

Satsanga with Sri Swami Vidadatmananda Saraswati
Arsha Vidya Gurukulam

Bhaja Govindam – Verse 24

The discussion continues in this verse. When the teacher keeps on reiterating a certain point, every Vedantic lecture may appear to be the same. Similarly, all Upanishads say the same thing. However, we want to be told of something else, we want to know something different. Sometimes we feel a little impatient because nothing seems to be happening and we feel that we are not progressing. The teacher addresses such impatience in the student.

त्वयि मयि चान्यत्रैको विष्णुः व्यर्थं कुप्यसि मय्यसहिष्णुः ।

भव समचित्तः सर्वत्र त्वं वाञ्छस्यचिराद्यदि विष्णुत्वम् ॥

tvayi mayi cānyatraiko viṣṇuḥ vyartham kupyasi mayyasahiṣṇuḥ,
bhava samacittah sarvatra tvam vāñchasyacirādyadi viṣṇutvam.

In you, in me, and in all other places too there is but one all-pervading reality, Viṣṇuḥ. Being impatient, you are unnecessarily getting angry with me. If you want to attain soon the status of Viṣṇu, be equal-minded in all circumstances.

Viṣṇu means all-pervasive

This is the beautiful truth that the scriptures reveal. Viṣṇuḥ means the Lord. Viṣṇu is, of course, the particular name of a deity, the preserver, but the definition of the word Viṣṇuḥ is *vye vyesti iti viṣṇuḥ*, one who pervades is Viṣṇuḥ. Therefore, the derivative meaning of the word Viṣṇuḥ is the one who is all-pervasive. That is the meaning of the names of all the *devatās*.

Nārāyaṇa means the ultimate goal of all living beings

The name Nārāyaṇa, for instance, evokes a particular form of the deity as the four-armed Lord, wielding the *śankha*, *chakra*, *gada*, and *padma*. That is called the *rūḍī* or popular meaning of the word Nārāyaṇa. However, if we analyze the derivative meaning of the word, we see that Nārāyaṇa is a combination of two words, *nāra* and *ayana*, as in *nārānām ayanam*. *Ayanam* is abode, the objective or the goal. *Nāra* is the group of *naras*, all the *jīvas* or beings. Thus, Nārāyaṇa is one who is the ultimate goal or ultimate aim of all the beings, the one whom everyone is seeking, that freedom, that limitlessness, that *saccidānanda*. Another

way of looking at the meaning is that all these *jīvas* or beings are the abode of Nārāyaṇa. He is one who abides in all the beings as their very self.

The same Lord is worshipped in many forms

Traditionally, every deity has a particular form with some attributes, but in the ultimate sense, every deity represents that definitive principle, which is *saccidānanda*. Every deity represents only Brahman, the ultimate, and that limitless alone is worshipped in different forms depending upon our own disposition and emotional makeup. Accordingly, I worship that Lord in the form of a father, a mother, a son, a master, etc. and that is how we have so many different deities. Just as the same man may be looked upon as being a father, a brother, a son, or a friend by different people, so also, the same lord is looked upon differently by different people. That is why we worship the Lord in so many forms.

That same Lord is in me and in you

Tvayi mayi ca anyatra ekaḥ viṣṇuḥ. Ultimately, there is *ekaḥ* Viṣṇuḥ, this one Viṣṇu, in you, in me, and in everything else. There is this one all-pervasive lord, this one Nārāyaṇa alone. This is a very comforting vision. The very idea gives me such relief, that I am Viṣṇuḥ, I am Nārāyaṇa, I am limitless. Whether or not I am able to see myself as free or limitless today is a matter of my knowledge or experience, but the scriptures reveal this vision about myself. I am told, *tat tvam asi*, that thou art, that limitless, that divine or that ultimate truth.

My constant struggle to be free from any limitation shows my true limitless nature

One may ask, when I experience a sense of limitation, inadequacy or incompleteness constantly, how does it make sense to say that I am a complete being even now? In spite of this line of argument, even an intellectual understanding proves this logic to make sense. I can see that every moment, and through every pursuit, I am constantly seeking to be complete. I am constantly striving to be free from limitation. Whatever I do or do not do is motivated by this innate urge to become free. Everything that I do in my life reflects an innate love for freedom, for completeness, for adequacy. Every action of mine is a manifestation of my love for the limitless and the fullness that is Nārāyaṇa. The rule is that there is always love for that which is natural and aversion for that which is unnatural. For instance, the river loves the ocean because the ocean is

its natural destination, and fire loves heat because that is its nature. So also, that I love freedom, that I love wholeness, and completeness, shows that this freedom, wholeness, and completeness must be my nature. Likewise, that I cannot accept division, limitation, or inadequacy shows that they must not be my nature.

The logic is thus very simple. There is a constant urge and struggle in me to be free from every sense of limitation, and this shows that I am not limited. Otherwise, I would have accepted it. Therefore, I know that I am not the limited being that I take myself to be; I am not a sinner, I am not impure, I am not insignificant, I am not a failure, and I am not a miserable or sad creature. Even though I take myself to be thus, I am not so. If I understand this, it gives me a tremendous amount of relief, if nothing else, and I do not give reality to the sadness or the smallness that I experience about myself. This is because I have *śraddhā*, trust in the revelations of the Upanishads. I give the Upanishads and the teachers the benefit of the doubt, that they know me better than I know myself. Just as when I go to the doctor I submit myself entirely and accept the judgment of the doctor, so also, I have this implicit faith in the Upanishads. They reveal that I already am that which I seek to be, that I already am that which I am searching for.

Do not give reality to the sense of limitation

The first thing to do, then, is to not give reality to the sense of limitation, and thus, not lend reality to these problems. Understand that all these problems arise only out of your imagining that you are a small or a limited being. That initial superimposition brings in its wake, a host of other problems. A Vedantic student will not grant reality to the problem. It is not a legitimate problem because one does not have to 'become' limitless.

Become a renunciate for 30-45 minutes a day

The teacher continues to declare that I am limitless, and says, *vyartham kupyasi mayyasahiṣṇuḥ*, you are unnecessarily getting upset with me. This is because I don't experience myself to be that which he says I am. I get impatient, and even upset. "Swamiji, say something practical. What can Vedanta do about my job? What can Vedanta do about problems that I have with my children? How can Vedanta help with this problem that I have with my boss? Does Vedanta have something to say about it?"

First of all, address the problem you have with yourself before you look at the problems you have with the world. I have a problem with my own self and that problem reflects or manifests as my other problems. Therefore, *iti paribhāvaya*, think about all this. While we don't say that you should give up your job or become a renunciate, make some time each day, atleast half an hour or so, to become a renunciate. Give up all your roles for this half hour or 45 minutes; have no agenda, no responsibility, nothing to accomplish. You don't have to answer to any body, you don't have to fulfill any demands. This is the time that is meant for you to dwell upon yourself and to address your mind. Do you worry about that report? Write it afterwards. Do you worry about the project in the office? Put it off for that half hour. Worried about your son's exams? Again, deal with it after half an hour. Let everything be postponed until after that half hour. *Iti paribhāvaya*, may you dwell upon these things.

Take time to enquire into your limitations

The things that I take granted about myself, should they really be taken for granted? Lord Kṛṣṇa says in the Bhagavad Gītā,

तं विद्याद् दुःखसंयोगवियोगं योगसंज्ञितम् ।

स निश्चयेन योक्तव्यो योगोऽनिर्विण्णचेतसा ॥

taṁ vidyād duḥkhasamyogaviyogaṁ yogasañjñitam,
sa niścayena yoktaṁ yogo'nirviṅṇacetasā.

May one know that dissociation from association with sorrow is what is called *yoga*. That *yoga* should be pursued with clarity of purpose with a mind that is not discouraged [Bhagavadgītā, 6-23].

What is this *yoga* he speaks of? Lord Kṛṣṇa says that this *yoga* is nothing but *duḥkha-samyoga-viyoga*. *Yoga* means joining, but in a sense, *yoga* is really *viyoga*, disjoining. I am already joined to *duḥkha*, pain and sadness. Disassociating or disjoining from this pain and sadness is *yoga*. There is already *samyoga* or association with *duḥkha* because I have taken myself for granted, I have taken myself to be *duḥkhī*, to be small or limited. I then go around trying to become *sukhī*, trying to make myself free from limitation. Therefore, take the time to enquire whether you are indeed limited, whether you are indeed *duḥkhī*, sad, and whether you are indeed a *samsāri*. This *yoga* is of the nature of *vicāra* or enquiry. It means trying to implement whatever understanding I gain through this *vicāra* in a way that it slowly permeates and percolates into my life. What is so difficult

about doing this? Even to learn in an indirect manner that I am already free is comforting, and there is an enthusiasm in me to see it as being a fact of life. *Sa niścayena yuktavyo yogo'nirvinṇacetasā*, this *yoga* of self-knowledge must be implemented or pursued, *anirvinṇa-cetasā*, by a mind which is free from *nirveda*, despair. Don't despair, don't get disappointed, don't lose patience, and don't lose heart because there is nothing new that you have to accomplish. You already are what you are seeking to accomplish. Therefore, don't worry or don't lose heart.

Acquiring self-knowledge takes time

Patience is extremely important in seeking this knowledge. We become impatient, but that is also acceptable. That urge and enthusiasm is definitely required, except that at the same time, we should understand that this affliction of self non-acceptance, self-rejection, and self-judgment is long-standing. It is said in Ayurveda that you should take medicine for as many months or for as many years as you have been having the disease. Consider how long have you been having this problem, and don't expect to be cured of it overnight. This 'disease' of constant self-condemnation is so old that it is going to take some time to become free from this. It has become a habit, and I did not even know it was there. It has crept in so effortlessly and been there for so long that I have come to think that it is the truth about myself. Therefore, the whole question now is to completely reverse this trend, this way of thinking.

There is this ingrained pattern in my mind to always look down upon myself, to always judge myself from the standpoint of this body, or from the standpoint of this mind, or intellect, and to always judge myself as being an inadequate or incomplete being. To begin to judge myself, not from the standpoint of this personality, or body, or mind, but from the perspective of the self that I truly am, is a task that is going to take its own time. Often, this reversal of thought is compared to the task of completely reversing the flow of a river. Imagine how much effort it would require to make a river go back to its source. Similarly, with as much effort, this river-like flow of thoughts, of self non-acceptance, has to be turned around into becoming thoughts of self-acceptance, self-recognition. Therefore, have patience, have faith, have *śraddhā* in yourself, and have *śraddhā* in the scriptures. Have *śraddhā* in God that he is also with you and that you can always seek his help. As we saw earlier in *iha saṁsāre bahudustāre kṛpayā'pāre pāhi murāre* [21], you must seek his help.

May you see the Oneness in everything

What is to be done for acquiring this vision? The second line of this verse describes that very beautifully, *bhava samacittah sarvatra tvam vāñchasyacirādyadi viṣṇutoam*. *Acirāt* is soon. *Acirāt vāñchasi*, you desire that you should acquire the state of *viṣṇutoam* soon. You want to become Viṣṇuḥ, you want to become whole or complete, you want to become free or limitless. *Yadi vāñchasi*, if this is what you desire, that desire is legitimate. Then what should you do? *Sarvatra*, everywhere. *Tvam bhava*, may you become *samacittah*, one who has sameness of mind, or equanimity of mind.

Gain a non-judging mind, one that does not judge something as being good and something else as bad, or conclude one thing to be right and some other to be wrong, or see something as being success and something else as failure. Everything may seem different from everything else, the costumes are different, the names and forms are different, and the external appearances are different, but recognize the essence of everything to be the same. For example, gold may appear in the form of many ornaments, and each ornament looks different from every other ornament. Perhaps the shape is different, perhaps the design is different, perhaps the function or wearability is different, and perhaps the value is different. In spite of all these differences, however, all of them are still the same in as much as they are all made of the same material, gold. Similarly, there are many living creatures, human beings, birds, animals, plants, insects, and many sentient things as well as insentient or inert things. There is so much variety and diversity in the creation, but this variety and diversity is not the ultimate truth about this creation. Hidden behind this variety and diversity is the oneness, that Viṣṇuḥ, that all-pervasive principle. That one alone manifests in these different costumes, names, and forms.

Separate the person from the personality

Kastvam, who are you? *Koham*, who am I? *Kāme jananī*, who is my mother? *Ko me tātah*, who is my father? It is the same Viṣṇu who is this 'I', the same Viṣṇu who is 'you', and the same Viṣṇu who is called mother or father, husband or wife.

As we discussed earlier, everyone is a union of two factors, one is the person and the other is the personality. Just as an actor is the performer and the costume, so also, in everyone there is a person and a personality. It is the personality that is called the husband, the personality that is called the wife, the

personality that is called mother, the personality that is called father, the personality that is called you, and the personality that I know as me. However, the personality is not the whole truth of you or me, the father, or the mother, because behind this personality is a person. Who is that person? That person is Viṣṇu, the all-pervasive one, the whole, the complete, the limitless, and the pure. Whether it is called Viṣṇu or Śiva, that is the person. How many such persons are there? There is but one. That person is the silent conscious presence, which illumines or enlivens the personality. This is in the manner of the thread, which supports the harmonious arrangement of all the flowers in a garland. When you see that garland, all you can see is the arrangement of the flowers. We fail to see the thread passing through every flower. However, if the thread were not there, this entity called a garland would not have been there. Therefore, it is the thread that provides the harmony, the oneness to all the flowers. Similarly, there is only one thread that is passing through every name and form.

The name and form has variety, it has multiplicity, and the goodness and the badness are all in this name and form, in the costume. Just as an actor may appear in the costume of a beggar, he may appear in the costume of a villain as well as the costume of God. The same actor will play Rāma in one movie, and Rāvaṇa in another. That Rāma and Rāvaṇa are attributes of the costume, but that is as far as our perception can go; we cannot penetrate the costume. We think that the costume is real, that the outer appearance of name and form is real. Therefore, we are not able to penetrate that costume and appreciate what lies behind it. The same awareness, the same Śiva, appears as every costume.

विद्याविनयसम्पन्ने ब्राह्मणे गवि हस्तिनि ।

शुनि चैव श्वपाके च पण्डिताः समदर्शिनः ॥

vidyāvinayasampanne brāhmaṇe gavi hastini,

śuni caiva śvapāke ca paṇḍitāḥ samadarśinaḥ.

Wise people see the same self in a *brāhmin* endowed with knowledge and humility, in a cow, in an elephant, in a dog and (even) in a dog-eater [Bhagavadgītā, 5-18].

Whether it be a learned *brāhmaṇa*, a cow or an elephant, or a dog or dogeater, in all of these, the wise, *paṇḍitāḥ*, see the same truth, the same principle or the same self, *samadarśinaḥ*. This represents the whole spectrum of beings from the *sāttvic* or pure to the most impure.

The beauty about Lord Śiva is that he remains unaffected or untainted by all the inauspicious things or impure things that he is supporting. You and I would not even touch those things. We would not touch the snake or the ash coming from the cremation ground. Lord Śiva wears a garland of skulls. He is surrounded by ghosts and goblins. All of these are considered impure and inauspicious, but in spite of it all, Lord Śiva remains ever auspicious. So also, let there be all this inauspiciousness in the personality. The snake, the inauspiciousness, is in the personality. The ghost-ness is in the personality. There is viciousness and inauspiciousness in the world and it manifests in the personality as what I find in the spouse, the parents, in the children, and in the world. Underlying all of this is the pure and auspicious Lord Śiva.

Shift the attention from the personality to the person

Bhava samacittaḥ, while perceiving all this duality or variety, don't fail to remember that there is only that One in all of it. Therefore, may you not judge a person merely by the outer appearance or the personality, but seek the real truth or the essence that is in them. That is *samacittaḥ*. As long as my attention is preoccupied with the appearance of an ornament, so long will I think that one ornament is better than another, but then, when I look upon the ornament from the standpoint of the essence, I realize that all the ornaments are the same. Therefore, the teacher says, let us shift our attention. Presently the focus of attention is merely on the costume, on my own personality and the personality of the others. May we shift the focus of our attention from the personality to the person, and find the same Viṣṇu everywhere and in everything. May we see the same Viṣṇu, the same principle, in whatever we call inert as well as in whatever we call sentient, in one whom we call the sinner as well as in one whom we call the saint, and in what we consider to be pure as well as in that which we consider impure. The same One supports it all.

Develop equanimity of mind

Bhava samacittaḥ is the *sādhanaṃ*, the means given to us in order to appreciate the fact that there is only one, the Viṣṇu or Brahman. The Chāndogyopaniṣad [3-14-1] says, '*sarvam khalvidam brahma*', all of this is Brahman. All of this is indeed Viṣṇu, all of this is indeed Śiva, and all of this is indeed the self. We will be able to appreciate that truth when we begin to have *samatvam*. Lord Kṛṣṇa talks about *samatvam* throughout the Bhagavad Gītā. *Samatvam* is having same-mindedness whether you confront *iṣṭa*, the agreeable,

or *aniṣṭa*, the disagreeable, *nityam ca samacittatvam-iṣṭāniṣṭopapattiṣu* [Bhagavadgītā 13-10]. We keep confronting a variety of situations in our life. One moment, the situation is conducive or agreeable or pleasant. Another moment, the situation will be unpleasant or disagreeable. We seem to ride on the wave of joy and sorrow depending upon what we are confronting because we only relate to each situation superficially. Lord Kṛṣṇa says, whether it be pleasant or unpleasant, agreeable or disagreeable, don't lose equanimity of mind. Welcome both the pleasant and the unpleasant with even-mindedness. Welcome everything as being but the manifestation of the Lord. Understand that the one Nārāyaṇa comes before me now as the pleasant, as the agreeable, and as the conducive. The same Nārāyaṇa may choose to come before me as the disagreeable, or the unpleasant. Therefore, do not get distracted by the appearance, but always seek to appreciate the one who informs everything and comes before you in different costumes. It is this *samacittatvam* or sameness of mind that is taught in the Bhagavad Gītā¹.

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