

Satsanga with Sri Swami Vidadatmananda Saraswati
Arsha Vidya Gurukulam

Bhaja Govindam – Verse 10

Some questions are asked in the tenth verse, showing us the relationship between cause and effect.

वयसिगते कः कामविकारः शुष्के नीरे कः कासारः ।

क्षीणेवित्ते कः परिवारः ज्ञाते तत्त्वे कः संसारः ॥

vayasigate kaḥ kāmavikāraḥ śuṣke nīre kaḥ kāsāraḥ,
kṣīṇevitte kaḥ parivāraḥ jñāte tattve kaḥ saṁsāraḥ.

What good is lust when youth has fled? Where is the lake when the water has dried up? Where is the retinue when the wealth is gone? When the Truth is realized, where is *saṁsāra*?

When we remove the cause, the effect goes away

Vayasigate kaḥ kāmavikāraḥ. *Vayas* is age, and *vayasigate* means the passage of youth. *Kāmavikāraḥ* is the expression of lust in the human body. How can there be an expression of lust in the body when youthfulness is no more? There cannot be lust when youthfulness is spent because youthfulness is a cause, and the expression of lust, an effect. The idea is that when the cause is gone, the effect cannot remain.

Śuṣke nīre kaḥ kāsāraḥ. *Kāsāraḥ* is a body of water, a pond or a lake. We call it a pond or lake only when it is filled with water. When the water has dried up, *śuṣke nīre*, where is the pond or the lake, *kaḥ kāsāraḥ*? You can see this happen in India where, in the heat of summer, the water in the rivers and lakes is reduced to a trickle. The *Sābarmati*, for instance, is a flowing river only for a couple of months in the year. At other times, there is no water in that river.

Kṣīṇevitte kaḥ parivāraḥ. *Vitta* is wealth. *Kṣīṇevitte*, after the wealth is exhausted, *kaḥ parivāraḥ*, where is the family or retinue? There are people around you only when you have something to offer them or when they have something to gain from you. When your wealth is no more where are the followers? Wealth here means money or power, position, or some skill. Only as long as these things are there will people look up to you or follow you. When the cause is no more, the effect is no longer there as well.

Once, when my eyes were closed, I was bitten by an ant. I brushed it away. There came another ant, and then another. I opened my eyes and saw that there was a whole line of ants. I swept them away. After a while I saw that they had come back and I swept them away again. Soon the ants returned and I had to sweep them away yet again. When this had happened a few times, I examined why the ants were coming and found some small sugar crystals lying on the ground. The ants were coming there to get them. I then removed the sugar crystals and the ants went away. What we have to learn from this is that if you remove the cause the effect goes away by itself.

Anger is an effect

Very often people ask me how they can get rid of anger. Most people know that anger hurts them, and they take a vow that they will not get angry anymore, except that anger comes anyway. You try to sweep away anger by changing the situation or doing something temporarily, but some other situation is created, and anger comes. Pujya Swami Dayanandaji tells the story of someone who came to him and said, "Swamiji, I have given up anger. I have not been angry at all for the past four months." Swamiji told him, "Well, it is just a matter of situation. Maybe a situation has not arisen that would make you angry." "No Swamiji, I have given up anger." "No, no. I am sure that a situation has not been created to make you angry." "Swamiji, I have not gotten angry," he bangs on the table. Swamiji tells him, "No, but I am telling you that it is just a matter of the situation being created." And the person gets angry. Anger waits to come out. All that it calls for is a certain situation. This is a typical example of how the effect cannot be removed when the cause is not removed.

Binding desires and demands lead to anger

Our attempts to get rid of anger are not successful because anger is a symptom or an effect, and has a cause. Arjuna asked Lord Kṛṣṇa, "What is it that makes me sin or make me do things that are unbecoming of me?" Lord Kṛṣṇa says, "*kāma eṣa krodha eṣa* [Bhagavadgītā, 3-37]." It is *kāma*, or strong desire, that becomes anger. Why do I get angry? It is because some demand of mine has not been fulfilled. Therefore, anger invariably springs from some desire or some demand. We are very demanding people and we demand things from the whole world. We demand a certain behavior from our family, friends, and everybody around. We demand that they act in a certain way, talk in a certain way etc. At

the moment that my demand is not fulfilled, I get angry. The more demanding a person I am, and the stronger the demands I make, the more likely it is that I am going to be angry. Anger springs from strong desires and demands.

To get rid of anger, become less demanding

Every time that you have been angry, sit quietly when the anger has gone away and ask yourself this question, “Is it necessary for me to maintain that demand or hang on to that demand, or can I give up that demand?” If you can give up the demand, one cause of anger is given up. I want people and situations to function according to my requirement. As I learn to accept the world as it is, and as I gradually become less demanding, the occasions for anger will also be fewer. Thus, the effect can go only when the cause goes. If the cause remains, the effect will spring up some time or the other. As the rains come, the grass and the weeds start growing because the seeds are there in their potential form. When they get an opportunity, they sprout. Remove the seed and the sprout goes away. This verse tells us how to deal with the effect by eliminating the cause.

***Samsāra* arises out of self non-acceptance**

Jñāte tattve kaḥ saṁsāraḥ. This is the most important segment of the verse. We are all interested in becoming free from *saṁsāraḥ*. What is *saṁsāra*? *Samyak sarati asmin iti saṁsāraḥ.* The word *saṁsāra* is made up of *sam* and *sāra*. The word *sāra* is derived from *śr*, to move. *Sarati* is the one who moves. *Sam* comes from *samyak*, meaning constant. *Saṁsāraḥ* is *samyak sāra*, that in which there is constant movement. What kind of motion is this? It is motion from one birth to another, from one situation to another, one accomplishment to another, and one becoming to another. Man is always trying to become something. This life of becoming is called *saṁsāraḥ*.

The problem of *saṁsāra* is the constant sense of self-rejection or self non-acceptance. There is a constant current of self non-acceptance in me. I am not satisfied with the way I am now. On the one hand I do not accept myself as I am, and on the other, I cannot tolerate this self non-acceptance either. Therefore, there is an immediate impulse or urge to become acceptable to myself. Thus arises an effort or action on my part to become acceptable; a poor man wants to become rich, a weak man wants to become strong, a strong man wants to become stronger, a man who is not educated wants to get educated, a man in the east

wants to go to the west, and so on. Every man or woman wants to *become* something, and this need reflects the dissatisfaction with one's present state.

Thus, the fundamental problem of the human being is his constant dissatisfaction with himself. Animals do not have this problem. A cow with a twisted set of horns does not seem to be jealous of the cow with shapely horns. Why does this complex arise in the human being? It arises out of self non-acceptance. Animals are called *vimuktāḥ*, liberated. They are ever free from all these complexes. We torture ourselves because of our various complexes, most of which result in self-rejection. In fact, there is a constant battle going on within us; we don't require a battle outside. That is *saṁsārah*.

Self non-acceptance arises out of ignorance

What is this freedom from *saṁsārah* that we seek? It is nothing but freedom from this sense of self non-acceptance or self-rejection, freedom from the need to become something. In reality, the only freedom that we have to acquire is inner freedom, a freedom from the compulsion within, that I must change. Śrī Śaṅkarācārya says, *jñāte tattve kaḥ saṁsārah*. When the *tattva* or truth is known, where is the *saṁsāra*? What is this truth? It is the truth of the Self. It means that my self non-acceptance or self-rejection is there because I do not know the truth of myself. It is not only ignorance, but a false notion or a misconception about my own self that brings this about.

There is no reason why I should not like myself, but I do not. That is why I expect the world to love me. There is a need that the world should honor me because I do not honor myself, a need that the world should say that I am alright and accept me because I do not accept myself. It is one thing that the world honors me, but quite another, that there is a need that the world should honor me. That need is called *saṁsāra*. That is why, generally, all the needs are nothing but expressions of self non-acceptance. Desire represents *saṁsāra* because *avidyā-kāma-karma*, ignorance leads to desire, which leads to action. There is nothing wrong in desiring. Vedanta is not against desire. However, the desire represents self non-acceptance, and is the cause of *saṁsāra*. Where does it arise from? It arises from an ignorance of my own self, a self-ignorance that results in self non-acceptance.

Self-knowledge is distinguishing between the Person and the Personality

I do not know who I am. Am I this body? If I am, I can never become an acceptable self because this body can never fulfill my expectations regardless of

what I do with it. Am I this mind? This mind is also a limited equipment and I can never be fully satisfied with this mind either. Am I, then, this intellect? This intellect is also a limited entity, and therefore, I can never be satisfied even with this intellect. I am never fully satisfied with my knowledge, with my wisdom, or with my understanding. Therefore, as long as I take myself to be this body or *upādhi*, I can only see myself as a limited being suffering from all kinds of limitations and deficiencies.

You are different from this *upādhi*; the body is your dwelling and the mind and sense organs are the various instruments with which you perform different tasks. You are essentially the witness of all this. The body, the sense organs, and the mind form the personality comparable to the costume that an actor wears. Just as an actor is different from the costume, so also, the person wearing this personality is different from it. It is *aviveka* or non-discrimination that associates the person with the personality. The personality is always limited, and when I see myself from the standpoint of the personality I can only be a limited being.

Jñāte tattve. What is the *tattva* or truth of my Self? The truth is that I am a person, a conscious being without any attributes, strengths or limitations attached, simple, pure, and beautiful. When can that truth be known? *Nirmohatve niścalatattvam*, the truth can be known only when the mind is free from *rāga-dveṣas* and has the clear perception that enables it to see the truth. This clarity comes as a result of worship of God, and therefore, the worship of God becomes a means for gaining the knowledge of the Self.

Self-knowledge leads to self-acceptance

Self non-acceptance comes about because I have a misapprehension about myself as being limited in every way. *Jñāte tattve*, when I see the truth of myself as a whole and complete being, this self non-acceptance or self-rejection remains no more. There is, instead, a total self-acceptance. I then abide in myself. When I am happy with myself, I find myself happy with everyone else. When I find myself rejecting things in the outer world, I must know that it is a result of a rejection of myself, a discomfort with myself. That discomfort with myself goes when I discover my own beauty.

When the *tattva* or truth of life is known, where is *saṁsāra*? Where is this life of birth and death? Where is the struggle of this life of becoming? Where is that compulsion of self non-acceptance? Those conflicts are no more. Thus, to become free from *saṁsāra*, you should eliminate ignorance, the cause of *saṁsāra*.

When the ignorance is gone, *samsāra* can no longer be there. The Upaniṣads declare that you already are that which you are trying to be. As the 10th man¹ is told, you already are the 10th man. The fullness which you are seeking is your very own nature².

¹ According to the '10th Man story', ten young disciples of a *guru* wanted to make a trip to the next village. The *guru* cautioned their leader to be careful in crossing the rain-swollen river. In fact, at the river it was too deep to wade and they all had to swim across. On the other side the leader counted to make certain all had made it across safely. To his enormous distress he found out that only nine had reached the other shore. For a long time they all searched for the missing tenth man until a wise old man who happened to come to the scene pointed out that the leader had forgotten to count himself.

² Transcribed and edited by Krishnakumar (KK) S. Davey and Jayshree Ramakrishnan.