

Lecture by
Shyam Sundar Goswami
(I.47)

Bhakti, Love for God – A Short Novel

The question of "what we want" is differently answered by different persons. But what is it we should want? In general what we want may be classified in two parts: 1) worldly things, and 2) non-worldly or spiritual things.

To innumerable people the non-worldly does not mean anything. Their goal is merely worldly and it is difficult to say how much they can achieve with so little inside, and suffering from circumstances that enslaves them. On the other side, we have other people, who do not think of this worldly side at all. They have become totally uninterested of it. So the problem mostly lies with those, who are somewhere in the middle between these two categories and who cannot merely live in a worldly way but want something spiritual, too. Naturally no one can dictate what is the right attitude to adopt here.

Everyone should know for himself where he stands and decide what he thinks is suitable for him. Yet we want to take to, and follow, understand, and mould our life according to a certain higher pattern. But if we in our life do not deeply feel the necessity of being alone and feel the irresistible need, the inner willingness for contemplation, if this is not developed in us then we are still, seen from spiritual point of view, at the lowest stage of the spiritual line. For the eagerness and willingness to be alone, and contemplate, must be there, even though the daily routine-work is going on. And unless there is this hunger for it, we have not reached very far on the spiritual road - we have not even started then.

It is as with Hatha Yoga exercise. The moulding of our life can be envisaged

in many ways. And thus many students come to take exercise and leave again. But if they practiced patiently and sincerely, it would develop different things and become part of their life. For once we become established in such a practice, we can then, stage by stage, achieve our goals.

The same applies to the concentration exercise. First we perhaps can't do it rightly and think that it is not something for us. But if this is the case, we should take it as a sign that we actually are in need of it. Taking this practice merely at the intellectual level, will prove rather a hinder than help. If we just try and go on with concentration, it will mean something quite new in our lives. For when it becomes established, we will feel a natural need coming from within for it, without being told by others. So, even if we think that we are not able to do it because of all other things already filling our life, we simply must rearrange our agenda and find time for it. If not, we'll become nothing but a human shell with nothing really substantial in it. When this is done, we will gradually feel the results in ourselves. And it does not matter whether we fail with it a thousand or a million times, we should only continue to practice and try to concentrate. Gradually things will adjust.

We have put so much in our heads, however, which first must be thrown away for the purpose of successful concentration. Obstacles will then be lesser, and concentration will work. We are not able to concentrate with the handicap of emotions or all sorts of worldly thoughts, mundane or philosophical. It is our attachment to worldly things which is the root cause of all those thoughts that bar our concentration. And they sit deeply as various desires, interests, likings, all come from the same source, and make us want to enjoy emotionally, and even mingle the body into it. All our thoughts are coloured by emotions, which often cause absurd decisions and abnormal desires, etc. Unless all this is controlled, how can real, deep

concentration come, which makes one forget everything?

Suitable conditions for concentration must first be created by a systematically determined, regular work that goes throughout all the aspects of our life, both as to the physical, emotional, and the intellectual, which alone will not take us very far.

Here an other kind of knowledge is needed: *jñāna*. This term cannot easily be defined. Let me explain : Our general knowledge is in the form of *vrittis*. Usually we are not acquainted with other forms of knowledge that are not *vrittis*. However, Yoga teaches : "The *vrittis* are to be eliminated". The *vrittis* are *ajñāna* or non-knowledge and that is what we usually have - a limited knowledge - *avidya* - or ignorance. For all worldly knowledge is essentially sensory and therefore *avidya*, and so only what is extra-, or non-worldly, is *vidya*. And what is not worldly is spiritual. It is that kind of non-worldly knowledge which makes the knowledge of the world disappear. For both cannot go together. Being in this world, we get the knowledge of this world. But if we see the other, the spiritual, we miss this world. We say, that there is Ishvara (or God) and there are no means to avoid him, whether we will it, or not. But God is not recognizable for us, as long as we are worldly. We can, however, accept him intellectually or in pious thinking. Yet we don't know. For God is not of the knowledgeable kind of cognition, but real God. And as long as we think that our physical existence to be so real, all what we are experiencing is the *vritti* mode, and there is no room for God in whom the existence of this world is non-existent. This is not a matter of belief: it just is so. We don't know God anyhow and yet we can accept that God is there. It need not even be in a pious form - we merely accept him as such; once this gap is overcome, God will remain throughout our life. It is when we recognize the contemplative aspect of our mental life that we find God to be there.

Bhakti is translated as "Love for God". But can there be such a thing? For when love for God arises, the love for all else disappears. Both can't be there. We cannot at the same time love the world and love God. We can only talk about it or think of it.

We talk so much about love. But generally that is only talk! For those are very few, who can really love. Those who really have seen God and know God will tell you that this can't be done both ways. When it comes to that exclusive level of love, the world-image will entirely disappear, and there is then no question of God in the world, or the world in God.

So in this world we rarely find real love, for how could it come?

Real love in this world is so rare, it can only be found in very spiritual persons - not in the non-spiritual ones who are only inclined to or able to display a general kind of love.

There is a story, which can illustrate this:

Once there was a married man who lived a happy family life with his wife, his children, and his mother. But one day his teacher told him:

"Leave them and follow me ".

The man protested:

"How could I ever leave them? They love me so much".

At this the teacher proposed him to make an experiment, which would show him if this really was the case, and the man agreed. So the Teacher gave him something which would make him dead-like, but preserve his faculty of hearing and feeling.

And so the man was found "dead" by his family, who all mourned and cried. Then the Teacher came to them in a disguise, and told them that they need not cry any more, for he could do something for them. He could give them a medicine, which would bring the dead back to life again: but only under the

condition that one of them first ate of it, and, since it was a strong poison, that person would probably die of it, but this would immediately allow the the man to recover. And surely they loved him so dearly, that one of them would be ready to help him by this. But when questioned the mother said she would not take that risk, for she was still very needed to take care of the family, and provide for their living. And when the Teacher asked the wife, she emphatically denied for she had to take care of the children who needed her. Hearing all this the man heard the man thus understood that none of his family loved him as he had thought they did. And so he suddenly got up, quite alive, and declared himself ready to leave them, and follow his teacher.