

11. Detachment Is Possible For One And All

యోగి శత్రువా? భోగి శత్రువా?
సంసృత శత్రువా? సంసృతి హీనం
యస్మిన్ (భుక్తి) శత్రుత్వం
వంశతీ వందతీ వంశ శ్రేణి.

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వంశ శ్రేణి యోగి వంశ శ్రేణి.

*Whether one is a Yogi given to simple living
or a Bhogi given to luxury, whether one
has renounced everything and is a Sanyasi
or is still in a family enjoying attachment,*

*peace and truth are the only two things
which can give him ananda or bliss. His
peace is his happiness supreme.*

Boys and girls!

When Sankara was engaged in composing the verses of *Bhaja Govindam*, each disciple was also giving a verse of his own and a principal disciple, by name Nityananda, had given a distinctive message in the verse that he composed. The meaning of this verse is that whether one is given to *Yogic* way of life or one is given to a luxurious way of life, whether he has renounced the world or is still in it, once he has seen and tasted the greatness of *Brahman* or the aspect of the divine, he will remain a divine person and nothing will detract him from the divine path. You may ask the question how is this possible? A dancer or an actor, while performing a dance or enacting a drama, does the particular act very well and is not led away from the normal life by what he or she is doing in that act. So, this *Yogi* or the individual who is living in a family and performing the duties prescribed for that purpose is not attracted into the family. Because we are looking only at the external appearances, we are not able to understand the true spirit in which a *Yogi* functions.

There is another small example for this. According to Indian traditions and as an accepted practice if one husband has two wives and if one of the wives is

pregnant at the time of the death of the husband she will not acquire widowhood till she delivers the child but continues to enjoy the status of a *sumangali*. She alone knows the fact that she is widow. *Purusha*, or the creator of the universe has two wives, *Pravritthi* and *Nivritthi*. As in the example just given, *Nivritthi* only keeps up her appearance of a *sumangali* for the prosperity of the world and has a special relationship to *Purusha*, the husband.

It is about this that a clever disciple by name Saunaka questions *Guru Angirasa* in the *Mundaka Upanishad*. *Angirasa* tells that whatever could be taught is of two kinds. One is the knowledge of the lower type, the *Apara Vidya* and the other is the knowledge of the higher type, the *Para Vidya*. Whether it is the *Rig Veda*, *Atharvana Veda*, *Sama Veda* or *Yajur Veda* or the *Upanishads*, they have all been taught as *Apara Vidya*. Not only that, *Angirasa* had taught various things like grammar, prosody, astrology, etc. as part of *Apara Vidya*. On the other hand, whether it was to listen to, or understand and turn over in one's mind, all that is abstract and all that relates to the divinity or *Brahman* the eternal, it was handled as part of *Para Vidya*. This means that once you turn your mind towards understanding the imperishable *Brahman* then whatever is performed as a function of the body is no longer *Apara Vidya* but also turns into *Para Vidya*. We know that King Janaka, even while performing ordinary worldly duties such as ruling

the kingdom and looking after the needs of the kingdom, found it possible to turn his thought completely towards the divine.

For Janaka's ability to do this, there is an example. The great *Rishi* Suka, was once teaching several things to his disciples in a forest quite close to Mithilapura. King Janaka learnt about this and wanted to become a disciple of Suka and listen to his teachings. Janaka went to the forest, made obeisance to Suka and asked that he be accepted as one amongst the numerous disciples Suka had, and requested permission to attend the classes. From that day, Janaka was conducting himself as one of the disciples. One day when he did not arrive in time, Suka did not start his class and waited till Janaka arrived. He further told the other disciples that he was delaying the class for that reason.

When the sage told the other disciples to wait till Janaka arrived, they murmured amongst themselves and told each other that they had joined this great sage only because it was believed that he attached no special importance to kings and such other powerful people. It now appears that he is influenced by the king's wealth and power.

From that day, their faith in the *Guru* started weakening. They also became envious of King Janaka. This is something which has been known from ancient times. When deserving disciples are given the

opportunity of going close to the teacher, others who are not eligible for such treatment become envious.

It is not possible to say when and on whom such grace will fall. Some people, even if they had done a lot of good in their previous births, are reborn the moment their accumulated good work has worked itself out. This means that one should go on performing good actions and thereby rise higher and higher. On the other hand, if one thinks that he need not do any more good, he will lose the opportunity.

As soon as Suka saw such envy and jealousy among his disciples, he decided to teach them a lesson. At an opportune moment, all the disciples were made to feel that the entire city of Mithilapura was in flames. As soon as the disciples saw that Mithilapura was in flames, each one of them began to think of the effect it would have on their houses, on their parents, on their wealth and so on. Each one began to run to the city, with a view to save and salvage what he could. But, king Janaka did not waver and did not move from his place. Suka told Janaka that the flames appear to have spread to the palace and he asked Janaka to go and save the inmates of the palace. Janaka did not agree to do this but was only smiling, thinking that God's will shall be done and no one can change it.

The envious students who ran to the city found that there were no flames at all and that it was perhaps

only a make believe. They came back and reported this to Suka. They expressed surprise at the steady mind of Janaka. Suka looked at the disciples who were envious and told them that it is better to have one disciplined student rather than many students who have no stability of mind. It is good to have one steady mind to whom you can convey a lesson. This is better than a thousand wavering minds.

There is a similar story with regard to Ramakrishna Paramahansa. In the midst of giving a discourse, he found a disciple, by name Rani Rasmani, sitting and pretending to listen to the discourse. He went straight to her and gave this Rani two slaps. Others who were witnessing this event were surprised and were thinking that Ramakrishna did not have a sound mind. Rasmani also was surprised at this and was trying to think if anything was wrong with her and why the *Guru* was treating her with disrespect. Truly, if one knows one's own faults, he will not commit those faults. In fact, because Rasmani did not know her fault she was not able to realise what was wrong with her. Ramakrishna told her that if she came there to think of her problems of litigation and not to listen to the discourse, she might as well do so in her house.

In the same manner, some people who come and sit here to listen to what is being said here waver and flutter like the leaves of a tree. They move about and look around as if they are crows. They are not able to sit

steadily. They look this side and that side. They are unconcerned and unaffected by all that happens here. They cannot even sit properly. Unless you have a steady mind, you cannot understand matters relating to the *Atma*. They also set a bad example to others. People who have wavering minds cannot be true *yogis*, even though they may pass off as good devotees in external appearances.

It is in this context that Sankara's disciple, Nityananda wrote this particular verse. Even if you have family attachments, you can do many good things and understand the *Atma Thathwa*. There have been many saints like Pothana, Thyagaraja, Kabir, Ramdas, Vemana, Jayadeva, Gouranga and so on who have expounded the divine while remaining in the society and retaining worldly attachments. There are others who remove themselves away from the society and go to a forest or a hill to attain this *Atma Thathwa*. There are yet others in the society who pretend to be great devotees. They always move to places where there are large gatherings of devotees. They pretend to be very detached while remaining in the society. Such actions and such pretensions can never be the accepted way of life.

Valuable jewels are always kept in strong boxes and sellers thereof show them only to those who really wish to buy them or those who have the capacity to buy them. They do not take the jewels to a fish market and show them to everyone irrespective of their capacity to

purchase them. *Japa, dhyana, sadhana* and other methods of self-realisation are like valuable jewels and gems. They can only be shown and given to people who have unwavering faith and a steady mind. They cannot be given, for purposes of exhibition, to people who do not even know how to concentrate on an object.

There are three kinds of *sadhana* to develop an unwavering mind. The first is the *Meena Sadhana* (like the fish). The second is *Mriga Sadhana* (like the animal) and the third is *Kurma Sadhana* (like the tortoise). *Meena Sadhana* can be explained by remembering that fish can survive only in water. The moment it is taken out of water, it perishes. Similarly, *Meena Sadhana* is one which can be done only in solitude. If you sit in public, the *sadhana* will not be successful. Being unable to concentrate when he is mixed up with other people and being able to get concentration in solitude is called *Meena Sadhana*. The animal *sadhana* is that in which one can get concentration on the earth only. You cannot go elsewhere, say into water, and do it. As in this case, there are some people who can get concentration only when they are sitting in company and among others. They cannot get concentration in solitude. If they are alone, they begin to think of their family problems.

On the other hand, the tortoise can live equally well either in water or on earth. So, if we say that one's *sadhana* is like *Kurma Sadhana* or one is able to concentrate like a tortoise, we mean that the person is

able to concentrate irrespective of whether he is alone or is sitting in company among the others. This is called *Kurma Sadhana*. Today, there is no equal-mindedness. You are all developing only what is related to *sangha* or the society. In this age of youth, it is possible for you to develop intense concentration. While your body and mind are strong, you must control your organs. Otherwise you will have a wavering mind and you cannot control it when you grow older. If you have a wavering mind, you will be wasting your life. If things happen contrary to your ideas, your desires and your expectations, there will be excitement coming from within you. You should not be subservient to such excitement. You should control yourself and get an upper hand over such excitement. Then only, will you be entitled to God's grace. Be in society, but remain careful to see that your faith and devotion are not perturbed. If your faith shakes, your life will become shaky. If your mind can be controlled, you can certainly do something useful and your life will become purposeful.

I want to urge upon you to make good use of your stay here, without wasting time. Looking at all this, taking a superficial view of this, and your taking down notes from what the teachers have said are not going to be of much use. Only that portion of it which you take to your heart and preserve with care will be of lasting value. In a washerman's house, there may be hundreds of shirts, pants and bush coats with very attractive

colours and shapes but all these clothes will be there for a short while only. They will be washed, ironed and returned to the owners. The only clothes that will remain in his possession for a longer time will be his own clothes. In the same manner, your head is like the house of a washerman. The teachings which are being given to you now, go into your head like the clothes of others which go into a washerman's house. Only those teachings which you retain and put into practice will remain with you and all others will go out of you.

If you take a spoon and put it in various items of food like the sambar, buttermilk, payasam and so on, the spoon itself cannot get the taste of any of these items. There is no use if our intelligence moves about in the contents of various lectures that we hear, like the spoon in this analogy. It is only when we consume this ourselves, that useful results will follow.

There is a small story in the *Mahabharatha*. With a view to getting Krishna on her side, Sathyabhama, a selfish woman, went to Narada and requested him to tell her some way, a short cut, by which she could achieve her objective. Narada knew that Sathyabhama was very selfish and that selfishness will never work in regard to matters relating to God. So, Narada wanted to teach a lesson to Sathyabhama and said that he knew of a method which would get Krishna on her side completely. This method consisted of a devotional ritual in which she was supposed to give away her husband as a gift to

someone and then buy him back by paying money, equivalent in weight to the weight of the Lord. Narada said that if she went through the ritual, Krishna would belong solely to Sathyabhama at all times and under all circumstances .

Sathyabhama did not understand God's ways. She had no idea of God's strength. She was intensely selfish and was lured into the plan which Narada had put before her. Therefore, she had undertaken the ritual of gifting Krishna to Narada and then getting him back after weighing him in terms of wealth. In one pan of the balance, she made Krishna sit and she put all her wealth in the other pan but it was no match to the weight of Krishna. Narada saw an excellent opportunity in the situation and told Sathyabhama that since she is not able to give the money needed to equal her husband's weight, he was taking away Krishna and that from that day, Krishna would not belong to her but would belong to him.

In that situation, Sathyabhama was trying to find someone who would help her. She thought of Rukmini and went in search of her. She found her performing *Tulasi puja*. Rukmini saw the plight of Sathyabhama and said that she would gladly come to her help. She went with a few *Tulasi* leaves in her hand. When Rukmini went there and saw the situation in which Krishna and Narada were, she was astonished to find that Sathyabhama was trying to outweigh the Lord Himself with money. She knew that this would never

be possible. She addressed Narada and said that money will never outweigh God and only God's name can match Him in weight. Narada did not agree to this and said that since Krishna has a form which can be seen, He must be weighed against something which can also be seen. Narada said that he could not accept something which cannot be seen such as a name as equivalent to Krishna, a form which can be seen.

Since Rukmini had a pure heart, she immediately grasped the situation and she told herself that whether it is fruit, flower, or a leaf or even a spoon of water, if given in full faith, God will surely respond. If there is any truth in this, she expected Krishna to respond to what she was going to do, and in full faith, she placed a few *Tulasi* leaves in the other pan of the balance after uttering the name of Krishna.

The name of Krishna became exactly equal to the person of Krishna and the weight of the leaves became the excess in the balance. It is only with affection, love and a pure heart that one can get round God. But if you want to adopt tricks and short cuts and if you want to be foxy and thus try to get round God, He can be even more foxy and turn you into a dog. Your pretensions and your doing things that are not relevant will never take you to God. For this reason, whether one is a *Yogi* or a *bhogi*, whether one is in the society or in solitude, if he knows and understands the nature of God, he will change into becoming one with the divine. This is the

substance of the verse given by Nityananda in the *Bhaja Govindam* Series.