

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

**Bhaja Govindam – Verse 8**

Now in the eighth verse, the *ācārya* addresses people who are totally engrossed in this worldly life.

काते कान्ता कस्ते पुत्रः संसारोऽयमतीव विचित्रः ।

कस्य त्वं कः कुत आयातः तत्त्वं चिन्तय तदिह भ्रातः ॥

*kāte kāntā kaste putraḥ saṁsāro'yamatīva vicitraḥ,*  
*kasya tvam kaḥ kuta āyātaḥ tattvaṁ cintaya tadiha bhrātaḥ.*

Who is your wife? Who is your son? Extremely strange is this *saṁsāra*. Who are you? Of whom are you? Where have you come from? Oh brother, may you dwell upon these truths.

In the course of life, we are preoccupied with ideas of our wife and children. This is either because we are totally infatuated with them due to strong attachment, or because of worry about our responsibilities, duties, and concerns regarding them. The teacher agrees that there is such a thing as a family, and all the relationships such as husband, wife, son or daughter are valid. Addressing the person who is totally attached to his wife or children, whose life centers around them to the exclusion of all else, he asks, "What is the purpose of this family life? Is this relationship between a husband and wife merely meant for pleasure?"

**Relationships help discover oneness**

The man and woman come together in a particular association, but this is not restricted to seeking pleasures in life. In this alliance, each becomes a complement to the other. The relationship helps discover the inherent oneness and harmony that obtains between them in spite of their obvious duality at the level of the body, their individual personalities etc. This is meant to achieve another goal in life; the worship of Govinda.

**Relationships are nothing but 'roles'**

Śrī Śaṅkarācārya asks, "*Kāte kāntā kaste putraḥ*". *Kāntā* means wife. *Kāte kāntā*, who is your wife? *Kaste putraḥ*, who is your son? Who are they that you

call wife or son? Being wife or son is only a role. Therefore, do not exhaust yourself in these attachments.

At the wedding ceremony the priest declared both of you as husband and wife, and you *became* husband and wife. This is called *samskāra*, an idea put in the mind. There is no entity called 'husband', or 'wife'. That is a notion that you superimpose upon a person who has an independent existence. The roles are relative and only exist in our mind.

### **Relationships are transformations of one fundamental substance**

The son was in the womb of the mother, before birth. Before that, he was there in your own body as an energy. Before that it was nothing but food, the plants and vegetables in the fields, which, even before that, was nothing but earth. What we call earth transformed into food, and later into energy in my body, and then became a foetus, a child in the mother's womb. Therefore, when we look at the whole process of transformation, what we call wife, son and husband are nothing but transformations of a fundamental substance called the five elements. We should be aware of this truth.

### **We come together in relationships by chance**

Each individual is on a journey. It is only by chance or fate that these people have presently come together in the relationship of husband, wife, son or daughter. There is a verse in Sanskrit which likens this coming together, to the journey of logs of wood along a stream. These pieces of wood come together and travel together for some time, and again separate. Similarly, in this life, these souls come together by a stroke of luck or stroke of fate, live together for a period of time, and again depart or separate to go their own way.

In India, the *mahātmās* always explain that the relationship among the members of the family is similar to that of passengers traveling together on a train journey of one or two days. In the course of that journey they share a particular compartment, talk to each other, share their food and develop friendships and affection. However, when their destinations arrive, one passenger after another departs. At that time, do we cry and weep because someone goes away? We do not, because we know that each has come from his own place and each will get down at his own destination. In the same way, every individual soul has his own journey to perform.

## Remain free from attachment

The soul does not have any gender. Gender exists only at the level of the gross body. Within the gross body there is a subtle body, which is what we call the *jīva*. That subtle body travels from one gross body to another, from one life to another. In a given life, it has its own *prārabdha*, or fate. Therefore, he comes together with other people in the relationship of family and friends. He remains in that relationship for some time, and when the *prārabdha* is exhausted he goes his own way.

The institution of the family is an arrangement that we have accepted for harmonious living. Here, we are told about the kind of attitude we should have in our relationships as members of the family. We should realize that different members of the family are there only for a period of time. Therefore, let there be love, let there be charity, let there be compassion, and let there be service. Let this be the spirit obtaining between the different members of the family.

As far as possible, remain free from attachment. We become so attached and become so dependent that we cannot do without the other members. As a result, when we are left alone by fate, we are unable to function. The relationships take away a lot of our time and energy. They also get polluted with all kinds of demands and attachments. So let there be a relationship of giving and of love, as much as possible, free from demands or attachments.

## Don't get entangled in relationships

*Samsāraḥ ayam atīva vicitraḥ*. What you call *samsāraḥ* is extremely strange, *atīva vicitraḥ*. We imagine this is real, but the reality is something that we have assigned to it. Children often play the game of make-believe and assume roles of parent and child, or teacher and student. We may laugh at them, but this game is a very serious business. Be aware that as grown-ups we are also playing similar games. How long can this game go on? It can endure only as long as the members playing the game decide to follow the rules. All these sets of relationships are *atīva*, very strange. *Samsāraḥ ayam atīva vicitraḥ*, they are merely a figment of our imagination.

Life has a greater purpose, beyond the performing of mundane functions. We get so entangled in the various relationships that we forget the purpose of our life. Each person is a seeker in search of his own individual ends. Therefore, *bhajagovindam bhajagovindam*.

*Kasya tvam kaḥ kuta āyātaḥ. Kaḥ, who are you? Kasya tvam, to whom do you belong?* The husband thinks that he belongs to the wife and vice versa. We cannot think beyond the relationships that seem to define our life. How long does this belonging go on? It exists only as long as you are together in this particular span of life. There are stories about this in the *purāṇas*, like the Mahābhārata. In one such story, a childless king performs a penance to the sages in order to beget a son. His wish is granted and a son is born. Unfortunately for the king, the son dies at the young age of six or seven years. He is left grieving and unable to overcome that pain. Sage Nārada happens to pass by and asks him what happened. “Why is my son taken away? I want him back.” “What will you do with him?” “I just want him back. That is all.” Sage Nārada invokes his powers and brings the son back to life. The king calls out, “Oh son, please come back to me”. The son asks, “Who is the son? Who is the father? Do you know how many lives I have passed through? I have been your son many times and you have been my son many times too!” This story provides a much wider perspective on life. Living within our little shells, we are entangled in our mesh of relationships. The teacher is addressing this deluded or distracted person.

*Kuta āyātaḥ, where have you come from? What is the purpose of your life? Tattvam cintaya tadiha bhrātaḥ. Brātaḥ is brother. Oh brother, he says, may you dwell upon or think of the tattvam or the truth, the reality of life. Ask yourself some fundamental questions. What is the purpose of life? Why am I joined or united with other members of my family? Why am I where I am? What exactly is the role that I have to perform? What is the destination that I have to reach? We don't have the time to contemplate this because we are so preoccupied with our mundane duties of life. Koham, who am I? There is no time or opportunity to think about who I am. Kāte kāntā? Kaste putraḥ? May you think of that. Thus, focus your attention on the more essential aspects of life<sup>1</sup>.*

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