

**Satsanga with Sri Swami Vidadatmananda Saraswati**  
**Arsha Vidya Gurukulam**

**Bhaja Govindam – Verse 28**

The *ācārya* presents another observation of life here. He asks us to observe how a common man exhausts himself and squanders this precious opportunity of human life without recognizing its value.

सुखतः क्रियते रामाभोगः पश्चाद्धन्त शरीरे रोगः ।

यद्यपि लोके मरणं शरणं तदपि न मुञ्चति पापाचरणम् ॥

*sukhataḥ kriyate rāmābhogaḥ paścāddhanta śarīre rogaḥ,*  
*yadyapi loke maraṇam śaraṇam tadapi na muñcati pāpācaraṇam.*

Very readily one indulges in carnal pleasures; thereafter, alas, come diseases of the body. Even though the ultimate end is death in this world, man does not give up his sinful behavior.

**Human birth is rare**

Śrī Śaṅkarācārya says elsewhere:

दुर्लभं त्रयमेवैतदेवानुग्रहहेतुकम् ।

मनुष्यत्वं मुमुक्षुत्वं महापुरुषसंश्रयः ॥ ३ ॥

*durlabham trayamevaitaddevānugrahaHetukam,*  
*manuṣyatvaṁ mumukṣutvaṁ mahāpuruṣasaṁśrayaḥ.*

The status of a human being, the disposition of one who longs for freedom, and being under the tutelage of a teacher – this three-fold blessing is difficult to gain and has its cause only in the grace of the Lord [Vivekacūḍāmaṇi, 3].

There are three things that are said to be rare, of which *manuṣyatvam*, gaining birth as a human being, is one. In the very first verse of the Vivekacūḍāmaṇi, Śrī Śaṅkarācārya says that there are millions and millions of species in this whole universe, and the human being is but a minuscule part of all the creatures in this whole universe. However, to be born as a human being is a great blessing, *jantunām nara-janma durlabham*. It is a rare privilege, and we should utilize this precious opportunity. In this birth, the human form enjoys certain distinctions, certain privileges, which are not available to other life forms. The animals grow

in a horizontal direction. In the case of an animal, the head, the stomach, and all the organs are in one line. Therefore, the head is intensely engaged in thinking about the stomach and the sense gratification. However, that is not the case with the human being. The human head is high above the rest of the body. He also has senses no doubt, but then, his head is not to be merely utilized in thinking about sense gratification. His head is to be used to think about something greater than that.

### **The intellect provided to the human being is a unique blessing**

आहारनिद्राभयमैथुनं च सामान्यम् एतत् पशुभिर्नराणाम् ।

बुद्धिर्हि तेषां अधिको विशेषः बुद्ध्या विहीनाः पशुभिः समानाः ॥

*āhāranidrābhayamaithunam ca sāmānyam etat paśubhirnarāṇam, buddhirhi teṣām adhiko viśeṣaḥ buddhya vihīnāḥ paśubhiḥ samānāḥ*

There are several features common to the human being and other beings: eating, sleep, sense gratification. For human beings, the intellect is an extraordinary feature. If the intellect is not there in the human being, then he is as good as an animal only [source?].

*Āhāra*, *nidrā*, *bhaya*, and *maithunam* are the impulses common to all animals and humans. *Āhāra* is food. Where there is hunger, there is a common need to appease that hunger. *Nidrā*, the need for sleep and rest, is common, *bhaya*, fear or the need to protect oneself, is common, and *maithunam* or the impulse for sense gratification is also common. However, human beings have one distinction. They have an intellect. They can think, and they have an urge to evolve. There is an urge to change, an urge to improve, an urge to progress. Such an urge does not appear to be there in any other life form. That is the reason why, for centuries, the cows have been what they are. There is no change in their lifestyle or their diet. The animals have not even thought that they could cook grass or spice it up a little bit! We see the sparrows building the same kind of nests for centuries together. They know whatever architecture they need to know. That is all. There is no improvement at all. Whereas, we can see the degree of progress human beings have made. That shows that the human being is a very privileged species. Therefore, this human form is not acquired to merely be wasted away in eating, drinking, and making merry. An animal form is more suitable for that. If eating well is the goal of life, I'd better become a buffalo, which has a big stomach, and can eat a lot of food. In many other faculties, the animals are much more efficient than I am; the fish can swim, the birds can fly, the horse can run.

In terms of power also, animals like elephants and tigers are much more powerful than us. If you compare the human beings with all other life forms, we are nowhere near, and still, the human being is master of the universe. Why is that so? It is because he has an intellect. It shows that his life has a purpose different from that of the animals. Animals spend their entire lives as dictated by their instincts of *āhāra*, *nidrā*, *bhaya*, and *maithunam* because they don't have the freedom to be other than what they are. They have no freedom to change their instincts, whereas, the human being has freewill, which is a great privilege. Therefore, man should contemplate upon the purpose of life. Life should not be wasted away merely in sensuous pleasures, but people do that.

### **But all our energy is exhausted in indulging the senses**

*Sukhataḥ kriyate rāmābhogaḥ.* *Sukhataḥ*, easily. *Rāmā* means woman. *Rāmābhogaḥ* means carnal pleasures. Man succumbs easily to the impulse for lust or pleasure. The tongue has a natural affinity for taste. The ears have a natural affinity for sound. Our sense organs have a natural affinity for sense objects. That is how they have been created. God has created them like that.

पराञ्चि खानि व्यतृणत् स्वयम्भूस्तस्मात्पराङ्पश्यति नान्तरात्मन् ।

*parāñci khāni vyatṛṇat svayambhū-tasmāt-parāṅpaśyati nāntarātman.*

The self-existent Lord has created the sense organs (and the mind) to be extroverted. Therefore, there is a natural tendency for sense objects, not the inner Self [Kāthopaniṣad, 2-1-1].

The sense organs have a natural affinity for the sense objects. Therefore, they always extend outwards, reaching out for pleasure. It is very easy. Just as it is very easy for water to flow from a higher level to a lower level, so also, it is very natural for this mind, this sense organ, to expand from the inside to the outside. The outward flow of the mind can be compared to the outward flow of the river. The seat of the mind is the heart. From there, it runs out through these apertures, the sense organs, into the world. Because this is something natural, and very easy and instinctive, the river of the mind is always flowing out, resulting in all the energy being exhausted or wasted away. Therefore, the common man wastes away all his energy in the play of the senses. He wastes away his life. What happens then?

## **The abuse of the body breeds many diseases**

*Paścād hanta śarīre rogaḥ. Paścād*, thereafter. *Hanta*, alas. *Hanta* is a term used to express pity. What a pity it is, that after having spent his life merely in sense pleasures, he suffers from all kinds of bodily diseases, *śarīre rogaḥ*. As Bhartrhari says, *bhoge rogabhayam* [Vairagya Śatakam, 31], whenever there is an attachment to pleasures, an attachment to sense gratification, there is also *roga bhayam*, the fear of *roga* or disease. Whenever one is engaged in sensuous pleasures, there definitely is going to be disease. Most of the diseases that we are suffering from are there because we abused our body.

God has created this body to be quite capable of doing what it is meant to do, but we utilize our body for purposes different from what it is designed for. We utilize the stomach as a storehouse for food; we keep on dumping food. It is not meant to be used that way. Pujya Swamiji used to say that one man would run 20 miles each day. This is very funny. We are not horses. How can someone run 20 miles every morning? Doesn't he have anything else to do? Thus, we abuse the faculties that God has given us. Just because we have eyes, it does not mean that we watch TV six hours a day! The ears are given to us. Even as they run, people use a walkman to hear music. Keep on listening, nothing else to do! I am not saying that we should not watch TV or listen to music; that is not the point. It is only that indulgence in any field is undesirable. There is a saying in Sanskrit, *ati sarvatra varjayet*, you must always avoid excess in anything. However, our life is full of excesses and indulgence, full of abuse to the body. That is the reason why we soon start suffering from a variety of diseases such as diabetes, cholesterol, blood pressure, etc. We abuse the body. When people get nervous, they eat food. If I don't feel good or I am bored, I go to the refrigerator and pull out something to eat. We don't realize, however, that what we eat, what we drink, what we read, or what we hear has an influence on our mind. The abuse of the body is not merely confined to the body, but breeds many diseases of the mind as well. People seem to have all kinds of problems. A normal person is hard to find. As long as they don't talk, so long, everything is fine. It is only when they start talking that we realize the kinds of craziness out there. All this is because we do not live our life intelligently.

## **Despite the certainty of death, we squander life away in material pursuits**

*Yadyapi loke maraṇam śaraṇam*. People see that *marāṇam* or death is the ultimate end. I cannot survive for ever. I see that life is short and so the time and opportunities I have at my disposal are also short. At the time of death I am

not going to take anything with me. The wealth that I have accumulated is not going to come with me. *Apare khaatar mehal banaayaa, aap ahi jaakar jungule soyaa*, says the poet Kabir. This man built a palace for himself, but ultimately where did he go to sleep? In the forest. When you die, where do you sleep? In the jungle! Why are you wasting your time building such a big palace? It is puzzle to me, why people build such huge houses with so many rooms, bathrooms etc., that cleaning the place itself becomes very difficult. Such houses are such a waste of energy, building and maintaining.

Even though the person knows that he is ultimately going to die, he does not give up his sinful ways, *pāpa ācaraṇam na muñcati*. “Swamiji, I am a very straightforward and righteous person. Sin does not apply to me.” You are righteous, perhaps, as far as honesty is concerned. Still, that is not the only righteous way. What are you doing about yourself? What is the purpose for which you are here? Are you utilizing your energies for that purpose, or are you squandering it away on something else? That is also a *pāpa*. To abuse this body is also a *pāpa* or a sin. A surgeon’s knife is meant to perform a delicate surgery. If you use it for sharpening pencils, that is an abuse. If a sophisticated instrument is used for a rough purpose, it is an abuse. Similarly, this body is a very sophisticated and priceless piece of equipment, but we are squandering it in mere material pursuits or sense gratification. That is a great sin.

असुर्या नाम ते लोका अन्धेन तमसाऽऽवृताः ।

तांस्ते प्रेत्याभिगच्छन्ति ये के चात्महनो जनाः ॥

*asuryā nāma te lokā andhena tamasā’ ’vṛtāḥ,*  
*tāñste pretyābhigacchanti ye ke cātmahano janāḥ.*

Those worlds of devils are covered by blinding darkness. Those people that kill the self, go to them after giving up this body [Īśavāsyopaniṣad, 3].

The Upanishad calls those who hurt themselves or kill themselves in this manner, *ātma-anaḥ*. They are leading an extroverted life. A life in which material things are the only purpose is an extroverted life.

This is an observation that Śrī Śaṅkarācārya makes for our benefit. Look, ultimately you are going to die. Therefore, are you preparing for your death or not? *Samprāpte sannihite kāle nahi nahi rakṣati dukṛñkarāṇe*. When the appointed time comes, *dukṛñkarāṇe*, none of these pursuits are going to help you. They are

not going to protect you. Therefore, spend your life in a worthwhile pursuit that will save you or help you at the time of death<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Transcribed and edited by Krishnakumar (KK) S. Davey and Jayshree Ramakrishnan.