

Satsanga with Sri Swami Vidadatmananda Saraswati
Arsha Vidya Gurukulam

Bhaja Govindam – Verse 13

In the 13th verse, again, a piece of advice is offered.

काते कान्ता धन गतचिन्ता वातुल किं तव नास्ति नियन्ता ।

त्रिजगति सज्जनसं गतिरैका भवति भवार्णवतरणे नौका ॥

kāte kāntā dhana gatacintā vātula kim tava nāsti niyantā,
trijagati sajjanasam gatiraikā bhavati bhavārṇavatarāṇe naukā.

O distracted one, why worry about wife, wealth etc. Isn't there an ordainer for you? The association with the wise or the good is the only one boat available to cross this ocean of becoming.

The question asked earlier was, *kāte kāntā kaste putraḥ* [8]. *Kāte kāntā*, who is your wife? She is a woman, and is married to you, but do you think your wife is merely this body or is there something more to her than that? *Kaste putraḥ*, who is your *putraḥ* or son? Again, is it merely this body, the individual, or is there something else? Know that there is a different dimension to life, we are told. Have you ever thought that in your silly relationship of pleasure and pain, and likes and dislikes with the individual who you call your wife, there is a person behind that personality? Have you ever thought about who you are dealing with? Similarly, you have various expectations of your son alright, but do you think that the outer form that appears is all there is to him? *Kaḥ*, who are you? *Kastvam*, are you merely this body, this personality experiencing pleasure and pain, or is there something more to you?

Kāte kāntā dhana gatacintā, why do you have this *cintā*? The word *cintā* means *cintanam*, thinking. How it is that you are constantly preoccupied with the thoughts of *kāntā*, *dhana* etc.? *Kāntā* is wife or the beloved. *Dhana* means wealth, possession, name, fame, and power. *Vāta* is the wind. *Vātula* is one whose mind is under the spell of *vāyu* or the wind, meaning one who is deluded or distracted. Here, Śrī Śaṅkarācārya says, *Vātula*, oh distracted one, *kim tava nāsti niyantā*, do you not have anything else to think about other than thoughts of money and wealth?

Think of the Ordainer, above and beyond our perception

You are constantly thinking of money, as to how much you have, how much more you will have etc. You are constantly making plans about how to add one more bedroom or another airconditioner or a garage etc. and are thus constantly planning and thinking. “I just had my breakfast, what am I going to have for lunch?” And then, even before finishing lunch, “What am I going to have for dinner?” “What am I going to be doing this weekend?” Do we have anything else to think about? *Kim tava nāsti niyantā*. Isn’t there an ordainer, *niyanta*, a God or something other than all these things in life? Do you think your life merely consists of only these things?

There are some serious questions raised here. Do you think the world is merely that which is perceived through the eyes and ears, or is there something above and beyond? Is life merely to be exhausted in pursuing and experiencing just what is perceptible? What is it that gives the mind the capacity to perform its functions? What is it that gives the various sense organs the capacity to perform their functions? What is it that gives the world the ability to exist and survive and function the way it does? *Vātula kim tava nāsti niyantā*? Don’t you think that there is a *niyantā* or ordainer, some fundamental Truth or greater dimension to life? You see that the perceptible world exists, that it is constantly in motion, and that it is supported or sustained, but do you realize that there is some principle that sustains this creation, and because of which the creation is? This principle is that which cannot be revealed by speech, but because of which speech is revealed, *yad vācānabhyutham yena vāg abhyudyate* [Kenopaniṣad, 1-5]. Do you realize that speech is not the ultimate reality, but there is something because of which the speech is revealed? It is that which cannot be comprehended by the mind, but because of which the mind comprehends, *yanmanasā na manute, yenāhurmano matam*, [Kenopaniṣad, 1-6]. Do not think that the mind is the only reality, but enquire into what is it because of which the mind is able to think, perceive, realize, understand, and know.

Life has a different dimension beyond what you perceive it to be. If you do not take that dimension into account, you have not taken life into account at all. That is the reason why, in the Kenopaniṣad [2-1], the teacher says to the student, if you think that you know god, meaning that god is confined to that which is perceptible or knowable, you have known only one small fraction of god, *yadi manyase suvedeti dabhram evāpi, nūnam tvam vettha brahmaṇo rūpam*. This is because there is something that is beyond, that sustains this perceptible

creation. Therefore, Śrī Śaṅkarācārya says here, *vātula kim tava nāsti niyantā?* Isn't there a substratum which sustains this entire creation as you understand it? Have you ever taken that into account when you make calculations in your life, that you are going to do this, you are going to achieve that etc.? In all of these calculations, schemes, and planning, have you ever taken into account the fact that there is something that sustains all this? Śrī Śaṅkarācārya is pointing out how you permit yourself to be completely preoccupied with just the concerns, worries, anxieties, and thoughts about this gross perceptible creation, which is called *kāntā* and *dhana*, without looking beyond it.

Alternative interpretation: The Ordainer, not you, sustains the creation

Another way of interpreting this statement would be to see *kāte kāntā dhana gatacintā* to mean, why are you worried about your wife and wealth and everything else. *Vātula, kim tava nāsti niyantā?* Oh distracted one, isn't there a *niyantā*, the ordainer who actually sustains the creation? Do you imagine that it is you who support and sustain this family, your wife and child and everything else? Do you not realize that there is some principle, *niyantā*, who has created this world and is supporting it? Do you not know, that when you think that you are sustaining, or supporting, or accomplishing, in fact you are able to do all this on account of this very *niyantā*?

Each of us is but an instrument

In the Bhagavad Gītā, this lesson was very vividly given to Arjuna. When Arjuna requested Lord Kṛṣṇa to reveal his cosmic form, Śrī Kṛṣṇa showed him his cosmic form. Arjuna soon saw that this cosmic form was nothing but the embodiment of death; Lord Kṛṣṇa manifested himself as the very death, devouring the creation. Arjuna saw that death was in front of him, devouring the whole creation. All the great warriors were entering the mouth of the Lord, and he was chewing them up, masticating them, and enjoying the whole exercise, licking his lips. Arjuna was shaken up, "Lord, what are you doing? Who are you? How are you visible in this form?" "I am death and I am here to devour everything." "If you are devouring everything, what am I doing here?" "You are doing nothing. Whether you are in this battlefield or not, nobody here is going to survive. All these people who appear to be alive and fighting with you are, in fact, already taken care of. Nobody is really alive. I have already consumed them." "Then what is my role?" "Your role is to stand up and do what you have to do, and take all the credit. I have chosen you to win this battle

and get the credit. Thus, history will say that Arjuna won this battle and conquered the unconquerable ones such as Bhīṣma and Droṇācārya. While you are doing this, however, realize that you are just the *nimitta* or instrument in my hands.”

This is the truth of life. Each one of us is only an instrument, but then we have the arrogance or pride to think that we are doing all of this. I should realize that I am merely an instrument, and that things are being done through me; that I am doing this because there is a grace or favor. Therefore, when I think that I have built the house, I have earned this money, and I have accomplished this, or think that this is my family, or this is my responsibility, I am always anxious. There is an anxiety and fear of what will happen to my wife, or to my children etc. Śrī Śaṅkarācārya says, why do you concern yourself with these worries and anxieties? Do you think that you have taken care of them so far? Do you think that you have supported and sustained them? Isn't there a *niyantā* or ordainer? Do you not realize that there is a creator, one who sustains this creation? He is the one who actually supports them.

Don't be unnecessarily proud

There is a story told, of Chatrapathi Shivaji. He was a great man and a great king. It seems that during his reign there was a famine brought on by a drought. So Shivaji initiated many social work projects, such as the digging of wells, digging of ponds etc. to keep the people engaged, and to give them food and support them. When such projects were going on, Shivaji was once observing them, inspecting things with a certain pride. A certain thought apparently arose in his mind, “Oh, look at what I am doing. If I were not there, what would have happened to these people?” It seems that his teacher Samartha Rāmadas was with him at that time. He was really *samartha*, endowed with various powers. He realized what was happening in the mind of Shivaji, and saw that he had pride that he was doing these things. He ordered Shivaji to bring a hammer, and then asked him to split open a big rock. Shivaji hit the rock several times till it split apart. Inside the rock, he found a small cavity in which there was a small insect, and there was one little particle of grain. Rāmadas asked Shivaji, “Who is the one supporting the little insect inside this stone? Are you providing that grain to the insect?” “No, sir.” Rāmadas then explained, “It is God who is taking care of that insect. It is God who has created that creature, and therefore, God also provides for him. When he gives you teeth, he also gives you food. This is the scheme of life.” Shivaji then realized that he had been

unnecessarily proud in thinking that he was responsible for supporting all those people.

Pride breeds all kinds of anxieties

If pride gave me a sense of happiness then it would have been alright. But even as I feel proud that I am the one who has accomplished or achieved something, the pride gets transformed into worry about how to achieve further or what will happen to my achievement. Similarly, there are anxieties regarding what will happen to my wife, or my children, my wealth or my position. Bill Clinton has just won the election, and do you know what they are already thinking about? His re-election is the concern now! They are wondering how to go about engineering the economic policies, so that at the end of four years the economy appears improved and he can get re-elected.

All that we are concerned about is how to maintain what we have, *yoga* and *kṣema*. *Yoga* here is acquiring what I do not have, and *kṣema* is protecting what I have. This consumes my life, and I think that I am responsible for doing all of this. This is the kind of a pride that is pointed out in *kim tava nāsti niyantā*. Don't you realize that there is a *niyantā*, an ordainer, who as creator, sustainer, governor and controller who is doing all of this? You are only an instrument in his hands. This is the second interpretation.

In my opinion, the first interpretation is perhaps better. How is it that you are so completely preoccupied with the thoughts of wife, children, wealth, possessions, power and position? Don't you have anything else to think about? Don't you realize that there is a higher principle, something superior that really fills up this life? Why don't you think about that?

Samsāra is like an ocean

Trijagati sajjanasam gatirāikā bhavati bhavārṇavatarāṇe naukā. *Jagat* means creation or the world. *Trijagat* is the three-fold world. We look upon the universe as consisting of three worlds, the *pṛthivī* or *bhū loka* or this world, the *antarikṣa* or *bhūvar loka*, the intermediate world, and *svaḥ* or *svarga loka*, the heavens. In all these three worlds, *sajjana samgatih eka bhavati bhavārṇavatarāṇe naukā*. *Arnava* is ocean. *Bhava* is *samsāra* or the life of becoming, this life of birth and death, the life of struggles. This *bhava* or *samsāra* is comparable to the *arnava* or ocean because there is no end to it at all. It is just as endless as the search of the 10th man. When will he ever discover the 10th man? Never. As long as he is searching for the 10th man, he can never find the 10th man. Why is it that he

cannot ever find the 10th man? Because he himself is the 10th man. So also, as long as I am searching for the fulfilment of my life elsewhere in the world, so long can I never find it, because what I am searching for is my own nature. That is why this life of becoming, this life of struggles, this life of gaining a sense of fulfilment is *samsāra* and is compared to the ocean.

Bhu means to be. *Bhava* means becoming; a life of becoming. *Bhava* also means birth. There is also change, there is constant modification, constant movement, a becoming from one state to the other, from one life to the other. Lord Śiva is also called *Bhava*, because he is the creator. As the creator he is called *Bhava*, when he is the destroyer he is called *Hara*, and when he is the sustainer he is called *Mrda*. When he is beyond all these three, he is called Śivaḥ. *Bhava* means this life of becoming. We have been struggling in this *arnava*, this ocean. As Pujya Swami Dayanandaji would say, we are neither completely floating nor completely drowning; now and then we come to the surface, breathe fresh air, and are again pulled down, suffocated and struggling. This is the story of our lives, one that has been going on from time beginningless, perpetuated from one embodiment to another, and therefore, called *arnava* or ocean.

The company of the wise will help us cross the ocean

How is one to cross this ocean? With the help of a *naukā*, which means boat. What is that boat? It is *sajjana samgatih*. *Sangati* is company, and *sajjana*, good or wise people. As we saw earlier, this *satsaṅga* or *sajjana samgatih*, the association with the wise or the good is the *eka naukā*, the one boat available to us to cross this ocean of *samsāra* in all the three worlds. Even if you go to heaven, you will not find another boat. The idea of a boat is a very beautiful *upama* or comparison, because while riding a boat we are protected and safe from the assaults of waves and other aquatic creatures. Similarly, when in the company of good people or wise people, we are protected from any assaults of the world which we would otherwise constantly experience such as honor and dishonor, or the sense of hurt and guilt. It is not as if these experiences will not be there, but being with the wise people give us a *viveka* or discrimination because of which we slowly discover a poise in spite of the experiences of life. Today, every experience seems to disturb me. I am upset, I am worried, and I am anxious. The association with the good shows us that all these worries and anxieties, and all the hurts and problems arise not because there is a reason for those problems, but because we do not have a proper perception of life. This right perception, *viveka* or discrimination, protects us from the assaults of the world, and therefore,

Śrī Śaṅkarācārya says that in all the three worlds, *sajjana samgatiḥ* is the only boat that can enable us to cross this ocean of *saṁsāra*¹.

¹ Transcribed and edited by Krishnakumar (KK) S. Davey and Jayshree Ramakrishnan.