

## śraddhā-bhakti-dhyāna-yogād avaihi

*Fifth part of the serial article continued from June 2019 issue.*

*Need for sraddha on the part of sastra and guru discussion continues....*

Now you understand what *śraddhā* implies—determining<sup>1</sup> that the sentences of the *śāstra* are valid, whether you understand them. If you do not understand, you look into the *śāstra* again and reconcile all the differences. Therefore, you use *anukūla-tarka*, conducive reasoning, to help you understand the *śāstra*. You do not use reason to dismiss the *śāstra*. This is *śraddhā*. If *śraddhā* is there, then your knowledge of grammar, language, and knowledge of other disciplines will all help you understand the *śāstra*. If *śraddhā* is not there, then all these will only distract you and keep you away from the *śāstra*.

Whenever an occasion arises, Śaṅkara says in his commentaries, “*śāstra-ācārya-upadeśam anu*, following a teacher’s teaching of the *śāstra*.” Śaṅkara always refers to both *śāstra* and *ācārya* together. So *śāstra* is taught by an *ācārya*. At one place Śaṅkara says,<sup>2</sup> “Even if a person is a great scholar in the *śāstra*, he should not inquire into Brahman without the help of a guru.” Therefore, Brahmaji said to Āśvalāyana, “*śraddhayā avaihi*, know through *śraddhā*.”

### BHAKTI

Now we have the *śāstra* and the *guru*. Then what more is needed? Nothing more is needed. If a person has the *guru*, he will definitely know. If the *guru* is there, it means the *śāstra* is there; if the *śāstra* is there, it means *jñāna* will be there. Therefore, the *śāstra* says, “*ācāryavān puruṣo veda*, one who has a teacher knows.”<sup>3</sup>

It is a very bold statement. But one person says,

“Swamiji, I have a *guru* but nothing happens.”

“Did you do what the *guru* asked you to do?”

“He only says, ‘Do this, do that, do *japa*’.”

---

<sup>1</sup> *Śāstrasya guruvākyaśya satya-buddhyavadhāraṇā sā śraddhā...*

(*Viveka Cudāmaṇi* 26) - The determination that the *śāstra* and the words of the *guru* are true (is said to be *śraddhā*).

<sup>2</sup> *Śāstrajñopi svātantryeṇa brahmānveśaṇam na kuryāt* (*Muṇḍaka Bhāṣya* 1.2.12).

<sup>3</sup> *Chāndogyopaniṣad* 6.14.2

It points out one more thing that one needs—and that is *bhakti*. *Bhaktyā avaihi*, know through *bhakti*. The *anugraha*, grace, of *śāstra* and *ācārya* are not enough. You need *īśvara-anugraha*. The word '*bhakti*' is there to show the need for *īśvara-anugraha*. *Bhakti* conveys the meaning of doing *sevā*. There are lot of *duritas* in the form of various obstacles in everyone's life which come in the way of our accomplishing things. In our daily prayers like *sandhyāvandana* or in performing rituals on special days there is a *saṅkalpa*<sup>4</sup> that we do. While doing the *saṅkalpa* we say, "I do this *karma* to please *Īśvara* through the neutralisation of all *duritas* I have accumulated so far."<sup>5</sup> Some modify this *saṅkalpa* to "I do this *karma* to please *Śrī Mahāviṣṇu*..."<sup>6</sup> *Parameśvara* and *Mahāviṣṇu* are one *Īśvara* only. The word '*prītyartha*' means to earn the *anugraha* of *Īśvara*. You achieve this by removing all your *duritas*.

*Durita* means *pāpa*, the cause that gives rise to sorrow and pain. Centred on one's body there can be obstacles in the form of diseases. Centred on the world there can be obstacles like a quarrelling neighbour and so on. Then, there are obstacles from unseen forces. These three types of *tāpas*, sufferings, are caused by *durita*. One has to pile up enough grace of *Īśvara*, through prayerful *karmas*, to neutralise the *duritas* so that one can be at the right time at the right place. The following narration will enlighten us on the need for *Īśvara's* grace.

One blind person was returning from the fort after seeing the king. He had to come out of the fort. Nobody was available except the inner gatekeeper and he would not leave the gate. The blind man wanted some help. The gatekeeper said, "You take the help of this wall by passing your hands on it all the way until the main door comes, and then you can go out. There someone will help you."

So the blind man went along the wall, but again he came back to where the inner gatekeeper was. The gatekeeper asked,

"Why did you come back here?"

"Oh! I thought this was the gate."

"How did you miss the gate?"

"I went along the wall, but there was no gate."

"How can you say there is no gate? There is a gate."

---

<sup>4</sup> *Saṅkalpa* is a step in a ritual wherein the intention of doing the ritual is stated.

<sup>5</sup> *Mama-upātta-samasta-durita-kṣaya-dvārā śrī- parameśvaraprītyartham aham idaṁ kariṣye.*

<sup>6</sup> *Mama-upātta-samasta-durita-kṣaya-dvārā śrī-mahāviṣṇuprītyartham aham idaṁ kariṣye.*

But how did he miss the gate? This man kept walking, touching the wall. Then he had some itch, and in order to scratch, he removed his hand but went on moving. After scratching, again touching the wall he went on walking. Thus, he went round and round because he had the itch exactly when the gate came for him to go out. The itch came only at that time. Think of it. This is some *durita* only.

Similarly, when one has to understand the *śāstra*, while listening, one falls asleep. The *guru* is teaching well, he also listens, but at the time of an important revelation he falls asleep. Then he wakes up and sees only the grammar. This is *durita*. When I was attending a Vedanta class on *Brahmasūtra* in Rishikesh, one Swami used to sleep in the class. He did want to listen, but he used to fall asleep. The teacher would not talk about it. He would continue teaching. One day, he himself could not take it anymore. He said in Hindi “*ye sunne ka baat hai, ye sone ka baatnahi hai*, this is a matter for listening and not for sleeping.” Sleep is a *durita*, an obstacle to one’s effort. One must do a lot of *pūjā*, *japa* etc., only then things fall in place. There is no other way. To earn the grace of *Īśvara*, *bhakti* is necessary.

*Bhakti* is a *lakṣaṇa* for *karma*. *Bhakti* should be taken as *bhakti-pūrvaka-karma*, action done with *bhakti*. In the *Gītā* Arjuna asks a question,<sup>7</sup> “What happens to a person who, even though endowed with *śraddhā*, puts forth inadequate effort and hence, does not make it in this life?” *Śraddhā* is there but something else is not there. What is that missing ‘something?’ *Īśvara-anugraha* is not there.

For the word ‘grace’ the equivalent in Sanskrit is ‘*anugraha*’. There is a difference between the two. God determines grace but you earn. God decides to whom he should give grace. Every day he should make a lucky dip. Otherwise, on what basis will God extend his grace? If you say that there is some good *karma*, then the result of that good *karma* alone is *anugraha*. Why should we use the word ‘grace’ then? The graceful expression of *karma-phala* is *anugraha*. So we can use the word ‘grace’. We do not know which *karma* was responsible for this blessing, for this favourable situation. If we cannot make the connection, then we say it is grace.

In this *janma*, birth, we have brought along with us some *karmas*. They are collectively called *prārabdha-karma*. It is *ārabdha-karma*, a *karma* that has begun to fructify and is getting exhausted now. This *prārabdha-karma* has some good *karma*. We cannot say when it was gathered. We cannot say it was gathered in the immediate previous birth or this birth. The previous birth may not have been human. Therefore, we are constrained to use the word grace. From the *sañcita*, accumulated *karmas*, certain *karmas* precipitate looking for a body, clamouring for a body. Those *karmas* that clamour for a body are many. One set of *karmas* may be ready to give you a *janma* of a cat and another, a *janma* of a rat. So, there are different types of *karmas*—all are clamouring, ‘I want, I want, I want.’

---

<sup>7</sup>Ayatih śraddhayopetaḥ yogāccalita-mānasah ... kām gatim kṛṣṇa gacchati (Bhagavad Gītā 6.37).

Among them, the powerful ones cause this particular body. If you come to Vedanta, then the next *janma* is assured to be a good *janma* for you, because you have to pick up the thread. Already due to good *karma* done now or before, you have come to Vedanta, you desire *mokṣa*. You are on an onward track because of cumulative *karmas* and you never trace back. Why? Because this journey is one you have set for yourself and you are given an assurance in the *Gītā* by the Lord <sup>8</sup>: “Anyone who performs good actions never reaches a bad end. Having gained the worlds belonging to those who do good actions, and having lived there for countless years, the one who did not succeed in *yoga*, a spiritual pursuit, is born in the home of wealthy and cultured people who are committed to *dharma*. Or he is indeed born into the family of wise *yogins*.” Even as a child he would be listening to Vedanta.

I once went to Ahmedabad from Mumbai. In the Mumbai airport there was a big queue for security check. Boarding was announced for the Ahmedabad flight and I was standing in the security line; the line was very long. Then an airline staff member came and called ‘ Ahmedabad.., Ahmedabad.., Ahmedabad.., Ahmedabad..’ Now, all those bound for Ahmedabad were taken out of the security line and allowed to board the plane. So, even if you are in a queue, you cross all the others and board the flight. This is how Bhagavān also calls: ‘*mokṣa.., mokṣa.., mokṣa.., mokṣa...*’ If you are ready to board the *mokṣa* flight, you are taken out of the big queue of other *karmas* waiting to give you a body and taken forward by Īśvara. This is how Īśvara in the form of the law of *karma* works

...to be continued

---

<sup>8</sup>...*nahi kalyāṇakṛt kaścīd durgatīm tāta gacchati* (6.40). *Prāpya puṇya-kṛtām lokān uṣitvā śāśvatīḥ samāḥ śucīnām śrīmatām gehe yogabhraṣṭo’bhijāyate* (6.41). *Atha vā yogināmeva kule bhavati dhīmatām...* (6.42).