

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

**Bhaja Govindam – Verse 31**

In verse 31 the teacher gives us his final blessing.

गुरुचरणाम्बुज निर्भर भक्तः संसारादचिराद्भव मुक्तः ।

सेन्द्रियमानस नियमादेवं द्रक्ष्यसि निज हृदयस्थं देवम् ॥ ३१ ॥

*gurucaraṇāmbuja nirbhara bhaktaḥ saṁsārādacirādbhava muktaḥ,*  
*sendriyamānasa niyamādevaṁ drakṣyasi nija hṛdayasthaṁ devam.*

O devotee of the lotus feet of the teacher! May you become liberated soon from the *saṁsāra* through the discipline of the sense organs and the mind. You will come to experience the Lord that dwells in your own heart.

*Bhaktāḥ* means a devotee. *Nirbhara* is completely. *Nirbhara bhaktāḥ* is one who is completely devoted. Devoted to what? *Gurucaraṇāmbuja*. *Ambuja* means lotus. *Carāṇa ambuja* is the lotus feet. *Gurucaraṇāmbuja* is the lotus feet of the teacher. Now the teacher is addressing us, Oh seeker, you who are ardently devoted to the lotus feet of the teacher, Oh *bhaktā*, *saṁsārād acirāt bhava muktaḥ*. *Acirāt* is soon. May you soon become free from *saṁsārā*. Here, in the last verse, having told us so many things, Śrī Śaṅkarācārya wants to tell us of one more thing that we may want to do. Everything else will follow from it.

**Ardent devotion to the teacher is the most important means**

What is that one most important means? It is the ardent devotion to the lotus feet of the teacher. He is suggesting that this is an outstanding means for the pursuit of knowledge, for becoming free from *saṁsāra*. Why is this devotion to the teacher emphasized so much?

**Devotion to the teacher represents devotion to the scriptures**

Devotion to the teacher also includes devotion to what the teacher stands for. I cannot be devoted to a teacher unless I am devoted to what the teacher stands for. A teacher represents the scriptures. He represents the tradition, he represents the knowledge. In being devoted to him, there is devotion to the knowledge, devotion to the scriptures, devotion to the tradition, and devotion to God. Devotion means love with respect and reverence. It is a love in which there is reverence and surrender. There are different kinds of love, but the love

between a teacher and student is altogether different. There is a willing submission or willing surrender to the teacher out of a sense of reverence, and an implicit trust or faith in him. All the scriptures declare this to be a very important means.

यस्य देवे परा भक्तिः यथा देवे तथा गुरौ ।

तस्यैते कथिता ह्यर्थाः प्रकाशन्ते महात्मनः ॥

*yasya deve parā bhaktiḥ yathā deve tathā gurau,  
tasyaite kathitā hyarthāḥ prakāśante mahātmanah.*

In him who has total or supreme devotion for the Lord, and the same devotion for the teacher as in the Lord, in the mind of such a person will the words of the scriptures reveal their meaning [Śvetāśvataropaniṣad, 6-23].

The same idea is presented in this verse and we are told, Oh seeker, you who are devoted to the lotus feet of the teacher, may you soon become free from *saṁsāra*.

*Sendriyamānasa niyamādevaṁ draṅsyasi nija hṛdayasthaṁ devam. Evam, in this manner. Niyamā means control, of the indriya and mānasa, the sense organs and the mind. With the devotion to the teacher, the scriptures and the Lord, and with the sense organs and mind under control, meaning focused upon the self, draṅsyasi nija hṛdayasthaṁ devam. Draṅsyasi, you will see. What will you see? Devam, the Lord. Who is the Lord? That very self. Where is he? Nija hṛdayastham, in your own heart. Thus, by a control of the mind along with the senses, and with a heart in which there is total devotion for the teacher and the Lord, you will see the Lord who is in your own heart. Thus, you will soon become free from this saṁsāra.*

### **Nothing can be achieved without devotion**

This is the last verse and Śrī Śaṅkarācārya gives us his blessing, “May you soon become free from *saṁsāra!*” May you discover that devotion in your heart for the teacher, for the scriptures, for the Lord, and for the knowledge of the Self. Devotion is a very important thing to have. Without devotion, nothing can be achieved. Some people believe that there are different paths, that there is a path of devotion and a path of knowledge. They believe that sages such as Caitanya Mahāprabhu followed the path of devotion, and wonder what path Śrī Śaṅkarācārya is following. Do you think he is not a devotee? Śrī Śaṅkarācārya who is the champion of knowledge is equally a devotee. His devotion is evident

everywhere. The devotion for the teachers, devotion for the scriptures, and devotion for the Lord is evident in everything that Śrī Śaṅkarācārya writes. Therefore, whatever you are pursuing, the first requirement is that the heart must have devotion.

### **Devotion arises as a result of the grace of the Lord**

Devotion comes as a result of the grace of the Lord. We pray that we may have devotion. That is what Tulsidas says when he addresses Lord Rāma and says, *nānya spraha nanya spraha raghupade hrdaye smadhiye*. He! Raghupathy! *Hrdaye smadhiye*, in my heart, *nānya spraha*, there is no other *spraha*, no other desire or craving. In my heart I don't have any desire other than this. You know this well because *bhavantar akhilad ātma*, you are the self of all. You are the witness of everything. You know what there is in my heart, and I am telling you that in my heart, there is no *spraha*, or desire other than this. What is the desire? *Nirbhara bhakti*, total devotion. What I want is *raghu pungava nānya spraha raghupataye hrdaye smadhiye bhaktim prayacha raghupungava nirbaramare*. Oh Lord Rāma, please give me *nirbharam bhakti*, a fulfilling devotion. Please give me total devotion in my heart. *Kāmādhi doṣa rahitam .. mana summe*. Please make my mind free from the *doṣas* of *kāma* and *krodha*. Please remove these evil enemies of devotion, and fill my heart completely with devotion. That is all I desire. I do not want anything else.

*Bhakti* is the element that always goes along with the pursuit of knowledge, or the performing of an action. It is the one common feature in all that we do to achieve our goal of self knowledge. Here, Śrī Śaṅkarācārya says, may you discover in your heart, a devotion for the teacher, and soon may you become free from *saṁsāra*. Thus, we also pray that by his blessing, we discover the same emotion and also become free from *saṁsāra*<sup>1</sup>.

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