



CHATURVIDHA ANANDNIRJHAR

(The Four Paths To Happiness)

- By Swami Shri Girishanandji

EDITOR'S NOTE

A week long session on the Shrimad Bhagwad Gita was organized at the Ashram of Param Pujya Swami Dayanandji, in the summer of 1998. The Ashram is situated in the Purani Jhadi at Rishikesh.

Param Pujya Swami Girishanandji was asked to speak on the four paths to happiness, as described in four shlokas in the twelfth Chapter of the Gita. The clarifications in his discourse contain the essence of our scriptures, including the Shrimad Bhagwat Mahapurana. Any person reading this succinct rendering will obtain a concentrated capsule of the timeless wisdom of the Upanishads.

The book has been sponsored by Shri Ravin Jhunjhunwala and Smt. Sheela Jhunjhunwala, as part of the celebrations of the first anniversary of the inauguration of the Temple of Shri Rameshwar Mahadev, at the Saket Dham Ashram in Jabalpur. The transcription was undertaken by Smt. Sheela Jhunjhunwala, translated by Smt. Purnima L. Toolsidass and typed by Shri Pankaj Roy. It is an offering to the Lord who abides in all, and comes in the form of His Sants, to banish our nescience and help us lead happier lives.

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शान्तं शाश्वतमप्रमेयमनधं निर्वाणशान्तिप्रदम्
ब्रह्माशम्भुफणीन्द्रसेव्यमनिशं वेदान्तवेद्यं विभुम्।
रामाख्यं जगदीश्वरं सुरगुरुं मायामनुष्यं हरिं
वन्देऽहं करुणाकरं रघुवरं भूपालचूडामणिम् ॥

शंकरं शंकराचार्यं केशवं बादरायणम्
सूत्रभाष्य कृतौ वन्दे भगवन्तौ पुनः पुनः ।
ईश्वरो गुरुरात्मेति मूर्ति भेदविभागिने
व्योमवत् व्याप्त देहाय दक्षिणामूर्तये नमः ॥

*Shaantam shaashvatamaprame `yamanagham nirvaanashaantipradam
Brahmaashambhufane`ndrase vyamanisham ve`daantavedyam vibhum,
Raamaakhyam jagadeeshvaram suragurum maayaamanushyam harim
Vande `ham karunaakaram raghuvaram bhoopaalachoodaamanim.*

*Shankaramshankaraachaaryam keshavam baadaraayanam sootrabhaashya
kritau vande ` bhagavnatau punah punah,
Eeshvaro gururaatme`ti moortibhe`davibhaagine` vyomavat vyaapta de `haaya
dakshinaamoortaye` namah.*

I cannot comment upon the other points in the introduction given by Swami Shri Govindanandji, but I am in full agreement regarding obtaining the tangible experience of the Grace of our Guru.

The topic of the Gopis' jealousy for the flute of Shri Krishna was once being discussed at Vrindavan. The grievance of the Gopis was, "In spite of all the साधन-भजन *saadhan-bhajan* (efforts for spiritual progress, and singing the glories of the Lord) we do, Shyamsundar does not accept us. Yet He keeps this बाँसूरी *baansuri* (the flute made of a bamboo reed) with Himself all twenty-four hours."

This shloka is given in the Venu Geet:

गोप्यः किमाचरदयं कुशलं स्म वेणुः

(भा० १०.२१.९)

*Gopyah kimaacharadayam ` kushalam sma ve `nuh.
(Bhagwat 10. 21. 9)*

"What kind of a साधना *saadhanaa* has this वेणुः *ve `nu* (flute) done, that she is granted this constant proximity with the Lord?"

Many learned people were present when this point was raised. The Bhagwat and other scriptures give a number of explanations regarding this question. Amongst the learned people present was a highly evolved Sant, whose comment appealed greatly to me.

Two of the qualities deemed essential in a Guru, are श्रोत्रीय *shrotreeya* (one who has full knowledge of the scriptures) and ब्रह्मनिष्ठ *Brahmanishtha* (one who has experienced the Brahman). These qualities are imperative for the Guru to be able to remove any doubts his disciple may have. A person may have learning, but unless he has experienced the oneness of the Brahman he will not be able to clear up all the doubts of a seeker.

This Sant had worshipped Shri Krishna, and also studied the scriptures. The question raised was, “What special quality did the Venu have, which enabled her to get this great good fortune?” This Sant said, “It seems to me that the absence of any quality was the Venu’s special quality.” The beauty of this answer appealed greatly to me.

You know that a flute is completely hollow. There is nothing inside it. It will not play if there is anything inside it. So, this Sant said, “The note of Shri Krishna will be heard only from one whose heart is completely empty of anything worldly. How can Shri Krishna’s music be heard if the heart is filled with all sorts of worldly clamor?”

Our Maharajji often said, “Our heart has become a cross-road. So many people come and go in it. Friends, and enemies, and factors which cause attractions and aversions – all these come into our heart, and leave it. And yet we expect to hear the notes of the Lord’s music amid all this clamor?” You can’t even hear normal music if you stand at a crossing. How is it possible to hear the sound of the Lord’s music?

“If you invite someone to stay with you,” said our Guruji, “you arrange a separate guest room for him. You empty out all the clutter and place it somewhere else, so that your guest can be comfortable. And yet, you want the most important guest in the world – the Lord – to come into your heart, without removing all the rubbish you have filled it with? How can you expect Him to come? Even an ordinary guest will refuse your hospitality if you offer him a dirty room filled with all kinds of clutter. He may stay for one night, out of politeness, but he will make some excuse to leave the very next day.”

What I wish to say is that Swamiji’s words about my अध्ययन *adhyayana* (studies) are true. My studies were extensive, but the Lord graced me by showing me the difference between what can be attained through individual effort, and how much more can be attained by the Grace of the Guru and the Ishwara.

I studied Sanskrit for eight years, as per Maharajji’s guidance. After that – and Swamiji knows about this – I was so ill for two years that I forgot all that I had learnt. If I picked up one of my books, I could remember having studied it, but I could no longer depend on my memory to recite all the passages I had known by heart.

Since I was unable to study, the next two years were spent in traveling to holy places and meeting many Sants. They blessed me, and graced me by preaching to me, and guiding my progress towards the Ishwara. Thakurji made me understand how limited the achievements of personal effort are, and how unlimited are the benefits obtained from the Grace of the Ishwara and the Guru. So, the study – the अध्ययन *adhyayan*, as we call it – is just a निमित्त *nimitta* (chosen instrument). One thing is certain, and that is the tangible experience of the Grace of the Guru and the Ishwara. The Guru and the Ishwara are two only in name. In point of fact they are one, and their Grace can be experienced anywhere, everywhere, and under all circumstances.

Now, let us give some thought to our own lives. The purpose of organizing discourses, Satsang, or any Dharmik activity is to obtain true happiness and be free from worldly problems. How is this achieved? Before I came to Vrindavan, I was with a highly elevated Mahatma, who possessed great spiritual powers. He was popularly known as Pujya Roti Ram Baba, although he had another, proper name. He lived in the forest. I stayed with him, serving him, for about one and a half years, before coming to Vrindavan. Baba had no formal education. He was born with a strong natural renunciation. He would say, “मसि कागद छुयो नहीं, कलम गही नहीं हाथ” “*Masi kagad chooyo naheen, kalam gahee naheen haath*” – my condition is such that I have never picked up a paper or a pen.” His experiences, however, were absolutely amazing! He would say, “Look, my brother, the Lord has said four shlokas in the Gita, for the removal of dilemmas, for obtaining Him, or obtaining the direct experience of the Atma.” You can choose how you want to put it – they all mean the same thing. Only the words are different. Whether you call it आत्मानुसन्धान *aatmaanusandhaana* (trying to find the Atma), आत्मसाक्षात्कार *aatmasaakshaatkaara* (having the experience of the Atma), ईश्वर दर्शन *eeshvar darshan* (getting a vision of the Ishwara), or being free from dilemmas – all these different expressions are used to indicate the different paths which lead to the same experience simultaneously. The tangible experience of the Ishwara automatically results in आत्मानुभूति *aatmaanubhooti* – the direct experience of the Atma and the simultaneous dispelling of all doubts. तत्त्वानुभूति *Tattvaanubhooti* (the experience of the essence of the Brahman) takes place as the tangible experience of the Ishwara (the Lord with attributes) and the liberation from all doubts. So, Baba would say, “My brother, there are four shlokas in the Gita,” and he would quote the four shlokas of the twelfth Chapter.

The Lord has spoken the four verses in this order:

मयेव मन आधत्त्व मयि बुद्धि निवेशय
निवसिष्यसि मयेव अत ऊर्ध्वं न संशयः
(गीता० १२.८)

Maiye `va mana aadhatsva mayi buddhim nive `shaya,

Nivasishyasi maiye 'va ata urdhvam na sanshayah.
(Gita 12. 8)

Baba would say, “My brother, these methods have been given for the उत्तम अधिकारी *uttam adhikaari* (a devotee of the highest level). ‘Place your mind in Me, and fix your intellect on Me.’ When this state has been achieved, then – निवसिष्यसि मय्येव अत ऊ धर्व *nivasishyasi maiye 'va ata urdhvam*. ‘Ata urdhvam’ means, ‘once you have attained this state, your abode will be in My form. There is no doubt about this.’

Bhagwan Shakaracharya’s explanation of the word मय्येव ‘*maiye 'va*’ is, मयि विश्वरूपे ‘*Mayi vishvaroope*’ - fix your mind and intellect on My विराट *Viraat* form – My universal form – which is the entire Creation.’ The Bhagwat also gives the same, traditional principle. The Bhagwat describes how we generally complain about our inability to keep the mind focused on Thakurji, Shri Rama, Shri Krishna, or the Lord Shankar, when we sit for meditation. The mind is so wayward that it will be focused when you work, but will start wandering as soon as you sit down to meditate.

“Where does the mind go to?” is the question raised in the second Canto of the Bhagwat.

The mind goes to either one of two places; either it goes to the one you love, or it goes to the one you hate. In simple terms, your mind will go either to your friend or to your enemy. People think of these two, and not about any of the others who come in-between. So, the purport of seeing the Lord in His Virat form is that धर्म dharma is placed on the Lord’s chest, and अधर्म *adharma* (that, which is contrary to Dharma) is placed on the Lord’s back. Thus, the sight of a noble person will give rise to the thought, “This is the Lord’s heart,” while the sight of a wicked person will give rise to the thought, “This is the Lord’s back.” The people – noble and wicked – will vanish, because you will be seeing only the Lord.

What will be the result of this? The राग द्वेष *raga-dve'sha* (attachment and aversion) in the mind will be reduced drastically. It is not that they will be totally destroyed. That can happen only when the person has the direct experience of the Atma, because then no one, except the all pervading Atma, remains. However, the weakening of worldly attachments and aversions will result in the mind’s remaining focused on the Lord. There will no longer be any inclination towards any friend, nor any feeling of enmity. Your mind will be seated within your Self, and you will be able to carry out your साधन-भजन *saadhan-bhajan*. You will enjoy meditating effortlessly on the Lord. So, विश्वरूपे *Vishvaroope* (as the world), विराटरूपे *viraataroope* (in the Virat form) of the Lord, is what we should focus on. The Lord says, “Fix your mind on My Vishvaroopa – My universal form.” That means, all that is visible to the eye. It is said that the mountains are the bones of the Lord’s Virat form, the trees are the short hairs of His skin, and the rivers are His veins. Once you view the

entire Creation as the form of the Lord, is it possible to feel that you exist outside Him? That is not possible! What, then?

The answer encompasses the Vedanta Prasthanam. Our Maharajji has written, “This repeated use of the word मयि ‘Mayi’ (on Me) – as in मत्येव *mayie`va* – means that if anything exists apart from our Atma, then you can consider it to be the world you see when you are awake. See the Lord’s Vishwaroopa as being indicated by ‘mayi’. Or else, see the Ishta (the chosen image for worship), or see the Virat form.” Maharajshri tells us that the Lord is telling us to fix our mind and intellect on this ‘mayi’.

Now, this ‘mayi’ – which means ‘in Me’ – is separate from your Atma; and if your sadhana (effort for spiritual progress) is of a high level, then you see the Lord as being the world around you. Now, we return to the same point. I accept that the residue of the attachments and aversions in your life are negligible, and that your mind and intellect are fixed on Him. ‘However,’ asks Maharajji, “what happens when you sleep?” Where will your intellect go while you slumber? Will it go to the Vishvaroopa, or into the Virat, or will it come and immerse itself into its own Atma? Where will it go?”

The answer is that the principle which applies to the waking state does not apply to the sleeping state. It is impractical to think that the Lord is telling us to fix our mind and intellect on Him all twenty four hours. Our Shri Maharajji says, “The intellect is a devoted wife. She may not be around to work for you during the day, but she cannot stay anywhere except with her husband – the Atma – at night. She has to return to him; she will come back and be with him at night.”

So, then, what does that mean? The natural, actual meaning of ‘mayi’ is the form of our Atma. It does not mean the Atma attached to separate individuals. The Jeevatma (the subtle ego of individual identity) is often called the Atma, but it is not this which is being referred to here. The Atma referred to here, is the indivisible Atma which is present in all forms. When the mind and the intellect are focused on that universal, indivisible Atma, then they will only have the appearance of being ‘the mind’ and ‘the intellect’, because the only reality in existence is the Atma, and nothing else. Hence, it is said that the best method is that you realize that doubts and dilemmas will cease to exist once everything is known to be our own Atma.

There was a Mahatma who would say, “My brother, the scriptures have a number of definitions of अविद्या *avidyaa* (nescience or ignorance).” I was just reading the Patanjali Yoga Sutra. This is one of the advantages of coming here with Swamiji – he would continue with his chanting, and I would sit near him. The Patanjali Yoga Sutra also contains a definition of *avidya* –

अनित्याशुचिदुःखानात्मसु नित्यशुचिसुखात्मख्यातिरविद्या

Anityaashuchidukhaanaatmasu nityashuchisukhaatmakhyaatiravidya.

That means, avidya is when you accept something which is transient, potentially sorrowful, impure, or अनात्मा *anaatmaa* (that which is other than the Atma) to be the eternal, pristine, and blissful Atma. This is one of the many descriptions of avidya.

One Sant used to say, “What is avidya? Avidya is the समस्या *samasyaa* (problem) of life.” Whatever problems you may have, they are all rooted in avidya. Avidya means tension. Avidya means depression. These are the results of ignorance or nescience. If we are freed from avidya, and can see everything and everyone in our Atma, then there will be no factor which can cause tension for us.

Do you have tension with yourself, or with someone else? Who do you have tension with? Well, all right. You may not be having any tension with anybody, but I have had this experience. You need not talk about it, if you do not have tension, but think for yourself, whether there is tension with another person, or there is tension with oneself. Think that you are talking about me; but will the tension be with myself, or will it be with somebody else? It will be with somebody else, won't it?

And, who do we get angry with? Do we get angry with ourselves, or do we get angry with others? If we break something, we will be quick to make excuses for our mistake. We will say, “I slipped,” or “such lapses occur”, or “it is human nature to make mistakes.” However, what if someone else breaks our vessel? Then, we will not be so forgiving! Our Guruji used to say that a great many problems would be solved if only we learnt to forgive others the way we forgive ourselves! So, anger is for others, greed is for others, vanity is towards others, tension is with others, and envy will also be for others.

What does this indicate? We should keep testing ourselves as we progress. What does it mean, to be a ‘sadhak’ (one who strives for spiritual progress)? A sadhak is one who does not look at the world. Our Shri Maharajji used to say, “Who is a संसारी *sansaari* (worldly person), and who is a sadhak? A sansari is one who notices the faults and virtues of other people, and is critical of their habits and behavior. A sadhak is one who examines his own habits and behavior, questioning his role in any problem what crops up. “Has there been any lapse on my part?” asks the sadhak to himself. “Can I improve in any way, to solve the problem?” Thus, an introspective person is called a sadhak.

What does this imply? If – by the grace of God, your life contains the four achievements called the ‘sadhana chatushtaya’ which are विवेक *vive'k* (discrimination), वैराग्य *vairagya* (detachment), षट्संपत्ति *shat-sampatti* (the six qualities of mental, and physical restraint, lack of interest in worldly pleasures, faith, tolerance, and spiritual understanding), and मुमुक्षा *mumukshaa* (a longing to be free of the cycle of rebirth)]; and if you feel that you receive something of value when you listen to Vedanta, then test yourself by observing whether you get annoyed with others. If you have obtained आत्मदृष्टि *aatmadrishti* (the vision that everything is the one, indivisible Atma), you will not feel any anger. Why is

that? Because one does not get angry with oneself. To attain आत्मदृष्टि *aatmadrishti* is to see the essence of one's own Self.

Swamiji narrates an incident about Puja Udiya Babaji Maharaj. He was the Guru of our Guruji. A man once started to abuse him. Another person present, told Baba, "This man is abusing you."

"My son," replied Baba, "it is I, in that form, who is abusing myself."

What a fantastic feeling to have! If you have indeed become free of avidya, and honestly see the existence of only your own self in all – because it is a fact that everything is our Atma – only then can you have a feeling like Baba.

What is there in your antahkaran (the four-fold mind composed of the emotional mind, intellect, inclinations, and subtle ego)? The important factor is the experience, or reaction, of your mind, is it not? Even an ant is our Atma. So are an elephant and a tree. Can you say that the tree is something other than the Atma? If our Atma was like the tree, what difference would there be, between us and trees? The important thing is what we experience in our antahkaran, even though it is true that the Atma is everything there is.

A Thakur Saheb (wealthy land owner) came to our Shri Roti Ram Baba, wearing yellow garments. Baba was in a humorous mood, and said, "Thakur, you seem to be changing your colors! Are you inclined to take Sanyas?"

Thakur Saheb belonged to the Kshetriya (warrior) caste, and came from a Royal family. He had an enormous moustache. He said, "Baba, if I obtain the experience of being the Atma, I am prepared to take Sanyas this very day."

Now, see what the reply of a Mahatma – who has achieved Self-realization – is like. The thoughts have their roots in the scriptures, but the words used by such Sants are not to be found there. That is why the scriptures have been called the ocean, and the Sants have been called the clouds. The water comes from the sea, but when does it become sweet? When the clouds shower it upon us. You can't use sea water directly. Mumbai has sea on all sides, but when the rains are delayed, the authorities order people to leave the city. Why is this order given, when the city is surrounded by the sea? It is because only sweet water can be used. The salty water of the sea must be gathered up by the clouds, and showered down after being made suitable to be used by us.

There are many scriptures. Our Maharajji often said, "If you imagine that you can read the 'Brahma Sutra', and get the Brahman out of its pages – well, that is not possible! Yes, you can obtain the Brahman when you get a Sadguru (a true Guru) who possesses the capacity to give you the Brahman which is described in the 'Brahma Sutra'. Your Guru will say, "This is the Brahman. This is the Tattva (essence)." So, one cannot get anything from just the script or a book. Wisdom and understanding – or true knowledge – come from the unique viewpoints of enlightened Mahatmas."

When Thakur Saheb expressed his willingness to take Sanyas if he obtained the experience of being the Brahman, Baba said, "Even when you do not experience being the Brahman, you are the Brahman." What does 'even when you do not

experience' indicate? It indicates that you do not have to become the Brahman; you are the Brahman already. A person who becomes the Brahman will, one day, stop being the Brahman. A status which is achieved, is lost in due course. So, you are not to become the Brahman. You are to free yourself from the false impression that you are not the Brahman. So, where does that take us? Let us return to our main topic.

In the first shloka, the Lord says, " If the devotee is of the highest level, he can free himself permanently and completely from life's problems, by fixing his mind and intellect on the Universal form of the Atma."

What happens after that? All that happens is good, if he is a कृतोपास्ति *kritopaasti* (has already undertaken extensive worship), and has the four attributes called साधन चतुष्क्य *saadhan chatushtaya*. The life of a person is fulfilled, when he begins to have this experience through listening to Vedanta, pondering upon spiritual philosophy, and making the mind focus repeatedly on the Lord. However, if he does not obtain this experience, he should seek the reason. Preachers and Sadhaks listen to, and study Vedanta – maybe for two decades or more. During their discourse, they say, 'Everything is the Atma. Everything is the Brahman.' Yet, if someone were to abuse them as they came down from the platform, would they consider the person to be the Brahman? It would be an excellent thing if they genuinely felt everything to be the Brahman indeed, otherwise – it is one thing to give a fine speech on the mike, and quite another to experience the truth of what you say. Remember, giving discourses is also an art.

So – do we actually experience it, when we say that everything is the Atma? The joyous, carefree life of a person who has this experience is quite different from the lives of others. Just think of the blissful unconcern of a person who is completely detached from everything worldly. The luxuries of this world, and Heaven after death, hold no allure for him. How free of tension will be the life of a person who has the wealth of the साधन चतुष्क्य *sadhan chatushtaya*! You can imagine how utterly happy such a person would feel all his life. Is our own life at all like that? If it is, it is commendable, but only one in millions would be leading such a life. The Gita says: मनुष्याणां सहश्रेण *manushyaanaam sahasre`shu*. If our life is not like that, what is the reason? We have been studying Vedanta for so many years!

Just recently, we were studying with Swami Divyanandji Maharaj. The subject of our study comes to my mind because he reminded us of the चतुःश्लोकि *Chatuhshloki* (four shlokas) of the Bhagwat. The first verse describes the Brahman. The second verse describes Maya – the Lord's power of Creation and illusion. The third one describes the world, and the fourth describes the Jeeva. These shlokas are a part of seven important shlokas. Two shlokas are given before them, and there is one concluding verse after. Now, the very first shloka is about what Lord Narayana says to Brahmaji, before Brahmaji takes up the work of creating the universe. What does the Lord say?

The Lord says, “I am giving you the most profound wisdom, the Gyan which is kept secret – परम गुह्यं मे यद् विज्ञानसमन्वितम् *param guhyam me` yad vigyaanasamanvitam*. Don’t think them to be idle words, or tall talk. It is a Vigyan – it is My experience.”

ज्ञानं परम गुह्यं मे यद् विज्ञानसमन्वितम् सरहस्यं तदडगं च गृहाण गदितं मया

(भा० २.९.३०)

Gyaanam paramaguhyam me` yad vigyaanasamanvitam sarahasyam tadangam cha grihaana gaditam mayaa.

(Bhagwat 2. 9. 30)

Brahmaji faced the same kind of problem that we face. When he undertook an intense asceticism, he prayed to the Lord, “Maharaj, You are about to delegate the work of Creation to me. This is a very great task.” People like us get filled with ego if we acquire ten factories. We strut around, walking on air! Brahmaji is given the task of creating the entire universe, yet he is cautious and apprehensive. He says, “Lord, You are delegating such this enormous job to me. I fear lest I develop vanity – as I work – thinking that it is I who is doing the work. Please tell me, which is the knowledge that enables You to remain totally unaffected – like a lotus is unaffected by the slime from which it rises – even when You create, sustain, and destroy the world? I plead with You, to give me that knowledge.”

What an excellent knowledge to acquire, before entering the world! The earlier practice of the Gurukul system was for a youngster to stay at his Guru’s house, studying and serving his Guru, till he completed his education. Only when he was fully prepared did a man get married and enter the Grihastha Ashram – the life of a householder. Brahmaji is preparing himself in the same way, before embarking on the colossal task of Creation. He asks the Lord to give him the right perspective. “Please grant me the knowledge which will save me from getting deluded by the world, or getting attached to it, or even acquire a false vanity, thinking that it has been created by my abilities.”

Some people think that Gyan and vairagya are of value only for Mahatmas. They feel that a Grihastha has no need for such qualities. A great many people feel this way, even though none present may think this. Our Guruji was once giving a discourse at somebody’s house. The head of the family said to him, “Maharaj, please keep in mind the fact that you are giving a discourse at my house.”

“What do you mean?”

“Please avoid speaking about the benefits of Gyan and vairagya, when you speak at my house.”

“Why do you say this?” asked Maharajji.

“You see, Maharaj, amongst my family members there are a number of youngsters, young girls, and young daughters-in-law. Your discourses are so

appealing that it is natural for them to be drawn to Gyan and vairagya, when they hear you speak upon how conducive these are to happiness, because everybody desires happiness.”

Our Maharajji always spoke with such carefree joyousness that people started thinking, “What is the secret of this happiness? How blissful a life like that would be!”

So, this gentleman was worried that the younger generation would be drawn to Gyan and vairagya. “Suppose something happens to the younger generation of my family?”

‘But you people have been listening to my discourses at Prempuri Ashram for years,’ said Marajji. Nothing happened to you.”

“Maharajji,” confessed the man, “The fact is that even though we listen, we absorb only what suits us.”

We had gone to Ahmedabad with Swamiji. A gentleman – who had a lively sense of humor – invited us to his house for a meal. “Maharaj,” he said, “I don’t allow my children to go to the Satsang.”

“Why?” I asked.

“The youngsters are like unbaked pots,” he explained. “Young minds are like blank sheets of paper. They will believe whatever they hear, to be the truth.”

“But you all come regularly,” I said.

“Maharaj, we are like baked vessels,” he replied. “No matter how much you extol the benefits of Gyan and vairagya, we will absorb only as much as we want. We will bow down to you, offer *dakshinaa* (monetary gift given to Mahatmas and Brahmins), but your talks will affect us only to the extent we want. Nothing you say will affect us beyond that.”

What does this indicate? The impression people have, that Gyan and vairagya are useful only for renunciates, is wrong. What is the meaning of Gyan? Gyan means the knowledge of the essence of the Ishwara. Or, it means the experience of our Atma. Vairagya means a reduction of our worldly attachments. If your attachment to worldly objects is reduced, will it help to increase your happiness, or will it increase your sorrow? What will you get? You will be much happier, won’t you? Then what prompts you to say that vairagya is only for the Babajis? It is quite true that Gyan and vairagya are considered the ornaments of a Sant. However, didn’t Janak have Gyan and vairagya? Didn’t Vashishtha possess these qualities? Didn’t Ambarish and Prahalad have them? Were they Mahatmas, or were they Grihasthas? What were they? They were all Grihasthas. And, what was the result of their Gyan and vairagya? Their family life was excellent in every way, and they were unaffected by the joys and sorrows faced by householders. So – are Gyan and vairagya useful only for Babajis? No, indeed! They are helpful for all. Let us return to our topic of discussion.

Brahmaji prayed to the Lord, “Please grant me that knowledge by which You remain detached even while doing everything.”

“Look, Brahma,” said the Lord, “Some ground has to be prepared before I impart that विज्ञा *vidya* (knowledge) to you. A foundation has to be prepared for the knowledge to rest upon; otherwise you will be unable to retain it.”

“What foundation do I need, Lord?”

ज्ञानं परम गुह्यं मे यद् विज्ञानसमन्वितम्

Gyaanam paramaguhyam me` yad vigyaanasamanvitam.

What is the base of the actual Tattvagyan (knowledge of the essence of the Brahman)? What is the vessel which holds it? The answer is:

सरहस्यं तदङ्गं च

Sarahasyam tadangam cha.

Two points are mentioned: सरहस्यं *sarahasyam* is defined as ‘the worship of the Lord’, and तदङ्गं *tadangam* is defined as ‘leading an ethical life predominated by Dharma.’ So, the first step is, leading an ethical life and the right interaction in the world. When Dharma is predominant in our life it means that we never knowingly cheat anybody. We have to be alert that we never cause wanton suffering. Swamiji was telling me about our Maharajji’s admonition, while giving a Mantra Diksha. He would explain the Mantra, and tell the person about the साधन-भजन *saadhan-bhajan* he should do. He never failed to tell the person, “Look, my brother, do not inflict pain knowingly on anyone, ever in your life. Please note that knowingly is underlined. It is not within your control to ensure that nobody ever gets upset because of you. There is a considerable difference between deliberately causing pain, and someone being pained because of something you do. If your doing bhajan for four hours upsets someone, or if your business prospers and someone is jealous – what remedy is there for that? There is no remedy! Now, if some people ask, “Maharaj, I am the indirect cause of that person’s distress. Should I do something?”

One Mahatma explained, “Such distress is the result of sin. The center of the sin is not present in your life – it is in the other person’s life. You will not suffer as a result of his pain (because you have not deliberately caused it) There is nothing for you to do.” What is the message? Do not inflict pain deliberately or knowingly, on any.

A devotee of our Maharajji had made a profit of twenty five thousand rupees. Yet, he looked quite depressed when he came to meet Maharajji.

“I have heard that you have made a good profit,” said Maharajji.

“Yes, Maharaj, I have indeed made an excellent profit,” he said.

‘Then why are you so depressed?’ asked Maharajji.

“Maharaj, my neighbor – with whom I don’t get on – has made a profit of fifty thousand rupees!”

Now – is there any remedy for such sorrow? There is no remedy! Hence, if your good fortune becomes the cause of someone’s unhappiness, do not waste any thought on it. However, do not deliberately do anything which will cause

sorrow to another. This is व्यवहार शुद्धि *vyavahaar shuddhi* (purity in interaction). It is the first step on the path of being an appropriate candidate for receiving Gyan. You would be knowing what they say, about the right vessel for keeping the milk of a lioness. I know very little English or Gujarati, though I am familiar with Hindi and Sanskrit. So – only a vessel made of gold can hold the milk of a lioness. If the vessel is made of any other metal, the milk will burn a hole through the bottom and leak out. It will not be retained in the vessel. Gyan, too, needs a pure vessel. Proper interaction is the first step, and worship of the Ishta and Guru is the second step, in making yourself suitable for retaining Gyan. The second shloka (which comes just before the Chatuhshloki) says –

तथैव तत्त्वविज्ञानमस्तु ते मदनुग्रहात्

(भा० २.९.३१)

Tathaiva tattvavigyaanamastu te` madanugrahaat.

(Bhagwat 2. 9. 31)

The first two items were vyavahaara shuddhi, and worship of the Ishta and Guru. After this, when will the actual freedom from avidya be attained? It will be attained when the आशीर्वाद *aashirvaada* (benediction) of the Guru is obtained. The Lord says, मदनुग्रहात् “*Madanugrahaat* – may you achieve that state by My blessing.” What does this mean? If we do not reach the state of being free from avidya, even after listening to – and studying – Vedanta for so long; if we continue to be affected by sundry problems, what does it indicate? Remember, we are not to improve the world. The principle of Vedanta and Bhakti is not the attainment of happiness by changing the world; it is to attain happiness by changing ourselves. It is not the सृष्टि *srishti* (the world) which is to be changed; it is the दृष्टि *drishti* (outlook) which is to be changed. The world will begin to look right as soon as the right perspective is developed.

So, the question is – has our lifestyle become the right kind of lifestyle? If it hasn't, then we need to give some thought as to whether there are lapses in our worldly interaction. Is our worship of the chosen form of the Lord, and Guru, as sincere as it should be? What is the main fruit of a sincere worship of the Ishta and Guru? It is detachment from worldly considerations. We can either worship the world, or we can worship our Ishta and Guru. The detachment developed through the worship of the Ishta and Guru will be enduring. And, as soon as a person develops a strong, enduring vairagya, the Gyan of Vedanta will be seen as clearly as an object in the hand.

There are many examples of this in the Bhagwat. You will see that after hearing the entire Gita, Arjuna said –

नष्टो मोहः स्मृतिर्लब्धा

(गीता १८.७३)

Nashto mohah smritirlabdhaa.

(Gita 18. 73)

Arjuna stated, at the end of the eighteenth chapter of the Gita, that he was freed from nescience, and had regained his memory (about his Dharma). Uddhavji

says the same thing at the end of the eleventh Canto of the Bhagwat, after listening to the Lord's sermon. Uddhavji says –

विद्रावितो मोहमहान्धकारो

(भा० ११.२९.३७)

Vidraavito mohamahaandhakaaro.

(Bhagwat 11. 29. 37)

“Lord, the darkness of nescience has left me after I heard Your sermon.”

The Bhagwat gives a revolutionary example. Arjuna's avidya was dispelled after hearing the entire Gita. Uddhav's avidya was dispelled after hearing the entire eleventh Canto of the Bhagwat. The Gopis' avidya, however, was dispelled after hearing just two shlokas of the eighty-second chapter of the tenth Canto of the Bhagwat. The Lord preached Tattvagyan to them in just two shlokas. This Tattvagyan is the principle of our life. But, how is it to be brought into our lives? We will have to observe the method.

The Lord gave Tattvagyan to Devki-Vasudev at the end. He also preached it to the Gopis. The Lord Shri Rama preached Tattvagyan to Dashrathji. Now had there been any incompatibility between Gyan and Bhakti – well, these were all great Bhaktas. Narasimha Mehta spoke Tattvagyan himself – you can see for yourself how his bhajans are filled with Gyan. So, as I was saying, the Lord preached at length to Uddhav and Arjuna, before their avidya was dispelled. To the Gopis, however, He needed to say only two shlokas, and their avidya was removed. This meeting took place at Kurukshetra, and the shlokas are quite ordinary –

अहं हि सर्वभूतानामादिरन्तोऽन्तरं बहिः
भौतिकानां यथा खं वार्भूर्वायुज्योतिरङ्गानाः

(भा० १०.८२.४६)

Aham hi sarvabhootaanaamaadirantontaram bahih bhautikaanaam yathaa kham vaarbhooर्वायुज्योतिरङ्गानाह.

(Bhagwat 10. 82. 46)

“Oh, Gopis, I pervade the entire world, just as all objects are pervaded and surrounded by the five elements. The world is nothing but My own visible form. Experience Me to be everything, including yourselves.”

It was just this short sermon, which I have just spoken and you have just heard. Neither the speaker, nor the listener achieved anything, but the Gopis attained Tattvagyan. You can take up the Bhagwat and see for yourself – Shukadevji Maharaj spoke of just these two shlokas. Even though many Hindi translations are available, people keep saying, “Who knows whether the Gopis' avidya was dispelled or not?” A Mahatma as detached and elevated as Shukadevji has confirmed that the avidya of the Gopis was indeed dispelled completely.

The next shloka is:

अध्यात्मशिक्षया गोप्य एवं कृष्णेन शिक्षिताः
तदनुस्मरणध्वस्तजीवकोशास्तमध्यगन्

(भा० १०.८२.४८)

*Adhyaatmashikshayaa gopya e`vam krishne` na shikshitaah,
Tadanusmaranadhvastajeevakoshaastamadhyagan.
(Bhagwat 10. 82. 48.)*

Shri Shukadevji Maharaj says that when the Gopis heard this अध्यात्म विद्या *adhyaatma vidyaa* (metaphysical knowledge), their identification with their gross body was shattered. They began to experience Shri Krishna as their own Atma. This is what Shukadevji Maharaj tells Raja Parikshit. What does this mean? We preach, and hear, the same sermon. Then, why is it that we do not identify with the Lord Shri Krishna? The Gopis were suitable vessels for receiving this knowledge, but we are not yet fit. We lack the विवेक, वैराग्य, षट् सम्पत्ति एवं मुमुक्षा *vive`k, vairagya, shat sampatti and mumukshaa* of the Gopis. Don't get the mistaken impression that this is contrary to the Vedanta Prasthana. It is not at all against the philosophy of Vedanta. It is an example of how the Vedanta Prasthana can be brought into our lives. It helps us to proceed on the path to the experience described by Vedanta.

Can you find तितिक्षा *titikshaa* (tolerance) like Meera Bai's anywhere? Deadly poison is brought to her. She is told that it is the चरणामृत *charanaamrit* (sanctified water, with which the feet of the image of the Lord have been washed) sent for her. "This is for you, from Giridhar Gopal." Meera Bai drinks it up. Could the poison do its work? It could not. जहर का प्याला राणा ने भेजा, पीवत मीरा हाँसी रे 'jahar kaa pyaalaa raanaa ne` bhe`jaa, peevata meeraa haansi re'.

There are two kinds of titiksha. One is a साधन तितिक्षा 'saadhan titikshaa' and the other is a normal tolerance in a person, called सहज तितिक्षा 'sahaj titikshaa'. The first is a kind of forbearance taught by our Guruji, when he tells us that a sadhak (spiritual seeker) should not quarrel. If somebody abuses us, we should endure it. Of course we feel bad to be abused, but we remain silent because our Guruji has told us not to quarrel.

The other titiksha is when we do not see anybody as being a separate entity. If our worship has reached its pinnacle, then we see every person as a form of our Ishta. Tolerance is, in that case, not an effort – it is natural. We are on the right path, if we develop Bhakti and then listen to Vedanta, and get released from avidya. Our Maharajshri used to ask, "How can you tell that you are on the right track?" Each of you can take a look into your own heart. Whatever effort you put in for spiritual progress – whether it is meditation, thinking about what is said in the scriptures, bringing your mind back repeatedly to focus on the Lord – you are on the right track if your efforts help to increase your inner tranquility. However, if your agitation increases despite all your efforts, then watch out! You have to start thinking about where you are going wrong. Swamiji says,

“The path of अध्यात्म *adhyaatma* (spirituality) is such that you start feeling peaceful as soon as you set your foot on it. The bliss – when you reach the goal – is beyond expression.” Having embarked on the path, if you do not feel more at peace, then there is some fault in you, not in the path. This is something each person has to think out for himself.

There are three people who have the capacity to look into your heart and guide you. They are the Lord, the Sadguru & you yourself. Any of them can tell you what is right for you. I have told you about some of the experiences I have had, of the Grace of the Gurus. The time given to me was forty five minutes, which is almost over. It would take a great deal more time than that, to talk about these things in detail.

So, the first method is that the devotee of the highest level should accept all as his own Atma. This will free him from all doubts and dilemmas. The next point is that it is not possible for others to see all as their own Atma. A gentleman came to Maharajji. No, he came to Swami Satyanandji, a mahatma in Vrindavan. He said, “I read, and hear, that everything is an illusion, the world is a mirage, everything is our Atma. It sounds very appealing, and I understand the reasoning behind it. However, I face a problem, when I come home and somebody picks up my things and wants to take them away. What should I do, at such a time? Should I consider him to be my Atma, or should I snatch my things back?” What will you feel? This is not a simple matter. You can see the bliss in the Mahapurusha who has obtained Atmadrishti – the vision that everything is the Atma. Even if you just imagine the feeling, you will feel a certain joy. The actual experience will bring you bliss beyond description.

I have seen a Mahatma, lying at one spot for twenty three years. I had gone to have his दर्शन *darshan* (seeing with reverence), and spent two hours with him. Many people came, bringing प्रसाद *prasaad* (offerings of food), and placed the packets of food on him. Once in a while, he would pick up some item, and eat it. Otherwise, he would leave it untouched. The packet would lie on his prostrate body. A little later, some children would pick up the packets and eat the prasada. Another thing I observed is that someone came and placed money – I think it was two hundred rupees – on him. The Mahatma did not stop the man. A little later, when the man had gone, a child clambered on top of the Mahatma, picked up the money, and ran off with it. The Mahatma made no move to prevent him. Neither did he prevent the man from placing the money, nor did he prevent the child from taking it. Well – is it easy to be so detached? So, the thing is that it is easy to say these things, but it is extremely difficult to actually experience the truth about life. So, Baba would say, “My brother, there is the other shloka” –

अथ चित्तं समाधातुं न शक्नोषि मयि स्थिरम्
अभ्यासयोगेन ततो मामिच्छाप्तुं धनञ्जय

(गीता १२.१)

Atha chittam samaadhaatum na shaknoshi mayi sthiram,

Abhyaasayoge 'na tato maamichchaaptum dhananjaya.
(Gita 12. 9)

If it seems difficult for you to get this viewpoint (that the Atma is everything) if you are unable to experience this truth, then practice it. Practice it repeatedly in your life. If you can't cultivate this feeling, have faith in your Guru and the scriptures, and develop the feeling, "Everything is my Atma. Everything is the Lord I worship – it is Rama, it is Krishna, it is Shankar." Think the world to be whichever image you feel reverence for. अभ्यास 'Abhyaas' means repetition, to repeat again and again. Baba gave another meaning for 'abhyas'. His interpretation was that we should spend as much time as possible in the company of the Mahapurushas who have had this experience. We should meet such enlightened Sants at every opportunity.

What will be the result of this? When you see the viewpoint held by the Mahatmas, you will naturally feel reassured that the day will come when you will also feel that way. Such interpretations are not to be found in any available commentary – it is the interpretation of a Sant. I have not read this interpretation anywhere. Baba used to say, "If you cannot do even this, if you are unable to spend time with a Sant because you have work at home, and 'duties' to carry out, and things to organize – if you are unable to even ponder upon these matters, then the Lord has another method. People come and tell me, 'Maharaj, when I sit down to meditate, I am unable to see the Lord because I keep seeing the world. What should I do?'"

The Lord says –

अभ्यासेऽप्यसमर्थोऽसि मत्कर्मपरमो भव

(गीता १२.१०)

Abhyaase 'pyasamarthosi mathkarmaparamo bhava.
(Gita 12. 10)

"If you are unable to do abhyas, then – मत्कर्मपरमो भव *mathkarmaparamo bhava* – start doing your routine work as an offering to Me." What is the meaning? The Bhagwat has a simple definition of this. 'Write one sentence – मत्कर्मपरमो *mathkarmaparamo* – as the motto of your life.' Ask yourself, before doing anything, whether your Guru and Ishwara will like it or not. Every person has the necessary discrimination for doing this. Everybody knows what the Guru and Ishwara will approve or disapprove of. If your heart confirms that your Guru and Ishwara will approve of your action, then go ahead. However, if your heart forbids you, saying, "Guruji and the Lord I worship will not want me to do this," then desist from doing it. This is मत्कर्मपरमो "Matkarmaparamo - for pleasing Me". So, then, will the Lord like you to be dishonest? Will He feel happy if you abuse someone? Will He approve if you harass anyone? Accepting just this one sentence will free you from many faults. Our scriptures have so many wonderful sentences! If a person takes note of just this one sentence, and pays attention to whether his actions will please his Guru – and if he is a sincere servant of the Lord – then his whole life will be improved. He will do the work

only if it is likely to please his Guru and God. He won't do anything which is likely to displease them.

If you can't work to please the Lord, then do your work, but give up the result of your work. Undertake any task, but don't desire the fruit – this is the fourth method.

When do we feel unhappy? You will have noticed that many people come and say, "Maharaj, I worked so hard all my life, for the sake of my son. Now, he abuses me. I am deeply distressed by his behavior." This is quite natural. However, the Sants say that we should reflect a little. Pujya Ramsukhdasji Maharaj once said, "If you think deeply about this, you will realize that the cause of your distress is not the abuse given by your friend or son. You feel unhappy because of your expectation about their behavior. Had you not expected some respect and cooperation from them, you would not be so distressed."

It often happens that a coolie abuses us during our travels. He grumbles about our deducting five rupees, or not allowing him to exploit us. We don't feel at all bothered about his abuses. Had the same things been said by our son, we'd have been so hurt that we'd remember it all our life! The coolie's abuses are forgotten as soon as we are on the train. Why is that? It is because we do not expect better behavior from the coolie. What, then, is the truth of the matter? The truth is that our sorrow is caused by our expectation; and not by any item, abuse, or place. It is only when you expect a certain kind of behavior from someone, and that person does not live up to your expectations that you feel troubled. So then, did the person inflict sorrow, or did your expectations inflict the sorrow? Your expectations are the cause of your sorrow!

It is stated that the fourth method for escaping from sorrow is:

Continue doing what the Lord, the scriptures and your Guru tells you, but do not expect anything from the materialistic world. Keep your focus on your Guru and Ishwara as you work. Remember your Guru's commands and the admonitions of the scriptures, and do only the work they approve of. Do your work as a duty, and you will be saved from sorrow.

If anyone came and told Baba that even this was impossible for him to do, then Baba would say, in his own style, "The Lord has given you four methods for being happy. Now, if you are unable to utilize any of them, then you can only go on being born and dying. What can anyone else do for you?"

So, with these words, I bow down at Swamiji's feet. The most important thing is that Sants are present everywhere. We need the vision to recognize a Sant. And, if you find a Sant, and have faith in him, then the principle of the scriptures is to never let go of him! Never leave a Sant, even if he wants to send you packing. But, if a wicked man tries to be friendly avoid him; and if a Sant tries to drive you away by scolding or even abusing you, never leave him. Then, one day, you will have the experience of Paramananda (supreme bliss) in your

life. You simply have to experience the Grace of the Guru, and the Grace of the Sants in your life, and your life will be fulfilled.

Victory to Sacchidananda