

Satsanga with Sri Swami Viditatmananda Saraswati
Arsha Vidya Gurukulam

Bhaja Govindam – Verse 30

Verses 28 and 29 have told us about the calamitous and foolish pursuit of *artha* and *kāma*. We have to apply the *pratipaksa bhavana* in order to withdraw our mind from this preoccupation with *artha* and *kāma*, so that the attention of the mind can be drawn to what we really have to do. Verse 30 tells us what to do when we achieve this.

प्राणायामं प्रत्याहारं नित्यानित्य विवेकविचारम् ।

जाप्यसमेत समाधिविधानं कुर्ववधानं महदवधानम् ॥ ३० ॥

prāṇāyāmaṁ pratyāhāraṁ nityānitya vivekavicāram,
jāpyasameta samādhividhānaṁ kurvavadhānaṁ mahadavadhānam.

The control of breath, the sense withdrawal, discriminating between the permanent and the impermanent, along with a mind that is absorbed in doing *japa*, perform these with care, with great care.

In the earlier two verses, the *ācārya* told us what not to do, and here we are told what to do, *kuru mahad avadhānam*. *Avadhānam* means great care. *Mahad avadhānam*, with great care or very carefully. With great care, may you do this. What is he asking us to do? *Prāṇāyāmaṁ pratyāhāraṁ nityānitya vivekavicāram jāpyasameta samādhividhānam*.

Have self-control and be alert

Prāṇāyāmam is control of the breath. The control of the breath is the control of all our faculties, which implies exercising control over our sense enjoyments. As Lord Kṛṣṇa says:

युक्ताहारविहारस्य युक्तचेष्टस्य कर्मसु ।

युक्तस्वप्नावबोधस्य योगो भवति दुःखहा ॥ ६-१७ ॥

yuktāhāravihārasya yuktaceṣṭasya karmasu,
yuktasvapnāvabodhasya yogo bhavati duḥkhahā.

For one who is moderate in eating and other activities, who is moderate in effort with reference to one's duties, (and) to one's sleeping and waking

hours, (for such a person) meditation becomes the destroyer of sorrow
[Bhagavadgītā, 6-17]

Let there be a sense of proportion in everything that we do in our life. In *āhara*, food, and in *vihāra*, walking and moving around. In whatever *karma* you perform, always have a sense of proportion. When you talk, talk what is necessary, what is proper, what is right, what is pleasant and what is truthful. In whatever you do, always be alert. May you be alert in all the actions that you perform and may you not waste any effort. Do what is right; neither more, nor less. That is called having a sense of proportion. In food, avoid eating too much, and avoid eating too little. In sleep, avoid sleeping too much and avoid sleeping too little. In speech, avoid speaking too much, and avoid speaking too little. In action, avoid doing too much and avoid doing too little. If it is too little, you get too lazy. If you do too much, you get exhausted. May you design the activities in your life in such a manner that your focus is always maintained upon what you want to do, meaning acquiring a knowledge of your self. Let your whole life be designed around the pursuit of knowledge. What the *ācārya* calls *prāṇāyāma*, really means the control of all the sense organs of perception, and organs of action. With all these faculties, the hands, legs, speech, eyes, and ears, I do what is necessary. I do properly and alertly what I have to do, no more, no less. This is self-control.

Discipline the mind to focus on the Self

Pratyāhāram is the withdrawal of the senses. It is the withdrawal of the mind from its preoccupations. I should slowly withdraw the mind from other things and begin to focus the mind upon the Self. The first step is the practice of discipline and having a sense of proportion in all my activities, through self-control and alertness. The second is the withdrawing of the mind from its external preoccupations and focusing it upon the self.

Discriminate between the real and the unreal

Nityānitya vivekavicāram is the discrimination or *viveka* between *nitya* and *anitya*. Let my intellect be engaged in discrimination. Let me become an enquiring person, a thinking or contemplative person. Let me not take things for granted. There are so many notions and assumptions in our life, which we have never stopped to analyze. Therefore, let me consider what is *nitya* and what is *anitya*, or what is permanent and what is impermanent.

What am I seeking? Whenever I want to perform any task, I should ask this question, "Is this task going to help me in achieving what I am seeking?" When I leave home to go somewhere, the destination always remains in one corner of my mind. Whichever road I choose, whichever exit I take, all of that is determined by my destination. Similarly, let our lives be totally dedicated or devoted to the pursuit that we have chosen for ourselves. Let no action ever be wasted. This also can come in the practice of *prāṇāyama*. Let the mind always dwell upon understanding what is *nitya* and what is *anitya*, what is permanent and what is impermanent, what is desirable and what is not desirable, what is conducive to my goal and what is not. Let the mind always be alert. Ultimately, it is a study of the scriptures, the study of Vedanta, which unfolds the nature of the *nitya vastu*, Truth. Thus may we develop the ability to discriminate between the truth and the untruth, the real and the unreal.

Jāpyasameta samādhividhānam. *Samādhi* means the relaxation of the mind, the absorption of the mind. When the mind is devoid of the various distractions and disturbances, it becomes silent. That silence is the total relaxation of the mind, the absorption or total abidance of the mind. As Lord Kṛṣṇa says, may your mind abide in the self, and not think of anything else, *ātmasaṁsthānī manaḥ kṛtoā na kiñcidapi cintayet* [Bhagavadgītā, 6-25]. When the mind is free from all its distractions, then the mind abides. So *samādhi* here, means the abidance of the mind in the self. How is that to be achieved? *Jāpyasameta*, by doing *japa*. We have talked about *japa* or the repetition of a holy name in the mind. It prepares the mind and cleanses the mind, purifies the mind and makes it silent. Ultimately, that silent mind can have an abidance in the self.

Abide in the Self

Kurovadhānam mahadavadhānam, do this everyday, do this carefully and do this with great care. In all of this we should exercise a great deal of care and patience. When it is said here, do this with great care, it also means exercise patience. We should have patience. Sometimes, the first thing that people want to do is meditate. Everybody wants to start with *dhyānam*. In the practice of *aṣṭāṅga-yoga*, meditation or *dhyānam* is only the seventh stage: *yama* or restraint¹, *niyama* or good conduct², *āsana* or correct posture, *prāṇāyama* or regulation of breath, *pratyāhāra* or withdrawal of the mind, *dhāranā* or fixing the mind, and then

¹ *Yama* or restraint consists of non-injury, non-stealing, celibacy, non-acceptance of gifts, truth.

² *Niyama* comprises purity, contentment, penance, study of scriptures and meditation upon (or renunciation of fruits of action to) *īśvara*.

dhyānam or meditation. Only when you have completed the first 6 stages is your mind is ready for *dhyānam*. *Yama* is having the values of life like non-violence, honesty, self-control, truthfulness, and non-possession. *Niyama* is *santoṣa* or contentment, *tapah* or austerity, *saucam* or inner and outer cleanliness, *svādhyaya* or the study of scriptures, and *īśvara pranidhanam* or the worship of the Lord. *Āsana* is control at the level of the body. *Prāṇāyama* is the control of the breath. *Pratyāhāra* is the withdrawal of the senses. *Dhāraṇa* is the ability to concentrate. Then comes *dhyānam*, meditation. Therefore, the whole life is designed for accomplishing the goal that we are discussing. *Kurvadvadhānam mahadvadhānam*, do it carefully, and with patience. Don't be in a haste. To dedicate myself to the pursuit is fine, but often, there is also haste, "I want to do it right now. It should happen rightaway!" We hurt ourselves, sometimes, in being in such a haste³.

³ Transcribed and edited by Krishnakumar (KK) S. Davey and Jayshree Ramakrishnan.