

Satsanga with Sri Swami Viditatmananda Saraswati
Arsha Vidya Gurukulam

Bhaja Govindam – Verse 18

In verse 18, we finally have the picture of a real renunciate. Earlier, we had seen renunciates who appeared to be renunciates, but were not. Here is the picture of one who is truly a renunciate.

सुर मंदिर तरु मूल निवासः शय्या भूतल मजिनं वासः ।

सर्व परिग्रह भोग त्यागः कस्य सुखं न करोति विरागः ॥

sura mandira taru mūla nivāsaù çayyā bhūtaḷa majinaḅ vāsaù,
sarva parigraha bhoga tyāgaù kasya sukhaḅ na karoti virāgaù.

Live in a temple or under a tree, wear the deer-skin for the dress, and sleep with mother earth as your bed. Renounce all your possessions and enjoyments. Blessed with such dispassion, could any fail to be happy?

Here is the picture of a wise man, a real ascetic or a real renunciate. He has no possessions. He does not have a house, and is constantly wandering from place to place. Which is his dwelling place? Where does he live? *Sura mandira taru mūla nivāsaù*. *Taru* means tree. *Taru mūla nivāsaù*, he lives under a tree. *Sura mandira* is a temple. He either lives in a temple or under a tree. He lives in public places because he has no place of his own.

We don't require anything to be happy

We can imagine how the ideal of life in India is so opposed to the ideal of life in other places. In the US, for example, the ideal of life is to have an air-conditioned six-bedroom house, with a three-car garage and wall-to-wall carpeting. The goal of life for the person who simply follows his sensuous requirements is maximum possessions and maximum comfort. Therefore, when you present this kind of a picture of an ascetic, people will ridicule you. "You don't know how to live life. That is why you are living such a self-mortifying and unnatural way of life." But in India, the picture of an ideal man is, *sura mandira taru mūla nivāsaù*, one who dwells under a tree or in a temple. He does not require his own dwelling place. Indeed, he is one who does not require any particular dwelling place.

The problem with us is that we not only require a dwelling place, but we require it to be 'my' dwelling place. Not only is a house required, but it has to be

'my' house. All kinds of comforts are required, the right softness of the mattress is required, or the right temperature is needed. I cannot fall asleep unless everything is perfect. This is because there are all kinds of anxieties and worries in my mind. This person can sleep anywhere, and does not require any particular creature comforts. Don't pity him thinking that the poor fellow does not have anything. That is what they think about *sannyāsés*.

We do not require any external security

When you take *sannyāsa*, people pity you, sympathize with you. Even your own parents sympathize with you. "What will happen to my child? He is going to suffer." Some people privately ask me, "Swamiji, what happened to you? Why did you have to do this?" Why did I have to adopt such a strange way of life? We cannot imagine that the person can be happy in a mode of life other than what we are living in. Even one's parents cannot imagine it. "Oh, you won't get married? What will happen to you? Who will look after you when you grow old?" Who knows who will take care of whom? We are so insecure that we always want to build all kinds of fences, all kinds of walls of security around ourselves. Very often, therefore, the institution of marriage, and having wealth and a house, is for the sake of security. This renunciate is a person who does not require any external security and, therefore, he can afford not to have a place that he can claim as his.

Renunciates grow out of the need for possessions

Sayyā bhūtaḥ, what is his bed? *Bhū* is earth and *bhūtaḥ* is the surface of the earth. The earth is his bed. *Ajinaḥ vāsaḥ*, what kind of clothes does he have? *Ajinam* is the bark of a tree. This bark becomes his clothes. How can he live like that? *Sarva pari-graha bhoga tyāgaḥ*. *Parigraha* is possessions. *Sarva pari-graha tyāgaḥ* is one who has given up all possessions. I may give up possessions, but still I may not give up *bhoga*. I may not cook by myself, but I may make sure that they cook what I like when I go for *bhikṣā*. Does this renunciate have this kind of *bhoga*? No, he is a *bhoga tyāgaḥ*, one who has renounced all *bhoga*.

In Vedānta, renunciation means growing out of the need for *bhoga*; it is not a giving up of *bhoga*. He has given up all his possessions. What do the possessions give me? Possessions give me a pride of possession, they also give me a certain sense of security. Suppose I feel secure with myself, then there is no need for possession. He has grown out of the need, or is free from the need for possessions. That is the reason why he does not possess anything.

A wise person is happy by himself

I need *bhoga*, a variety of enjoyments, good food, a comfortable dwelling etc. Why? I depend upon these things for my entertainment or the cheerfulness of my mind. Otherwise, I get bored. Here, this man does not require any external *bhoga*. Lord Kāñëa describes a wise man as being *ätmanyevätmanä tuñöaù* [Bhagavadgëtä, 2-55], one who is *tuñöaù* or happy with himself, and by himself. He has a different source of happiness altogether. Ordinary people seek sense objects and achievements, but here is a wise man who has tapped an unlimited fountain of happiness within his own heart. That is the reason why he does not have to depend on anyone else or anything else to be happy. It is a case of total self-acceptance or total self-liking. He has discovered the true nature of the Self, a self which is most acceptable or most lovable. Therefore, he has no need for *bhoga* or enjoyment, or for material pleasures.

Many *sädhus* in Rishikesh deliberately renounce any kind of taste. They make sure that the food that they eat is without any taste, so that they will not get attached to any taste. When the *sädhü* goes for *bhikñä*, all of it is collected in one bowl: 'dal', rice and 'päyasam' or 'kheer'. He then collects this *bhikñä* in a bundle of cloth, goes to the Ganges and dips it in the water so that the food is washed of all the taste, and then eats it. This is a discipline. You don't have to do it, but some do it. It is not easy to do it. It is bland food that you eat, so that you do not get addicted to any taste. Otherwise, there is an expectation of good food when you go for *bhikñä*; there is always that hope in your mind, which is also undesirable. Sometimes, you don't get any *bhikñä* and then you get disappointed.

Here, we are talking about a person who does not require a particular taste. He is happy with whatever comes to him. It does not mean that he is incapable of enjoying food. He does relish it if it comes his way, but even if it does not, he is fine, *yadäcchäläbhasantuñöaù* [Bhagavadgëtä 4-22]. *Yadäcchä* means Éçvara's *iccha*, desire. He is truly content with whatever fate or *prärabdhä* brings his way. As Çré Çai karäcärya says, *sanjäte alam pratyayaù* (source?) such a person has a constant sense of contentment or constant feeling of adequacy or sufficiency and is always happy. He is happy because that is his very nature.

To discover happiness we have to purify our mind

To discover happiness in ourselves, all we have to do is to purify the mind. It is the impurities of the mind that deny me the happiness which is the

nature of my own self. If there are a lot of impurities in the water of the lake, you are not able to see the lake-bed, but if you remove the dirt, the water becomes clear and the bed becomes visible to you. So also, the happiness of the self is comparable to the bed, upon which lies the mind, which is comparable to the lake. There are all kinds of impurities and disturbances in this mind as a result of which we are not able to experience the happiness right now. That is the reason why, instead of running after bits and pieces of happiness in the outer world, it is better that we seek to remove the obstacles which deny us this happiness. These obstacles, which we call impurities, are our likes and dislikes, and reactions. These are the things which deny me the treasure in my own heart, and these reactions are compared to demons. They are the demons who rob me of the wealth which is my own self. Therefore we talk of values, e.g., becoming free from anger, free from greed, and free from reactions. The renunciate we see here is a person whose heart is pure, simple, transparent, and enlightened. Just as the water which is pure reflects what ever shining object there is, so also, the happiness of the self is always reflected in his heart. No deliberate effort is made to be happy because it is something spontaneous. So he is a spontaneously happy person.

Dispassion is developed by practicing *karma yoga*

Sarva pari-graha bhoga tyāgaù. *Tyāga* means renunciation, but understand that the renunciate is one who has grown out of the need for any *pari-graha* or any *bhoga*, need for any possessions or any enjoyment. This is an ideal person. Here, the *ācārya* asks the question, *kasya sukhaè na karoti virāgaù.* For whom does *virāga* not bring any happiness? What is *virāga*? It means a state of freedom from *rāga*. *Rāga*, here, also includes *dveñā*; therefore, in this context, it means attachment and aversion. *Vigataù rāgaù yasmāt saù virāgaù*, that from which all the attachments and aversions have gone away is *virāga*. *Virāgasya bhāvaù* or the state of *virāgaù* is called *vairāgyam*. So *vairāgyam* is a state of mind from which all the *rāga-dveñās*, or attachments and aversions have gone away. That is the reason why it should be the first attainment or *siddhi* that you should achieve. The Bhagavad Gētā teaches us how to do that through the practice of *karma yoga*.

यतः प्रवृत्तिर्भूतानां येन सर्वमिदं ततम् ।

स्वकर्मणा तमभ्यर्च्य सिद्धिं विन्दति मानवः ॥

yataù pravāttirbhūtānāè yena sarvamidaè tatam,
svakarmaèā tamabhyarcya siddhiè vindati mānavaù.

Through one's duty, worshipping him from whom is the creation of the beings, by whom all this is pervaded, a human being gains success [Bhagavadgētā, 18-46].

Yataù pravāttirbhütānām, it is the Lord from whom this whole creation emerges, and by whom the whole creation is sustained, *yena sarvamidaà tatam*, and by whom the whole creation is pervaded and enlivened. The Lord is all-pervasive and of the nature of *caitanya* or consciousness; he is both the life of the creation and the very substance of the creation. Lord Kāñëa teaches that by worshipping that Lord by my *karma* or actions, one attains *siddhi* or accomplishment, *svakarmaëä tamabhyarcya siddhià vindati mānavaù*. Therefore, the worshipping of God is the only means of purifying the heart. The worshipping of God means developing the idea of devotion and worship in my mind. It is that which purifies my heart. The ultimate purification subsequently comes through knowledge, by which the remaining impurity of ignorance is also removed.

Dispassion always brings happiness

The question here is *kasya sukhaà na karoti virāgaù?* For whom does *virāgaù*, dispassion, not bring happiness? Dispassion always brings happiness to everyone. The idea is that happiness is wherever dispassion is; there is unhappiness wherever passion is. Even in my day-to-day experiences, wherever I have a moment of happiness, I understand that I am enjoying a frame of mind where I am devoid of all the passions. We think that the happiness comes because we get good food, or from a movie or some things like that. But really, happiness comes because at that moment my mind has become free from any kind of passion, from *rāga* or *dveña*. What the objects of the world are able to do is momentarily release my mind from *rāga-dveñas*, and what I enjoy is that state of mind. I might think that I am enjoying that food, but what I am really enjoying is my own mind, which has momentarily become devoid of *rāga* or *dveña*. This freedom from *rāga-dveña*, attachment and aversion, is called *vairāgya*.

Dispassion is not aversion

Very often people equate *vairāgya* with aversion, but aversion is not *vairāgya*. Aversion is only another form of attachment, a distorted attachment. *Vairāgya* is an aversion, which is opposed only to attachment. It doesn't mean one does not like anything. Having *vairāgya* means that one is neither attached nor averse to anything.

Dispassion is not an action, but a state of mind

Vairāgya, like renunciation, is not an action. It is just a disposition of the mind. It arises on account of a healthy perception of the objects of the world. We all love *vairāgya* and we are all renunciates by nature. Our life can be looked upon as a life of constant renouncing. One way of looking at our life is to say that we are constantly acquiring; I acquire money, a house, a car etc. But another way of looking at life is to observe that we are constantly giving up something else. We can say that you have given up poverty, when you acquire money. Don't say that you have acquired furniture, but that you have given up discomfort. When I acquire a car, I am giving up discomfort or my restricted mobility or my dependence on transportation. Really speaking, every moment that we acquire something, we are giving up something else. Are we acquirers, or are we renouncers? I would say that every one of us is a renouncer. So renunciation is something that we are doing every moment. But we have to learn what proper renunciation is. What we have to renounce is these *rāga-dveṇās*, attachments and aversions, arising from *aviveka*, non-discrimination.

Discrimination leads to dispassion

From *viveka* arises *vairāgya*. We keep on discarding things from morning to evening. First thing in the morning, I sweep the house. All the dirt is gathered, and I discard that. While cooking, we peel off things from the vegetables and discard them. We keep discarding things. We discard things which we have discovered to be useless. As long as I think something is useful, I cannot give it up. The moment I discover it is not useful, I give it up that moment. Here is the person who has discovered that nothing is necessary. To discover that you do not require anything, is total *vairāgya*.

Kasya sukhaṅ na karoti virāgaṁ, to the extent that we discover a freedom from *rāga-dveṇās*, to that extent we discover a happiness in ourselves. Really, to be happy, you don't need anything. For being wealthy, you require, wealth, for being famous, you require fame, and for being powerful, you require power. For being happy, you don't require anything. What do we require? We require just a mind which is free from *rāga-dveṇā*, a mind that is pure and transparent. We go about doing all things in our life without paying attention to the mind, and inadvertently keep on acquiring more and more impurities, more and more *rāga-dveṇās*. On the other hand, a lifestyle which is designed to remove these *rāga-dveṇās* becomes *karma yoga*. Whatever we do in our life, and whatever be our station in life, if we perform our actions in a manner that every action becomes a

means of getting rid of these impurities, these *rāga-dveṣās*, then every action becomes *yoga*. Every action becomes a means for leading us to happiness. Thus, *kasya sukhaḥ na karoti virāgaḥ*, for whom does *virāgaḥ* or dispassion not bring happiness?¹

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