

9. Conquer Your Senses: There Will Be No Sorrow

కొత్త పొండా? కష్ట పుత్రులు?
 సంసార బాధలు మత వినయము?
 కష్టత్రయం? కుట్ర అయినా?
 కష్టమి పంచయ: ఆదిహా (బ్రాహ్మణ)

వికలభార్య ఇంకెవరి బుద్ధులు?
 ఎంత బ్రతికేయి సంసారము?
 వికలబాధ? కష్టము? కష్టము వల్ల?
 కష్టమి పంచయ: ఆదిహా (బ్రాహ్మణ)

*Who is your wife? Who is your child? What
 a mysterious thing is this family? To whom
 do you belong? From where have you*

come? Dear brother! know that all knowledge is contained in the answers to these questions.

Pavitratma Swarupas, students!

For the last one week, you have been listening to the *Bhaja Govindam* verses given by Sankara and his disciples. These verses contain a description of the essence of all our *Sastras* and all types of *dharmas* appropriate to the world. Apart from that, you have been told that all the paths in this world lead to only one objective and that objective is to reach God and become one with Him.

When the sun shines in the sky with thick clouds in front, people on the earth are not able to see the sun. However, this does not mean that the sun is not there. If there is a cool wind, the clouds move away and the sun becomes evident. In the same manner, the effulgent sun of our *Atma* is generally covered by the clouds of our ignorance. If man can drive away the clouds of ignorance by acquiring knowledge, then the self-effulgent *Atma* will become evident to him. Man in this world is forgetting what is permanent and what is of value. He is running after the worldly pursuits considering them to be real. He does not see the *Atma* because of the cloud of ignorance. He requires the winds of knowledge and wisdom to move away the clouds of self-deception

so as to enable him to see the effulgent *Atma*.

All physical relationships are temporary. In a stream which is flowing, it is quite common to see branches of trees meeting and separating away from each other after moving together for some distance. The joining of these two branches together is like the joining of two people together as husband and wife. They join, move together, live together and separate and struggle in this stream of life. In this context, Sankara wants you to give up the illusion of attachment.

The next question is, who is your son. This son of yours has come as your son as a result of something which you or he may have done during his or your past birth. It is only to redeem some debt between you both that he has come as your son in this life. This situation has been described in the *Bhagavatha* in a lighter vein by saying that the son comes to you for the sake of property and not because of any connection with the *Atma*.

If you ask the questions of anyone, who he is and where he has come from, he will not be able to answer. How can he tell you how many births he already has had and in which of them he was a son to whom? How can he tell you how many births he will have in future and in which of them he will be a husband to whom? He will not be able to tell you how many births he already has had and how he has landed himself in the present birth.

We do not know where we have come from or where we are going. In this illusory world, we go on

increasing our attachments and thereby we are moving away from *Madhava* and are not getting closer to divinity. We are only increasing our bondage and restlessness by this process. In this context, we should not attach any importance to bodily relationships. The body is made up of the five elements and is certain to fall. There is no indication of the body telling you when it was born and when it will die. Do not be misled by this illusory world. Realise the permanent *Atma*.

There is a small story for this. One day the *Yuvaraja* or prince of a kingdom was moving about in a forest. He was tired and felt thirsty and was searching for water. He reached an *ashram*. The inmates of the *ashram* were attracted by the appearance of the prince, took him inside and gave him fruit to eat, water to drink, and asked him to rest. The prince did not agree to take rest but wanted to see the elders who lived in the *ashram*. They then took him straight to the head of the *ashram* who was a saint. The head of the *ashram* asked the young man who he was. He replied that he came from the kingdom of *Jitendriya* and that his name was prince *Jitendriya*. He was asked what his father's name was and the prince said that his father's name was King *Jitendriya*. He was then asked how the people in the kingdom were and the prince replied that all the people are *Jitendriyas* and they always enjoy bliss and happiness. The head of the *ashram* who was a *sanyasi* had a doubt. The word *Jitendriya* means one who has conquered all desires. How is it possible that the king,

the prince and the people were all *Jitendriyas*, asked the swami. He was wondering how one who is a ruler and is controlling people as head of the state, could be a *Jitendriya*. He wanted to verify it personally.

He obtained the details of the way of reaching the kingdom and proceeded thereto after asking the prince to stay in the *ashram*. The swami asked the prince to give him the princely robes and himself wear the yellow robes symbolic of a *sanyasi*. He asked the prince to remain in the *ashram* till he returned from his mission. The prince was not at all affected by the suggestion, because he was a *Jitendriya*, and exchanged his robes with those of the swami. The swami took the clothes to a distance, put some blood stains on them and proceeded to the kingdom of *Jitendriya*. He reached the kingdom and told the gatekeepers to tell the king that a swami was there and that he wants to convey to the king some tragic news regarding the prince.

The swami was allowed to go in, and he met the prime minister and told him that the prince of the kingdom had been killed by a tiger and as proof of the fact that the prince was dead, he showed him the blood-stained royal clothes. He wanted this tragic news to be conveyed to the king. The minister remained unperturbed when he heard the news. He smiled and said that it looks ridiculous to see a *sanyasi* wearing the yellow robes grieve for the death of a prince. However, since the *sanyasi* wanted to convey the news to the king, he was

allowed to do so.

As soon as the *sanyasi* saw the king, he handed over the blood stained clothes to the king and began weeping. The king looked at him and was laughing. The king told the *sanyasi* that in the evening many birds come and perch on a tree and, at dawn, those birds fly away, and each bird goes its own way. One bird cannot tell another where it goes. No two birds are connected with each other. He said that in the same manner, his family consisted of children, wife, grandchildren, etc., who were all birds on a tree and they would all fly away in different directions. That day, one bird as the prince had gone away, and the next day another bird may go away, and it looks ridiculous that a *Sanyasi* should grieve for such a situation. The *Sanyasi* thought that it was possible that the king did not like this particular son and that he might have developed detachment to the son.

So the *sanyasi* thought that he should see the mother, believing that the mother who had given birth to the prince would surely be unhappy at this death and tears would come from her eyes. The attendants took him to the mother of the prince and he told her that the prince had been killed by a tiger and handed over the blood-stained clothes to her. The queen said that there was no reason for such grief and compared the situation to a *choultry* where many people come for rest during the night and each man goes his way the next morning. She asked what the connection is between people who

come into the *choultry* from different places, and compared the world to a *choultry* and said that many people come into this *choultry*. Today the prince has left the *choultry* and tomorrow others will also leave. None of us will stay permanently in a *choultry*. Our connections are like that and there is no reason to grieve. She asked the *sanyasi* why he should grieve for such a situation. In his illusion, the *sanyasi* thought the mother might be a step-mother and therefore she did not have affection and so he wanted to meet the wife of the prince and give her the news.

He thought that being a *sumangali* and wife of the prince, she will surely grieve over the situation. He went to the wife of the prince and told her that the prince had died and that she would have to live as a widow thenceforth. Saying this, he cried loudly. The prince's wife laughed. She told the *sanyasi* that this world can be compared to a forest where there are many trees. The trees dry up and the branches fall into a river. Similarly some more branches come from another forest and these branches meet in the river. She said that husband and wife are like such branches coming from different families or different forests and meeting temporarily in a river. The river is the river of life. Although the branches are different, the river in which they join is the same and in the same manner she said that between the husband and wife who are like two different branches that have fallen into the river of life, the ocean of bliss is common, and there is no need to grieve about this.

Then the *sanyasi* realised that all the people in that kingdom were *Jitendriyas*. So the *sanyasi* returned to the *ashram*. He still had the desire to test the prince if he was really a *Jitendriya*. He told the prince that he saw his kingdom being overrun by enemies and that the enemies had taken the king, the queen and other relations as prisoners and were causing untold harm to the people in the kingdom. He told the prince that in that context, the Prince should return to the kingdom and should not stay in the *ashram*. The prince laughed and asked what the kingdom is and who the kings are. There is no relation between them. He said that in effect God is the big king, *bhakthi* is the kingdom and the devotees are the princes. The relationship between the prince and his father was only a bodily one, said the prince. The only kingdom is the kingdom of *Atma*.

In a similar context, Gandhari was telling about all her grief to Sanjaya in the story of *Mahabharatha*. She said that amongst the Kauravas, Aswathama, Kripacharya and Kripana were the only three people alive. Amongst the Pandavas, five Pandavas, Krishna and another brother of his were alive. She expressed grief that there were seven people alive on the side of Pandavas while on their side, there were only three people alive. There were altogether ten people alive while so many persons had been sacrificed in the war for the sake of these ten people.

Sanjaya gave a very significant reply to this question. The name Sanjaya signifies one who has

completely controlled all his senses. Sanjaya told Gandhari that there is some significance to the fact that there are ten persons left after the war. God wants to proclaim to the world the meaning of all our existence and of the number ten. To the right of the integer one, there is a zero in the number ten. Zero represents the world and the integer one stands for God. Without “one”, the “zero” has no value. That is, without God, the world is meaningless. The world which is false, transient and impermanent will amount to nothing if it is not associated with God.

The earth on which we live is spherical. The sun which gives us light and the moon which gives coolness are spherical. In fact, most things which we see around us in the world have a spherical shape. In that context, our own life has a spherical shape and is nothing more than a zero. By the side of this zero, if we put the divine, life will become meaningful.

The seed contains the tree in it and the tree carries the essence of the seed in it. This is the truth which has been coming to us from time immemorial. The purpose of this life is to realise the truth that the tree and the seed contain each other. All the rest is just illusion or *Maya*. This *Maya* has been described and defined by Sankara as that which does not exist. This does not seem reasonable. Sankara gave a beautiful example in answer to this. The big palaces which you see in your dream do not exist when you wake up and open your eyes. In the

same manner, you see so many things while you are awake and you experience many things through your senses but when you sleep, these things do not exist. It means that one is a day dream and the other is a night dream. Both are dreams and all the dreams are untrue. The purpose of our life is to search for the truth, if any, in what we see. Therefore, our bodily connections should not worry us and create special beliefs in us. We should only utilise them for doing the duty which we have to do. We should have no special attachment to the world.

There is no mother, there is no father, there are no children, there is no wealth, there are no relations—beware and awake. All that you suffer by birth, growth, and death is painful—beware and awake. This is what Sankara had said. So long as you are alive you should keep your body healthy, your mind and vision steady. You should enjoy the bliss of the *Atma* by this means. You should not weaken and neglect the body so as to require help from others and become dependent on them. Keep your body healthy so that you can use it well.

This life is like a boat. One side of the river is the material world. The other side of the river is the spiritual destination. Your life is like a river. With the boat of the body, you should cross the river. We should use that boat and reach the destination before it develops a leak. If it develops a leak and deteriorates in the midstream, there will be trouble and you cannot reach the destination. There is no danger even if the boat remains

in water for any length of time. If water enters the boat, there is every danger.

You should be in the family and there is no danger. Do not let the family enter you. If you do that, there is every danger. If you can spend your life in this manner, you will yourself be the supreme self. With a view to bring you to this path, Sankara has given you this particular verse in *Bhaja Govindam* by way of asking questions such as who are you? Who is your wife? Where have you come from? Who are your relations? and so on. By asking such questions, he attempted to make you think and search for the right answers.