

Satsanga with Sri Swami Viditatmananda Saraswati
Arsha Vidya Gurukulam

Bhaja Govindam – Verse 5

The nature of relationships and the attachment that people have to their families and friends is brought to our attention in this verse.

यावद्वित्तोपार्जनं सक्तः स्तावन्नज परिवारो रक्तः ।

पश्चाज्जीवति जर्जरं देहे वार्ता कोऽपि न पृच्छति गेहे ॥

*yāvadvittopārjana saktah stāvannija parivāro raktah,
paścājjīvati jarjara dehe vārtāṁ ko'pi na pṛcchati gehe.*

So long as a man is fit and able to support his family, see what affections all those around him show. But no one at home cares to even have a word with him when his body totters due to old age.

Man seeks security in relationships such as those of family, husband, wife, brothers, sisters or children, in the hope that they will always be with him. Those who sit all around you are called *parivāra*. *Paritah* means surround you. Śrī Śaṅkarācārya again points out a very crude fact of life here. You are so attached to your *parivāra*, your family, your friends and retinue, but only so long as you are capable of earning and making money, *yāvadvitto pārjana saktah*, is this *parivāra* committed to you, *tāvadvitto pārjana saktah*.

Typically people respect what you have, not what you are

Śrī Śaṅkarācārya then goes on to say, *paścājjīvati jarjara dehe*. *Paścāt* is later on. *Jarjara dehe*, when you become old and infirm, and are no more capable of earning any money or commanding any respect, what happens to you? *Vārtāṁ ko'pi na pṛcchati*, nobody will ask after your welfare, *gehe*, even in your own home.

Today, you are receiving a lot of respect from people because you are capable of earning money. Here, money implies all potential; you may be a good musician, or lawyer, or even a *svāmi* for that matter, and you may talk, teach, and give good lectures. Whatever you may be, as long as you have this capability you find that people are committed to you, that people are attached to you.

It is unfortunate that often, people respect me not for what I am, but for what I have. When they grow old, even very powerful people who dominated

everybody in their lives find themselves ignored. Earlier, everybody would ask for advice, but now nobody wants to even stop and listen to them. That is why people who retire have a lot of problems once they lose the power they are accustomed to having. Śrī Śaṅkarācārya says that this will happen to you one day.

These verses bring to our attention, the facts that we prefer to ignore. Like the deer at the end of the chase, we turn our face away from these realities and like to think that everything is fine and wonderful. But then, that is not the case.

Wealth begets respect from friends and family

There is an old saying in Sanskrit, *sarve guṇāḥ kānchanam āśrayante*. The person who has *kānchana*, gold, is the best in the world. Anything he does is wonderful because he has wealth. Everybody praises him. People will remark upon how handsome he is or how he comes from a noble family, and see wonderful qualities in this person. However, when a person does not have any money, others see no value in him. If you are not smart and do not have the ability to earn money, nobody, not even your own family, will have value for you. Even within a family, if there are many sons, the one who who earns the most money gets the best treatment. The fellow who gets the worst treatment is the one who does not make much money. The truth is that all the children are not equal even in the eyes of the parents. The one who earns the most money gets their respect or love. The others are supported, but they do not get respect.

There is an interesting story from Gujarat. It is about a poor man called Ramlal who would be derogatorily addressed by various names as he walked down the street. Once, it so happened that he bought a lottery ticket and, as luck would have it, hit the jackpot. He became a millionaire. After that, whenever he walked in the streets, people would salute him and call him 'Rambhai' in greeting. One day he was walking with a friend, when some one saluted him. To that, Ramlal muttered, "Ok, I will tell him." Another person passed by and greeted him. Again Ramlal muttered, "Ok, I will tell him." His friend then asked, "Why do you mutter, 'I will tell him'?" In reply, Ramlal took his friend home. He went into an inner chamber and opened his vault. There was a lot of money in it. He told his friend, "Nobody salutes me. They are all saluting my money. So every evening I dutifully come here and tell this money who and how many saluted it." As the story shows, it is a person's wealth or a person's power that receives the salute.

When he loses an election, even the President becomes an ordinary man, and nobody cares for him either. This is how it is. We might perhaps deceive ourselves into thinking that we enjoy a lot of respect and support from a lot of people, but in this world, relationships are always like this. You get something because you give something. When you are not capable of giving anything in return, a simple fact of life is that you will slowly also stop getting.

Depend on the Self for security

We don't say that there is anything right or wrong about it. This is the way of the world and the nature of relationships. As the world becomes more materialistic, relationships are corrupted or polluted. Today, the equation has altered even in such a relationship as between husband and a wife. You cannot depend upon the *parivāra* any more for your security. "Swamiji, does this mean that I should have a separate bank account for my own security and not depend upon anybody?" We are not saying that. No bank account can give you any security. The only thing that can give you security is that which is discovered from your own Self.

Nothing in the world can give you security, because everything is so small and insignificant. You can only get a false sense of security from such things as power or wealth. As we are told in a later verse, even these can go away in a moment. You cannot seek security in the people who are around you or from the people who you think are dependable. The only place where you can seek security is within your own Self. Do not wait for a day when you are rejected by people. That day will surely come; be prepared for that. Therefore, seek security in yourself right now. Discover from within your own Self, an inner freedom or inner security so that you do not depend upon the acceptance of the people. That does not mean that you have to abandon friends or relatives or whatever you are now doing. Go ahead and live your life, but bear in mind that as far as security of life is concerned, you cannot depend on any of this¹.

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