

ANANTA SATSANG • SACRED TEXTS

भगवानु सँ अपनापन

Bhagavān-se Apnāpan

Belonging with God



Swami Ramsukhdas

*Five Discourses on Divine Belonging,
Right Use, Nāma-japa, Service, and Karma-yoga*

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Five Discourses on Divine Belonging, Right Use, Nāma-japa, Service, and Karma-yoga

Swami Ramsukhdas

This is a fresh, complete English reading edition translated paragraph by paragraph. The official Hindi PDF controls all text it contains, but it omits printed page 46. That page has been restored from PDF page 51 of an older physical Gita Press scan preserved by the Internet Archive; the source map records the witness change and its five-page pagination offset. The modern eBook wrapper, the cover, a duplicated printed page 15, three promotional excerpts from other books, and the closing catalogue are not treated as translation paragraphs.

The five discourses develop reciprocal *apnāpan*: Bhagavān is ours and we are Bhagavān's. This belonging does not withdraw the seeker from responsibility; the body, possessions, relationships, and world are treated as Bhagavān's entrusted field and therefore served without possessive claim.

Reader's Orientation

Readers drawn to surrender may begin with *Belonging with Bhagavān*; those concerned with the use of circumstances and possessions may begin with *The Highest Good through Right Use*; readers practising the Divine Name may begin with *Attaining Bhagavān through Nāma-japa and Service*. The author's oral satsang voice uses questions, concrete examples, and deliberate repetition; this edition preserves that movement rather than recasting the talks as a self-help manual.

Terminology Guide

Apnāpan is intimate, reciprocal belonging; Bhagavān is ours and we are Bhagavān's. *Mamatā* is possessiveness or mine-making, distinct from devotional belonging. *Sadupayoga* and *durupayoga* are right use and misuse; *kalyāṇa* is the highest good; *nāma-japa* is repetition of the Divine Name; *sevā* is service; *bhagavat-prāpti* is attainment of Bhagavān; *karma-yoga* is the yoga of selfless action; and *tyāga* is relinquishment of self-interest and claim, not abandonment of duty. Bhagavān, Paramātmā, Hari, and Prabhu are retained as distinct divine names.

Title Page, Imprint, and Contents

No. 408

Śrī Hari.

*You alone are my mother, and You alone my father;
You alone are my kinsman, and You alone my friend.
You alone are knowledge, and You alone are wealth;
You alone are everything to me, O God of gods.*

Swami Ramsukhdas

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Śrī Hari.

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Belonging with Bhagavān

Śrī Hari.

In reality, all of us belong to the Supreme Self, and this world too belongs to the Supreme Self. But when we want to take possession of it and regard it as our own, we become bound by it. We carry the notion that the more objects and people come under our control, the greater we shall become and the more we shall become their owners. But this notion is entirely mistaken.

We become dependent upon and subject to the money, family, and other things that we regard as our own. We imagine that we have become their owners, but instead we become their slaves. This must be understood thoroughly; it is not merely something to hear and repeat. Consider it for yourself. You worry only about the houses you call your own; you do not worry about houses you do not call your own. You are affected by the flourishing or decline of the family you regard as yours, while the flourishing or decline of a family you do not regard as yours does not affect you. In the same way, once you regard money, land, property, and other things as yours, the burden of responsibility, worry, management, and so forth falls upon you. What you do not regard as yours does not bind you. Reflect upon this reasoning.

You are bound only to the few houses, the few people, and the little money-thousands, lakhs, or crores-that you call your own in this world. You are entirely free from the houses, people, and money you do not call your own. Thus you already possess the greater part of freedom from the world; only a little freedom remains! Liberation means becoming free. You are entirely free from the money and other things you do not regard as your own. Where you have no

possessiveness, their gain or loss does not affect you; toward them you remain even. Whether it is gold, clay, or stone, its coming or going does not affect you—“regarding clay, stone, and gold alike” (Bhagavad Gītā 6.8). Likewise, you remain even toward honor and dishonor and toward the sides of friend and enemy; they do not affect you—“equal in honor and dishonor, equal toward the sides of friend and enemy” (Bhagavad Gītā 14.25).

In reality, equanimity itself is the essential principle. The Gītā says:

“Even here they have conquered the created world whose mind is established in equality;

for Brahman is flawless and equal, and therefore they are established in Brahman.”

(Bhagavad Gītā 5.19)

That is, those whose mind is established in equanimity have conquered the whole world in this very life. The point is that in a heart possessing equanimity, the making and unmaking, coming and going of things produces no inequality, partiality, attraction or aversion, joy or grief. If the coming and going of objects and people does not affect us in the least, we have conquered the world. But if it does affect us, the world has defeated us; we have lost, and the world has conquered us. No one likes defeat, while everyone likes victory. Those whose mind rests in equanimity can win today, at this very moment. This is a principle that is wholly true. The Gītā says that the Supreme Self, the compact mass of Existence-Consciousness-Bliss, is flawless and equal; therefore those established in equanimity are established in the Supreme Self. What a remarkable teaching!

Attaining the Reality of the Supreme Self is the special aim of human life. Every brother and sister can attain that Reality in every circumstance, for this human body has been received precisely for its attainment. Yet by calling perishable things our own, we become caught and bound and are deprived of our goal. These things were not ours before and will not remain ours afterward-this is certain. We become trapped by calling them ours in the interval. If, instead of regarding them as ours, we regard them as Bhagavān's and put them to the best and noblest use, we shall not become bound. As our sense of belonging with those objects falls away, our freedom will steadily increase. Our belonging with the Lord has existed from all time and will always remain. We alone have turned away from Bhagavān; Bhagavān has not turned away from us. We belong to Bhagavān, and Bhagavān is ours:

“Let pride never delude me and depart;

I am the servant, and Raghupati is my Lord.”

(Rāmcaritmānas, Araṇya-kāṇḍa 11.21)

Mīrābāī rose to such spiritual heights because she held this conviction: “Gīrīdhara Gopāla alone is mine; there is no other.” Bhagavān alone is mine; no one else is mine.

Gentlemen! Once we become Bhagavān's, it becomes necessary for us to conduct ourselves in the very best way toward Bhagavān's creation. This whole creation belongs to the Lord; all these beings belong to our Master. If you hold that attitude, our conduct toward them will become excellent-conduct marked by renunciation, concern for their welfare, and service. Our worldly conduct will be purified, our highest spiritual purpose will also be fulfilled, and we shall become free from the world. Therefore, belonging to Bhagavān, let us do Bhagavān's work. All these beings belong to

Bhagavān; let us serve them all. Let us establish this prayer within ourselves:

“May all be happy; may all be free from illness.

May all behold what is auspicious; may no one suffer.”

Whether the whole world will become happy through our holding such a prayer, we do not know; but there is no doubt that we ourselves shall become happy.

Please be so gracious as to understand this attentively. On the path of devotion, only one’s inner orientation has to change: “I belong to Bhagavān and Bhagavān is mine; the world is not mine, and I do not belong to the world.” The Gītā says, “those who think of Me with no other thought” (9.22), and “the one who, thinking of no other, remembers Me constantly and always” (8.14). To contemplate Bhagavān exclusively means: “I belong only to Bhagavān, and Bhagavān alone is mine.” To such a person Bhagavān says, “I am easy to attain”—that is, I am readily attained by the one who remembers Me with no other thought.

Gentlemen! If someone who wants to conduct business is told of an excellent opportunity, he will not let it go, because it offers great profit. In the same way, for one who seeks spiritual advancement, the finest and most straightforward teaching is to accept: “I belong to Bhagavān, and Bhagavān is mine.” If this conviction becomes firm, perfection can come today itself. If you do not erase this conviction, perfection will arise of itself in due course. Therefore please be so gracious and kind as to accept firmly: “I belong to Bhagavān, and Bhagavān is mine.” This is true; I am not deceiving you. You belonged to Bhagavān before, you will remain Bhagavān’s

in the end, and even now you belong to Bhagavān. Whether you accept it or not, you are Bhagavān's—there is no doubt about it.

“All are dear to Me; all are born of Me” (Rāmcaritmānas, Uttara-kāṇḍa 86.4); “the individual being is an imperishable portion of God” (Rāmcaritmānas, Uttara-kāṇḍa 117.2); and “My own portion in the world of living beings” (Bhagavad Gītā 15.7). Thus Bhagavān and all the saints declare that the individual being is a portion of the Supreme Self. Although we truly do belong to the Supreme Self, until we accept, “We belong to the Supreme Self,” we cannot receive the benefit of that relationship even while belonging to Him. So long as we remain turned away from the Supreme Self, we shall find neither peace nor gladness nor joy.

*“The moment a living being turns toward Me,
the sins of millions of births are destroyed.”
(Rāmcaritmānas, Sundara-kāṇḍa 44.2)*

As soon as one turns toward Bhagavān, the sins of millions of births are destroyed. Therefore, gentlemen, please accept that we belong to Bhagavān and to no one else. A doubt may arise: if we belong to no one else, how will the world be cared for and sustained? How will mothers raise and nourish their children? The answer is that there is no special glory in caring for someone because one calls that person one's own. Every mother cares for her own child; there is no heroism in that. But if there is a child with whom we have no kinship or caste relation, a poor child whose parents have died, people say of the woman who raises him, “Blessed is she!” If she raises one who is not her own just as she would her own child, there is spiritual greatness in it, she finds peace, and it also leaves a deep impression upon the child.

Long ago, an incident was published in a monthly issue of *Kalyāṇa*. It concerned a village where a child was born in a Muslim household, but the child's mother died. The poor father was deeply distressed—both because his wife had died and because he did not know how he would care for the tiny child. An Ahīr lived nearby and had a child only a few days old. When his wife heard what had happened, she told her husband, “Bring that child here; I shall raise him.” The Ahīr brought the Muslim man's child home. The Ahīr woman raised both children, nursing them with her own milk and caring for them with affection and love. She made no distinction in her mind that one was her child and the other someone else's. When the boy grew old enough to begin studying, she called the Muslim father and said, “Now take your child and educate him; do with him as you wish.” He took the boy and had him educated. After completing his studies, the boy became a compounder at a hospital. By chance, the Ahīr woman later developed weakness and an internal wound in her chest. She was taken to the doctor at the hospital for treatment. Examining her illness, the doctor said she would recover if she received a blood transfusion. But who would give the blood? Tests were performed. The Muslim boy, now a compounder, worked in that same hospital, and by divine providence his blood matched. The woman did not recognize him, but he recognized her as the mother who had raised him. Because he had grown up drinking her milk, their blood had acquired a kinship. The doctor said that his blood could be transfused. When asked if he would give blood, the young man said, “I shall give it, but I will charge two hundred rupees!” The Ahīr paid him two hundred rupees. He gave as much blood as was needed, it was transfused into the woman, her body recovered, and she returned home.

A few days later, the young man went to the Ahīr's home, placed one or two thousand rupees at his mother's feet, and said, "You are my mother. I am your own child. You alone raised me. Please accept this money." When she refused, he insisted that she must accept it. He reminded her of what had happened at the hospital: "I charged two hundred rupees for my blood only because you would not have accepted it for free, and without the blood you could not have been saved. In truth, this blood is yours. I grew up on your milk, so this body and everything I have are yours. My money has been honestly earned. By your grace, I do not even eat garlic or onions. I have developed a dislike for impure and unclean things. Therefore you must accept this money." Saying this, he gave her the money. The Ahīr woman possessed such purity of heart that the influence of her milk was such that, although the boy was Muslim, he did not eat what she regarded as impure food.

Reflect upon this. Every mother raises her own children. All of us were raised by women and mothers. Yet no one narrates their stories or speaks about them. We repeatedly tell the story of this Ahīr woman because it affects us: what extraordinary compassion filled her heart! She made no distinction and did not ask, "How can I raise another person's child?" Therefore we praise her today as a noble mother who raised another's child and then returned him to his father. Even a female dog raises her own young; what is so remarkable in that?

You may either raise your own children without regarding them as your own-regarding them as Ṭhākurjī's-or care for children who are not your own; either way, great merit will result. But possessiveness destroys that merit. "I am raising my children; I am protecting my own people"-this very sense of mine-making consumes your merit. Therefore, gentlemen, please regard your family as belonging to

Bhagavān. All of them, young and old, belong to the Lord. Serve them and say to the Lord, “O Master, we are serving Your own people.” If you begin to act in this way, Bhagavān will become indebted to you. Bhagavān too will say, “Yes, this person cared for My children.” If you act with possessiveness, Bhagavān owes you nothing; everyone cares for their own children. Hold only this attitude: “They are not ours; they belong to Ṭhākurjī.” Then life will be fulfilled, gentlemen!

In the Gītā, Karma-yoga, Jñāna-yoga, and Bhakti-yoga all teach the relinquishment of possessiveness and egoity:

1. *“Having abandoned all desires, the person who moves without craving,*

free from possessiveness and egoity, attains peace.”

(Bhagavad Gītā 2.71)

2. *“Relinquishing egoity, power, pride, desire, anger, and acquisition,*

peaceful and free from possessiveness, one becomes fit for the state of Brahman.”

(Bhagavad Gītā 18.53)

3. *“Bearing hatred toward no being, friendly and compassionate,*

free from possessiveness and egoity, equal in pleasure and pain, and forgiving.”

(Bhagavad Gītā 12.13)

“These are not mine; they belong to the world”-regarding them as the world’s in this way becomes Karma-yoga. “These are not mine; they belong entirely to Prakṛti”-regarding them as Prakṛti’s in this way becomes Jñāna-yoga. “These are not mine; they belong to

Ṭhākurjī”-regarding them as Bhagavān’s in this way becomes Bhakti-yoga. “These are mine”-regarding them as one’s own in this way becomes “the yoga of birth and death”: be born, then die, then be born again after dying, and thus remain related to birth and death. Wherever your possessiveness remains, there you will take birth. When possessiveness is absent, you will become free from the cycle of birth and death. What a straightforward and excellent teaching!

Listener: It is an excellent teaching, but it does not happen!

Swamiji: It is not true that it does not happen. Accept it today, this very moment, and it will happen this very moment. You do accept that I do not deceive you and that I speak the teachings of saints, the scriptures, and the Gītā. Ask elderly mothers. When they were little girls, they regarded their father’s house as their own. Their possessiveness toward that house said, “This is my home.” But after marriage they began to regard their husband’s house as their own; the people of their marital home became their own. Thus you already know how to transfer the sense of “mine.” Living in her marital home, she becomes so completely absorbed in it that it no longer occurs to her that she once did not belong to that house. The family expands; sons and grandsons are born. Her grandson marries, and when his wife arrives and causes friction in the house, that elderly grandmother says, “This girl born in another house has come and ruined my home—a home lost to one born elsewhere!” Now someone should ask that elderly mother: “She may have been born elsewhere, but were you born here?” She no longer remembers that she too was born elsewhere; she thinks, “I have always belonged here.” Tell me, did her sense of belonging change or not? That girl born elsewhere will also one day say, “This is my home.” You may call her one born elsewhere today, but this house too will

become hers. Mothers! A house that was not yours became your own; Bhagavān's abode, however, has been yours from the beginning. Bhagavān says:

“An eternal portion of Myself, having become the living being in the world of living beings...”

(Bhagavad Gītā 15.7)

Every one of us is a portion of that Paramātmā, a dearly loved child of that Lord. We may be bad children or good children, but we belong to the Lord alone.

“A bad son may sometimes be born, but there is never a bad mother.”

A son may be a bad son, but a mother is never a bad mother. Likewise, our Lord is never a bad mother or a bad father. He sees, “This one is still a child and has made a mistake,” yet He is ready to love the child again!

“Even if a person of exceedingly evil conduct worships Me with exclusive devotion,

that person must indeed be regarded as a saint, for the resolve is rightly directed.”

(Bhagavad Gītā 9.30)

Even the most wicked person, if wholly absorbed in worship of Bhagavān with the exclusive conviction, “I belong to Bhagavān and Bhagavān is mine,” should be regarded as a saint. Very quickly that person becomes righteous and attains abiding peace:

“Quickly that person becomes righteous and attains lasting peace.”

(Bhagavad Gītā 9.31)

This is true.

We do not belong to the world, and the world does not belong to us. We ourselves have established this sense of belonging with the world. In reality, we have always belonged to Bhagavān, and Bhagavān is ours. We may forget Him, but Bhagavān has not forgotten us. We may turn away from Bhagavān, but Bhagavān has not turned away from us. Bhagavān says, “All are dear to Me; all have been brought forth by Me” (*Mānasa*, Uttara 86.2). Every being is dear to Me. Therefore, gentlemen, all of us are Bhagavān’s dearly loved children, His beloved ones!

After hearing the entire Gītā, what did Arjuna say? “My delusion is destroyed; memory has been regained” (18.73). Delusion was destroyed and memory returned; he remembered. What had been forgotten came back to him: “I belong to You.” What will you do now? He said, “I shall do as You say.” I already belong to You; I had forgotten before, and now that forgetfulness has been erased.

We have always belonged to Paramātmā alone. The body was received from the world. It is our duty to serve in every way, give comfort to, and honor the mother and father from whom this body was received. But we ourselves belong to Paramātmā alone. The wise devotee Prahlāda knew this. His father said, “Do not utter Bhagavān’s Name or worship Him; if you do, you will be killed.” Yet Prahlāda was not frightened. His father, Hiranyakaśipu, told his wife Kayādhū to give their son poison. Kayādhū was devoted to her husband. Prahlāda was in her lap, and a cup of poison was in her hand. For a mother to give poison to her child is exceedingly difficult. Prahlāda said to his mother, “Mother, give me the poison. Then your dharma will be upheld and mine will be upheld as well.” Prahlāda drank it but did not die, because he had complete trust in

Bhagavān. He did not disobey his father's command. When they tried to drown him in the sea, he did not ask, "Why are you drowning me?" When he survived, trees and stones were cast upon him. He was thrown from a mountain, made to be trampled by an elephant, and attacked with weapons, but he did not die. Prahlāda never asked, "Why are you killing me?" Yet he did not abandon the worship of Bhagavān.

His father sent him to Śaṇḍa and Amarka, sons of Śukrācārya. There he did not pursue his lessons. Whenever the teachers went outside, he turned the school into something else. He was a prince, so at his word all the boys worshipped Bhagavān. The teachers saw that Prahlāda had turned the school into a hall of devotion. They went to Hiranyakaśipu and said, "Your Majesty! Your son is himself already corrupted, and he is corrupting the other boys as well." Hiranyakaśipu summoned Prahlāda and asked, "Where did this wicked understanding of yours come from? Did it arise by itself, or did someone teach it to you?" Prahlāda replied, "Father! Such understanding neither arises by itself nor can anyone teach it. It is received through the grace of saints and great souls."

In childhood Prahlāda received the grace of the venerable Nārada. While Prahlāda was still in his mother's womb, Indra came, plundered the place, and carried Kayādhū away. Hiranyakaśipu had at that time gone to the forest for austerities. As Indra was taking Kayādhū away, Nārada met him on the road. Nārada asked, "Why are you causing suffering to this defenseless woman? What offense has the poor woman committed?" Indra replied, "Master, in her womb is a portion of my enemy Hiranyakaśipu. He alone has harassed us so much; when there are two of them, we shall face great difficulty! Therefore I am taking Kayādhū away. When her child is born, I shall kill him; I shall do nothing to Kayādhū."

Nārada said, “Her child will not be your enemy.” Demons, asuras, gods, and human beings alike heed Nārada’s word, for he is a saint; everyone trusts a saint. Indra accepted his word and released Kayādhū. Nārada settled her in a cottage and said, “Daughter, do not worry; remain here joyfully.” As a girl lives lovingly in her father’s house, so she began to live there. Keeping the child in her womb in mind, Nārada narrated accounts of Bhagavān. With the intention that the child in her womb become a devotee of Bhagavān, he related excellent teachings of satsang.

“Not a trace of Nārada’s instruction remained in the mother’s heart;

the son retained it in the womb and became wise.”

Nārada’s instruction did not remain in the mother’s memory, but Prahlāda retained it while still in the womb. He became a devotee from there itself. Through becoming a devotee, this understanding arose in his heart: “I myself truly belong to Paramātmā alone, while this body belongs to my parents. Even if my parents cut this body to pieces, I have no right to protest, because they gave this body. But I myself am directly a portion of Paramātmā; therefore they have no right to turn me away from Paramātmā. Let me turn toward Paramātmā, and let this body be engaged in serving my parents.”

Gentlemen! This body belongs to one’s parents. Therefore serve your parents thoroughly, give them comfort in every way, and honor and welcome them. In truth, even by serving them you cannot discharge your debt. No one can discharge the debt owed to one’s mother. Of all worldly relationships, the mother’s is the greatest. No one can nourish this body properly as a mother does—“There is no bodily nourishment equal to a mother’s.” Therefore it is said:

*“Through him the family is purified, his mother finds fulfillment,
and the earth becomes blessed-*

*through him whose mind is absorbed in the supreme Brahman,
this boundless ocean of conscious bliss.”*

(Skanda Purāṇa, Māheśvara-khaṇḍa, Kaumārika-khaṇḍa 55.140)

That is, when a person’s inner faculty becomes absorbed in Parabrahman, Paramātmā, that person’s lineage is purified, their mother finds fulfillment, and this entire earth becomes greatly sanctified.

*“If a mother gives birth, let it be to a devotee, a giver, or a hero;
otherwise let her remain childless and not squander her radiance.”*

I have heard saints sing this congratulatory refrain: “Blessed is the mother who bore such a son; auspicious trays resounded.” The mother who gave birth to such a devotee is blessed! For a mother has a special influence upon her child. It is generally seen that if the mother is noble, her son too is noble. Therefore, when someone’s mind becomes absorbed in Bhagavān, his mother finds fulfillment.

By giving in charity, earning merit, and rendering great help, you cannot gain as much as you can by taking refuge at Bhagavān’s feet. For our relationship with Paramātmā is indestructible and unbreakable; it can never be severed. Only the living being has forgotten this relationship; Bhagavān has not. Therefore the responsibility for turning toward Bhagavān rests upon the living being. Bhagavān, for His part, continually bestows grace, whatever that being may be like. Bhagavān sustains and nourishes everyone. He reforms even a sinner through punishment and purifies that person by placing them in hells. Thus Bhagavān remains engaged in sustaining, nourishing, and purifying all beings. Bhagavān says:

“The moment a living being turns to face Me, the sins of millions of births are destroyed that very moment.” (Mānasa, Sundara 44.2)

It is the living being who turned away from Bhagavān; therefore the responsibility for turning to face Bhagavān rests upon that being. The moment one turns toward Him, one’s boat crosses over! Therefore let us take refuge at the Lord’s feet and change our ego-identification to “We belong to Paramātmā.” Sisters and mothers similarly change their identity: “I no longer belong to this house; I belong to the house into which I was married.” Their gotra changes; their father’s gotra no longer remains theirs. In many places, when a child is born in the house and the period of birth impurity prevents the family from serving Ṭhākurjī, they say, “Your married daughter who is at home can perform the service, because the impurity does not apply to her; her gotra is different.” That very daughter may be in your house, but if a child is born in her marital home, you tell her, “Daughter, do not touch the water.” She is your own daughter, yet the birth in her marital home places her under the impurity. In the same way, change your ego-identification to “We belong to Bhagavān,” and you will reach reality.

We do not, from our side, regard Bhagavān as ours, but Bhagavān, from His side, regards us as His own. He does not merely regard this; He knows it. A child regards his mother as his own mother, but sometimes becomes stubborn and says, “If you do not do what I say, I will not be your son.” The mother laughs, because she knows that he is indeed her son. The child thinks his mother needs him, and that by being her son he is greatly obliging her. So he says, “I will not be your son; I will not sit in your lap.” But whose loss would it be if he ceased to be her son? What harm would come to the mother? The mother lived for many days without the child, but it would become difficult for the child to survive without the mother.

On top of everything, the child acts as though he is doing his mother a favor. In just this way, we too can act as though we are doing Bhagavān a favor!

Bhagavān had a very dear devotee whose name I do not remember. Day and night he remained intoxicated with devotion to Bhagavān. Someone made him a tall cap. Wearing it, he was ecstatically performing kīrtana. As he sang, he became so absorbed in divine love that Bhagavān Himself came and sat beside him. Bhagavān said, “Devotee! Today you are wearing a very tall cap.” He replied, “It does not belong to somebody else’s father; it is mine.” Bhagavān said, “You are acting proud?” He answered, “Did I borrow this pride from someone?” Bhagavān asked, “Do you know Me?” He said, “I know You very well.” Bhagavān asked, “Would you sell that cap?” He replied, “What do You even possess to give that You have come to buy it? You have only the three worlds; what else can You give?” Bhagavān said, “Such pride!” He replied, “Have I borrowed it from someone?” Bhagavān said, “Look, if I tell the world that you are no devotee at all, the world will no longer honor you.” He replied, “Very well, You say that; then we too will say that Bhagavān is nothing. It is we who have made You famous; otherwise who would know You?” Bhagavān accepted defeat!

The love in a mother’s heart is greater than the love in her children’s hearts. Likewise, boundless love fills Bhagavān’s heart. He cannot restrain His love for His beloved and therefore accepts defeat! “He conquered everyone else, but was defeated by the devotee”-what an extraordinary thing! Become the own of such a Bhagavān. Our relationship with others exists only to serve them. We are not to regard them as ours; we are to regard Bhagavān alone as ours. We should serve Bhagavān too, but we are to take nothing from Him.

Your daughter changes her identity, regarding herself as the daughter-in-law of another house. Can you not change your identity? Do you not possess even as much capacity as that daughter? You raised that daughter and celebrated her marriage with great festivity, yet you do not become angry when she changes-when she regards another house as her own. In just this way, if you regard yourself as Bhagavān's and Bhagavān as yours, no one will be angry, because it is true. Mīrābāī said, "Mine is Giridhar Gopāl alone; there is no other." Apart from Giridhar Gopāl, no one is mine, and I belong to no one else.

If you work at a job, you will receive a salary according to your ability. But when you go home to your mother, will she give you bread according to your ability? She will feed you whether you work or do not work. In the same way, it is not the case that a relationship with Bhagavān is formed only through worship and does not exist without worship. If you establish belonging with Bhagavān—"O Master, I am Yours alone"—Bhagavān will think, "Whatever this child may be like, the child is My own!" Therefore Bhagavān will have to care for you. Thus, "I am Yours alone, and You alone are mine" is a very direct path.

Bhagavān says that the living being is indeed His own portion, yet it draws toward itself the body, senses, mind, and intellect situated in Prakṛti and regards them as its own (Gītā 15.7). Oh! In what direction have you wandered? Where do you belong, and where have you become attached? Serve the world. Through your body, mind, wealth, intellect, ability, authority, and so forth, give happiness to others, but do not regard them as yours. This worldly belonging will not endure. They are yours only for the purpose of service. The very things of the world toward which we establish belonging make us dependent. We imagine, "This much family is

mine; this much wealth is mine,” but in reality these are not yours-you have become theirs, dependent upon them! Neither will they remain with us nor will we remain with them. Therefore serve them with great enthusiasm and readiness, so that the world may be pleased and Bhagavān too may be pleased. May you also remain forever joyful and carefree! When no one is found to render service, the person who wants service remains unhappy; the person who renders service, however, remains always happy and joyful.



The Highest Good through Right Use

|| Śrī Hariḥ ||

Human beings have given great importance to objects, persons, and circumstances, but in reality these have no importance in themselves. What matters is their use. They can be used rightly or misused. If they are rightly used, every place, time, object, person, event, circumstance, and so forth becomes conducive to a human being's welfare. A human being is free to use or misuse them, but no one is free to make circumstances and the like conform to one's wishes.

People generally give greater importance to objects themselves and do not attend to their right use. Consequently they become dependent and trapped. They confront a difficult situation: "What should we do? How should we do it?" To avoid this, one must learn how to use them rightly. Circumstances keep coming and going before a person; they keep changing. No circumstance, object, person, or condition remains the same. All of these keep changing. If the best possible use is made of these changing things, all of them will become conducive to welfare.

First, one point must be understood. You and your circumstance, you and your object, you and your condition, you and your community, you and your country, you and your time—in every case, the two are distinct. That is, all things that arise and perish are portions of Prakṛti, while you are a portion of Paramātmā. You remain eternally and continuously. Things born of Prakṛti, however, change constantly and never remain uniform even for a moment. Their conjunction and separation occur ceaselessly; like the current of a river, their flow continues without interruption.

You are that which remains: “Eternal, all-pervading, stable, immovable, and primeval” (Gītā 2.24).

You have been unmoving from beginningless time, while all these-body and world-are moving. Why do moving objects affect the unmoving? Because the unmoving identifies itself with moving objects. The body and you yourself, who remain, are two. You are not the body, and the body is not yours. The error occurred when you formed ego-identification and possessiveness toward the body. Placing yourself in the body produced egoity; placing the body and other objects within yourself produced possessiveness. Believing “I am the body” produces egoity, and believing “the body and other objects are mine” produces possessiveness. Egoity produces division; possessiveness produces conflict. Both are causes of bondage.

Saints and great souls have told us to relinquish “I” and “mine.” Objects are already being relinquished of themselves: every object in the world is separating from you at every moment. This is something to heed, know, and understand deeply. I feel that we should state it, hear it, and reflect upon it every day. What is visible is becoming invisible; sight is being enrolled into non-sight. The whole world is moving toward death, toward destruction. The entire creation is moving toward the great dissolution. With every day that passes, we move nearer to death. One day nothing will remain, and that day too is drawing near! Every body is moving toward death at every moment. There may be doubt whether some other task will occur, but there is no doubt or alternative concerning whether death will occur. No one can say what will happen in the future, how it will happen, or whether it will happen; but one can say entirely without doubt or fear: “Death will occur.”

What is bondage? The unchanging has identified itself with the changing-that alone is bondage. If a discerning person sees the changing and the unchanging as distinct-if one directly realizes, “The changing is not my essential nature; my nature is the unchanging”-one becomes liberated today itself. This must be known rightly; it is not merely to be learned. We can learn from books and be called scholars, but in reality a learner is not a true scholar; only one who knows rightly is. Mere learning will not suffice. A learner is like a parrot. Teach a parrot and it will learn to say, “Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, Gopī-Kṛṣṇa,” repeating it when prompted. But when a cat comes to kill it, it begins squawking. Come now, say “Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, Gopī-Kṛṣṇa” at the final moment; utter Bhagavān’s Name so that you may be delivered! But the parrot does not understand what Bhagavān’s Name is.

Even if Bhagavān’s Name comes to mind merely as something learned, welfare results. Such accounts occur in the Purāṇas. “They know that taking Govinda’s Name removes even the greatest sin”-if Bhagavān’s Name arises at the final moment for any reason, all sins are destroyed. A courtesan was teaching her parrot to say “Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, Gopī-Kṛṣṇa” when a snake suddenly bit her. She kept saying “Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, Gopī-Kṛṣṇa” and was delivered. The sayings of saints contain many such accounts. Once a hunter roamed the forest with bow and arrow, seeking animals and birds to kill. A pīpīhā bird sat in a tree. On one side the hunter aimed an arrow at it; on the other, a hawk swooped to kill it. In this danger the pīpīhā remembered Bhagavān. Through impressions from a former birth, even animals and birds may possess something absent in human beings. No one knows when impressions from long ago will awaken. Suddenly a snake emerged from that tree and bit the

hunter. His hand jerked and the arrow flew, striking the hawk. The hunter and hawk both died, and the pīpīhā was saved.

The chātaka perched in the tree: an enemy above, the hunter's arrow in sight below. A snake struck the hunter; the released arrow flew and pierced the hawk. O pīpīhā, your life was spared and calamity averted: recognize Hari as your true benefactor. He is imperishable Brahman, a mass of bliss, destroyer of faults, and giver of happiness. (Karuṇānidhāna 15)

A hunter killed a deer in the forest, lifted it, and set out. Overcome by thirst and fatigue, he sat in the shade of a tree. A tame parrot that had escaped from its cage was perched there. A snake emerged and bit the hunter. The parrot said “Rāma, Rāma” twice. Hearing Bhagavān’s Name, the hunter too uttered “Rāma, Rāma” twice and died. Yama’s messengers came to take him away, but Bhagavān’s attendants also came to take him to Bhagavān’s abode. Yama’s messengers stopped them: “How can you take him? He killed many beings and committed many sins; therefore he must go to the hells.” Bhagavān’s attendants replied, “He uttered Bhagavān’s Name at the final moment; therefore he will attain welfare.” A dispute arose. To decide it, all his sins were weighed against the Name, and the Name proved heavier. Thus the hunter received the fearless abode:

“A hunter killed a deer; a serpent bit him beneath a tree’s shade. Dying of thirst, he heard the parrot’s words, and the Name arose within his heart. Twice he heard it with his ears, twice his mouth sang it; such was his final hour, and in that instant help arrived. Yama’s mighty servants bound him, but the Lord released his bonds; the dwellers of Hari’s city came and settled the account with justice. All sins went onto one scale, the Name onto the other;

in this way he crossed becoming and was granted the fearless abode.” (Karuṇāsāgara 67-70)

Bhagavān’s Name possesses immeasurable, infinite power. One cannot calculate how many sins stand before it. If one match is needed to burn one seer of cotton, are forty matches needed to burn one maund? No. A single match will burn it all. There is no measurement requiring as much fire as there is cotton. Likewise, one does not count how many sins there are and how much Bhagavān’s Name is. Even if a house has been filled with darkness for years, lighting one lamp drives it all away. The world is momentary and perishable; it is passing and being destroyed. Bhagavān, Bhagavān’s Name, His glory, and His power, however, endure eternally and continuously. Before that which remains, this flowing-away world has no strength.

The body, senses, and so forth are perishable and changeable, while the self-the individual Self-is imperishable and unchanging. Either know these two correctly, or relinquish reliance upon the perishable and take refuge at Paramātmā’s feet. Taking refuge in the perishable and making it one’s foundation is a grave error. “Money will accomplish my work; relatives will accomplish it; the body will make things happen. I possess immense ability and learning; I hold a great post; I am a great official”—all these change and perish. If one abandons reliance on all of them and relies on Bhagavān alone, one will be blessed!

First one must know that there are two: the perishable and the imperishable. Knowing this is a human being’s distinctive task. Bhagavān introduces this subject at the very beginning of the Gītā. From the eleventh through the thirtieth verse of its second chapter, He explains the distinction between real and unreal, eternal and

non-eternal, embodied Self and body. If this distinction is understood correctly, every discipline-Karma-yoga, Jñāna-yoga, Bhakti-yoga, and the rest-becomes easy. Without understanding it, spiritual practice becomes difficult. If the distinction is correctly understood, we will undoubtedly rise above the changeable, because in reality we already stand above it. What difficulty is there in experiencing ourselves as we are? By rightly understanding the distinction between eternal and non-eternal, real and unreal, imperishable and perishable, one awakens to truth and is freed from the cycle of birth and death. Association, attachment, fondness, and attraction toward Prakṛti's guṇas are the chief cause of birth and death:

“Attachment to the guṇas is the cause of one’s births in good and evil wombs.”

(Bhagavad Gītā 13.21)

Many brothers say, “What can we do? The mind does not become absorbed, and nothing happens without its absorption. If the mind is not absorbed in worship, what benefit is there in worship?” Others too promptly pronounce, “You repeat Rāma’s Name, but nothing happens unless the mind is absorbed.” Hastily passing judgments and giving advice to others is intellectual indigestion. Ask them, “Have you tested this yourself?” There are excellent physicians for treatment, yet nowadays everyone wants to prescribe: “Give this person such-and-such; they will recover. Do not give that; it will not help.” They offer such advice in passing. Ask them: “Have you studied Ayurveda?” No. “Do you practice medicine?” No. This is intellectual indigestion.

Gosvāmī Tulsīdāsa's whole life passed upon "Rāma, Rāma." His first name was Rāmabolā because he uttered "Rāma" at birth; the name Tulsīdāsa came later. He says:

"With good feeling or bad, in anger or even laziness, repeating the Name brings auspiciousness in all ten directions." (Mānasa, Bāla 28.1)

The moment Bhagavān's Name is uttered, auspiciousness fills all ten directions. Even if the Name is uttered with ill feeling, it brings welfare. Yet people say, "If the mind is not absorbed, nothing happens!"

Brothers and sisters, carefully consider what I say. "First let the mind become absorbed, then we shall take the Name"-this will never happen. The mind will become absorbed only as you keep taking Bhagavān's Name. At least begin taking the Name. People themselves do nothing, and by saying, "There is no benefit if the mind is not absorbed," they make others abandon their practice too. They go to the hells themselves and take others with them.

Gentlemen! What is especially dangerous? Our delusion, fondness, and attraction toward perishable objects-this is the dangerous thing. Fondness for the perishable alone will make you weep: "What is dear makes you weep."

Attachment and attraction toward the world are signs of ignorance, the special mark of foolishness:

"Attachment is the mark of ignorance in the fields where the mind exerts itself."

To whatever degree one is attracted to the perishable, to that degree one is foolish. If one sets fire inside a tree's hollow and then looks

upward, waiting for the tree to become green and bear flowers and fruit, that is foolishness. Likewise one remains attached to the world while expecting happiness, peace, and joy. This will never happen.

What do people do? They keep increasing attachment and yet desire peace. “If I acquire this much money, I shall be happy; if I acquire this much property, I shall be happy.” Brother! Wealth and property do not bring happiness. If you doubt this, test it. Meet the person who possesses the greatest wealth and ask, “Do you have no sorrow of any kind? No unrest of any kind?” If the person reveals the truth, your question will be settled!

One house became overrun with mice. Thinking, “It is not right to kill them; let us catch them and release them far away in the forest, where they will be safe,” the household brought a wire cage to trap them. They placed pieces of bread inside and left it open. The mice now come and climb all around it, thinking, “If only we can somehow obtain the bread lying in the cage, we shall be blessed!” Searching and searching, they find the entrance. As soon as they go that way, the spring-loaded plate under the weight, bends down, and the mouse enters the cage. As soon as it goes inside, the flap rises again. Outside, the trap clicks; inside, alarm strikes the mouse. Forgetting the bread, it now runs about trying to find a way out. The mice outside imagine that the mouse within is enjoying itself greatly: “How much bread lies inside, and how freely it roams! Only we have been left outside.” One of them finds the entrance and goes in; then the trouble begins. The two mice fight and race around inside the cage. Those outside see them and think, “They are enjoying themselves, while only we have been left out!” In this way the mice become trapped. That cage was made by someone else, but the cage in which we are trapped has been made by us ourselves. Those who possess little money imagine that if, by lying, deceit,

dishonesty, theft, or any other means, they could accumulate as much wealth as possible, they would become happy. With wealth, they think, there will be great comfort and delight. Those who are unmarried look at married people and imagine, “They are enjoying themselves greatly; only we have been left empty-handed. Somehow, may we too be married!” Once they marry and someone greets them-“Victory to Rāma! How are things?”-they answer, “We are trapped!” If they work in a large city, they think: “Had I been alone, I could have stayed anywhere, but now it is very difficult. Where should I keep the children? How are we to live? I must arrange their education, and when they grow up I must arrange their marriages.” It becomes a great affliction. In the same way people say that the very rich enjoy great happiness and comfort. Go and live with them and see. They cannot sleep peacefully at night or eat at the proper time. Even at two in the afternoon they may find no leisure to eat, and at night it may be eleven or twelve before they are free. Many such examples have come before me. I am not speaking merely from books; I am also telling you what I have seen. What the books say is certainly true, for the ṛṣis and sages wrote from experience.

This happened in Calcutta. A gentleman who worked as a broker used to attend satsang. He would ask, “Why do these wealthy people not attend satsang? They possess so much money that even if they merely sat and consumed it, it would never come to an end. Why, then, do they not attend satsang?” He used to speak like this. Later, when he himself acquired more wealth, he too stopped attending satsang; now he had no time for it. We spoke with him: “Earlier you wondered why rich people did not attend satsang. Why do you not attend now?” “How can I? My business has grown so much that I have no time!”

As the water in a lake rises, its mud also increases. At first there is little, then it becomes greater. In the same way, as wealth increases, poverty-the sense of want-also increases. Yet people neither attend to nor reflect on this. An ordinary person hungers for a hundred or a thousand rupees; one who has a thousand hungers for thousands; a millionaire hungers for millions, and one worth crores hungers for crores. The more wealth grows, the more hunger grows with it. An ordinary person does not hunger for millions, but no one looks at this side of the matter. People see only this: “If I gain more wealth, I shall enjoy myself.”

Brothers, pay attention. You do not need more money. Make the very best use of whatever money you possess; that will yield immense merit. It is not a rule that more money necessarily brings more merit. If you spend according to your capacity-as much as you can afford-you will be delivered. A wealthy person will have to spend greatly for his highest good; an ordinary person can attain the highest good through ordinary expenditure.

King Yudhiṣṭhira performed an extraordinary sacrifice. He placed Duryodhana in charge of the treasury, reasoning that if the treasury were entrusted to an enemy, he would distribute more and the sacrifice would be magnificent. Nowadays people put a miser in charge so that he will not spend too much, and this brings disrepute. Duryodhana gave ten times as much, and the sacrifice was praised everywhere. The brāhmaṇas began exclaiming, “Wonderful! King Yudhiṣṭhira has performed a tremendous sacrifice!” Just then a mongoose arrived and spoke in a human voice: “Compared with the sacrifice of a brāhmaṇa family living in this very forest, which I witnessed, this sacrifice is nothing.” They asked, “What did you see?”

The mongoose began: “A brāhmaṇa, his wife, their son, and their daughter-in-law-these four lived in this forest. They were exceptionally pure brāhmaṇas. A brāhmaṇa’s wealth is austerity; renunciation alone is his treasure. They sustained themselves through *śiloṇcha-vṛtti*: after grain has been harvested, what remains fallen on the ground-ears and scattered kernels-belongs by right to the ‘gods on earth,’ the brāhmaṇas. To glean these remnants and live on them is called *śiloṇcha-vṛtti*. Once the family had found no grain for several days. One day the brāhmaṇa found a little barley in a barley field and brought it home. His wife and daughter-in-law ground it into flour and roasted it to make *satūā*. This was not the *sattū* made in Rajasthan with clarified butter and sugar; it was simply roasted flour. All four had been hungry for many days, yet they divided the *satūā* into five portions.”

When food has been prepared, it is sinful to consume it all oneself. Sinners who cook food only for themselves consume sin:

“Those sinful people who cook for themselves alone eat nothing but sin.” (Gītā 3.13)

Manu too has said, “One who eats alone becomes solely an eater of sin.” Whoever prepares food for himself alone consumes sin. Once a meal is ready, hospitality toward a guest is a householder’s duty. Bhagavān has placed upon the householder the responsibility of sustaining brahmācārins, forest-dwellers, renunciants, and everyone else. Therefore, if someone comes to your home, give something. There is no rule that you must feed the person to complete satisfaction, but give something. A common saying advises: “Answer with your hand; do not answer merely with your tongue.”

The brāhmaṇa performed *bali-vaiśvadeva*, offered the food to Bhagavān, served it onto five leaf plates, and then went outside to look for a guest. Once food has been prepared, one should perform *bali-vaiśvadeva* and wait for a guest for as long as it takes to milk a cow. If no guest comes, one may set the guest's portion aside and eat. If a guest arrives before the meal, one should feed the guest first and then eat oneself. Just then a brāhmaṇa arrived. They invited him to receive alms, brought him inside, and gave him the *satūā* reserved for the guest. He ate it. The brāhmaṇa householder then gave him his own portion, which the guest also ate. The brāhmaṇa's wife went to her husband and said, "My lord, the guest is still not satisfied. Give him my portion too." The brāhmaṇa explained, "Look, as a woman you feel hunger more strongly and will not be able to bear it. We have honored our guest and thereby fulfilled the householder's duty. Do not worry." She replied, "It can never be that you remain hungry while I eat." When she insisted, her share too was given to the guest, and he ate it. Then the son approached his father. Giving charity, performing śrāddha, and similar duties belong to the senior, principal member of a family. The son therefore did not serve his own portion directly but petitioned his father. The father said, "Look, son, you are young. In youth the digestive fire is strong and hunger is greater, so you should eat. We are old; it does not matter for us." The son would not agree. When he persisted, his portion too was served to the guest. The son's wife then approached her mother-in-law and said, "Mother, please give my share to the guest as well, so that he may be satisfied. We have been hungry for several days; what does it matter if we remain hungry one more day?" After much insistence her portion too was given to the guest. Having given everything, all four were overjoyed: "Today something truly wonderful has happened!"

If someone regrets a gift and becomes unhappy after giving it, that gift does not bear its full fruit. One should rejoice after giving: “Today I have been blessed!” It is easy to give food when one’s own stomach is full, and easy to give a little money when one possesses millions or crores. But to give food while oneself hungry is no ordinary matter; it is exceedingly difficult. You have heard the story and I have told it-what effort has that required? Its true test comes when such a demand confronts us. Those four rejoiced greatly after giving: “Today we have been blessed!” The brāhmaṇa guest then revealed himself as Dharmarāja and said, “I was testing how righteous you are. Today I have lost and you have won! You have conquered Dharma. Come now to heaven in these very bodies.” They all departed with Dharmarāja. The mongoose continued: “I saw all this. Water used for ritual sipping had been sprinkled over the leaf plates. When I rolled there, the portion of my body touched by that water turned to gold. The rest did not become wet, so my whole body did not turn golden. I heard the greatness of this sacrifice proclaimed-that King Yudhiṣṭhira had performed an immense sacrifice. I came here and rolled in the mud, but only more mud clung to me; not a single hair turned golden! Why do you falsely praise this sacrifice?” Now consider: despite all that charity and sacred giving, Yudhiṣṭhira’s sacrifice was not as great as the one performed by that brāhmaṇa. It is simply not true that giving a larger amount must produce greater merit.

Women often imagine: “When I have wealth, I shall give such-and-such charity, perform such-and-such concluding observance, take the sacred Vaiśākha bath, do this, and do that.” Who knows how many castles they build in the mind! Sisters, act according to what you have. A customs tax is levied upon goods; if

you possess no goods, what could the tax be levied upon? Only as much as you possess applies to you.

*Distribute true and worthy gifts, says Nāpo to humankind;
seeing want within your home, do not flatly refuse-give at least something.*

(The poet Nāpo says: “People, give charity according to your capacity. When scarcity exists at home, do not give someone an outright ‘No’; instead, give at least something.”)

If you give according to your capacity, it becomes a momentous gift. The glory lies in using what one possesses well. Do not think, “When I have greater wealth I shall give charity, visit sacred places, undertake vows and sacrifices, and organize grand satsang gatherings-but what can I do now? I have no money!” Gentlemen, if you have no money, giving money, undertaking pilgrimages, vows, sacrifices, and the like simply do not apply to you. You too expect from a small child only what the child can do. Is Bhagavān not at least as understanding and compassionate as you? Does he not know your capacity? You have to do only as much as your strength permits. If you make proper use of whatever ability and circumstances you possess, your highest good will be no less. That brāhmaṇa’s sacrifice was not inferior to Yudhiṣṭhira’s. He did not even have food to eat, yet his sacrifice surpassed Yudhiṣṭhira’s.

Do not wish, “When I have more, I shall do more.” Make the best possible use of what is with you. If you use your present circumstances in the best way, the act will not remain small; it will become greatly significant. I have heard a story said to occur in a southern Rāmāyaṇa. A fierce battle was raging between Śrī Rāma and Rāvaṇa. A squirrel came to Rāma holding a straw in both paws

and declared, “I shall kill Rāvaṇa at once!” Bhagavān was pleased with it and placed his hand upon it; the marks of his fingers became the squirrel’s stripes. What power did a squirrel have to kill Rāvaṇa? But it put forth its entire strength, and that pleased Bhagavān.

Devote your full strength to the deliverance of others. Bhagavān sees, “Though this person has little strength, he is striving for the good of others; at the very least, I must surely deliver him!” When even a person of ordinary strength exerts it fully for others’ welfare, this moves the greatest saints and even Bhagavān. When a child lifts a small load, you exclaim, “Wonderful-look how much he has lifted!” though you could pick up the same load with one hand. You praise him because he employed his full strength. Likewise, gentlemen, make proper use of whatever things and circumstances you have received.

You think, “If only I had wealth, favorable circumstances, and a healthy body, I would attain my highest good. But what can I do? I lack learning, intelligence, and ability!” In fact, no one expects more learning, intelligence, or ability from you than you possess-not even Bhagavān. Use well whatever you have, and Bhagavān will bring about your highest good. Gentlemen, circumstances themselves do not bestow the highest good. What does so is the skill of putting circumstances to proper use. Understand that skill correctly and thoughtfully, then use your circumstances well; through that, the highest good will be attained.

I recall a story read in childhood. The book *Bīrbal-vinoda* contains a dialogue between Emperor Akbar and Birbal. The emperor once asked, “Which weapon is supreme-the one that assures victory?” Birbal answered simply in Rajasthani, “*Osāṇa*”-the opportune

occasion. The emperor decided to test this. One day Birbal went into the forest with him. Birbal was a highly intelligent brāhmaṇa, and the emperor favored him greatly. He cooked and ate separately. While he was alone in the forest preparing his bread, the emperor had an elephant made drunk and released toward him, thinking, “Let us see how he saves himself now.” Birbal saw the elephant approaching. A female dog was sitting nearby, so he gave her a piece of bread. As soon as the elephant came close, Birbal caught the dog by the legs and flung her at it. She struck the elephant on the forehead. The elephant fled, terrified by this unknown calamity! Has anyone ever heard of this as a weapon for driving away an elephant? It was the occasion-the opportunity-that enabled him to drive it off. The emperor conceded, “You are right: whatever the occasion supplies is the weapon.” Likewise, the opportunity that presents itself is itself the occasion for charity and merit.

A popular saying runs, “Cultivation by every resource is good; charity belongs to the decisive moment.” If one begins cultivation immediately when the rain falls, it succeeds; two days later, what could have been accomplished at the outset may no longer be possible. Likewise, when a worthy recipient appears, give at once; such a gift yields immense merit. We have heard a story about Draupadī. In a former birth she too was a woman. One cold day she went to a river to draw water. A brāhmaṇa was bathing there wearing only a loincloth. By chance the loincloth was swept away. Women were standing outside, and the poor man began to shiver in the cold. Yet how could he come out, having no cloth? The woman saw that he lacked clothing and was freezing. She tore a strip from her sari and threw it toward him, but it floated away. She threw one or two more strips, but they too were swept away. Then she tied a stone to another strip and threw it; it reached his hand, and after

covering himself with it he came out. The thought, “How can I tear my sari?” never arose in her mind. How greatly did that single strip of cloth later multiply! When Draupadī’s garment was being pulled away, Bhagavān said:

“In a former time, when one was distressed, you gave a strip of cloth;

I did not lengthen your garment, Draupadī-you yourself lengthened it.”

The afflicted brāhmaṇa had been trembling in the water. To preserve his modesty, you tore your own cloth and gave it; for that very reason your garment increased. “Duḥśāsana’s arms grew weary, and Śyāma became the garments.” Thus, a gift made at the proper time—a thing put to its right use—possesses immense greatness.

Your strength may be slight and your circumstances extremely difficult; even so, do not be alarmed. Think instead, “What can be done at this moment?” Some means will emerge. A great service may be accomplished through you, and that will bring about your highest good. Gentlemen, greatness does not lie in the object or circumstance but in how it is used. You can use both favorable and unfavorable circumstances well; you can use both health and illness well. Whether you possess much or nothing at all, you can rightly use either condition. Therefore, do not be distressed on seeing your circumstances. Put them to proper use, and Bhagavān will be pleased.



Attaining Bhagavān through Nāma-japa and Service

॥ ॐ Hari ॥

In spiritual disciplines, action is not primary; inner feeling and knowledge are primary. Action is primary in worldly affairs. Although repetition of Bhagavān’s Name is an action, it is an extraordinary means of awakening inner feeling and knowledge. In repetition of the Name, feeling is foremost. If feeling is deficient, even continued repetition yields no special benefit. Much can be said about this feeling. The first point is that there must be a sense of belonging with Bhagavān. When one repeats the Name with this belonging, it has an effect upon Bhagavān. A child cries, “Mother! Mother!” Every woman sitting here who has a child is called “mother,” but they do not all run when that child calls. Only the woman whom he calls mother rises and runs to him, caresses him lovingly, and embraces him. The point is that when one belongs to the mother and calls her, the call affects her. A child may also say “Mother, Mother” while absorbed in play. His mother sees that he is busy playing, so his call does not affect her so deeply.

The special method of repeating the Name is this: belong to Bhagavān, and then take Bhagavān’s Name. “Bhagavān alone is ours, and we belong to Bhagavān alone; the world is not ours, and we do not belong to the world.” If this conviction becomes firm, the benefit is immediate. Gosvāmī Mahārāja has said:

“The ruin of many births may be repaired today-right now. Become Rāma’s, repeat the Name, and, Tulsī, abandon corrupt company.” (Dohāvalī 22)

What has gone wrong through countless births may be set right today—not merely today, but right now, in this very moment. How? Become Rāma’s and call upon Rāma. Our mistake, however, is that we belong to the world while calling upon Bhagavān. “Worldly work leaves me no time; I am a worldly person, a creature of Kali-yuga.” If you identify yourself as worldly and as belonging to Kali-yuga, the world and Kali-yuga will exert greater influence over you, because you have joined yourself to them. Contact with an electric wire brings current; similarly, if you join yourself to the world and Kali-yuga, their effect will certainly come. People say, “Mahārāja, we just repeat an empty ‘Rāma, Rāma.’” Brother, then why do you not repeat it with fullness and substance? You act as though Bhagavān’s Name were empty while your real relation were with the world and Kali-yuga. This is a very great mistake.

In truth, Bhagavān alone is ours. Before we were born into the world, he was ours; after we die, he will remain ours. This world was not ours before, will not be ours hereafter, and even now is separating from us every moment. Our years are passing, the body is passing, and the time of Kali-yuga too is passing. You have no true relation with the world at all. Keep this in mind.

I have said this many times, and I say it again. When you were a child, you called yourself a child; now you no longer do so. On what date did you give up childhood? If any brother or sister can say, let them answer! In fact, you did not relinquish childhood; it fell away by itself. If childhood has fallen away, will youth not also fall away? Will old age not fall away? Their nature is to leave. Your relation with what is continuously leaving is merely imagined; no real relation exists. Your relation with Bhagavān, however, existed before, exists now, and will remain hereafter. It can never break. Even if evil deeds compel you to pass through 8.4 million forms of

birth or enter hells, you cannot become separate from Bhagavān, nor can Bhagavān become separate from you. You have forgotten this eternal relation with him and, while assuming a relation with the world, repeat Bhagavān's Name. That is why the Name's power is not becoming visible.

Family relations are like the meeting of boat passengers upon a river. On this bank everyone boards the boat together; as soon as they reach the other bank, they disembark. Their relation lasts only until the river has been crossed. Family relation is likewise: it will not continue hereafter but will fall away. This is the truth. If you accept, "I do not belong to the body and world, nor do the body and world belong to me. I belong to the Supreme Self, and the Supreme Self is mine. I am taking the Name of my own Supreme Self," then Bhagavān has no power to withhold his gracious glance from you!

Belong to Bhagavān and repeat Bhagavān's Name—"Become Rāma's and repeat the Name." The closer a child's relation with its mother, the sooner she comes. When the child cries loudly, the mother sends her elder daughter: "Daughter, go soothe your brother and make him happy." The sister puts rattles in his hands, but he throws them away. She gives him a sweet, and he throws that away too. She takes him in her lap, but he kicks and keeps crying, "Mother! Mother!" Then his mother must come. If the rattles satisfy him or he settles in his sister's lap, the mother does not come. His sister's lap does not contain his mother's milk or that same love! In the same way, people begin honoring one who repeats the Name: "Wonderful! He is a devotee, a man of worship!" Then just sit there playing the rattle. People offer honor and respect, prostrate themselves, worship, and praise you as a great saint. The sister in the form of Māyā arrives and takes you into her lap. If that satisfies you, Bhagavān does not come. If you sell the Name and in exchange

accept honor, offerings and salutations, and pleasure, tell me: how can you accumulate the wealth of the Name? By taking pleasure, you are spending it away.

The saints have said, “Cry out as a defeated captive cries.” As someone surrounded on all sides, desperate to escape, calls, “Someone free me! Free me!” so let the cry arise from within: “O Lord! I am trapped in desire, anger, greed, possessiveness, and attachment. O Lord, free me from them!” Call to Bhagavān with this anguish.

All the greatness of the Name that has been written until now is certainly true, and far more remains beyond it. Yet people fail to take the Name in the proper way and then say, “The glory attributed to the Name in scripture and heard from others is not visible in practice!” How could it become visible? You have never taken the Name in that way. The way is to take it with exclusive belonging: “Bhagavān alone is mine; apart from Bhagavān, no one is mine. I belong to Bhagavān alone; apart from Bhagavān, I belong to no one. I do not belong to parents, spouse, or children. If they regard me as theirs, I am here to serve them.” Serve your parents and maintain your spouse and children, but harbor no wish to take anything from them. Win their happiness eagerly and justly, but do not let yourself become entangled. Giving will not entangle you; the mere desire to take will bind you. For service, the entire world is ours; for taking, the world is not ours at all.

The highest way is that we should not take the Name even to obtain something from Bhagavān. We should not take it even to destroy sins. We should take the Name so that Bhagavān may accept us, so that we may remain his alone and never forget him. A devotee has said:

*“Whether my dwelling be in heaven or upon earth,
or freely in hell, O destroyer of Naraka,
even at death may I contemplate your feet,
which humble the autumn lotus.”*

(*Garga-saṃhitā*, Aśvamedha 50.33)

Printed explanation: “O Lord, destroyer of Narakāśura! You may place me in heaven, on earth, or even in hell; I do not object to any of these. I ask only this: may I not forget, even at the moment of death, your feet whose beauty surpasses the autumn lotus. May your feet remain always in my remembrance.”

This is a deeply significant point; please attend to it. We have nothing to take from Bhagavān. In his grace, Bhagavān has already given us a human body-what more do you want from him?

The Lord has not bestowed only a little grace. He has given us a body rare even for the gods. Together with it, even a slight inclination toward the supreme spiritual good has arisen; this is no ordinary thing. Among hundreds of thousands of people, many possess no inclination toward Bhagavān at all, yet it has arisen within us-this is extraordinary. In Bhagavān’s court the rarest and finest treasure is his beloved devotees. Bhagavān says:

*“The sādhus are my heart, and I am the heart of the sādhus.
They know nothing apart from me, and I know not the slightest
thing apart from them.”*

(*Śrīmad Bhāgavata* 9.4.68)

Printed translation: “The saints are my heart, and I am the heart of those saints. They know nothing besides me, and I too know nothing besides them.”

If we receive the words, company, and life stories of saints so dear to Bhagavān, can this be called a small grace? When Hanumān meets Vibhīṣaṇa in Laṅkā, Vibhīṣaṇa says:

“Now, Hanumān, confidence has arisen in me: without Hari’s grace, one does not meet saints.” (Rāmcaritmānas, Sundara-kāṇḍa 7.4)

“Hanumān, I am now assured that Bhagavān will bestow grace upon me. Since I have met you, it indicates that I shall meet Bhagavān too!” Bhagavān has already given the finest treasure in his court, yet people still ask him, “Give me that; give me this particular thing!” You do not understand what should be asked of Bhagavān. You cannot even appraise the value of what he has already given.

I shall tell you something deeply significant. Gentlemen, Bhagavān has given you such extraordinary capacity and privilege that through you Bhagavān himself may be attained, and even a want felt by Bhagavān may be fulfilled! To the extent that you have developed possessiveness toward the world, intimacy with Bhagavān has been lost—to that extent, a want has arisen in Bhagavān. If a mother’s child goes into another mother’s lap, refuses to come into his own mother’s lap, neither remembers nor likes her, will that mother be happy? In the same way, we have abandoned Bhagavān and become absorbed in the world. If we become absorbed in Bhagavān and turn toward him, Bhagavān will be delighted. To the extent that faith, love, and belonging toward

Bhagavān are absent in us, that much is lacking for him. When we offer faith, love, and belonging to him, that lack is fulfilled. Though we have received a human body capable even of fulfilling Bhagavān's want, we run after perishable things that do not value us at all.

You run after money, but has money ever said, "We are yours, and you are ours"? You call houses, land, property, money, clothes, jewelry, and other objects "mine, mine," but have they ever said, "We are yours, and you are ours"? On the contrary, they are pushing you away and leaving you. Family members too are departing. Clothes and ornaments are wearing out, tearing, and being destroyed. Yet you keep crying, "Oh money! Oh money!" Is this worthy of a human being? For money, you do not fear to practice lying, deceit, dishonesty, sin, and injustice. Nor can you use money for good works. Never mind if you turn away from Bhagavān and all religion and righteous conduct drown-somehow, from somewhere, just obtain money. Earn by evil deeds if necessary and consume it-that is all! What kind of condition is this? Reflect a little. In your heart you desire money, while outwardly you repeat Bhagavān's Name.

Sweet words above, but shears concealed beneath the arm;

do not think the fire extinguished-it lies hidden under ash.

The fire within has not gone out. The mind is in a frenzy to exploit others somehow through deceit, forgery, cheating, and fraud. Then one says, "No benefit from repeating the Name is visible!" How could it be visible? The mind is filled with an enormous heap of refuse.

Why did Mīrābāī attain such spiritual heights? “For me there is Giridhara Gopāla alone; there is no other.” Bhagavān alone is mine-that is all; no one else is mine. Let there be this exclusive relation with Bhagavān. Such exclusive feeling grasps Bhagavān; an action cannot grasp him. If you try to purchase Bhagavān with objects or actions, it will not happen. Establish belonging with Bhagavān, and he cannot utter a protest or go away.

“I belong to Bhagavān and Bhagavān is mine-then why has he not come? Why have I not yet attained him? Why has he not yet granted me his vision?” When such yearning arises and one’s relation with the world is severed completely, Bhagavān is attained. Our relation with the world exists only for serving the world. While living in a family, serve its members alone; do not retain in the mind any expectation of receiving objects or service from them.

Our birth in the world has occurred through bonds of debt. I have heard a Rajasthani expression: when someone causes suffering, people say, “He has eaten that person’s black sesame”-meaning that some debt is owed to him, and he will collect it. You owe repayment to all your worldly relations. That debt must be discharged. If you desire liberation, at least repay the old debt; why incur a new one, dear friend? Serve the world, but desire nothing from it.

“Expectation is indeed the greatest sorrow; freedom from expectation is the greatest happiness.” (Śrīmad Bhāgavata 11.8.44)

To expect from the world is great sorrow, and to be without expectation from it is great happiness. To regard parents, spouse, children, brothers, and sisters-in-law as relations merely so that they will conform to us and do our work-to enter relation solely to take and take-is demonic in nature.

How may Bhagavān be pleased? We should take nothing even from Bhagavān; rather, we should give to him. When a child goes far from his mother, she remembers him intensely. I have heard mothers speak this way. When festivals such as Dīpāvalī and Akṣaya-tṛtīyā arrive, they say, “What shall we prepare? The boy is not at home; for whom should we make something special?” When he is home, they prepare the finest dishes, feed him, and rejoice. In the same way, we-Bhagavān’s children-have gone away to a foreign land. Bhagavān now says, “What shall I do? What shall I give? My child is not even at home! He is absorbed in wealth and property, occupied with games and amusements!”

“The very moment a living being turns toward me, the sins of millions of births perish.” (Rāmcaritmānas, Sundara-kāṇḍa 44.1)

But today we are facing toward money, objects, family, comfort, honor and esteem, taste and luxury!

One who expects from the world yet also worships Bhagavān is certainly better than one who does not worship at all. It is very good if the mind becomes fixed on Bhagavān by any means:

“Therefore, by whatever means, one should direct the mind toward Kṛṣṇa.” (Śrīmad Bhāgavata 7.1.31)

But if you wish to see the greatness of repetition of the Name immediately, it will become visible only when you attach yourself to Bhagavān with a sincere heart. Those who have truly worshiped have undergone an extraordinary transformation. We have seen many whose condition before taking up repetition of the Name was one thing and whose condition after becoming absorbed in it was entirely different. But they repeated with ardent devotion.

This happened while I was studying. Lessons and related activities continued until ten at night. One evening after ten, I went outside. There was a lake in the forest, and beside it sat a sadhu whom we knew. He was repeating “Rāma, Rāma” and weeping. What was the matter? “So many of my days have passed empty, without worship of Bhagavān. What am I to do now? How can that lost time be made fruitful?” This thought made tears fall from his eyes. Time that has slipped from one’s hands will never return. Even if Bhagavān himself were attained today, the time already lost would not be restored. Had that time not passed empty, Bhagavān would have been attained earlier and we would not have remained separated from him for so many days.

*Do not let even one breath pass empty among worldly people;
wash the mud and stain from your limbs, if you will.
See the darkened heart, filled full with heaps of sin;
join the mind to the lamps of knowledge, if you will.
Such a human birth will not come again, O fool;
become dear to the Supreme Lord, if you will.
Within this momentary body, this birth is to be redeemed;
string the pearl in the lightning’s flash, if you will.*

When lightning flashes, string the pearl at that very moment; otherwise darkness will return. In the same way, while this human body remains, worship and attain Bhagavān. This opportunity will not come again. “What use is rain after every crop has withered? What use is regret after the proper time has passed?” (*Rāmcārītmaṇas*, Bāla-kāṇḍa 261.3). The time is still here: withdraw the mind from every direction. All relations are destined to break; none will remain. If you relinquish them, you will be

blessed. You have only to relinquish what is already bound to leave-what new thing is required? Become inwardly distant from what must leave. Distance means: serve it, but desire nothing from it. Your family will not be displeased by this, because service is precisely what they want. Do not take service from them, and they will be more pleased still.

If you do nothing but serve, the world will be pleased, you will be blessed, and Bhagavān will be attained. If you desire from the world, it will be displeased. Even when it gives, it will give unhappily, thinking, “What can I do? This affliction has befallen me!” But when you harbor no desire, the world will feel compelled to give. The world serves those saints who are genuinely free of desire within. Those who serve them say, “Mahārāja accepted my offering-today I have been blessed!” If no need exists in the receiver’s heart, the giver is blessed by giving. But if need exists in your heart, the other person will not be happy even when you give to him. Instead he will think, “This man is a cheat. If he is giving, who knows what refuse he conceals within!” Therefore, maintain a generous feeling toward the world in your heart.

Anything received from the world belongs entirely to the world. The body came from our parents; learning came from our teachers. We have only taken and taken from the world. Now, please, begin to give. At least learn to give. Giving will cause no loss; simply let the feeling become generous. A hunter watches for prey to come before his gun. Likewise you watch for someone to come before you, to fall into your power, so that somehow you may take from him. This is your condition, and then you complain that no spiritual benefit has come. How could benefit come? The result will instead be downfall. Spend only as much as you spend today; do not increase your expenditure. But change the feeling completely: “We have nothing

to take; we are only to give. We are here to serve.” Spend as much as you can comfortably afford, but establish the feeling, “I am to take nothing from anyone.” Then see whether life improves. Life will become pure. People will be pleased, Bhagavān will be pleased, and you will become joyful and carefree. One who serves is never unhappy; one who takes is always unhappy. Even if he receives, he is dissatisfied that he received too little; if he receives much, pride arises. Sorrow and demonic qualities remain with him because he desires to take inert matter. Hence it is said: “For giving, even a morsel is good; for taking, take Hari’s Name.”

I saw a sadhu sitting in solitude, repeating the Name while tears streamed from his eyes. The room had one small window, and he had closed even that so that neither others’ gaze might fall upon him nor his gaze upon them. He could not sleep at night. If someone repeats the Name with such ardor, why would he not receive its fruit? Try it and see. Hunger is in the stomach, but you tie the *halvā* upon your back and complain that you have not been satisfied. Eat it and see whether satisfaction comes.

*Let the world do what it will-whether good or bad in your eyes;
Nārāyana, sit down and sweep clean your own inner dwelling.*

In this way, become absorbed in repetition of the Name with exclusive devotion.

Serve while living in the household. Sisters and mothers should serve one another. Whether the other is a younger or elder brother’s wife, a mother-in-law, a husband’s sister, or even a daughter-in-law, serve her. When a priest brings an image of Bhagavān from the market for worship, he does not think, “We shall make this image perform the household work.” Likewise, when a son marries, an

image has arrived; now it is to be served. Sadhus themselves are commonly called “images”; people ask, “How many images are there?” The point is that these living images are to be served; apart from service, they are of no practical use. If someone has taken birth, he has come from Ṭhākurjī’s abode-serve him. Your relation with others exists only for service.

Volunteer service groups attend fairs and festivals. If someone falls ill, they bring him to their camp, give medicine, and serve him; if he dies, they cremate him. Who among them will now weep? In the same way, if you maintain with everyone only a relation of service, your weeping, anxiety, and grief will cease. Give comfort to all, honor and respect everyone, and undertake the labor yourself. Your household will become a source of happiness. If you continually wish to give happiness, happiness will arise; if you continually wish to take it, happiness will diminish. Why has money become scarce today? The number of coins has not fallen-how, then, did money become scarce? Whoever received money hoarded it, and therefore it became scarce. Some years ago small change became very scarce. Since individual people had accumulated twenty, fifty, or even a hundred rupees in loose change, how could it remain available in the market? Each person gathered whatever reached his hands. In the same way, happiness is unavailable now because everyone is occupied with taking it, crying, “Let me consume! Let me consume!” If everyone begins giving happiness to one another, there will be abundant happiness.

While living at home, serve every member of the household. Keep this feeling constantly: “How may I bring comfort to those younger than me, older than me, and equal to me? How may I honor them?” Some mothers serve and then complain, “I serve so much, yet my happiness has gone into the dust!” If happiness has gone into the

dust, that is excellent—a crop will grow. When seed enters the soil, cultivation bears fruit. If you serve but no one praises your virtue or blesses you, that is very good indeed: the merit of your service will remain deposited. If others applaud you, your service will be exhausted—spent. If you serve from a desire to gain something, you will have sold your service.

The householder's stage exists for deliverance, not entanglement. Serving leads to deliverance; taking service leads to entanglement. If you want every family member to conform to you, that is an excellent road to downfall and bondage. Enter the water and draw it toward yourself with both hands, and you will immediately go beneath it and drown. Push the water away with both hands and feet, and you will swim across. Likewise, in this ocean of the world, desire to take and you will drown; desire to give and you will cross. None of us has come here to take; we have come to serve.

Therefore, while living as a householder, serve everyone and work for everyone's welfare. Those who delight in the welfare of all beings attain Bhagavān:

“They attain me alone, delighting in the welfare of every being.”
(Gītā 12.4)

Otherwise, sit and play with the world's rattle. What will it give you? A mother's love and milk will be received only when you throw away the rattle, whistle, and squeaking toy and can no longer remain without her.

Bhagavān has placed the human being in the middle realm so that one may serve the higher worlds, the lower worlds, and this world as well. More than that, a human being may serve Bhagavān himself. Bhagavān too has expectations of the human being, and

family members also have expectations. Serve them, and yourself repeat the Name. Tell others to repeat it as well—“remembering and causing others to remember”; “Rāma’s Name is there for the taking—take as much as you can!” May Bhagavān’s Name taste sweet and dear. If it does not, tell Bhagavān, “O Lord, may your Name become dear to me. O Lord, may I not forget you.” Every minute, every half-minute, keep saying, “O Lord, may I not forget you.”

“It will not do to forget, O treasury of grace; it will not do to forget!”

“How could one who knows your beneficence forget you, O friend of the distressed?” (Śrīmad Bhāgavata 4.9.8)

How can anyone who knows Bhagavān’s grace forget him? What wondrous grace he has shown! He has given every limb, the mind and intellect, and birth in a good home. You have been raised in a good place, received good impressions, believe in Bhagavān, and attend satsang. What a beautiful opportunity he has given! Do just a little more now, and you will be blessed.

By giving a human body to a being, Bhagavān has invited that being to come to him. Suppose someone invites a brāhmaṇa or sadhu home, gives him a seat, and sets a leaf plate and water before him. Is there any need to wonder whether food will be served? If the host did not intend to give food, why would he have invited the guest? Since all the preparations have been supplied, the food too will be supplied. In the same way, Bhagavān has given a human body, a good inclination, and good company—will he not also bring about his own attainment? He stands ready: “Come, dine joyfully and be satisfied forever!” Therefore, do not worry about attaining Bhagavān. Repeat the Name, serve the world, and hold no expectation. The world expects happiness from you. If you too seek

happiness from those who seek it from you, how can one cheat succeed between two cheats? You think, “Let me take from my brothers, relatives, and parents,” while they want to take from you. Both are cheats; both will be cheated, and neither will receive anything. Just as feeding the hungry and giving water to the thirsty have great merit, so serving those who desire service has great merit.

Sisters should serve everyone while living in their husband’s home, and serve everyone while living in their father’s home. Hold this feeling: “When I go to another household, where will I again find the opportunity to serve these people—mother, father, paternal uncles, maternal uncle, brothers, sisters-in-law, and the others?” You received your body from your parents, and they raised and nourished you. You have only taken from so many family members; when will you give back? Sisters should therefore begin serving in childhood. If you only take and take from your parental home, when will you serve? Your family there will nevertheless continue giving throughout their lives. When you gain a place and authority in your husband’s home, serve everyone there as well and bring them happiness. Then see: your household life will become peaceful, and Bhagavān will also be attained.

Change only your inner attitude: “I am here to serve.” Every morning and evening, bow at the feet of your elders. Do the work yourself and give comfort to others. If criticism, contempt, reproach, or insult come, take them yourself; give honor, praise, respect, and hospitality to others. Then see how much joy arises. Family affection will develop, and worship will also be accomplished. The benefit of worship will become visible. If you expect from the world, that benefit will not appear. You regard receiving money or comfort as benefit and run day and night for it.

Yet you will receive only as much of that as is destined; what is not to be received will not be received. Worship of Bhagavān, however, is true wealth, and it can be obtained only by practicing it. If you do not practice, you will not obtain it. Therefore, accumulate this true wealth.



The Principle of Karma-yoga

॥ ॐ Hari ॥

Very few people know what karma-yoga actually is. It is difficult to meet a liberated great soul who knows Reality, but it is even more difficult to meet someone who knows the essential principle of karma-yoga. Nearly five thousand years ago Bhagavān said that, through the passage of a very long time, this yoga had become almost lost: “Through the great passage of time, this yoga has been lost here, O scorcher of foes” (Gītā 4.2). By now it has become still more thoroughly lost. Books do not expound karma-yoga; it is not expounded in education; even in satsang its exposition is not found. Its study has nearly disappeared. The teaching therefore seems very difficult. A full explanation could take many hours; I shall tell you only a little of its essence.

The first point is that whether you say “karma-yoga” or “desireless action,” the meaning is the same. The expression “desireless karma-yoga” does not properly form a meaningful term. Even very intelligent people use it! It is therefore somewhat difficult to say that the expression is completely wrong. Say either “desireless action” or “karma-yoga”; both are correct. But how can “desireless karma-yoga” be formed? What can one do now, and to whom can one say this?

I feel a great sorrow that neither the brothers nor the sisters show curiosity or readiness to know this principle. I do not insist that you accept it. At least learn what it is; whether you accept it is your choice. But let there arise within you an earnest desire to know the principle. In my conviction, none of you is unfit or unqualified to

understand it; every one of you can understand. What can be done, however, for someone who simply does not wish to understand?

The Gītā defines yoga in two places. Equanimity is called yoga:

“Equanimity is called yoga.” (Gītā 2.48)

samatvaṁ yoga ucyate.

And complete disjunction from conjunction with sorrow is called yoga:

“Know as yoga that disjunction from conjunction with sorrow.” (Gītā 6.23)

taṁ vidyād duḥkha-saṁyoga-viyogaṁ yoga-saṁjñitam.

What is equal? Brahman is equal: “For Brahman is flawless and equal” (Gītā 5.19). When is sorrow utterly absent? When supreme bliss is attained. There are many yogas-karma-yoga, jñāna-yoga, bhakti-yoga, haṭha-yoga, rāja-yoga, mantra-yoga, and others. The purport of all is the awakening of the eternal union, the eternal relationship, with Paramātmā. That union between Paramātmā and the individual has always existed. Karma-yoga is that in which action is for the world while union is with Paramātmā. Call it either acting without desire or karma-yoga.

Listener: How can karma-yoga lead to realization of the Supreme Reality?

Swamiji: Attend carefully. Your doubt is: if our actions are performed for the welfare of the world, how can they result in attaining Paramātmā? If one is travelling to Badrinārāyaṇa, how could one arrive at Dvārakā? How could one act in one direction and attain something in another-travel north and arrive south, or

travel south and arrive north? That seems impossible. The doubt is therefore quite natural and entirely reasonable.

First attend to one point. Is the Supreme Reality everywhere or not? Everyone who believes in Bhagavān will answer that Paramātmā is everywhere. This is fundamental. I state four things:

1. Paramātmā is everywhere.
2. Paramātmā is at all times.
3. Paramātmā is in all things.
4. Paramātmā belongs to everyone.

It is not that He is nearer to me and farther from you. He is as near to the worst sinner and wrongdoer as He is to saints, liberated souls, knowers of Reality, and lovers of Bhagavān. Paramātmā is not distant from His side; it is the individual who turns away from Him.

If Paramātmā is everywhere, is He here or not? If He were not here, one could not say He is everywhere-only that He is everywhere except here. Likewise, if He is at all times, is He present now? No one can dare say that He is at all times but not now. If He is in every object, is He in us-in body, life-breath, senses, mind, intellect, and ego, the sense “I am”? If not, one cannot say He is in all things. Can you say that Paramātmā is absent wherever you are? No believer would dare say so. If He belongs to everyone, He belongs to me too; otherwise “everyone” has no meaning. All beings are His portions: “An eternal portion of Myself has become the individual being in the world of living beings” (Gītā 15.7); “The individual soul is an imperishable portion of Īśvara” (Mānas, Uttarakāṇḍa 117.2). Bhagavān calls Himself the friend of every being: “the friend of all beings” (Gītā 5.29). It cannot be that He is not the friend of even

one. How, then, does one attain Him who is everywhere, at all times, in all things, and everyone's own? Practise any one yoga. Since the present subject is karma-yoga, I shall now speak of it.

When will action awaken union-the eternal relationship-with Paramātmā? When we perform no action for ourselves. Eating, drinking, rising, sitting, sleeping, waking, thinking, worship, meditation, and even samādhi must not be done for oneself. Then there is karma-yoga; otherwise there is karma-bhoga, the enjoyment of action. Action for oneself produces enjoyment, not union. This is the fundamental point.

On hearing "perform no action for yourself," a person gets stuck: "If not for myself, for whom?" Forgive me if what I say goes against you: repetition of the Name, austerity, samādhi, and prayer are not to be done for oneself. In our essence we are portions of Paramātmā:

"The individual soul is an imperishable portion of Īśvara-conscious, stainless, and by nature a mass of happiness."
(Mānas, Uttarakāṇḍa 117.2)

īśvara aṁsa jīva abināsi, cetana amala sahaja sukha rāsī.

What needs to be done for that which is conscious, stainless, and a mass of happiness? Nothing. Doing for ourselves is itself bondage. This is difficult and not readily understood by everyone, but whatever is done for oneself binds. Any action has a beginning and an end. Its result too comes into conjunction and later separation. How can such a result serve you, who are eternal?

Attend very deeply. "Do nothing for yourself" is the principle of Vedānta, of the nondual path, of the path of devotion, and indeed of

the philosophers. The individual self is a direct portion of Paramātmā. It neither grows nor diminishes through action: “By action it becomes neither greater nor smaller.” It remains just as it is. The error is to expect that action will make us obtain it. Whatever we do should be for others. All the world’s objects and activities are for others, since both object and activity belong to prakṛti, not to Paramātmā. Paramātmā is beyond both.

Paramātmā is present in every object and activity, yet remains beyond and untouched by all. There is no adhesion in Him. We act and desire a result; that is association with the guṇas, through which birth in higher and lower wombs occurs (Gītā 13.21). The fruit of action is necessarily perishable. A “fruit” is something previously absent which arises and is destroyed; the Supreme Reality therefore cannot be the fruit of action.

The realization born of knowledge is not a fruit; love in devotion is not a fruit; the union of karma-yoga is not a fruit. Whatever is a fruit must perish. Why, then, act? Act to remove attachment to the world. Action can either fulfil attachment or bring it to an end; it should be undertaken only for the latter. We have joined ourselves to the inert, and action should sever that relationship. The severance occurs only when action is for others; action for oneself perpetuates it.

With the gross body serve others and give material things, but desire no fruit. Neither the action nor the object is ours; how, then, could service and charity be for us? With the subtle body contemplate how every being may benefit, how all may attain the highest good, how they may be helped and served. The causal body is called ignorance; disposition predominates there, and beyond it we know nothing. The waking state belongs to the gross body,

dream to the subtle body, and deep sleep to the causal body. All three arise through association with prakṛti. Samādhi belongs to the causal body: no manifestation whatever arises in it; there is complete stillness. Yet even samādhi must not be for us, for samādhi too is an action. Just as *gacchati* (“goes”), *cintayati* (“thinks”), and *dhyāyate* (“meditates”) are actions, so is *samādhīyate* (“enters samādhi”). Doing is action and not doing is also action. Bhagavān says:

“For such a person there is no purpose here in what is done, nor any purpose in what is not done.” (Gītā 3.18)

naiva tasya kṛtenārtho nākṛteneha kaścana.

That is, a great soul perfected through karma-yoga has no personal purpose either in acting or in refraining from action. Neither doing nor not doing is for oneself.

When body and objects are used for others’ welfare, both are purified. When one thinks of others’ welfare, mind and intellect are purified. Bhagavān says that those devoted to the welfare of all beings attain Him:

“Devoted to the welfare of all beings, they attain Me alone.” (Gītā 12.4)

te prāpnuvanti mām eva sarva-bhūta-hite ratāḥ.

“The sages whose impurities are exhausted, whose doubts are cut, whose selves are mastered, and who delight in the welfare of all beings attain the peace of Brahman.” (Gītā 5.25)

labhante brahma-nirvāṇam ṛṣayaḥ kṣīṇa-kalmaṣāḥ |

chinna-dvaidhā yatātmānaḥ sarva-bhūta-hite ratāḥ ||

For the attainment of both the qualified and the unqualified Absolute, the same phrase occurs: “devoted to the welfare of all beings.” No fixed quantity of benefit is demanded; let your delight, inclination, and love be in others’ welfare.

“For those whose minds are governed by the welfare of others, nothing in the world is difficult to obtain.” (Mānas, Araṇyakāṇḍa 31.9)

parahita basa jinha ke mana māhīm, tinha kahum jaga durlabha kachu nāhīm.

For those whose hearts hold the intention of benefiting others, nothing remains to be accomplished.

“Though the vulture was a lowly, flesh-eating bird, the Lord granted him the state for which yogis pray.” (Mānas, Araṇyakāṇḍa 33.2)

gīdha adhama khaga āmiṣa bhogī, gati dīnhīm jo jācata jogī.

Bhagavān gave the vulture the very state yogis implore Him to grant. King Jatāyu assumed a four-armed form and went to Vaikuṇṭha in the form of Hari. Bhagavān said of him, “Through your own deed you obtained that state from Me” (Mānas, Araṇyakāṇḍa 31.8)-“I have done you no favour; your own action won it.” What action? He fought Rāvaṇa to protect Sītā. Hearing her call for help, he saw that the wicked man was carrying away the wife of Śrī Rāma, crest-jewel of Raghu’s line, and cried, “Daughter, do not worry-I am coming!”

He called Sītā, Mother of the universe, his daughter because he was Daśaratha’s friend: “Daśaratha’s daughter-in-law is my own daughter-in-law, my daughter.” He fought Rāvaṇa so fiercely that

Rāvaṇa lost consciousness. When Rāvaṇa finally cut off his wings with a sword, he fell, for a bird's strength lies in its wings. Thus he offered himself for another's welfare and attained the supreme state. Bhagavān did not regard granting that state as a favour of His own.

All materials used in action belong to the world. This gross body of five elements is one part of the gross cosmos; the subtle body is one part of the collective subtle cosmos; the causal body is one part of the causal cosmos. To use the world's materials in action while seeking something for oneself is the cause of great ruin. It is association with the unreal and perishable, and from it come birth and death.

Let me tell you something extraordinary. It makes no difference how much ability, strength, property, or learning you possess. The greatest scholar and the greatest fool alike will be liberated if they perform no action for themselves. Ability cannot accomplish this, for ability arises and perishes, comes and goes; how could it yield the eternal Reality? Fine or poor resources, ability, and qualification are needed where those things operate-in the world. Worldly entitlement and results correspond to one's capacity and effort. None of these is needed for attaining Bhagavān; only renunciation is needed there.

Whatever the circumstance before you-gentle or terrible-Bhagavān can be attained in it. Arjuna asked why he was being engaged in a terrible action like war: "Why do You engage me in this dreadful action?" (Gītā 3.1). War aims all day at cutting down human beings, yet even while performing such violent action a person can attain the highest good. Bhagavān says:

“Having made pleasure and pain, gain and loss, victory and defeat equal, then engage in battle; thus you shall incur no sin.” (Gītā 2.38)

sukha-duḥkhe same kṛtvā lābhālābhau jayājayau |

tato yuddhāya yujyasva naivam pāpam avāpsyasi ||

Sin resides in inequality, not equanimity; equanimity itself is yoga. Established in it, even battle does not bind. In truth, victory and defeat, gain and loss, pleasure and pain do not need to be made equal; by nature they already are. Pleasure seems good while coming and bad while leaving; pain seems bad while coming and good while leaving. Thus on one side pleasure is good and pain is good, and on the other pleasure is bad and pain is bad. What difference remains? Attachment and aversion toward the pair are the chief obstruction in karma-yoga, for they make one adhere to and become bound by action.

Praising karma-yoga, Bhagavān says in Gītā 5.3: “One who neither hates nor desires should be known as an eternal renunciant, for one who is free from pairs of opposites is easily freed from bondage.” The karma-yogin without attachment and aversion is an eternal renunciant. Free of the pairs gain-loss, pleasure-pain, honour-dishonour, praise-blame, life-death, one is easily liberated. All pairs belong to prakṛti; when they cease, establishment in one’s true nature occurs of itself. One becomes free of them when one does not do even the slightest thing for oneself.

When a person acts for himself, he forms a relationship with prakṛti, and that relationship produces birth and death. How can birth and death befall one who does nothing for himself? The merit and sin of all the world’s actions do not accrue to us; only those

actions we do for ourselves accrue to us. If we do nothing for ourselves, neither merit nor sin attaches. If we act or desire anything for ourselves, there will be enjoyment rather than yoga, and bondage through action: “The creature is bound by action.”

I put it simply: if you live in a household, learn the art of living there. If you are a mother-in-law, think, “I am a mother and mother-in-law for my children and daughter-in-law; they are not for me.” If you are a daughter-in-law, “I am for my parents-in-law; they are not for me.” If you are a husband, “I am for my wife; she is not for me.” Hold this one conviction: “I am for them; they are not for me.” Remove the feeling that they exist for you, and domestic conflict will end. This is the true art of living in a household and in the world. If you become a disciple, you become one for the guru; you do not need a guru for your own sake. “The guru is not for me; I am for the guru. My father is not for me; I am for my father. My son is not for me; I am for my son.” All worldly relationships exist only for serving the other; none exists for taking. Close the account of taking altogether. Then He who is everywhere, at all times, everyone’s, and in everyone will be attained.

If you are a renunciant, householders are not for you; you are for them. This small point yields immense benefit. If your intention is the welfare of every being, you will not be bound. It requires no wealth, learning, or special ability. A karma-yogin uses whatever circumstance arises solely for others’ welfare.

Because we formerly acted for our own pleasure, we must now act for others’ happiness; otherwise even that would not be required. Service repays an old debt. If no new debt is taken, what follows? A shopkeeper who wishes to close his shop pays what he owes. If debtors pay him, he accepts; if not, he lets it go. Then the shop can

close. If he insists on collecting every rupee, it cannot. Likewise, benefiting others merely repays our debt; it is nothing to boast about. Take no new debt—that is, desire not even the least pleasure from anyone. With no new debt and the old debt paid, what else could result but liberation?

How much should one benefit another? According to one's capacity. Customs duty is levied on goods and income tax on income; if there are no goods, on what can duty be levied? Do as much for others as you can, and your work is complete. No one can expect what you cannot do. You expect me to teach you, but do those who know me expect Swamiji to give them ten thousand rupees? You expect nothing I do not possess. Would Bhagavān expect of you what you do not possess? Is He not even as understanding as you are? Do not hold back in what you can do.

You possess four things: time, understanding, resources, and capacity or strength. Devote all of each to others' welfare, and the highest good will follow. This alone is what Bhagavān and the world expect. If others demand more, that is their error. Having given all twenty-four hours, where will you find a twenty-fifth? Having devoted all your understanding, resources, and strength, where will more come from? When whatever you possess is regarded not as yours or for you, but as belonging to and existing for others, nonattachment arises of itself. Nonattachment is our very nature: "This Person is indeed unattached" (Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad 4.3.15).

The nonattachment a jñāna-yogin obtains through discrimination is obtained by a karma-yogin through action for others. Read and memorize these two verses attentively:

“Only the immature, not the wise, speak of Sāṅkhya and yoga as different. One who is rightly established in even one obtains the fruit of both. The state attained by the followers of Sāṅkhya is also reached by the followers of yoga. One who sees Sāṅkhya and yoga as one truly sees.” (Gītā 5.4-5)

*sāṅkhya-yogau prthag bālāḥ pravadanti na paṇḍitāḥ |
ekam apy āsthitaḥ samyag ubhayor vindate phalam ||
yat sāṅkhyaiḥ prāpyate sthānaṁ tad yogair api gamyate |
ekaṁ sāṅkhyam ca yogaṁ ca yaḥ paśyati sa paśyati ||*

The printed explanation says that only the unwise distinguish Sāṅkhya, the yoga of knowledge, from karma-yoga. One firmly established in either attains the Supreme Reality, the fruit of both. Karma-yogins attain the same Reality as jñāna-yogins; one who sees their result as one sees correctly.

No educated person can reflect on these verses and still dispute this. There is no harm in saying that liberation requires knowledge and that karma-yoga removes the impurity of the inner faculty; I too accept that principle. But I add that karma-yoga, jñāna-yoga, and bhakti-yoga can each independently liberate. The Gītā states clearly:

“Renunciation is difficult to attain without yoga, O mighty-armed one; the contemplative sage joined to yoga swiftly attains Brahman.” (Gītā 5.6)

*sannyāśas tu mahā-bāho duḥkham āptum ayogataḥ |
yoga-yukto munir brahma na cireṇādhigacchati ||*

The printed explanation reads: “O mighty-armed one, jñāna-yoga is difficult to perfect without karma-yoga; the reflective karma-yogin swiftly attains Brahman.”

Therefore renounce self-interest, pride, possessiveness, attachment, and desire, for these join us to the world. Remember: our relationship with the world is one we ourselves construct; our relationship with Paramātmā is self-evident and natural. No object, body, or other person has bound you or joined itself to you; you joined yourself to them. You can therefore relinquish that bond. Money never said, “We are yours and you are ours”; a house never said so. You alone said, “my money, my house, my body, my mind, my intellect, my ego.” You alone must relinquish the possessiveness. Prakṛti and its products, body and world, never called you theirs. They are rapidly passing away. Regarding them as yours is bondage. Regard them as not yours and devote them to service: their current will flow toward the world, while you remain untouched.

Listener: What should be done to remove the ignorance within?

Swamiji: If action performed through the gross body, thought through the subtle body, and even samādhi through the causal body are all solely for the world’s welfare, all ignorance will disappear. The relationship with inert matter will be severed and the conscious Reality will awaken of itself.

The wealth and position you possess are not for you at all. To regard them as yours is dishonesty; only this dishonesty must be removed. You call yourself a seeker yet cannot relinquish dishonesty while desiring liberation! To regard the gross, subtle, or causal body as

yours is dishonesty. All three belong in relationship to the world, not to you. They are not yours, and you are not theirs.

If the fruit of sin, sorrow, comes unasked, why should the fruit of merit, pleasure, not come unasked? It will be compelled to come. Do you ever desire or strive for illness? Do you ask an astrologer, “Why has illness not come? Please see when it will”? Do you wish, “No one in our home has died for five or seven years; who will die, and when?” Or, “Business has suffered no loss for ten years; when will it happen?” Do you strive for loss? Yet it comes. Just as pain comes undesired, pleasure too comes undesired; why desire it?

Could one be Bhagavān who forces us to suffer the fruits of sin yet makes us grovel for the fruits of merit? If He wants to keep us alive, let Him give bread; otherwise we have no need to live. Why ask Him for anything? His concern is greater than ours. Become free of doubt, worry, fear, and grief. With no doubt, worry, fear, or grief, diligently perform your duty:

“Therefore, constantly perform the action that ought to be done, without attachment; for by acting without attachment a person attains the Supreme. Janaka and others attained perfection through action alone. You too ought to act, keeping the welfare and order of the world in view.” (Gītā 3.19-20)

*tasmād asaktaḥ satataṁ kāryaṁ karma samācara |
asakto hy ācāraṁ karma param āpnoti pūruṣaḥ ||
karmaṇaiva hi saṁsiddhim āsthitā janakādayaḥ |
loka-saṅgraham evāpi sampaśyan kartum arhasi ||*

The printed gloss says: “Constantly and thoroughly perform your duty without attachment, for a person acting without attachment

attains Paramātmā. King Janaka and many other great souls attained supreme perfection through action itself. Therefore, with the maintenance of the world in view, you too should act without desire.”

Karma-yoga seems difficult because it is not widely taught, books on it are scarce, and those who understand it are scarce. In reality it is not difficult; it is very easy and straightforward. If you wish to practise it, it becomes easy. Desire makes it seem difficult at first; once desire is removed, it becomes easy. Karma-yoga is extraordinary.

The Gītā teaches something sublime: wherever you are, in whatever social order, stage of life, or circumstance, use that very circumstance rightly and liberation will follow. There is no need to go elsewhere or change social order, stage of life, sect, country, or dress. Only the inner attitude must change. Make right use of the circumstance already received.



An Accessible Means

॥ ॐ Hari ॥

While instructing the children of the asuras, Prahlāda asks what great effort is required to attain Bhagavān:

“What excessive exertion is required, O children of the asuras?”
(Śrīmad Bhāgavata 7.7.38)

ko 'ti-prayāso 'sura-bālakāḥ.

Regarding objects of the senses, note that worldly things do not exist in every place and at every time; special effort is needed to obtain them. Paramātmā, however, is in every place and time, every person and event. There is no place, time, person, or object in which He is absent. Only an intense desire is needed to attain Him. If something is already beside us, we merely turn our gaze and see it. To see Paramātmā, even turning the gaze is unnecessary, for He is everywhere, outside and within. Desire to attain Him and attain Him!

No effort is required for attaining Paramātmā; only longing is required, and even that longing is not difficult. It is natural and spontaneous in every human being, for everyone experiences some deficiency within. The mistake is to seek its fulfilment from the world. Not everyone has obtained all worldly objects, nor ever will. Even if acquired, they will not remain; and if they remain, you will not. Separation is inevitable. There was separation before and there will be separation afterward; the conjunction seen in between has no real existence. Yet we form a relationship with those things and desire them. This is a very great error.

Your chief mistake is assuming identity with the body: “This body is me, and it is mine.” You are not the body. If you were, you would never die; or if you died, you would take the body with you. If a corpse left after death were you, you would remain in it. But neither does the body accompany us nor do we remain with it. It is therefore wrong both to regard oneself as the body and to call the body one’s own. We cannot keep it as we wish; it does not obey us. How, then, is it ours? If even the body is not ours, how could wealth, property, splendour, and family be ours? The world is not ours; Bhagavān alone is ours. What is difficult in accepting this? Calling the world ours is precisely what makes it difficult to call Paramātmā—who truly is ours—our own.

Scripture says Paramātmā is ours, while your own experience says the world is not. You may not yet be able to accept this, but do not lose heart or decide that you cannot accept it. Even if it does not yet feel true, keep firm the fact that “I am the body and the body is mine” is not reality. Do not worry whether it enters your conviction or experience; do not discard the truth.

The body is neither “I” nor “mine,” and the truth is that I belong to Bhagavān and Bhagavān is mine. If we cannot accept what is true, that is our weakness. How can our failure to accept a truth make it false?

Listener: How do we discard this truth?

Swamiji: Through the senses and intellect we see objects, then regard them as real and ours; that causes the truth to be discarded. If you cannot yet renounce possessiveness toward them, let that be. But at least honour the truth that body and world are not yours. If Bhagavān is unseen, so be it; the statement “Bhagavān is ours and

we are Bhagavān's" remains true. Even if Brahmā himself were to tell you, "You belong to the world and the world is yours; you do not belong to Bhagavān and Bhagavān is not yours," plainly reply, "Sir, I do not accept this. It may not yet be my experience or seem entirely convincing, but the opposite is true." Bhagavān Himself says:

"An eternal portion of Myself has become the individual being in the world of living beings." (Gītā 15.7)

mamaivāṁśo jīva-loke.

Saints say the same:

"The individual soul is an imperishable portion of Īśvara." (Mānas, Uttarakāṇḍa 117.2)

īśvara aṁśa jīva abināsi.

With folded hands I therefore ask this favour: accept my words today. Acceptance may bring no immediately visible change; hunger and thirst, attachment and aversion may remain as before. Nevertheless, do not discard this truth. Accept that we belong only to Bhagavān; then do not care whether experience or realization has yet come. In the end it will become firm because it is true.

It is utterly true: "Giridhara Gopāla alone is mine; no one else." What strain is there in accepting it? You already know how to accept someone as friend, guru, and so on. You also know how to cease accepting: before marriage you called yourself unmarried, and afterward you ceased doing so. If you leave household life and become a renunciant, you cease calling house and family yours and accept the guru as your own. Everyone knows both acceptance and

nonacceptance. Apply that faculty now only to Bhagavān, not to the world.

Our mistake is that while listening we accept the truth, but later dismiss it and again accept as true what is false. Brothers and sisters also say, “We forget this.” If you have accepted it firmly, it does not matter if it is not consciously remembered; it will remain known without deliberate recollection. You accept that you are now in Vṛndāvana. Has anyone repeated on a rosary, “I am in Vṛndāvana”? Once accepted, do you repeatedly remind yourself? If asked, you immediately answer that you are in Vṛndāvana. Forgetfulness would mean starting to believe you are in Haridwar. Thus I do not call absence from active memory forgetting. If “I belong to Bhagavān” is not consciously remembered, that is no error; the error is accepting, “I do not belong to Bhagavān; I belong to the world.”

Once you have sincerely accepted that you belong to Bhagavān, you need not keep recalling it. What you should remember is His Name: repeat it, remember it, sing it, meditate on His līlās, and contemplate His form. Accept Bhagavān as your own once and leave the matter settled. Never doubt that you are His, whether or not the conviction feels vivid or experience has arisen.

Many ask, “What difference has appeared in your life?” It does not matter if nothing changes in measure, weight, colour, or manner. But do not discard the truth through excuses: “I cannot accept it; I do not remember; I am unfit, unqualified, or unworthy; I have found neither guru nor saint; the time is wrong, it is Kali-yuga, the atmosphere is bad, the company is poor.” If you keep devising reasons to reject it, perfection will not come. If you do not reject it, perfection must come-in days, months, or perhaps years. If you

continue taking worldly pleasure it will take much longer, but ultimately it will certainly be accomplished.

A farmer sows seed and becomes unworried; the seed sprouts by itself. If he repeatedly digs it up to inspect it, it will never sprout.

A story tells of monkeys eating mangoes in an orchard. The watchmen drove them away with stones, but as they fled each monkey carried one mango in its mouth and another in its hand. They held a meeting: “Those villains do not let us eat mangoes!” Some wiser monkeys replied, “Why would they let us eat in their orchard? If we plant our own, no one will stop us.” They already had the stones; they would bury and water them, grow an orchard, and eat abundantly. The proposal passed unanimously. They buried the stones beside a river, but repeatedly dug them up to see whether mangoes had appeared and buried them again. They continued until evening. Could an orchard grow that way?

To farm, sow and water the seed, then be at ease. If even something not yet present will arise when left undisturbed, why should a truth fail to establish itself? “We belong to Bhagavān and Bhagavān is ours” is true and self-evident. What labour, force, learning, or ability does it require? The simple truth is: we are Bhagavān’s and He is ours; we do not belong to the world and the world is not ours. Do not dig this conviction up like the mango stone by repeatedly testing whether any change or sprout has appeared. The tree will grow, bear mangoes, and all will be well. Please do not uproot the conviction. This is an exceedingly easy way to attain Bhagavān: simply do not yourself abandon the certainty, “I am Bhagavān’s and Bhagavān is mine.”

These brothers sitting here once regarded themselves as unmarried. After marriage they said they were no longer bachelors. If someone asks, “Are you married?” do they answer, “Wait, let me think. Not this year, nor last year-it was twenty years ago. Ah yes, now I remember: I am married”? They do not, because once the marriage happened, it happened; the status is accepted. Even in a dream they would say they are married. Likewise, “I belong to Paramātmā and Paramātmā is mine” will remain known without active recollection. Error arises only when you think, “I am not Paramātmā’s and He is not mine because my conduct and qualities are bad, I have neither faith nor trust in Him.” Do not erect such barriers. Even if faith, trust, and remembrance are absent, no change has appeared, and life has not improved at all, do not discard the conviction that you are Bhagavān’s and Bhagavān is yours.

I have asked those whom I regard as great souls. They said that when a person accepts Paramātmā as his own, the responsibility for making Himself known falls upon Paramātmā, for He alone can make Himself known; we cannot know Him. Where our capacity ends, Bhagavān’s capacity operates. How wonderful that you possess the ability to accept, “I am Bhagavān’s and He is mine; I am not the world’s and the world is not mine.” Apply all the ability you possess; Bhagavān will supply what you lack-“Listen, I have found Rāma to be the strength of the powerless.” To the extent that you are powerless, His strength acts. But if you fail to use the strength you do possess, the fault is yours, not His. You accept some people as your own and others as not your own; why not apply that ability to Bhagavān?

Bhagavān expects only what you can do, never what you cannot. Would you expect a small child to carry a sack of wheat? You expect only what the child can do. Is Bhagavān not even that honest?

Would He command you to accept what you cannot accept? Accept as much as you can. The discipline taught today is so simple and easy that everyone can practise it—educated or uneducated, man or woman, well-conducted or ill-conducted, virtuous or vicious, good or wicked.

Concerning a devoted wife it is said:

“Her one dharma, one vow, and one rule is love in body, speech, and mind for her husband’s feet.” (Mānas, Araṇyakāṇḍa 5.10)

ekai dharma eka brata nemā, kāyaṁ bacana mana pati pada premā.

If the conviction “he is my husband” is firm, whatever the husband may be like, she becomes a devoted wife. Was Rāvaṇa some exceptional saint? Yet Mandodarī fulfilled her wifely dharma, and through its power knew Rāma’s greatness while Rāvaṇa refused to accept it even when told. Whence came such knowledge? From fidelity to her dharma. Could Bhagavān say, “Your husband is not virtuous; therefore you will not attain the highest good”? He cannot. What can she do if he is not virtuous? If she fulfils her dharma, Bhagavān will give its full greatness:

“Without labour, the woman attains the supreme state.” (Mānas, Araṇyakāṇḍa 5.18)

binu śrama nāri parama gati lahaī.

The responsibility for attaining that state is not hers; it belongs to scripture, the sages, saints, and Bhagavān. By observing her dharma she obeys their command, so they must secure her highest good. If the husband lacks merit, how is that her fault? Her parents gave her

in marriage and he became her husband. Her fault would arise only if she failed to observe her own dharma.

Likewise, if you refuse to accept “I am Bhagavān’s and Bhagavān is mine,” the fault is yours. But if you sincerely wish to accept it and cannot yet do so, there is no cause for worry. Apply your full strength. At least do not adopt the opposite conviction or discard this one. I have told you a deeply intimate truth.

Accept only this much: “I am Bhagavān’s and Bhagavān is mine.” What must follow will follow by itself. Having accepted it, become free of alternatives and doubt. Then make whatever effort you can: repeat the Name, sing kīrtana, attend satsang, study sacred works, visit temples, and behold the sacred image. Do not act against Bhagavān or scripture. Do as much as lies within your power. Let this conviction never move, whether adversity or prosperity comes, whether others approve or oppose. It is true; therefore I have accepted it once and for all. Everything else is unripe and uncertain.

One may ask: “What if I do this but do not attain Bhagavān?” What magnificent achievement have you made so far that would now be lost? Only benefit can follow. Can anyone say what harm would arise? There will be none, and I do not deceive you. Because this is true, it must establish itself. How long can falsehood remain? Does calling body and world yours make them yours? They never were and never will be. If you call them yours, you will suffer and weep. Instead of accepting the truth only after they betray you, accept it now at my word. Where is the deception? Even if it were deception, you have been deceived so often—be deceived once at my request! But if anyone sees any deception, speak. There is none at all; apart from benefit, there is not the slightest loss.

I am not alone in saying this. Bhagavān Himself says, “An eternal portion of Myself has become the individual being in the world of living beings” (Gītā 15.7), and the saints say, “The individual soul is an imperishable portion of Īśvara” (Mānas, Uttarakāṇḍa 117.2). Hold this very firmly. It is a principle settled by the saints. Saints and great souls practised and verified it, then graciously wrote and told it for us. If a father earns wealth and gives it to his son, what labour has the son borne? Saints have likewise given us their earned capital. Our duty is now to preserve it and not throw it away. It is discarded through what we see and do: we call the perceptions and actions of senses and intellect true, while treating the words of Bhagavān and the saints as uncertain. That is the mistake. What appears does not truly exist. Neither action nor its fruit is eternal. Relying on them, do not dishonour, throttle, or violate truth. Violence against truth does not injure truth; it injures you and causes your own fall. Truth remains truth and can never cease:

“What is real never comes not to be.” (Gītā 2.16)

nābhāvo vidyate sataḥ.

If you do not accept it, you will not receive its benefit. Therefore accept: “I am Bhagavān’s and Bhagavān is mine.” This is exceedingly simple and of the highest order. Through it everything will be accomplished.

