

# Excerpts from “The Meaning of Śiva, and the Attainment of Yoga”

Reflections on *Bhagavad-Gita* 2:51-53

Swamī Bodhananda Saraswatī

- ❑ It is very difficult to attain a quiet mind living in the modern culture, which is a constant chase of things "new." All the time one desires new and newer things.
- ❑ The mind is disturbed essentially by causes: *śrotavyasya śrutasya ca*, "things heard and yet to be heard." You read the newspaper, watch TV and listen to gossip. Hearing and seeing all this, waves of desire, anxiety, jealousy, and anger arise in the mind. As a result, the *buddhi* becomes totally muddled and turbulent.
- ❑ Disturbance of mind is this ceaseless chase after objects, seeking happiness in the outer world. Seeking is a statement of unhappiness, which means, "I am not complete without objects." You may physically seek, or you may give up seeking, or postpone seeking; but still you are a seeker, because you are looking for happiness outside yourself.
- ❑ Our lives are like a train that has many compartments with a lot of goods being added at every station. By the time the train leaves the station, it holds a great deal of merchandise. New stations have to be reached; new goods have to be gathered. That image is our present state.
- ❑ I may be dispassionate towards the things seen today, but a new thing tomorrow might excite my passion and cause disturbance. What is disturbance? It is the thought, "I don't have this; in its absence I am incomplete." In fact, what we seek is an undisturbed state of mind, regardless of what we have or don't have. But ironically, whenever a new bit of information reaches you, the mind jumps at that object with the notion that, with its addition, you will be complete.
- ❑ What are we seeking? Is it not happiness, security, identity and recognition that we universally seek? But, paradoxically, so long as we seek these, they elude us. The moment we cease seeking and stay centered, the mind becomes quiet. Then all those values come seeking us. In that state of quietude, "*yadā te moha-kalilam buddhir vyatitariṣyati*," your mind transcends the delusional turbulence caused by seeking, expectation and attachment. When all those delusions are over,



"*tadā gantā'si nirveda*," "then you attain the state of *nirved*," the state beyond the reach of the *Vedas*, beyond knowledge, and beyond all desires. You become a centered person.

- ❑ Lord Krishna says that, when your *buddhi* is stable, and there is no turbulence, delusions are over and you are no more a seeker.
- ❑ An unperturbed state of consciousness is called "*Śiva*." For the beginner's sake, we assume a form for *Śiva*, for example, the form of "*Śiva līṅga*." The ultimate state of *Śiva* is not that easily understood by ordinary seekers, although that is our end objective. Pending this discovery, we say, "See *Śiva* in this *Śiva līṅga*," and we prescribe particular *pūjās*. All this is to keep the seeker in a reflective mode of thinking. Actually, what you worship "out there" is not *Śiva*; it is only a reflection of *Śiva*, an image, an idol of *Śiva*; an icon, a symbol. *Śiva* is to be realized as your own Self. *Saḡuṇa* worship (worship of form) should lead to *nirḡuṇa* (the formless) realization, realizing the infinite in the finite. Initially, you are given a form to relate to and to worship. Then slowly, you give up that image. Thus, the *buddhi*, your mind, transcends the turbulence of delusion—the most entrenched being the notion that *Śiva* is outside and other than you—although that delusion is better than not recognizing *Śiva* at all!
- ❑ The *Śiva līṅga* has an elliptical form, which is no form at all, a formless form. When you worship the *Śiva līṅga*, you are actually trying to realize your own limitless, beginningless, infinite self. Elaborate rituals (*pūjās*) are prescribed, for reflection upon the formless in the form. As part of the worship, on the *Śiva līṅga*, the devotee pours sacred *Gaṅgā* water, sprinkles pinches of ash accompanied by chanting of *mantras* and prostrations. The *piṭham*, or base, on which the *Śiva* is placed, represents your pure mind, a state of purity in which the devotee attains the vision of *Śiva*. And the sensory-motor organs are realized as the minions, assistants, of *Śiva*. In that state of total absorption whatever the devotee does is considered as worship of *Śiva*.

Imagine a dirty, muddy, turbulent pond full of decomposing leaves and twigs. If you quietly sit down and patiently wait on the bank for some time, the mud and dried leaves will settle for you to find pure water. The turbulent mind settles in quietude in silent contemplation. When all extroverted pursuits are over, your worshipful *Śiva* is internalized, and your own consciousness is appreciated as *Śiva*.

Ultimately, you realize that your own limitless consciousness is *Śiva*. "*Ātmā Tvam*," that your *Ātmā* is really *Śiva*. That is why, after offering worship to the *Śiva līṅga*, the devotee closes his or her eyes and "experiences" *Śiva* within—"janma-bandha-vinirmuktāḥ"—thus attaining "liberation from the bondage of the body."

That state is called *Chidambara Śiva*. "*Chid*" means your own consciousness. "*Ambara*" means "space or borderless." When that "space-like, borderless consciousness" is appreciated as *Śiva* (*Chidambara Śiva*), then you have reached your destination. That is the state when the mind goes beyond this turbulence and is settled.

When the fluttering mind becomes quiet, you attain *nirvedam*, the state of desirelessness, happiness, dispassion, or detachment. (All of these qualities are interrelated.) There is no storm in your mind; your mind is dispassionate, in a happy state, which is a detached, not-expecting happiness. Then you are enjoying *Śiva*, your spiritual nature. That state is also called ecstasy or "*kuṇḍalīni* awakening," meaning that your total energy is awakened, your consciousness is pure and enjoying total quietude, calmness. This is not a dead, static calmness but a very alive, alert calmness.

*Nirveda* is a very important Eastern spiritual concept. Slowly, the West is also coming to this dispassionate attitude towards things. This attitude is one of playful abandon, free from wanting and possessiveness. Possessiveness comes from sense of inadequacy. Playfulness is expression of self-fullness.

A realized person also goes all over, but this "going" or "doing" is not due to any sense of lack or of inadequacy. They go out of their inner fullness. That "going" is a very different experience. Otherwise "going" is a very painful experience. Your constant thought will be,

"When will I reach? Will someone else reach ahead of me?" All this anxiety! But when you are inwardly complete, "reaching" is not your goal; "going" is your goal. Life becomes play. We call it "*līlā nyāyan*." the logic of playfulness. Without any care to possess, you enjoy everything.

There are two kinds of activities or attitudes: one is out of your inner joy, to express your inner happiness. The other is *for* happiness, to grab happiness. Someone who acts to express himself will have a lot of energy. A person who wants to become happy *by* working will have no energy, because such a person always thinks happiness is outside.

Once you have this *viveka*, this *nirveda*, the understanding that "I don't need anything to be a complete and happy person," then your mind becomes *niścala*, steady, unbuffeted by the barrage of information. The mind becomes steady in the center, "*samādhai*," in *samādhi*. *Samādhi* means the center, the *Ātman*. That meaning is derived because *ātma*, or consciousness, is the center of all experience.

You have always been complete: "*Pūrṇamadah, pūrṇamidam*." "I am complete, you are complete, he/she is complete, all are complete; I need nothing other than me to make me complete." I require neither the presence nor the absence of things to make me complete.

The Sanskrit definition of a human being, "*mānava*" — "*mānavam kāmāyate*," is that "one who never craves for the new." Such a one is stable. With that stability you can go anywhere, be anywhere. That "going" is a totally different going. You are not going in pursuit of anything. You are going out of your own inner ecstasy.

Such a realized person knows, "I am complete by myself. I don't have to gather any goods to be my self." That state is called being established in the Self. Then you have attained the full bloom of *yoga*. When you are able to draw your nourishment from within yourself you are a *yogi*, meaning you are no longer pursuing external things.

Lord Krishna gives one example of *niścala*, the unflickering flame of a lamp. That kind of experience is what is required. Then you have attained "the final fruit of *yoga*," "*tadā yogam avāpsyasi*."

