

BHAKTI YOGA – PART 10

SWĀMI DAYATMANANDA

Class begins with the chanting of the following Shanti mantra:

ॐ सह नावतु ।
सह नौ भुनक्तु ।
सह वीर्यं करवावहै ।
तेजस्वि नावधीतमस्तु मा विद्विषावहै ।
ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ॥

Om Saha Naav Avatu |
Saha Nau Bhunaktu |
Saha Viiryam Karavaavahai |
Tejasvi Naav Adhiitam Asthu Maa Vidvissaavahai: |
Om Shantih Shantih Shantih: ||

Meaning:-

Om May Brahman protect us both |
May Brahman bestow upon us both, the fruit of knowledge |
May we both obtain the energy to acquire knowledge |
May what we both study reveal the truth
May we cherish no ill-feeling toward each other |
Om Peace Peace Peace be unto all ||

In the last class, I had briefly mentioned that this relationship between the Guru and the disciple is eternal. This is in accord with the Hindu belief that the law of *Karma* is predominant. Whatever we had done in the past, we will have to reap the results. If in the past we had the good fortune to come across a *Guru*, and if we had been true disciples, then in this life too, already a person who is to guide us towards God is already fixed.

According to the law of *Karma*, there is no place for accident. There is no contingency, there is no emergency. Everything is prefixed. Looks a little bit, you know, tight. That, as though, we had no freedom. There is, in fact, a lot of freedom according to the law of *Karma*. Otherwise, the law of *Karma* itself becomes vitiated.

So the *Guru* is fixed. We know who... The *Guru* is going to come, sometimes we may not even recognize it. It may take a long time, but the *Guru* is already fixed.

When we study the life of *Sri Rāmakrishna*, we find that *Sri Rāmakrishna*, as soon as He saw some devotees, instantaneously He recognises them and says, 'You belong to This place'. And to some people, 'You do not belong to This place'. Doesn't mean He was rejecting. He was telling there is a *Guru* meant for you.

This is an eternal relationship. How it works we do not know. But this is a belief that it does work.

So I also mentioned that not only the disciple chooses the *Guru*, the *Guru* also chooses the disciple, without consciously knowing. There are some *Gurus* who know these will be my disciples. Sometimes even the *Guru* doesn't know that this will be my disciple, but nevertheless, they will be the *Gurus*.

I gave an example of how *Dronāchārya* became, unwilling, unknowing *Guru* to his disciple *Ekalavya*.

But many times, the *Guru* knows this is my disciple, because the relationship is already fixed.

And, funnily you know, the Hindu women believe that their husbands are going to be there, life after life, until they attain liberation. So, if they do not like their husbands better strive for liberation. That's the only way they can get rid of their husbands as soon as possible.

I'll give an example of how *Sri Rāmakrishna* had accepted a person and even offered him, 'I will initiate you'. But the disciple didn't care, he said, 'No I don't want initiation, I don't care for initiation, I don't believe in initiation'. But you know, the relationship cannot be broken down.

Sri Rāmakrishna was a very humorous person. You see, when He got married to *Holy Mother* who was a small child. That was a very funny incident, that in those days, the boys had to pay, shell out money to the girls. Now you see the result of *Karma*. Now it is the girls who are paying back with compound interest.

So *Sri Rāmakrishna* had to pay, I think, about 300 rupees in those days, which is a good amount. That was equivalent to about 60 months of His salary, at the rate of 5 rupees per month. That means, you know, almost five years of His salary He had to pay.

So, the marriage had taken place. And they had to borrow jewellery, for the wedding ceremony, from the neighbors. And the girl was very happy. She went to sleep. But the mother of *Sri Rāmakrishna* was worried that how to give back the jewellery. The jewellery had to be given back, it was only borrowed. So *Sri Rāmakrishna* was an expert. I don't know where from He got that? Without any knowledge of the girl He removed all the jewellery very nicely.

(5:31 mins)

In *Vedāntā*, Hindu mythology, *Lord Shiva*, had a quite peculiar title. He is the Lord of thieves, Emperor of thieves – तस्कराणां पतये नमः (*taskarānām pataye namaha*)
Salutations to the emperor of thieves!

What does He steal? Ordinary thief only steals what belongs to you. But this thief, He steals us. Once He steals our hearts, what else do you think, is there, remains to be stolen?

So *Sri Rāmakrishna* very adroitly removed all the jewellery. And next morning the girl got up, started crying, 'I am missing my jewellery'. Then Her uncle, *Neelmādhav*, I think. He got very angry and took the girl away. Then *Sri Rāmakrishna* said, 'You see the tie has been already tied, so it doesn't matter. Let them take Her away. Now they cannot break the relationship'.

So in the same way, this *Guru Shishya*, it is a kind of wedding also.

We sometimes, *Swāmis* also give that example of marriage. Once a Christian missionary, I think, came to my predecessor *Swāmi Bhavyānandā*. Wanted to convert him to Christianity. So *Swāmi* said, 'I understand that your *Jesus Christ* is very superior, but I'm afraid it is too late. I am already married to *Sri Rāmakrishna*.'

So, *Sri Rāmakrishna*'s statement is 'Once this tie has been done, for eternity there is nothing which can break it'. This is very reassuring because however unworthy the disciple is, once the *Guru* accepts him, there is no way that the disciple can be abandoned.

Swāmi Vivekānanda, He once wrote to one of His Indian disciples, 'Go down as much as you want to. But even if you go to the lowest place, I will pull you up. Because you know you are tied to Me with a tight rope'.

So there was an incident, *Sri Rāmakrishna* saw a devotee. This man used to visit Him. And *Sri Rāmakrishna* knew this person belongs to This place. *Sri Rāmakrishna* used 'This place' - means to Him. But this devotee, he liked *Sri Rāmakrishna*, but not as a *Guru*. *Sri Rāmakrishna* Himself told him, 'Why don't you take initiation'? He said, 'No,

I don't care, I don't believe in it. In fact I don't want any *Guru*'. And *Sri Rāmakrishna* smiled and said, 'Where will you go'? And *Sri Rāmakrishna* passed away.

And long after that, slowly the understanding dawned upon this man, what an invaluable opportunity he had lost. So, he could not bear it. One day he went to the *Ganges* side, started weeping, 'O Lord, You Yourself told me that You will give me initiation, and I have lost it'. Then you see after sometime *Sri Rāmakrishna* appeared to him and initiated him. And that's it. The man was very happy.

So this *Guru* is not dead. A *Guru* comes in many forms - visible form, invisible form. There is no death, neither for the disciple, nor for the *Guru*.

So when does this relationship break? It never breaks! When the differentiation between the *Guru* and the disciple is completely destroyed... When can it be destroyed? Only when they become completely one. Only then you can say there is no *Guru*, there is no disciple.

This is strictly according to the non-dual philosophy.

We have been discussing the tremendous place a *Guru* is held by all Hindus, by all spiritual aspirants everywhere, all over the world. And those who neglect to do so, will do so at their own cost.

(10:07 mins)

Russian Orthodox Church, It also recognizes the value of a *Guru*. They call it *Starets*. That is a *Guru*, we call it. Those of you who have read, *The way of a pilgrim*. And if you have not read, I suggest that you read it. Such a marvelous auto-biography of a spiritual aspirant. How he became illumined. And very beautiful language, and very easy to understand also.

So this *Guru Shishya* relationship is very - it is eternal, it is very ancient. And without a *Guru*, I can say, nobody can progress in spiritual life. There are so many people I come across, they say we don't want *Gurus*, it is their ego, why should...

- one problem is because of the ego - Why should I accept somebody as superior to me?
- The second problem is that maybe I will be involved in rules and regulations. I want to be free.

What a paradox. The very idea of accepting a *Guru*, is to become free. And here the man says, that I don't want to enter into bondage. But this bondage, with the *Guru* is one which leads him out of the bondage. He remains more bound if he doesn't have a *Guru*.

‘Oh, I should... maybe rules and regulations are there. Maybe I have to bow down my head. Maybe I have to accept him as my superior. We don't know what he is going to be in future’?

It is true you don't know. That is the very reason why you should have a *Guru*.

Guru is very very important. Though it's very difficult to tell to the people nowadays, especially in the West. Even in India, so many young men, they have become like modern people. They don't want to accept the idea of a *Guru*. It's not possible to progress in spiritual life. Simple fact! Matter of fact!

We have been also discussing that this *Guru Shishya* relationship has many aspects. Briefly, we had also discussed there are four kinds of teachers. That is -

The real teacher is the only *Guru*, God, *Satchidananda*. But He manifests Himself in three forms.

- 1) One is, what is called the **Divine *Guru***.
- 2) And second, the **human *Guru***, who helps us physically.

Divine guru means the inner guru. Our own mind, when it becomes purified, it acts like an unfailing guide. Intuition!

- 3) Then the third type of *Guru*, we briefly mentioned is **anybody who has gone one step ahead** of us can help us. He is not our real *Guru*, but he is called secondary teacher.

There is a beautiful story in the *Bhāgavatam*, how *Avadhūta* had attained illumination from learning from 24 *Gurus*, including one kite.

You know *Sri Rāmakrishna* mentions this story. One kite somehow got a piece of meat. And as soon as it got all the crows surrounded it, and then they started harassing it. Wherever it goes the crows will follow, cawing, shouting, surrounding, and taking and all that. So the kite tried to run here and there, but it couldn't. Finally in disgust, it dropped the piece of meat. As soon as he did, all the crows left it, and went after the piece of flesh.

Now the *Avadhūta* is a sincere spiritual aspirant. He was observing this. So he learned. What lesson he learned from this? That do not be attached to anything. Do not hoard anything. The moment you hoard...wherever there is a will, you know, wherever is a will there is a relative. So if we have something immediately people will be there, out to get it from us. So do not hoard anything. That is, just live by God's will.

Like that from 24 *Gurus*. One important *Guru* is Earth. How is the Earth the guru? How much abuse the Earth undergoes. They dig, they defecate, and they do all sorts of

things. And with what patience it goes on. Not only it goes on bearing, it goes on sustaining us, nourishing us, holding us up. So that is one of the great lessons - infinite patience!

(15:23)

There was a great disciple of *Sri Rāmakrishna* – *Swāmi Premānanda*. And I was reading the reminiscences. So every morning, He gets up. First thing a holy man does is to repeat the names of God. And then He is also repeating *sha sha sha*. ‘May I bear, may I bear, may I bear’!

You see it is very important. I found it extremely useful. Early morning you get up and say, ‘May I have forbearance, may I have forbearance, may I have forbearance’, consciously. Then you see how many things we have to put up. With the other people, and with many things which are not favorable for us. Which are not suitable for us, which we do not want, and all those things. But if we go on getting irritated, then our life will be a waste. So it's a great lesson to be learned from this.

Just take the name of God. We all know it. But this one – **Forbear, Forbear, Forbear!** It's a wonderful thing. And this man who was repeating it is not a spiritual, was not a spiritual aspirant. He was an illumined person. But why was He doing? Because, even for those people, as long as they close their eyes, enter into *Samādhi*, there is no outside world, no problem.

No world – no problem! But the moment they open their eyes, there is the world. And another name for world is – problem!

Yeah, *Sri Rāmakrishna* had made a contract with *Hriday*, ‘*Hriday* if I get angry and start shouting at you, you keep quiet. And if you get angry and shout at me, I will keep quiet’. And it worked wonderfully well for a long time.

The need of a competent *Guru* is even more necessary after the aspirant has acquired the preliminary virtues, and when he finds himself grappling with the unknown forces of the spiritual world. The psychic high tension wires is as risky as playing with fire.

Most of us, we do not attain that high state. But then if we sincerely go on practicing for years together, then we reach a state where no books, no outsiders have any inkling of where, what we have to do, how we have to escape and all those things.

I will give you a small incident. There was a very great *Swāmi*, whom we consider as one of the most illumined *Swāmis*, *Swāmi Virajānanda*. His book *Towards the goal*

supreme is one of the foremost wonderful books. This incident illustrates two points, which I will mention later on.

So the *Swāmi* went out for austerity, in the Himalayas. And after some time, he acquired severe headache, a migraine headache. So He could not bear it. He could not meditate, he could not even sleep. Then he came down. He went to *Swāmi Brahmānanda*, who was the president of our order at that time, and told him this is what happens, 'I can't meditate, I can't read, I can't sleep. Whole day I'm suffering from this'.

Then very politely, *Swāmi Brahmānanda* suggested, 'Why don't you go to your *Guru* and explain the problem'? And his *Guru* was none other than *Holy Mother* Herself.

So he went to *Jairambāti*. And he just entered the place. *Holy Mother* was sitting. He did not say anything. She looked up and said, She was startled. 'Baba' means son, 'where have you been meditating'? Not place, outside place. Means, you know, we have a fixed location within the body where we fix our mind. 'Where have you been concentrating' in which place of the body, part of the body.

And he said, 'In between the eyebrows'. She said, 'Who asked you to do that? That's not the proper way to do it. You must concentrate at the heart'.

And that's all. Within a few days the migraine headache totally disappeared.

(20:06 mins)

Now, two points from this incident.

1) One point was, *Swāmi Brahmānanda* was considered as the spiritual son of *Sri Rāmakrishna*. Do you think He was not capable of solving this problem?

He, the *Swāmi* could see what his disciples are doing in the Western countries. Once He said, you know, He had disciples *Swāmi Prabhavānanda* and others in America. One day casually He was telling, 'Do you think I don't know what so and so is doing in America'? They have the insight to see the whole world; nothing is a secret for them. They have that power.

So He was quite capable of solving this problem. Why didn't He do it? Because He wanted to reinforce the disciples faith in the *Guru*. If the *Guru* solves the problem, you know, the devotion for the *Guru* will increase, which will help him spiritually.

So he came to *Holy Mother*, and *Holy Mother* saw immediately the problem. The *Guru* need not have been told, 'I'm suffering from migraine headache. I can't even lead

normal life, let alone meditation'. She could by just having one look, She could see that he had developed a terrible problem.

2) Now, it's very interesting because there are so many people, I myself have come across a few people, who had started practicing *Prāṇāyāma* just by reading books, and another person who started practicing concentration in between the eyebrows, because it is written that is the best place for concentration. Undoubtedly it is a best place, but only very few people are fit to focus their minds upon the eyebrows.

It is not a big secret really, why one should not do it. There is a simple physiological explanation for it. Though many people do not know about it. What is it? Supposing you have an injury. It pains, is it not? What, what is the pain? It is a signal that something has gone wrong here, you attend. It is a signal to the mind that you pay attention here. So as soon as, wherever there is pain, did you notice, our mind goes there? And wherever our mind goes blood starts to accumulate there. Have you noticed it?

If a person is very angry his whole face is flushed. If you are hungry, then where is the blood focused, concentrated? In the stomach.

If you have a desire for something else... Wherever there is a desire, there is a sense organ. And wherever the sense organ is thought of, then the blood accumulates there. It is a very commonly experienced fact. So it is good, if there is an injury, blood accumulates there. And that blood has, what is called you know, flushing out function. It kills the germs, cleans the place, and it tries to heal it. That is very good.

But the same physiological fact, or psychological fact, also applies and can bring harm when a person tries to concentrate in between the eyebrows. Naturally the mind will be there. When there is mind, what happens? The blood starts accumulating there. And when the blood accumulates there for no conceivable reason, it becomes a disease. And many people develop severe migraine headaches because of this stupid problem and afterwards no doctor can cure that person. The only remedy is... Because it has become a habit. So the mind always goes there and somehow the problem becomes chronic. And it can create severe obstructions to even normal life.

So a *Guru* is very necessary, even a little bit if we advance in spiritual life, we leave behind many things. And nobody in the physical world, no books are ever going to explain, much less advise, what to do at that stage. Only a person who has already reached that state and beyond; only he knows how to advise the disciple what to do.

Now here is a very interesting piece of information. As we advance in spiritual life.. The general idea we have about spiritual life is that the more we advance the problems become less, the temptations become less. No!

There is a place in spiritual advancement, once we reach that place, after that no temptations are ever going to touch us. But until we reach that place, the more we advance towards that place, the more will be the temptations, the problems, the powers of the mind. This is a fact many many people do not understand, are incapable of understanding.

(25:36 mins)

Supposing a person has developed concentration of mind, without sufficient purification of the mind. Just imagine a small boy, if he takes up a stone and throws it at somebody, how much injury does it cause? Very little. Just imagine if the same boy grows up into a young man, and goes to a gymnasium, develops muscles of iron, and then he takes up this stone and then throws. Which would be more harmful?

In a similar way, when the mind is not capable of concentrating, if any passions occur in that mind, those passions are not capable of doing much injury. But if the same mind has acquired tremendous amount of concentration, but not the power of self control. If the passions arise do you know how much powerful those passions will be? They will be proportionate to the power of the concentration. Many people do not understand this fact.

So, as an aspirant advances in spiritual life, in the beginning, until he reaches a particular place, I will mention it a little later. The more he advances the more the pitfalls, the more the dangers, the more the passions. That is why sometimes we see the so called highly advanced persons, all of a sudden, falling to very stupid things.

Why? Why does it happen? You know, suppose a Guru has come from India, and living a holy life, and everybody is, you know, admiring such wonderful concentration, power, meditation, such wisdom, everything. After suddenly you will see that he had married an ordinary woman, or something, whatever just as an example. So you think, 'Even I being stupid I would not marry that kind of person. How come this highly advanced person, he made such a mistake'?

It is not a mistake, you know? Because he was so advanced, his power of mind was so great, that his passion also increases proportionate to that. And then he loses all discrimination. Only after that he realizes, that where he was and where he had fallen.

That is why *Swāmi Vivekānanda* used to say, very often, among the 100 spiritual aspirants 96% of them become hypocrites, 3 of them will become, go mad. And only perhaps 1 person reaches the goal. Don't exactly calculate 96% will be hypocrites. It's just a figure of speech you know. This is not exactly a calculating type of figure. Many people become hypocrites.

Or the most common type of disease that occurs is, we become mechanical as we go on practicing, you know? In the beginning there is a lot of enthusiasm, and then there is a kind of mechanization. Just to get up at a particular time, sit down for *Japa* or meditation at a particular time, read something at a particular time. Everything goes on in a very mechanical way.

That's why a *Guru* is necessary. Because a *Guru* is not merely a map. A *Guru* is a living dynamo of spiritual power. In his presence, even a dead person will come out to be alive. So if this is the truth, how much true it is when a person advances in spiritual life, then there is nobody to guide him what to do, what not to do.

In fact, so many Christians, so called Christian saints had to suffer a terrible amount of.. undergo suffering, just because they didn't have proper teachers to guide them in the nick of time. A lot of troubles can be avoided if one has a proper *Guru*.

(30:05 mins)

Another function of the *Guru* is to awaken the power of spiritual intuition in the disciple.

So the well known hymn to the *Guru* speaks of the preceptor as one who opens the eye of the disciple blinded by ignorance.

गुकारश्चान्धकारस्तु रुकारस्तन्निरोधकृत् |
अन्धकारविनाशित्वात् गुरुरित्यभिधीयते ||
Gukarascha andhakarastu Rukarastannirodhakrit |
andhakara vinashitvat Gururityabhideeyate ||

A *Guru* is one not meant for advising for work in worldly affairs. A *Guru* has nothing to tell to the disciple about worldly affairs. Not that he cannot tell. It is not his business. For example, if I have a physiological problem, I do not need to go to my *Guru*.

But there are disciples, you know, my disciples they phone, 'I have a headache'. I say, 'Okay, that is very good news, because first it shows you have a head really. Now go to a doctor. And don't bother me about these things'.

If there is a psychological problem, then go to a psychologist. It is no bad thing to go to a psychologist. Psychology is not madness. There are many kinds of, you know, aberrations of the mind. Go to a psychologist.

Only when it comes to spiritual guidance, come to me. Come to a *Guru*!

A relationship has nothing to do with anything physiological.

The 'My *Guru* is everything. I don't do anything without the permission of *Guru*, even if I have to go to toilet'... he will...mobile phone, you see? This is becoming a nuisance to the *Guru*. Instead of progressing in spiritual life, he is only regressing actually.

So, the relationship is only a spiritual relationship. This, we have to bear it in mind.

Then, a *Guru* transmits that quickening impulse which ignites, as it were, the dormant spiritual seed, as it were. He brings it to light. It is true. All of us have that seed. Do not worry about it. All of us are going to be spiritual, because we are all potentially divine.

But it depends upon how fortunate we are, how earnest we are in bringing that seed to the proper condition. It must be brought out. It must be planted in the proper soil, and all those things. This is what a *Guru* does. He helps us to bring out that seed which is lying hidden and makes it blossom.

How does the guru do it? So, in *Vedāntā* there are ways. The *Guru* transmits this quickening impulse. He does it through the process Called *Deeksha* or initiation. According to one of the *Upanishads* called *Tejobindu Upanishad*, initiation is of three types. There are three types of initiation - *Ārnava*, *Shāktā* and *Shāmbhava*.

1)The first *Ārnava* is the ordinary mode in which the *Guru* **communicates a mantra to the disciple**. This is the most usual method. The *Guru* fixes an auspicious date, and he gives a particular mantra to the disciple.

Even this type of initiation is of tremendous importance to us. I will tell you why. One reason is that, you know, our whole life is only wasted - which type of... which form of God should I meditate upon; and which type of spiritual discipline should I follow; and when should I sit for meditation; where should I sit for meditation?

I get all sorts of queries you know. Somebody came and saw me, 'I'm meditating on the floor, on a carpet. Do you think that will prevent the earth from sucking all my

spiritual power?' I said 'No, it is not enough. First you pay £108 of *Gurudakshina* to me, then I will tell you what is the best way'. What is the connection between, you know, sitting on the carpet and then your spiritual power? This is, this is not a proper way of question.

So our whole life, mind is restless. Why are we going from *Guru* to *Guru*, from religion to religion, from one spiritual book to another spiritual book for worshipping, from one form of God to another form of God? Because 2 reasons -

- 1) one reason is, we don't have strong faith.
- 2) Second is, our mind is very restless. And with restless mind, we cannot progress in spiritual life.

(35:05 mins)

So what does the *Guru* do? He simply comes and says, 'Look, this is your God' - means form of God. 'This is your *mantra*. This is the path you follow'. Definite! No question about it. You just close your eyes and follow the *Guru*. So he puts an end to this restlessness of the mind. So that is also very important in life.

How many of us waste our time? Year after year it is going. The paradox of it is, we think that let us think, 'It is a very intimate matter, it is a great spiritual matter. I have to think deeply. It is not that I'm going to buy some radio or anything. These are, there is a permanent relationship. Let me think deeply'. The assumption behind is, that he is going to live 101 years. And then he will decide, long before, what to do, what not to do. Who knows? Death may come tomorrow. It is good to have some kind of discrimination before you choose a *Guru* but don't take too much of a time.

Then the question comes, 'suppose I make a mistake and I choose the wrong *Guruk*. There is nothing called choosing a wrong *Guru*, because the real *Guru*, there is only one *Guru*. You have no choice.

Any *Guru* you choose, like Ford's quip, you know? Ford was producing black colored Jeeps. Somebody went and said, 'This boring black color, why not other colors?' He said 'Fine, you can have any color you want as long as it is black'.

Whichever *Guru* you choose, who is that *Guru*? Real *Guru*? Is only God. If you are in earnest, even a bad *Guru* also will guide you to the same goal. Because it is not the instrument which is guiding you. The human body is only an instrument. It is that which is within that instrument, who is guiding us. If we are in earnest, even the *Guru* also may attain illumination, who knows. So, that is a good, great benefit. So this is the first type of conveying this power is called *Ārnava* or its called *Mantra Deeksha*.

2) In the second type, the **Guru transmits power, directly by a touch or a fixed gaze.** This is a wonderful thing. *Sri Rāmakrishna* very often used to do this just by a touch or just by looking at it.

You know there's an incident. *Swāmi*, I think I'm not 100% sure, I think it was *Swami Vijnānānanda*, he was sitting and *Sri Rāmakrishna* was slowly gazing at him. He felt as though something is rising within him. Many, many times this has happened to many people in the presence of *Sri Rāmakrishna*. Just by looking at the person, by mere will, they can transmit spirituality.

3) And the highest and last one is that rare form of initiation, by which the **Guru gives the highest illumination by his mere wish.** This is very rarely we see. In this case, the *Guru*, and the disciple need not even meet. A *Guru* may be in Australia, the disciple may be in Antarctica. But somehow, a connection is established. And somehow, the *Guru* transmits that power. And somehow, the disciple feels, I am illumined. It's a very rare case, but that is the highest form of initiation. So, let us not wait for that kind of initiation, it's not going to happen.

The *Guru* has another function to perform. One of the grave defects of a spiritual aspirant and a persistent obstacle to spiritual progress is egoism. Of course, that is the root cause of all our problems, egoism. Nothing wrong with ego. The problem is with 'ism'. What is wrong? 'Ism' means the ego, the pure ego, identifying itself with whatever it happens to come into contact with.

The example given is, suppose there is a crystal. Crystal! And it is very clear. If you bring a rare, a red flower near the crystal, how does the crystal appear to be? Red.

The ego by itself is pure because it only knows, 'I Am' 'I Am' 'I Am'. *Soham!* 'I am He'. But the moment it comes into contact, I am the body, I am the sense organs, I am the mind, I am the thoughts, I am the emotions. That is called 'ism'. So that is the wrong thing here.

(40:13 mins)

And spiritual aspirants can become very egoistic, I tell you! They declare that they are going to be spiritual. But actually, through spiritual practice, many times, their egoism doubles and triples and it goes on multi, multifold increase.

Why does it happen? See, just meet an ordinary person, 'Are you a spiritual aspirant?', 'No'. He is very frank about it. 'I don't believe in God, I don't believe in spirituality. I'm

an ordinary man. I eat, drink and sleep'. Suppose there is a person who is doing a little *Japa* and meditation. 'Are you a spiritual aspirant?' 'What do you mean by I'm a spiritual... Don't you see I'm meditating, I'm doing this, I'm doing that'.

He doesn't want to tell by his own mouth that I am a spiritual aspirant. He wants you to find or observe him, 'Is anybody, everybody looking at me whether I'm meditating or not'. How much of this egoism can increase by turning our attention to God this is one problem.

Another problem would be, a spiritual person, in the beginning of his spiritual life becomes extraordinarily sensitive. Do you know sensitivity? When our body is normal, then it has some amount of sensitivity. But when it is, any part of the body is injured, that part becomes reddish and swollen and even a feather touch will be very painful is it not?

In the beginning of spiritual life, a person becomes extraordinarily sensitive to... other people will say, 'Oh this fellow, he is showing off his spirituality!' And it hurts us. It hurts. Why should it hurt? After all they are right. If we are eating, 'Oh this fellow is supposed to be a spiritual person, he is eating like me'. That hurts. No. Everything hurts.

We become very very sensitive. That's why a Guru is very necessary because he is there to break that ego. By criticism, by so many other factors.

So, obedience to the will of an enlightened master, is perhaps the best safeguard against all this.

I will tell you an incident, probably some of you have read it. There was a disciple of *Swāmi Brahmānanda*, *Swāmi Nirvānānanda*, *Suji Maharaj* we used to call him. So this young man, very devoted to his *Guru*. And one day, he was serving the *Guru*, he was special attendant to *Swāmi Brahmānanda*.

And *Swāmi Brahmānanda* was in the habit of getting up very early in the morning, and going out and washing his hands and all that. The disciple is supposed to get up, even before that, make the water a little bit warm so that in winter season it won't be cold and serve the *Guru*.

One day the disciple was late, just by a few seconds. He was running actually behind. And *Swāmi Brahmānanda*, he, as soon as the disciple came near, gave one slap.

Now, it's very interesting because, do you think that such an illumined person like *Swāmi Brahmānanda* becomes really impatient? Do you think that He got angry because the disciple did not come one minute before and waiting for him? Do you think... that would be our judgment! 'What type of man is this? Even we will not do such things', such kind of reactions, much less an illumined soul like *Swāmi Brahmānanda*.

But you know many times, these *Gurus*, they know that a tree of egotism is growing within. What they do and what is the real cause why they do have no real connection at all. Such great souls have that capacity to see. And where we are going to be hurt in the future they, as it were, nip the thing in the bud itself so that it will never grow.

I'll give you a small incident. There was one *Swāmi* in those days, one *Brahmachāri*. And *Swāmi Shivānandā* was the president of the order. So, once it so happened, this *Brahmachāri* was sent for doing some relief work. And he went with some volunteers, and did the work extraordinarily well, very capable way of doing it. Everybody was praise for him. And they all closed the work and came back to *Belur math* and they had to pay their presence to the president. So the devotees went to the *Swāmi*.

(45:15 mins)

Meanwhile the *Brahmachāri*, novice, went to take bath. Went to the shrine of *Sri Rāmākrishna*. He came a few minutes later. As soon as he entered the room, *Swāmi Shivānandā* started scolding him left and right! 'You fellow, stupid fellow. This kind of service to the people. What kind of man you are? What type of spiritual progress you are making?' etc. etc.

There was no connection at all. He was just coming innocently, very happy. He just finished his work so beautifully. He didn't understand at all. And the devotees were stunned because they were only giving good reports about this novice to the *Swāmi*. And this was the reaction of the *Swāmi*. And so they all saluted Him after some time, went away.

At night time that day, again all the monks and novices came to the room of *Swāmi Shivānandā*. That was our custom in those days, even these days, to go to the President's room. And *Swāmi Shivānandā* was very gracious now. Morning He was ferocious, now He is very gracious.

And this novice was with a downcast face, you know, castor oil face we call it. He was standing there because it was still hurting him. So everybody saluted Him, waited for some time, went away. This novice was standing.

So *Māhāpurush Mahārāj* 'My son, come here. Did you know why I scolded you in the morning?' He said 'No Swami, I don't know.' Then *Swāmi Shivānandā* said 'I saw that the seed of egoism is already planted in you. Everybody was praising you, how wonderfully well you carried out the work. Now it might not come out, but in future it will come out. So I have removed it. It is never going to come'. Because whenever he tends to think of how well I have done, he will also remember the terrible scoldings he got.

So this breaking up of the egoism is one of the functions of the *Guru*. By scolding, by criticising, by finding faults or by correcting lovingly, somehow or other, the *Guru* steers the man out of these traps, pitfalls of egoism. And egoism has many many many pitfalls.

We have to... how powerful is this ego. How much, how many ways, myriad ways, it can express itself, only it knows, we do not know. The power of the unconscious terribilities. So, these are many of the reasons.

And one of the most important reasons why a *Guru* is necessary is, the function of a *Guru* is to connect the disciple to a spiritual tradition, *Sampradāya*, or a line of *Gurus*, *Guruparamparā*.

A spiritual tradition is usually started by an *Avatara*, an incarnation of God, or an illumined Seer, *Rishi*, whose spiritual knowledge and power are preserved through a succession of *Gurus*. When a person receives initiation from a *Guru*, he also gets a share of the knowledge and power circulating in that corporate, mystical body.

You see the Christain church, doesn't consider the Church merely a building or an organisation. It considers it as a mystical body. And *Swāmi Vivekānanda* had instructed us, this *Rāmakrishna* order, is the very body of *Sri Rāmakrishna*. If you injure any part of this organisation, then you are injuring the body of *Rāmakrishna*.

I'll give you a very small incident. Once a monk, and you know many people think torn clothes and torn shoes, dirty shoes, they are indicative of the spiritual greatness. You know, unconsciously we think, you know, I don't care for new shoes as though, you know, I'm a great spiritual person. Maybe, he is...really it is because he doesn't care or because his unconscious is craving for some kind of spiritual recognition - this person is very dispassionate person, doesn't care for anything.

So one of the monks was wearing a dirty old shoe and he was walking. And then Swāmi Shivānandā, He noticed it and He said, 'You come here. Be careful. The shoe you are wearing is not your shoe, it belongs to Sri Rāmakrishna'. Just imagine, suppose Sri Rāmakrishna has given you a small piece of cloth or a shoe. How will you keep it? Do you just throw it out like an old torn out thing? With extraordinary reverence you keep it. You, in fact that is the greatest treasure anybody can receive. Is it not?
(50:25 mins)

My Guru, you know, whenever he initiates, he has to, the Guru has to bless the disciples. So he has a *khadam*, *khadam* means wooden slipper, of his Guru Swāmi Brahmānanda, which he wrapped up in a piece of cloth. And whenever we bow down, he will give one tap on the head with it. I think he didn't give a big tap on me, but that is his blessing.

You know, whatever belongs to our Guru, whether it is a shoe or a piece of cloth, we revere it as Sri Rāmakrishna Himself, as a relic of Sri Rāmakrishna, representing of Him - the subject which we will discuss in our next class which is called chief symbols - what are the place of *chin* - symbols? How do they help a spiritual aspirant in spiritual life?

But now to conclude, a little bit about it. So the Guru, he connects us with a spiritual tradition. So the whole order, or *Sampradāya*, or *Guruparamparā*, as though that power is still coming down. It is like the sacred *Gangā* water coming from the heights of Himalayas - which nobody has seen. But right from that place until they merge in the ocean, the entire thing is sacred, as it were, it is the same *Gangā*. You don't say the place where *Gangā* originated is 100% sacred and at *Vārānasi* it is 50% sacred, at Calcutta is only 20% sacred and at *Gangāsāgar* it is only 0% sacred. No - it is all sacred all through.

So the Mantra received by the disciple from the Guru actually is coming from an Avatara and that is where its greatness lies. It is capable of taking us to that highest goal.

That is one of the greatest reasons why a Guru is necessary. And for that he himself must be connected to some great tradition. That is why usually we seek a Guru who is coming from a tradition, *Guruparamparā*. It doesn't of course preclude. Suppose somebody has no connection within a tradition but he was very earnest and he becomes illumined. But he himself becomes the founder of that particular *Sampradāya* or tradition. So **tradition is very very important in more ways than one.**

Very briefly, how it works is like this. Supposing one of our *Swāmis* tends to do something which is not befitting. If he forgets from which tradition he is coming, to which order he belongs, he is more likely to go wrong. But suppose suddenly he remembers, 'I belong to the *Rāmakrishna* order. I represent, I am not an individual, I belong to the *Rāmakrishna* order. And if I do something wrong, then the whole, the name of the whole order will get spoiled. I have no right to do that'. The moment he remembers that, you know, even if he is inclined to do something wrong, he will think hundred times before doing anything wrong.

But whereas an individual, 'O there is nothing, nobody to look forward you know... who knows what I am going to do. I will do something, whatever I want'. So there is a good thing to be connected to a tradition.

And we believe, strongly believe, that there is a special power flowing from this tradition which is capable of uplifting us. Which means, just as an example, if I am a *Swāmi* of the *Rāmakrishna* order, I am not an individual. The whole *Ramakrishna* order, the whole power of the *Avatara*, is behind me. Maybe, I am like a small tap, but the source from which the water is coming, it is not coming from Thames river, it is coming from *Sri Rāmakrishna* Himself. That is the strength a disciple gets whenever he is initiated to a...or... to a Guru who is well connected with a traditional *Sampradāya*. There are one or two more points actually - we will discuss it in our next class.

Om Shanti shanti shanti: |
(55:12 mins)