

॥ Shri Hari ॥

Glory of 'Satsang' (Divine Company)

(from ART OF LIVING)



Swami Ramsukhdas

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Tvameva Maata Cha Pita Tvameva
Tvameva Bandhusa Sakhaa Tvameva
Tvameva Vidyaa Dravinam Tvameva
Tvameva Sarvam Mama Deva Deva

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*Pratham bhagati santanah ker sangaa
(Manasa III:35:4)*

The first devotion mentioned in the *Ramacharitmanas* is the 'satsang' (company of saints and exalted souls.)

*Bhakti sutantra sakal sukh khaani;
binu satsang ne paavahin praani
(Manasa VI:45:3)*

Meaning - Path of devotion is an independent entity with no conditions and prerequisites attached to it., It is a mine of all comforts, but a man can't get it without 'satsang' (association with Truth, company of saints and exalted souls, divine company).

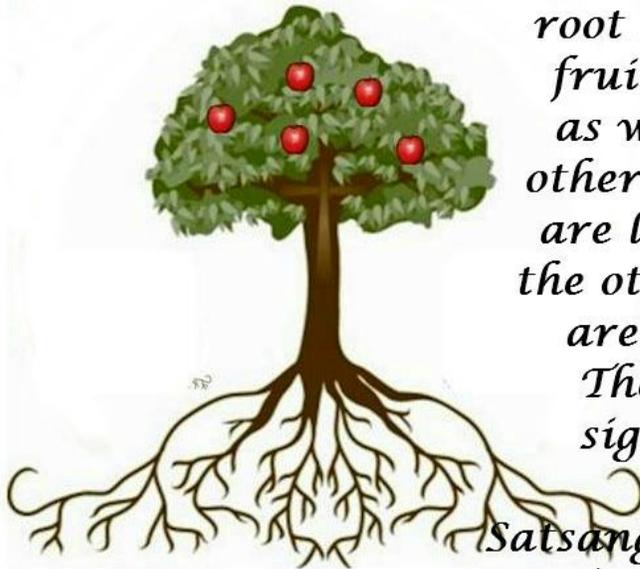
It is also mentioned -

*Satsangat mud mangal moolaa;
soyi phal sidhi sab saadhan phoolaa
(Manasa I:3:4)*

Meaning - 'Satsang' is the root of joys and blessings and it is the fruit while all the other means are flowers.

In a tree, first there is the root and finally there is the fruit. 'Satsang' is the root, as well as, the fruit, while others that come in between, are leaves and flowers. All the other spiritual disciplines are included in 'satsang'. Therefore there is great significance of 'satsang'

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Satsang means Association with Truth, Company of saints and exalted souls, divine company

Swami Ramsukhdasji

Sundaradasa says -

*Sant samaagam kariye bhai;
jaahi sugandh lage chandanki,
chandan hoonte baar ne laayi*

Meaning - Have 'satsang' because good associations are like sandalwood that gives good fragrance and removes bad smell. It is a boat by which we can cross the worldly ocean and it is the 'paaras' (philosopher's stone), which turns iron into gold."

He further says -

Aur upaayi nahin tirne kaa, sunder kaadhahi Raam duhaayi

Meaning - And swears that there is no other method for benediction.

This is an unfailing method to attain the supreme bliss. Where there is a good discussion, divine company, good thinking and good actions, there is affinity with the real i.e. God.

The man faces distresses and misfortunes because of the company of the perishable unreal. If he keeps company of the imperishable, he will attain the supreme bliss because he, being a part of God, is sentient, pure and naturally a heap of joy.

*Ishvar ansh jeev abinaashi;
chetan amal sahaj sukh raasi
(Manasa VII:117:1)*

Meaning - We are a part of God, we are divine, immortal, conscious, untainted and blissful by nature. (Manasa VII:117:1)

Therefore by 'satsang' (good company) and by loving the real, the real is attained. *Kabir* says -

Hans milyaa sukh hoyi re hansaa, hans milyaa sukh hoyi.

Meaning - When the soul identifies itself with God, it attains bliss. Therefore, if you get good company, the company of *Paramatma* (God), you will attain the

supreme bliss.

Good company means company of 'sat', the real i.e. God, and we can get that good company by giving up the unreal. We also use the unreal '*Prakriti*' (matter) for good company, for example tongue for good discussion, hands for good action, mind for good thinking and eyes for reading the scriptures, but their aim is to attain the real by renouncing the unreal.

Sanmukh hoyi jeev mohi jab hi.

(Manasa V:44:1)

Meaning - The moment a creature turns (becomes inclined) towards Me the sins incurred by it through millions of lives are washed away.

As soon as you have disinclination for the unreal, you are associated with the real. The unreal evils such as attachment, malice and jealousy etc., are obstacles to good company. If a man wishes, he may renounce them. But he finds it difficult so long as he does not have a firm determination. As soon as he has a firm determination, he is successful in renouncing them. Many of the brothers and sisters don't know the fact and those who know don't pay special attention to it. Thus they are unable to renounce them because they get pleasure from them. Therefore if we get good company, by renouncing the unreal, we attain the supreme bliss because this affinity with the unreal is the main obstacle.

As *Kalpa* tree fulfills all desires, similarly, good company enables us to attain all the four objectives - *artha* (riches), *dharma* (duty), *kaama* (desire) and *moksha* (salvation) of human life. The question arises whether we can get riches by good company. The answer is that we get exceptional riches by good company because while the worldly riches awaken ambition, the good company roots it out and we have no desire for riches.

*ganga paapam shashi taapam dainyam kalpataruhret;
paapam taapam tathaa dainyum sadhyah saadhusamaagamh*

Meaning - Bath in the *Ganges* removes sins, light of the full moon removes heat

and *Kalpa* tree removes poverty whereas 'satsang' (good company) removes all the three.

'Satsang' removes desires and burning sensations of the heart. So it is said –

*caaha gayi chintaa mitee, manuaa beparavaah;
jinako kachu ne caahiye, so saahun patishaah.*

Meaning - The man who has renounced his desires is the king of kings.”

‘Whatever is lotted, can't be blotted. Therefore why should you think of fulfilling your desire?’ Be a yes-man to His will. Good company is an art to cross the worldly ocean of distresses in the same way as a drowning man catches hold of a straw. In good company we get good ideas. In the Discipline of knowledge (*Jnanayog*) it is mentioned that you yourself are full of real wealth.

*'Dhan kis liye hai chaahetaa, tu aap maalaamaal hai;
sikkaa sabhi jisse bane, tu who mahaa taksaal hai.'*

Meaning - Therefore why do you have desire for worldly wealth? Good association enables you to behold the real, i.e. God (*Paramatma*).

In good company there is spiritual discourses, understanding, thinking and discussions. We get 'satsang' (good company) by God's grace. It is the key to God's treasure. As parents give the key of their worldly treasure to their most loving son, similarly God gives the key of His treasure to saints and exalted souls. When we get 'satsang' (good company), it means that God has a special consideration for us to enable us to realize Him, otherwise why should He have given us good company? We should have continued to face birth and death. Good company is an invitation to us from God for God-Realization. Therefore have good company, adoration and constant remembrance. If we have good company by accepting the presence of God everywhere and have the affinity that 'He is ours and we are His,' we may attain the supreme bliss.

Good company is the *Kalpa* tree to root out the sins of infinite births. As

soon as we start moving towards the real, the unreal perishes. This good company removes stupidity, purifies intellect and enables us to realize God. *Goswami Tulasidasa* writes in the *Ramcharitmanas* -

*Majjan phal pekhiye tatkaalaa;
kaak hohin pik bakao maraalaa.
(Manasa 1:3:1)*

Meaning - By taking bath in the stream of the company of saints one gets instant result, a crow turns into a 'koyala' (cuckoo) and a heron turns into a swan."

Good company does not change the color but it changes the manner and behavior. The hoarse sound of a crow changes into the sweet voice of a cuckoo and a heron gets knowledge how to separate water from milk. Good company changes the conduct of a man. If the conduct does not change, it means that either you don't have good company or you don't have interest in it. If you have both, there is no doubt in attaining the aim of life. The 'paaras' (philosopher's stone) can change iron into gold only if there is a direct contact between the two. But if there is an obstacle in between the two, it can't change.

Love God and saints without having any desire. Have a liking for God because He is ours in the same way as a child thinks its mother as it's own and likes her. If you ask a child, "why do you have a liking for her?" The child will reply, "I have a liking for her because she is mine." Good company means to have affinity with the real i.e. God.

I met a gentleman. He said that people say that there is a great importance of the pilgrimage to the *Ganga*, the *Jamuna* and *Prayaagaraj* etc. However, they don't pay the fare. If they pay the fare, then and then only they can go there. But in 'satsang' (good company), we get an opportunity to listen to excellent discourses, and also get fare to go to the abode of God. We get knowledge, love and devotion. In the *Ramcharitmanas*, Lord Rama says to *Shabari* -

Pratham bhagati satsang ker sangaa.

Meaning - The first devotion is the company of saints.

Shabari lived in the *Dandaka* forest where many sages and ascetics lived. They opposed her living there. But there was an old merciful sage named *Matanga* who allowed her to live there and assured her that one day she would behold God there. If you please a rich man, he may give you wealth. But if a saint is pleased, he may give you the real wealth, God. The saints are really wealthy because they have possession over the real wealth that is boundless and infinite. And the specialty of their wealth is that it does not decrease, rather it increases when it is given to others.

Daanen vardhate nityam.

Gentlemen, it is very surprising that in spite of having a right over such a boundless treasure that is free to all, people are suffering without any reason.

*Paani mein piyaasi, mohi dekhat aave haansi;
jal bich meen, meen bich jal hai nish din rahat piyaasi.*

It is surprising that a fish that lives in water remains thirsty. Similarly, the world lives in God and God pervades the world, yet the people of the world suffer. Why? They suffer because they have disinclination for God. If they have love for him, all their sufferings may perish. These are the saints and exalted souls who enable us to have love for God. The saints guide us that He is ours. You yourself may accept God as yours and alternately you may accept Him as yours by obeying the saints, they stand surety for you in the court of God because in His court the saints, not the worldly rich people are respected. Therefore *Goswami Tulasidas* says -

*Satya bachan aadheentaa per tiya maatu samaan
itne pe Hari naa mile toh Tulasidas jamaan.*

Meaning - Speak the truth, surrender to Him and regard other women as your mother. *Tulasidas* stands surety that by doing so, you will definitely realize God.

In this way you can realize God by good company because you get real wealth from saints without paying any price.

Question: What is the reason that some people do not like 'satsang' (good company) at all?

Swamiji: It is the nature of a sinner that he does not like good company. His sins are responsible for this dislike.

In *Ramcharitmanas*, *Goswami Tulsidas* confirms -

Paapvant ker sahaj subhaavu Bhajanu mor tehi bhava ne kaavu.

Meaning - Just as a man suffering from fever does not feel hungry, in the same way a sinner does not like talks pertaining to God.

If a man does not relish food, it most likely is because he is sick. When a man suffers from fever, he cannot relish sweets, because it tastes bitter to him. But does this mean that the flavor of sweet dishes is bitter? Rather, the tongue cannot relish the sweetness, because of the disease. Similarly, if the person does not like 'satsang' and talks pertaining to God, it means that he is suffering from an inner disease, an inner filth and impurity. So what is the solution?

It is simply - good company and adoration of God. A patient suffering from bilious fever finds the taste of sugar candy bitter? No. It means that his tongue can't relish the sweetness because of his disease. Similarly if a person does not like good company and talks pertaining to God, it means that he is suffering from some horrible disease and his inner sense is very filthy and impure. Now what is the solution? The solution is good company (satsang) and adoration of God. A patient suffering from bilious fever finds the taste of sugar candy bitter. So what to do? He should go on eating sugar candy. It has the power to cure him of bilious fever. If he continues eating, he will taste it sweet. In the same way, if a man has no liking for adoration and good company, he should go on having adoration and good company. By doing so his sins will perish and he will ultimately relish adoration and good company. I have seen people who had no interest in good company. But after sometime they started taking special

interest.

Question: Why should people have 'satsang' (association with Truth, good company) everyday?

Swamiji: The importance of good company cannot be expressed in words. It is a medicine to remove the poison of the worldly diseases such as lust, anger attachment, malice and worry etc. It removes sins, doubts and darkness of the inner sense and solves the complications of life. Thus like air, water and food, it is an everyday necessity. Therefore if you get an opportunity to have good company (satsang), you should think that God has been especially gracious to you. Lord Sankara demanded two things 1) rare devotion to God and 2) good company (satsang) forever.

*Pad saroj anapaayani bhagati sadaa satsang
(Manasa VII:14)*

Meaning - *Unceasing devotion to Your lotus-feet and constant communion with your devotees.*

Question: How does a man, gain from 'satsang' (good company, association with Truth) at no cost?

Swamiji: 'Satsang' is more useful than spiritual practices. The man who realizes God by spiritual practice is like a person who becomes rich by earning money in due course of time. But the man who realizes God by 'satsang' (association with Truth) is like a person who becomes rich immediately by being adopted without any effort. He is a pauper today and becomes a millionaire the next day. He becomes the owner of the money earned by another person without making any effort. Thus good company is a better means that leads to benediction. So do engage in 'satsang'.

Question: What is the reason that 'satsang' (good company, association with Truth) has greater importance than constant remembrance of God?

Swamiji: He that gets 'satsang,' can't remain without remembrance of God. He will naturally have constant remembrance.

Question: What should we do if we don't get a chance to have 'satsang' (good company, association with Truth)?

Swamiji: Pray to God. He is capable to do every piece of work. He will make arrangement for good company. Besides this, study the sacred books.

Question: What is the best method for spiritual progress? Tell me based on your experience?

Swamiji: 'Satsang' (Good company (association with Truth, Satsang) has proved more useful to me than any other spiritual discipline. It is very much advantageous. It gives us light and knowledge and enables us to attain God. Good company is very rare. Therefore don't renounce satsang (association with Truth, good company).

Question: How do we get enlightened through 'satsang' (good company)?

Swamiji: Satsang (good company, association with Truth) means light. When we travel by bus at night, light always remains on the front and guides us. Similarly, 'satsang' (good company, association with Truth) gives light and guides us. Whatever we learn by good satsang, should be put into practice, otherwise it is not very useful. Bright light alone will not help unless we move and cover the distance. Even if the light is dim and we cover the distance that we see, we shall be able to see the path ahead and reach our destination. Similarly, if we put the light (discourse) that we hear from satsang (association with Truth) into practice, it will be very useful for us. But even if we don't put it into practice, it will not go in vain, because truth can't be concealed. Truth always wins. But if we give due weightage to Truth, we may be benefited immensely and very quickly. Therefore teachings from satsang should be put into practice.

Narayan ! Narayan !! Narayan !!!

From book "Art of Living" by Swami Ramsukhdasji.

The pictures have been obtained through google images. If there are any objections, please inform us and we will gladly remove.

A Note to the Reader

The special quality of the original is difficult to capture in a translation. Readers are earnestly requested, that if they have the knowledge of the Hindi language, to read the original book entitled 'Jeevan Upyogi Pravachan' in Hindi.

WEBSITES:

ENGLISH: www.swamiramshukhdasji.net

HINDI: www.swamiramshukhdasji.org

<http://www.shriswamiramshukhdasjimaharaj.com/>

<http://www.sadhaksanjivani.com/>

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