality.

Everybody wants all the happiness that one can get. Everybody wants happiness all the time and in all the places, without any limitation of time and space. Moreover, we do not want any strings attached to our happiness; we want unconditional happiness. Also, we do not want to exert ourselves at all in

order to be happy. It is what we call *ānanda*, happiness without any limitation. The happiness that lasts all the time is called *sat*. I want to feel happy and also know that I am happy. That means I want happiness with knowledge. Awareful happiness is called *cit*. Therefore, what every man is really seeking in life is this *sat cit ānanda*. We may not know this. We may perhaps never have given thought to what we are seeking in life. When we do give thought to what we are seeking in life, we realize that we are seeking nothing less than *sat cit ānanda*. The limitation of all our pursuits is pointed out to us. Is there any pursuit that will give us what we are seeking? No. That is why each one of us, like Hanumanji, takes a pearl and cracks it open to see whether or not it contains *sat cit ānanda*.

I work hard for something, I get the result, and I examine it to see whether what I seek is there. It is not there, and I am not satisfied. I work hard for another pearl. I crack it open. Again, I am not satisfied. I go for yet another. Thus, there is no end to what one is seeking. How is it that we do not seem to be satisfied with any accomplishment? Every accomplishment seems to give me satisfaction for a period of time, no doubt, but then again, I find that I desire something else. Why is it so? It is because there is no accomplishment that is capable of providing what I am seeking, that *sat cit ānanda*, that fullness called God or the Self. This is what Çré Çai karācārya is pointing out here.

*Samprāpte sannihite kāle*, when the death comes at the appointed time, all of your accomplishments are there in front of you, but you find that they are insignificant. That is what is meant by *nahi nahi rakāti òukāi karaëe*. These secular accomplishments will not protect you, meaning they will not give you a sense of fulfilment. The worship of Govinda should be the priority of our life.

### **Dedicate all your actions to Govinda**

Does this mean that I should stop all my pursuits? Should I become a renunciate? Should I give up my job and start repeating the name, Govinda? What is the meaning of worshipping Govinda? Worshipping Govinda is not doing any particular thing, but realizing that whatever I do should become a means for the attainment of the ultimate goal. All the accomplishments in life have a purpose, alright, but they are a means and not the end. Let all your accomplishments become a means for the attainment of Govinda, the ultimate goal. This is what the scriptures teach us.

The Bhagavad Gētā teaches us how to make our life a means for the attainment of Govinda. Lord Kāñēa says, "Remember me at all times, and continue to perform your duty, *tasmāt sarveṅu kāleṅu mām anusmara yudhya ca*" [Bhagavadgētā, 8-7]. Here, we are provided with a vision of life. Whatever action you perform, do it with a particular attitude, as an offering to the Lord. Your whole life, then, becomes a means for attaining Govinda. A river is totally devoted to reaching the ocean. Whatever the river does is towards that purpose. If an obstacle comes in its way the river may change course, but eventually, it will go back to the pursuit of reaching the ocean. In the same manner, let all your activities be focused like those of the river. Keep in mind that what you are seeking in life is Govinda. Therefore, let the purpose of every activity be to reach Govinda.

There is nothing wrong in serving the world or even acquiring wealth etc. However, pursue all your activities keeping that goal in mind. Everybody is a devotee. Some are devoted to wealth, and some to their spouse, or children, or job. Don't be a devotee of any of these things. "Then how about my spouse, and children?" Let that devotion also be a means for worship of Govinda. Realize that the attainment of Govinda is the only true goal of your life<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Transcribed and edited by Krishnakumar (KK) S. Davey and Jayshree Ramakrishnan.