

Satsanga with Sri Swami Vidadatmananda Saraswati
Arsha Vidya Gurukulam

Bhaja Govindam – Verse 11

In verse 11, the teacher again points out the proper order of priorities in our life. He talks of becoming free from false pride and deceit.

मा कुरु धन जन यौवन गर्व हरति निमेषात्कालः सर्वम् ।

मायामयमिदमखिलं हित्वा ब्रह्मपदं त्वं प्रविश विदित्वा ॥

mā kuru dhana jana yauvana garvam harati nimeṣātkālah sarvam,
māyāmayamidamakhilam hitvā brahmapadam tvam praviśa viditvā.

Do not take pride in wealth, friends, and youth. Time takes away all these in the blink of an eye. Free yourself from the illusion of the world of *māyā* and may you know the abode of Brahman and enter it.

Mā kuru dhana jana yauvana garvam, do not take pride in *dhana jana yauvana*. *Garva* is pride. *Jana* means people and *yauvana* is youthfulness. *Dhana* is wealth or possessions. *Dhana* includes power, position, name, and fame. Do not have pride that you have followers, or that you command the respect of people or control some people. Do not take pride in your youth. Do not have any pride in your life because these things are not yours.

Wealth is fleeting

I can be proud only of something that I have created or something that I own, or control. I have not created either this *jana* or *yauvana*. I cannot claim even *dhana* or wealth as mine. It is only by chance that the wealth is with me. Elsewhere, Śrī Śaṅkarācārya describes the fleeting nature of wealth. He says that wealth is as unstable or unpredictable as a bubble or a wave in the water, *lakṣmīstoyataraṅgabhaṅgacapalā* [Śivāparādhakṣamāpaṇa Stotram, 13]. Wealth can never be yours. *Dhanam* or Lakṣmī is the consort of Lord Nārāyaṇa. As Swami Dayanandaji always says, if Lakṣmī *devī* comes to your home and you want to claim possession or ownership of her, naturally, Lord Nārāyaṇa cannot tolerate it. You never know when he will ask Lakṣmī *devī* to go away with him! Therefore, you can lose her in a moment.

Our earning power has been given to us

There is no reason to take pride in having wealth. How is it that I have wealth? I have either inherited it or earned it. If I have earned wealth, it is because I possess certain abilities by God's grace. These abilities or skills that I possess because of which I am a wealthy man are not something that I have created. We know very well that we have not created this body; it is a gift given to me. Along with the body, all the intelligence and knowledge and skill that I have are also given to me. Whatever I possess is a gift. This is because when I was born, I had nothing and was totally ignorant. In the course of these years so many teachers and so many other people have actually worked hard in order to impart this knowledge and skills to me. Now, I feel that I possess this knowledge and claim to be smart or intelligent or skillful. I claim to be an engineer, a doctor or a lawyer and when I earn money on the strength of that knowledge, I think that the money also is my private property.

We have been 'favored'

Lord Kṛṣṇa says that there is no private property at all. Even your own body is not personal property. He says the one who enjoys objects given by the gods without offering to them in return is indeed a thief, *tairdattānapradāyaibhyo yo bhūṅkte stena eva saḥ* [Bhagavadgītā, 3-12]. All the favor is constantly done to you. It is on account of this favor alone that you are what you are and enjoy this whole universe. If you do not acknowledge that favor, and consume everything that comes to you thinking that it is on account of your own personal effort, you are a thief. I have to appreciate the amount of favor that I have received from the whole universe. That is why they talk of *ṛṣi ṛṇa*, our debts to the sages, *pitṛ ṛṇa*, our debts to our forefathers, and *deva ṛṇa*, our debts to the gods.

We are indebted to the sages, to our ancestors, and to the gods

Ṛṣi ṛṇa is our debt to the *ṛṣis*, the sages and thinkers, because they have dedicated their whole life to the pursuit of knowledge and made this vast storehouse of knowledge available to us. We draw from this freely, and then call ourselves very knowledgeable people. *Pitṛ ṛṇa* is our debt to our parents and ancestors for having given us the gift of this body, and for having raised it and nourished it. *Deva ṛṇa* is our debt to the many *devatās*, meaning cosmic forces, which are constantly functioning in order to support us. The sun, the moon, the earth, the fire and the waters, all these elements are working constantly in order to support us. Without their favor, we could not survive or even exist.

Therefore, we must realize that all these factors are constantly contributing to make our life what it is.

You cannot lay claim to your wealth, youth, or power

Pujya Swami Dayanandaji says, you cannot even claim the body that you possess to be your own because so many have claims over it. The wife has a claim on this body, as do the parents, the children, the employer, and even the state. Even the bacteria in your stomach have a claim over your body! Of course, the vultures which are flying over there are waiting for our body to drop off. Therefore, when we really think about the realities of life, there can be only humility and no pride. You cannot lay claim to your wealth or youth or power.

Enjoy what you have without any pride

Harati nimeṣātkālah sarvam. Kālah is time, or death. *Nimeṣāt* means at the blink of an eye. Śrī Śaṅkarācārya says, time or death can rob us of everything in a mere moment. A great scholar loses his memory in an accident and becomes a vegetable. A young and active person is suddenly discovered to have a tumor in his brain and, by the time he goes in for surgery, loses many of his faculties. You never know what will happen the next moment. Therefore, enjoy what you have. It is not that you have to become a fatalist or pessimist, or be afraid of the future. Only, enjoy what you have in the present without any pride. Have humility and recognize the contribution of so many other elements to what you think is yours.

Worldly objects cannot offer security or happiness

Māyāmayamidamakhilam hitvā. Pride deprives me of a realistic or objective perception of life. I am not able to appreciate the world for what it is. Śrī Śaṅkarācārya says, *māyāmayam idam*, may you realize that all of this creation is *māyāmayam*, a product of *māyā*. The word *māyā* actually means magic. It is like a magician who, with his power of magic, creates a world which is really not there. For instance, he takes a piece of newspaper and turns it into a \$100 bill. He produces an apple out of thin air. Do not think that you can appease your hunger with that apple, or buy something with that \$100 bill. They are there, but not really there. The idea is that though they seem real enough, they do not have real content in them. So also, none of the things that appear to offer you security and happiness can ever do so.

The *dhana*, *jana*, and *yauvana* which you think are real and will always remain with you do not possess that which you seek. The objects of this world manifest happiness like a brass object that shines like a piece of gold, or a piece of mirrored glass that may shine like a diamond. Just as this glitter does not mean that the objects are what they appear to be, so also, the glitter of security and happiness etc. in the objects of the world is not real.

Renunciation is a certain attitude towards the worldly objects

Idam māyāmayam akhilaraṁ hitvā. Realize that happiness is not to be found in any of this and renounce it. In Vedanta, renunciation is not an action; it is a state of mind, a certain attitude towards the things of the world. In renouncing, I do not do something or discard something outwardly. When I give up something and yet feel its loss, it only means that I have not really given it up inwardly. Therefore, while we recognize that the world and all its achievements are there and have a certain value, what we call renunciation is nothing but seeing it for what it is and knowing the true worth of things.

Worldly objects can solve only certain problems

As we saw earlier, there are two kinds of problems in life. One is centred upon the self and relates to the subject. The other is centered upon the non-self and relates to the objects around us. For instance, the problems of hunger, poverty, or illiteracy are centered upon the object or the non-self. You need the object, wealth, in order to solve these problems. However, the problems of sadness or sorrow, fear, inadequacy or incompleteness, limitation, or bondage are centered upon the self. We cannot find solutions to these problems in the non-self. Thus, we should understand the nature of the problem and apply solutions that are appropriate to those problems. The recital of the Bhaja Govindam will not remove illiteracy or poverty; it will not appease the hunger in my stomach either. The appropriate solution for hunger is to eat food. If I am suffering from a disease, I have to take medicine. We can see that the solution to the various problems centered upon the non-self lies only in the non-self itself. Therefore, what we call the world, and perceive as its objects, is definitely useful and required for solving those problems.

However, the worldly objects can't solve problems centered on the Self

Unfortunately, we look to the world for a solution to problems that pertain to the self, such as sadness, fear, or insecurity. These cannot be solved by

the objects of the world. Recognizing this fact is renunciation. Renunciation is recognizing things for what they are, accepting that everything has a certain degree of reality or usefulness, and assigning them that degree of reality. As we have already been told, the solution to the problems of the self lies only in the knowledge of the self, *jñāte tattve kaḥ sarīnsārah*.

Self non-acceptance can be solved only by Self-knowledge

Brahmapadam tvam praviśa veditvā. *Veditvā* is having known. Having known the truth about yourself, *tvam brahmapadam praviśa*, may you enter the abode of Brahman. I can enter the abode of Brahman only when I have renounced the world. This renunciation happens when I understand that the fundamental problem of self non-acceptance, the sense of inadequacy or bondage etc. can be solved only by the knowledge of the Self, and cease to look to the world for solving these problems. Two important facts have to be known: *brahma satyam*, and *jagat mithyā*¹. Upon having discovered the *mithyātva* of the *jagat*, your mind will be free from any distractions, and then you will be able to focus your attention upon the knowledge of the Self. Thus, we are told, focus your attention upon the knowledge of your self and abide in that truth or knowledge.

These verses are uttered one after the other, and each touches a different aspect of our life. However, we do not see any particular train of thought being followed here because each verse seems to go off in a different direction. Śrī Śaṅkarācārya was addressing the old *pundit*, but he must have been looking around and seeing other people as well, with their own problems. Perhaps he is addressing different people in each of these verses².

¹ *Mithyā* is an ontological term to indicate a reality which has no independent existence. A clay pot, for instance, has no existence apart from clay, and therefore, with respect to the clay, is *mithyā* in terms of its reality.

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