

A VAISHNAV IN BRAJADHÂM : THE TOPMOST HAPPINESS

by

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"namo brahmanya-devâya go-brâhmanya-hitâya ca

jagad – hitâya krishnâya govindâya namo namah"

-[C.C. Antya-lila 20-21]

We have innumerable queries throughout our life. If we think deeply it appears that all these questions arise from a single source - we are always in search of happiness. All living beings have an innate desire for pleasure. Whatever we do in our life, whether an act of virtue or vice – such as - theft, robbery, cheating etc., it is to achieve happiness. Some want wealth, some want position, some want spouse; others desire son, car and such other material possessions. These are supposed to make us happy. Practically we are hankering for a piece of perishable matter to obtain pleasure. From this point of view all living beings are the same. However, we are sad to state that this happiness is extremely momentary. Immediately some other requirement pops up in the mind - disturbing tranquility and beckoning sorrow. Result - no peace, no joy. Eternal bliss cannot exist in piecemeal. Happiness and distress are associated factors of material life. Generally when we get something desirable we are very happy and when we get adverse results, we are distressed. But if we are spiritual, these factors will not agitate us.

"nâlpe sukham asti, bhumaiva sukham"

Meaning - "Happiness is not in bits but in the whole." – Ancient Indian Proverb.

If someone asks you—"When do you want pleasure?" Your obvious answer would be—"Always". "Where do you want bliss?" The natural answer is—"Everywhere". "From whom do you want pleasure?"—"From all". This shows that living-being desires happiness all the time, from everybody and at all places. Although temporary, happiness obtained from piecemeal is dependent on time-space-person. This indicates that joy is extra-temporary, yet we are mad for that pleasure and never search for the Omnipresent (The Supreme Being which is independent of time, space and person.) That Omnipresent One is God. His constitutional position (*swarup*) is all-bliss - "*Ânandam Brahman*". All miseries and all queries cease if 'one gets God or Sri Krishna, Who is the Godhead.'

"yam labdhva capararn libharn manyate ndhikam tatah

yasmin sthito na duhkkena na gurunapi vicalyate"

- [Gitâ 6-22]

The Lord is perpetually happy and if the living entities associate with the Lord, cooperate with him, take part in His association, they also become happy. In

that joyous state we become situated in boundless divine happiness, realized through divine senses. Established thus, one never departs from the Absolute Truth, and upon gaining this he thinks there is no greater gain. Being situated in such a wonderful position, we are never shaken, even in the midst of greatest difficulty. Sri Krishna means 'the highest pleasure' and it is confirmed that He is the store house of all happiness; Lord Krishna is full of six majesties - all beauty, all knowledge, all wealth, all vigor, all renunciation and all fame.

When we achieve this God, our thirst for happiness is quenched and all queries cease. Therefore the prime query is – how do we achieve God?

*"etavad eva jijñasyarl tatva **jijñasunatmanah**
anvaya vyatirekabhyam yat syat sarvatra sarvda"*

At first we have to find the path where there will be no doubt about achieving God. Then we should check whether the path has any proof of success, it should be devoid of failure, should not depend on other factors, applicable to all situations and eternally acceptable. If this path satisfies all these characteristics then we may consider it the best path for obtaining God.

A person interested in transcendental knowledge must therefore always directly and indirectly **inquire** about it to know the all pervading truth. Those who **are serious** about the knowledge of the transcendental world which is far beyond the material cosmic creation **must approach a bona fide spiritual master** to learn the science both directly and indirectly.

There are many paths mentioned in scriptures for God-realization like – *Karma* (result-oriented actions), Knowledge (*gyân*), practice of mysticism (*yoga*) and devotion. However, the path of *karma*, knowledge and *yoga* do not have all the characteristics mentioned above for choosing the right path. So there is no guarantee for achieving our ultimate goal (entering the kingdom of God) and hence we can not accept them as the best path. Under certain circumstances it is possible to perceive God by following the path of *gyân*, but the complete perception – that is – to relish His *mâdhurya* (sweetness) is not possible in any path other than that of pure devotion.

*na sadhyati mam yoga na sarikhyamdharma uddhava
na svadhyastapastyago yatha bhaktir mamorjita*

-[Srimad-Bhâgavatam 11-14/21]

We can win Sri Bhagavân and charm Him with love, not by activities, knowledge and mysticism. Even merely renouncing all activities, yet not engaging in the devotional service of the Lord can not make us happy. But a thoughtful person engaged in devotional service can achieve the supreme in no time. - [Gita 5-61]

Sri Chaitanya-Charitâmrita confirms the same -

*"aichhe sastra kahe-karma gyân yoga tyagi
bhaktye krishna bosh hoi bhaktya tanre bhaji"*

From various events and discussions of Vedic scriptures it is evident that the path of *Bhakti-yog* (unbroken devotional service to the Lord) contains all the characteristics of attaining God.

The most complete perception of God is the realization of His sweetness (*mâdhurya*), like the Gopis in Vrindavan.

The scriptures state that there is no other path but *bhakti* to relish the sweetness of God. *Bhakti* means 'loving service rendered to God'. Materialistic love involves expectations but this is not the case with devotional love.

Srimad-Bhâgavatam (11.14.21) states –

"bhaktyaham ekayagrahyah sraddhayatma priyah satam"

The Lord says Himself – "I am the beloved of the saints (*Vaishnavs*), only *bhakti* can control and charm me."

*"ananya-cetah satam yo mam smarati nityasah
tasyamaham sulabhah partha nityayuktasya yoginah"*

- [Gita 8.14]

Constant remembrance is the main part of *Bhakti*.

The 'swarup' or the constitutional position of the living being is to render service to the supreme personality of God. The only object of a *Vaishnav* is to serve Sri Krishna for His pleasure, with no expectation of any sort. The scriptures state that Sri Krishna has appeared in this world to enhance the bliss of the devotees. In turn He desires to taste the love of a pure devotee and to preach '*râg bhakti*' (natural and spontaneous love for Him) amongst the conditioned living beings. *Râg bhakti* is the loving thirst by which a devotee desires unbreakable devotional service favorable to Sri Krishna. The very natural keen or deep attachment (or extreme delight or ecstasy) related to God is called *râg*.

What is '*râg*'?

The usual attachment or love for wealth or matter is *râg*. For example, eyes have a normal attraction for beauty, we need no inspiration for this; similarly the heart of a pure devotee is attracted towards God. This sort of overflowing thirsty love is called *râg* and this *bhakti* is termed *Râgâtmika bhakti*. If the pure devotee (devoid of lust, anger, envy, malice) listens sincerely about the devotional service of *râgâtmika* devotee, then their taste or greed for similar *sevâ* grows. The devotional practice following in the footsteps of a *râgâtmikâ* devotee is called *râgânugâ Bhakti*.

Sriman-Mahâprabhu Who is none other than Sri Krishna (God himself) has appeared in this Kaliyug for two principal reasons -

- 1) To relish the love of Srimati Radha (this is the internal reason).
- 2) To spread the *Harinâm sankirtan* - the external cause of His appearance.

Overwhelmed and charmed by the absolute love of Srimati Radharani at Vrindavan, Sri Krishna desired to know the glory of Radha's love. Krishna pondered -

Why is She so much in love with me?

What are my special qualities attracting Her so?

And what is the actual way in which She loves me?

He craved to relish these mellows so much so that Radha and Krishna - the two divine identities - have again united and appeared in the form of Sri Krishna Chaitanya at Nabadweep *dhâm*. He has manifested Himself with the *bhâv* and splendor of Srimati Radharani, although He is Krishna Himself.

Sri Krishna Chaitanya, the savior from all sins and the prime distributor of love has said -

*"na dhanam na janam na sundarim
kaviatam vâ jagadeesha kâmaye
mama janmani janmanihsware
bhavatâd bhaktir ahaituki twayi"*

"O Almighty Lord! I have no desire to accumulate wealth, no fan-following, nor do I desire beautiful women. I do not yearn for praise in flowery language, I only want your causeless devotional service birth after birth" - (C.C. Antyalila 2-29)

In Vrajadham, the *Brijwâsis* offer spontaneous loving service to please Sri Krishna; it is the characteristic of *bhakti*. Similarly a true Vaishnav never desire *dharma, artha, kâm, moksha* (religion, money, lust, liberation). He never desires *siddhi-bhukti-mukti* (mystic power-enjoyment-liberation). Their pleasure (like the Gopis) lies only in Krishna's happiness.

Bhakti is of different kinds - *sâmsanya bhakti* (not so deep), *sâdhan bhakti* (by practice) *bhâv bhakti* (ecstatic bhakti), *prem* (eternal love as that of Gopi). I think this classification is made according to degree of *bhakti*,

Bhakti-Rasâmrita-Sindhu (1.1.11) defines pure devotion as -

*"anyabhi'lâshita-sunyam gyâna-karmady-anavritam
ânukulyena- krishnanushilanam bhaktir uttamâ "*

Meaning - "We should render unalloyed devotional service or divine service to the Supreme Lord Sri Krishna favorably and without desire for material gain through *karma* or philosophical speculation. That is called pure devotional service."

The activities (free of material contamination) which Krishna prefers are termed as *ânukulya* (favorable) or suitable. The word *anushilan* means disciplined effort by *kaya-mano-vâkya* (body-mind-speech), is to be completely used in serving God and in discussion related to Him.

The Lord has stated -

*"mat-karma-krn- mat-pararno mat- bhaktah sangavarjitakh
Nirvairah sarvabhutesu yahsa roam eti pandava."*

- (Gita 1 1-55)

Meaning - "He who engages in my devotional service, free from contaminations of *karma* and mental speculation, he who works for me, who makes me the supreme goal of his life, and who is friendly to every (even enemy) living being, certainly comes to me."

"When pure bhakti (*ahaituki* or unmotivated love) arises in our heart, we do not wish any kind of liberation such as *sâlokya* (to reside on His planet), *sârûpya* (to have the same bodily-features as God), *sârshî* (to have the same opulence), *sâyujya* (to become one with the Supreme), *samîpya* (to be near Krishna)."

- (SB 3.29.13)

Out of many kinds of devotees of the Supreme Being, one who is attracted to the original form of the Lord, that is, Sri Krishna in Vrindavan, is considered to be the topmost devotee. The pure devotee does not want even salvation. He does not want to be transferred even to the highest planet, Golok Vrindavan. His only objective is to serve Krishna wherever He may be. Such a devotee is never attracted by the opulence of Vaikuntha or even Dwâarakâ.

Sri Rupa Goswâmi concluded that these devotees who are attracted by the pastimes of the Lord in Gokul or Vrindavan are the topmost devotees. Pure devotees accept nothing other than *bhakti* when the Lord wants to offer a boon.

Vrindavan is the divine place where Krishna enjoys His eternal pastimes as a boy and it is considered as the topmost abode in all existence. When Vrindavan is exhibited in the material world the place is called Gokul and in the spiritual world is called Golok or Golok Vrindavan.

We have a normal tendency to serve others. A living being serves other living beings in various capacities. In this world we want to deliver happiness to our dear ones by serving them. If we have any relation with any one and we wish to strengthen our relationship, then we offer sincere service to that person. In the same way we should increase our greed or thirst to serve God if we want to build a relation with Him. It is possible to taste the eternal, conscious and blissful Supreme Being if we strengthen our relation with Him. He says - "Turn your faith towards me, then you will be happy." For this, an all time dependence on Krishna is a must.

anukulyasya sankalpah pratikulyasya varjanam

raksisyatiti visvaso goptrtve varanam tathâ

âtmaniksepa karpanye sadvidha sarangatih

The six divisions of surrender are the acceptance of those things favorable to devotional service, the rejection of unfavorable things, the conviction that Krishna will give protection the acceptance of the Lord as one's guardian or master, full self-surrender and humility. - (C.C Madhya 22-10G)

The principal characteristics of surrender to Krishna

1. *anukulyasya sankalpa* -- That which is helpful to devotional service, eg chanting of *Mahâmantra*, association with pure devotee etc.

2. *pratikusulyasya varjanah*- That which is hindrance to devotional service, e.g. *prajalpa* (discussing anything other than Krishna), gambling, illicit sex, fish and meat eating, association with non devotees, drug addiction etc.
3. *rakshishyati vishwâso* - Rigid confidence that Sri Krishna will protect us always.
4. *goptritve varanam* - Krishna is our Master caring for us
5. *âtmanikshepa* - To consider oneself helpless without Krishna's grace, total surrender to Krishna
6. *karpanye* - Forgetting our own worth and coming completely under Sri Krishna's control.

"We should chant the holy name of the Lord in a humble state of mind thinking oneself lower than a blade of grass, we should be more tolerant than a tree, devoid of all sense of false prestige, and should be ready to offer all respects to other. In such a state of mind we are to chant the holy name of the Lord constantly." - (C.C. Antyalila, 20-21).

The scriptures mention sixty four methods of serving Krishna but of them five are the most important. Rupa Goswami stated that five kinds of devotional activities viz. residing in BRAJADHÂM, worshiping the deity of Lord and reciting Srimad Bhâgavatam, serving a devotee and chanting the Hare Krishna *mahâmantra* -are so perfect that a small attachment to any one of these five items can arouse devotional ecstasy even in a neophyte. Chaitanya Charitamrita has stated –

*'sakal sâdhan shreshtha ei pancha anga,
krishna-prem janmây pâncher alpa sanga'.*

That *Vaishnav*, who takes the shelter of the lotus feet of *sadguru*, firmly believes that only Krishna is worthy of our worship, *bhakti* is the only path and love is the ultimate goal.

Here it is necessary to understand the difference between love and lust. Both the words mean a desire for happiness. The desire for happiness if directed to one self is termed lust and that directed towards Sri Krishna is called love or *prem*.

premâ hoite hoi krishna nija bhakta bosh - (C.C.)

Meaning - "Love is the only way to control Krishna."

*"prema Krame bath 'haya sneha, mana, pranoya
râg, anuraga, bhava, maha bhava hoyo (CC 23-42)
premer param sir mahabhava jani,
sei mahabhava rupa Radha Thakurani
Vrajer nirmal rag suni bhaktagan,
Rag marge bhaje yeno cart drama karma (Bhâgvad 2-4-30)*

By regulated devotional service it is not possible to establish a natural relation with Krishna because of hesitation or feeling of difference.

"bidhi marge nahi paiye Brojer Krishna Chandra" (Cc 22, Madhya)

Through regulated path of devotional service Vrajendra-nandan can not be achieved.

Till the feeling of ecstasy one is to serve through regulated path:

"bidhi bhaktistu bhava birvababadi"

But regulated path of devotional service is a must for purifying our heart or to remove unwanted material contamination by materialistic attachment. Krishna of Vraja, son of King Nanda is the worshipful of Goudiya Vaishnavs, followers of Sriman Mahaprabhu.

râg bhaktye vraje svayam-bhagyavane paya (CC 24-85 madhya).

By executing **spontaneous** devotional service in Vrindavan, one attains the original Supreme personality, Sri Krishna.

*aradhyo bhagavan vrajesa tanayas tad-dharna Vrindavan
ramya kacid upasana vraja – vadhu – vargena va kalpita*

*srimad bhagavatam pramanam amalam prema
pum artho mahan
sri caitanya mahaprabhor matam idam
tatradaraii na parah*

- (Commentary of Srimad Bhâgvatam, 10th Canto
by Kavi Karnapur Gurudeva)

Thus the essence of *vaishnavism* is to offer spontaneous devotional service to God, Krishna. The ecstatic love of God is life's ultimate goal and the reservoir of all pleasure bringing' an end to all queries and sufferings.

[I, a foolish person moving under an illusion , am trying to state the sacred and secret theory of devotional service to Lord and of attaining the highest pleasure as I have *kripâ* coming out a little from my worshipable Spiritual Master, *Vaishnavs* of BRAJADHÂM and pure devotees of elsewhere.]

HARE KRISHNA HARE KRISHNA KRISHNA KRISHNA HARE HARE RAMA RAMA
RAMA HARE HARE

1. Yog means linking our CONCIIOUSNESS; with supreme Absolute Truth. When the linking process is predominantly in fruitive activities is called knowledge, when it is predominantly empirical it is called *Karma-yoga* and when it is predominantly in a devotional relationship with God is called *Bhakti-Yog* is full of spiritual knowledge and service and therefore nothing, can excel it.

2. Devotional service to Krishna without devotion means engaging one self in the nine processes of devotional service chanting, hearing, worshipping, offering respect etc:

*shravanam kirtanam vishnoh smara nam pada-sevanani
archanam vandanam dasyaill sal;liyaiiii atni -nivedanam*

[SB 7.5 23-24]

3. *râg bhakti* or *râgânugâ-bhakti*-The spontaneous dealings of the residents of Vrindavan (*gopis*) in relationship with Krishna are called *râgâtmika*. These living beings do not have to learn anything about service. Their spontaneous attitude is called *râgâtmika-bhakti*.

Sri Rupa Goswami has defined *raganuga-bhakti* of spontaneous attraction for something while completely absorbed in it with intense love. Devotional service under the heading, of *râgânugâ* can further be divided into two categories, one category is called sensual attraction and other is called relationship. If a devotee covets such a position, he is considered the most fortunate.

4. *sâdhan bhakti*-regulated principles for the execution of devotional service performed by means of body and senses.
5. *prema*-Love of God (Krishna)
6. *mahâbhâva* - supreme symptom of divine ecstasy.