

Satsanga with Sri Swami Viditatmananda Saraswati
Arsha Vidya Gurukulam

Bhaja Govindam – Verse 27

In this beautiful verse, the teacher presents before us the daily spiritual practice that we should follow in order to prepare for the knowledge.

गेयं गीता नाम सहस्रं ध्येयं श्रीपति रूपमजस्रम् ।

नेयं सज्जन सङ्गे चित्तं देयं दीनजनाय च वित्तम् ॥ २७ ॥

geyaṁ gītā nāma sahasraṁ dhyeyaṁ śrīpati rūpamajasram,
neyaṁ sajjana saṅge cittaṁ deyaṁ dīnajanāya ca vittaṁ.

The Bhagavadgītā should be sung, and the Sahasranāma should be chanted; always the form of the Lord Nārāyaṇa is to be meditated upon; the mind is to be led towards the company of the good; wealth is to be distributed to the needy.

This is a nice set of instructions given to us for the purification of our minds, and the correction of our perception of life. By this, at the level of the mind, we have purity and at the level of the intellect, we have correct perception.

Study the Bhagavadgītā

What should we do in our daily life? *Geyaṁ gītā nāma sahasram*. *Geyam* means to be sung. *Geyam gītā*, the Bhagavad Gītā should be sung. Earlier, we have seen *bhagavad gītā kiñcidadhītā* [20]. The study of the Bhagavad Gītā has a great importance in our tradition. It is not a very large text and consists only of about 700 verses. Yet, within those 700 verses, we have all that we need for our inner development or maturity. Thus, the Bhagavad Gītā should not only be sung or recited, but must also be studied.

The reciting of the Bhagavad Gītā or listening to discourses on the text, or reflecting or contemplating on the meaning of the verses gives us a proper understanding and perception of life. The Bhagavad Gītā teaches us a vision of life and also a way of life. It not only tells us what the goal is, but also tells us of the path or the means to it. Therefore, the Bhagavad Gītā gives us *viveka* or discriminative understanding.

Chant the names of the Lord

Nāma sahasram, the 1000 names of the Lord. These names should be chanted or recited. It can be the 1000 names of Lord Nārāyaṇa or Lord Viṣṇu, Lord Śiva, or of our *iṣṭa devatā*. All the *iṣṭa devatās*, whether Lord Rāma or Kṛṣṇa or any other *devatā*, ultimately represent the same Truth; the Brahman, that limitlessness or freedom that I am seeking. Constantly reciting their names is an assertion of the Truth, which I am seeking. For instance, Rāma is nothing but Brahman. *Ramanti yogino yasmin*, that in which all the *yogis* always revel is Lord Rāma. Or that which dwells in all the hearts is called Rāma. Thus, when we repeat this name, Rāma, we are asserting our value, our commitment, and our devotion to the truth, because Rāma means God, or the Truth.

Reciting the Lord's names purifies our mind

The reciting of these names is very important because the devotion that accompanies it has a tremendous effect on the mind. It has a purifying effect on the mind while, at the same time, asserting my commitment to the truth. We must know that our mind silently repeats whatever we read or talk. The silent repetition is constantly going on. When I am talking to you, my mind is silently repeating whatever I am talking and the words that I repeat have a significant influence on the mind. Suppose you constantly repeat 'war, war' for an hour or so, you will find that your mind becomes the battlefield. If you repeat, 'anger, anger', you will become angry. Instead, if you repeat, 'peace, peace' your mind will have peace. So the repetition of a name has a magical effect on the mind. Therefore, in our tradition, this *japa* or repetition of a name is highly emphasised. Repetition of a name invokes the devotion that is there in the heart. There are many saints who believe that all you need to do is to constantly repeat the name of God, and do nothing else.

kālo kalmaṣa cittānām, pāpa dravyo upa jīvinām, vidhi kriya vihinānām, harer nāma yoh kevalam. (attribution?)

It is said that in the *kali-yuga* *kāma*, *krodha*, and *lobha* fill up the mind. When the mind is filled with impurities or *kalmasha*, *pāpa dravyo upa jīvinām*, the *dravya* or money that we earn is not always earned by fair means. Or we can say that there is always some sin involved in it. *Vidhi kriya vihinānām*, there is no *vidhi* (word meaning) in the *kriya*, action, or there is no *āchāra*, sanctity? (wrđ mng) in our life. Therefore, what is the one way to rise above this? *Harer nāmaiva kevalam*, saying the name of Hari or God is the only way. The repetition of the name of God thus

has a cleansing or purifying effect on our mind. So it is said here, *geyam gītā nāma sahasram*.

Meditation upon the form of the Lord invokes the devotion in our heart

Dhyeyam śrīpati rūpam ajasram. *Ajasram*, constantly. What is it that I should meditate upon constantly in my mind? *Śrīpati rūpam dhyeyam*. *Śrī* is Lakṣmī *devī*, the goddess of wealth. *Śrīpati* is Lord Nārāyaṇa, the lord of the goddess of wealth. Meditate constantly upon the form of the Lord. This applies to people who worship the Lord in a given form. It is not mandated that we have to always meditate upon a given form, but for those who are brought up in the culture of a worship with a form, it becomes very easy. We have an emotional attachment to our *iṣṭa devatā*. Therefore, the very thought of the form of the *iṣṭa devatā*, whether it is Lord Rāma or Śrī Kṛṣṇa or Lord Nārāyaṇa, brings about or invokes the devotion in our heart. Therefore, may you meditate upon the form of Lord Nārāyaṇa. What is meant by meditation here is keeping the objective in mind. Lord Nārāyaṇa, Lord Śiva, or Śrī Hari are nothing but representations of the same Brahman in a given form. For example, the features of Lord Dakṣiṇāmūrti symbolize certain principles. While, at the beginning, I may meditate on the physical form of Śrī Dakṣiṇāmūrti, I will slowly begin to dwell upon what Lord Dakṣiṇāmūrti represents. Thus, this kind of meditation upon a form is also very important.

Keeping company with good people inspires us

Neyam sajjana saṅge cittam. The faculty of thinking or inquiring is called *cittam* or *cit*. May your intellect always be in the company of *sajjana*, the wise or the good. As we have seen earlier, the company we keep is very important because we are prone to be influenced by our environment. Therefore, keep the company of good people or thinking people, those who have certain moral values. Be with those who are righteous and noble in their thinking, people of pure heart, people who have *śraddhā* or devotion in God and in the scriptures. May you always keep the company of such people so that *śraddhā* arises in your heart also. You will also be encouraged or inspired to follow those values of life. Cultivate *satsaṅga*, the company of the good, the company of the wise, or the company of like-minded people.

Develop an attitude of charity

Using my faculty of speech, I recite the Bhagavad Gītā and the name of the Lord. In my mind, I meditate upon the form of the Lord. With my intellect I seek *satsaṅga* and enjoy the company of wise people. What should I do with my hands?

Deyam dīnanāya ca vittam. With the hands, you give charity. *Deyam*, to be given. *Vittam*, money or wealth. Money should be given to *dīnājana*, the poor or people in need. With the hands, may you give in charity to those who are in need. This means that, there must be an attitude of charity in our life.

Charity is not expressed merely in giving money. It is to be expressed by our whole being. I should be a charitable person in whatever I do. Even in my speech, may I use words and expressions in a charitable manner so that I do not hurt anybody when I am talking to them. As best as possible, I should always utter pleasing and sweet words. Wherever I am, in whichever situation I find myself, may I make an attempt to become useful and to become a blessing. It is not that we have to do great things in our life to be good people. Even little things go a long way if they are done in the spirit of charity, in the spirit of giving, and in the spirit of offering.

Giving money is just one of the things I can do. Here, money stands for whatever wealth we have, which is not only monetary wealth, but wealth in terms of our mind, our knowledge, and our compassion. We have all that wealth. Let us always be ready and prepared to give that, to share it with others. Thus, there should be a spirit of sharing in our life.

The notion of ownership should slowly cease to exist

As we saw earlier, we should realize that whatever we have is on account of the support we have received and continue to receive from the whole creation. If I am a wealthy man, I cannot take the credit for what I have acquired or earned. I have earned it only because I have been given a certain ability, a certain understanding, a certain knowledge, and certain capabilities to do so. When I was born, I was born with nothing. In course of time, as I grew up, so many teachers and so many others contributed to the knowledge, the skills, and the capabilities, with which I then earned money. Therefore, I may not claim sole ownership of that. Even the physical abilities that I have and the skills that I have are on account of the support and grace that I have constantly been receiving. The whole world is constantly serving me. In truth, therefore, I am

not the private property even of myself. I am public property. Everybody is really public property. When I truly become public property, then alone do I become a wise man. A wise man is truly public property because he does not have any *ahaṅkāra*, meaning he does not have any sense of ownership, even of his own body. To the extent that I hold on to this idea of ownership, to that extent am I making myself limited, and making myself isolated. Thus this whole idea of ownership, which arises from ignorance, should slowly cease to exist. For that to happen, begin with being charitable.

Reaching out is essential for spiritual progress

Be charitable with your wealth of good words, your wealth of good thoughts, and your wealth of kind action. Let kindness and charity manifest through your action at every moment that you have an opportunity to be charitable, and every moment that you have an opportunity to be kind. Whatever you are doing, there is always a possibility for kindness, for charity, for sharing, for reaching out. Don't think that Vedanta never talks about social service and things like that; it does, in this manner. I realize that I have had the privilege of enjoying so many benefits and amenities, and that there are many people who are deprived of those benefits. They are deprived because they did not have the privilege or the opportunity that I have had. I was born in this family and in this environment and that gave me the privileges. The others did not have these privileges, but it does not mean that they should be completely deprived. Thus, a concern for them and a desire on my part to reach out is very important. There can be no spiritual progress without this. *Kāma*, *krodha*, etc. cannot go unless I slowly expand in the heart.

Tune up the entire personality to focus on God

Let your heart have charity and compassion. Let your hands be engaged in acts of charity and service. Let your mind always meditate upon the form of the Lord. Let your thoughts always be in the company of the wise, and good and thinking people. May you always recite the scriptures and the name of God. Thus, your entire being or the entire personality is engaged or focused upon God, which is the goal that you are seeking. This is a process of tuning-up. When I observe a very small particle under a microscope, I tune the microscope to focus on the particle. Or when I want to look at a distant object through a telescope, I tune the telescope in order to focus on that object. Similarly, our entire life is an attempt to focus on God or Brahman, the Self, which is what I

want to attain or know. Thus, all the aspects of my personality are aimed in that direction. This verse tells us beautifully how to do that. Your speech, your mind, your intellect, and your actions, let all of these be focused upon the Lord.

It is said that the first 13 verses of this poem were composed by Śrī Śaṅkarācārya. The next 14 verses are believed to have been composed by his 14 disciples. We have completed this second set of verses. We now come to the last four verses, which are again attributed to Śrī Śaṅkarācārya. They give us a summary of what we have studied so far and some some further instruction as well¹.

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