

BHAKTI YOGA - PART 13

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 ||

We have been discussing the role of rituals as aids in the path of devotion. We mentioned that rituals are the most important parts of development in any field of life. Now, before we go further, we would like to mention some examples of how these things really help. Sri Ramakrishna is the greatest example. He started his spiritual life through rituals, as a worshipper of an idol in the form of Divine Mother. In the spiritual practice, there are several ways, especially in Hinduism -- one of the most important of such pathways is called Tantra. (1.03) These tantric practices rely heavily on rituals, symbols etc. Sri Ramakrishna has gone through these important Tantric practices, only the

most important ones are supposed to be sixty-four in number. We don't know how many hundreds of other **aids** (?) there are. He had these wonderful experiences. I would just give some of these examples. Once he saw the whole universe filled with the light of Brahman in the form of a triangle. Later on, this happened to Swami Vivekananda also. Sri Ramakrishna specifically asked him to meditate upon Brahman in the form of a triangle as a symbol. Triangle is an important part of the *mandalas*, or the *chakras*, or the *yantras* – I will come to that point shortly. A triangle has three lines joined together. It is a symbol -- in this particular case, it is symbolic of the individual self, the universe and the supreme self. When these three are joined together, the spiritual aspirant has attained the supreme goal. So, Swami Vivekananda was advised by Sri Ramakrishna to meditate upon the triangle as a symbol of the supreme, and he did, because he was Swami Vivekananda. In a short time, he saw the whole triangle transform itself to the infinite Brahman. (3.17) This is why the triangle has become so very important in our yantras and mantras, and even in the mandalas, which we will come to very shortly. Hindus also, as I mentioned in my previous talk, take name (*shabda* or sound, शब्द) as a symbol of God. This is specifically called in Vedanta *shabdabrahma* (शब्दब्रह्म). According to that philosophy, everything in this universe, everything in this creation, has come out of sound¹. This was the experience of some of the rishis, and of the sound symbols, *pranava* (Omkara) is the most important syllable. As I have mentioned, whenever we utter the syllable Om, we are uttering the names, the sounds that are possible in the entire universe, because this particular word consisting of the three symbols A, U, M are spread throughout the entire vocal cord mechanism. Therefore, it represents the entire universe. But on this account, we have to be cautious – these are not man-made symbols; somebody did not sit, think over it, and created certain kinds of symbols for the facility of

¹ It may not be very peculiar, since in the Bible also, there is a mention that at the beginning there was the word – it was with God and from the word everything had sprung.

meditation. These are the intuitive depth discoveries of the rishis; spontaneously they discovered. The same truth holds also with regard to the various types of gods and goddesses that the Hindus worship. When Sri Ramakrishna's mind ascended to a certain state, he used to constantly hear this sound called *anahata dhvani*, unsounded sound. It is said that the yogis hear it.

The human body is a symbol of the highest reality. (6.13) There is a deep connection between the human body, and the *yagnashala*, where the ancient Vedic rishis used to perform sacrifices and used to construct the place in a particular way, in a very peculiar way. You can call it a temple of sacrifice. The modern Hindu temples, the human body, and the sacrificial halls, have a very close resemblance. How did this resemblance come about? (6.56) The great ancient seers have seen that when a person started deeply meditating, his whole body is transformed into a sacred vehicle, as if it becomes kind of a ladder taking the aspirant from the lowest rung to the highest rung. This advance from the lowest to the highest is divided into seven parts. These are the well-known *chakras*, the seven chakras. Now, why is the human body divided into? Nobody sat down and said that these were from the lower to the upper – it is only symbolic. A caution has to be observed here. It is not the physiological human body that is really meant, it is the symbolic human body. If you cut open the human body, you don't see any of these chakras. A *chakra* is a state of consciousness. When the mind becomes pure, it slowly starts to ascend from a lower state of consciousness to a higher state of consciousness. Even right now, we are in a particular state of consciousness, and this state of consciousness primarily consists of eating, sleeping and mating. That is why the three lower chakras are the symbols of worldliness. It is a state of consciousness because you are perceiving the same brahman, through the filters of your state of mind. When you look at God in the form of food, the

form of a mate, the form of rest, you experience God in that particular way. That is why worldly persons move among these three chakras, thinking of eating, mating and resting. True spiritual life starts when our mind ascends to the fourth chakra, which is located in the heart – then only man sees things in a different light. Tantra gives great importance on the rousing of these chakras. How does it happen? There is a mysterious force called ‘Kundalini’. Kundalini means coiled – coiled what? The entire personality, or the entire mind.. All our past impressions from the past 96 crores of life are, as it were, condensed and compressed, and lying down (**in the kundalini**). A very small part of that energy is being utilized for performing the ordinary chores (10.30) like eating, drinking, mating etc. Imagine this tremendous energy, as it were, lying unused, is roused up and made to travel through a particular pathway called *sushumna*, the central canal, and it then passes through from a lower state of consciousness to the higher state of consciousness. Sri Ramakrishna gave a graphic description of what happens when the kundalini is aroused and starts traveling from a lower chakra to a higher chakra. In the ‘Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna’ and ‘The Great Master’, he gave a vivid description. These states of consciousness symbolized in the name of chakras, is also symbolized in the form of the lotus -- as it were, the lotus is hanging with its head down and closed, but when the kundalini energy starts moving through the *sushumna* canal or the central canal, as soon as it comes in contact with the lotus, two things happen. First, the lotus that was hanging upside down, stands erect, and second, it opens to its fullest extent. This process continues until the kundalini reaches the thousand-petaled lotus, or the *sahasrara* (सहस्रार) chakra. This thousand-petaled lotus is not with thousand petals, it is only symbolic. It means that the full consciousness is reached. These numbers do not really mean much. Sometimes the devotees have doubt: “Swami I am meditating, but I don’t know how many petals I have to imagine, four petals or six petals.” If

you can imagine nicely two petals, then that is a great achievement. Don't think of four or six, even if you think of only one petal for a long time, you have achieved a great state of concentration. It is not the number -- it is only symbolic. At the same time, I don't mean that somebody sat down and said, 'let us fix two petals here, four petals there.' Somehow, they had an intuitive understanding of these things. Sri Ramakrishna and some of his disciples clearly experienced these things. These are some of the experiences. (13.29) In Tantric scriptures, a female human body is the highest symbol of divine motherhood. There are these "undesirable" types of practices or the so-called left-handed practices, but even these left-handed practices are also more symbolic than actual. For example, there is the *pancha ma-kara* or five M's² -- people who practice it,

- drink wine (*madya*), wine represents the state of divine bliss;
- eat *matsya* (fish) when fish moves in the water, how freely it moves – indicative of the sport of the individual self when it realizes the highest Self;
- *maithuna* (union of man and woman) -- indicative of the individual soul achieving union with the supreme Self; etc.

These are all symbolic expressions. Unable to understand these, people just drink, and get drunk. There are two reasons why Sri Ramakrishna practiced Tantra. He wanted to prove to the world that the scriptures are not bad or undesirable. Through those practices, some great souls also reached God. They are also valid paths of spiritual practice. The second reason why he did it is: Tantras are actually deft psychological studies. As the Kundalini rises upwards, the mind undergoes various changes. Whenever a devotee used to approach Sri

² Pañcamakāra (पञ्चमकार)

Ramakrishna, he used to see the inside the devotee's mind, understand where he is, what his obstacles are for further progress, and what is the best path suited for him. Through Tantric practices, this knowledge had come to Sri Ramakrishna quite very vividly.

Anyway, I am mentioning these because Tantras use different types of symbols: sound symbols, drawings (*chakras*, *yantras*, or *mandalas*), and then *beeja mantras*, the power of mystic syllables. (16.26). All these are parts of symbology and then there are elaborate ritualistic worships. Most of the special celebrations that we so, are about 10% Vedic ritualism, and 90% Tantric ritualism. Tantras also deal with *mudras*. There are special types of bodily postures. When you observe a person worshipping, a Hindu worshipper, you will see him ringing bells, throwing certain things here and there, moving his body in various forms, touching his body in various ways, uttering different mantras etc. You will not understand most of these. To keep you further in ignorance, we also provide music and other things³ (17.29). These were some of the experiences of Sri Ramakrishna, and then he used to worship some of the animals, like jackals – jackals are looked down upon as the lowest kind of animals, but in Tantric scriptures, jackal is the divine vehicle of the Divine Mother. So, Sri Ramakrishna was forced to eat the food touched or eaten by jackals. He was not saying, 'I am eating the prasada of the jackal', he was saying, 'I am eating the *maha-prasada*', the sacramental food offered to the Divine Mother's vehicle. The animal itself becomes divine, because it is associated with the Divine Mother. Wherever Divine Mother is, the vehicle will be there.

Many non-Hindus, unable to understand this symbolism, criticize Hinduism. In the past also, all that the school children knew about Hinduism

³ (Funny comment added) This has three advantages. Firstly, if you understand, you will not come here again. The second advantage is: the more you are kept in ignorance, the better it is for the pujari. And the third advantages is: even if the worshipper makes some mistakes, you will not notice them, because you don't know anything about it!

was about Ganesha riding on a small rat. Ganesha has the (elephant) trunk. Then Hanuman is the monkey-god. The Hindus worship monkeys, rats, elephant-faced gods and goddesses, this is the misnomer there. Don't think the Hindus are unintelligent people. They are far advanced. These are all symbolic things. Just to give you an example, every Hindu god and goddess is only a symbol of the divine reality, manifested in a particular form. Take Lord Shiva for example. Shiva is naked, except for a tiger skin. He has snakes hanging round his neck. He has a trident, and he rides on a bull. What a peculiar (form of) god worship! In these days of Concorde, who wants to ride a bull? What are these things? Why is he naked? Because, he is infinite. What is the symbolism of the bull? This terrible stubborn egotism is the bull. And the bull is also considered a symbol of lust. Sri Ramakrishna used to say that some people's eyes are bullish, full of lust, full of worldliness. So, who can become a yogi? One who can conquer these passions, can become a yogi. (21.05) One who conquers these passions, becomes Shiva! Riding (the bull) means subduing it, using it for his own purpose, for a positive purpose. Then the trident (*Trishula*, त्रिशूल) is there. The trident has got three points. What are these three points for? Shiva is called *Tripurari*, the destroyer of three cities. We all are a combination of three cities. This body is called *puri*. *Puri* means city, where the Divine Lord dwells. There are three bodies: *sthula* (gross), *sukshma* (subtle), and *karana* (causal). As long as we have these three bodies, we are bound souls. What does Shiva do? He pierces through his trident, in one stroke, these three bodies or cities. Then the *jiva* becomes free. This is why he is called *Tripurari*. The snakes all over Lord Shiva are his ornaments. What is the symbolism of snakes in Hinduism? In different cultures, it represents different things. In Christianity, snakes represent temptation. It is the snake that tempted Adam and Eve. In Hinduism, snake represents the Kundalini. Lord Shiva is a master yogi – the kundalini power, the divine power or the infinite energy is at his command.

Ordinarily, a snake kills or harms, but here it has become a beautiful ornament, which means, he can use it for a creative purpose. A coiled-up snake or a snake with rising hood are wonderful symbolisms. When the snake is lying down, it means that the man is unconscious. But when it is awake and its hood is fully up it means that the man is very active. When a person tries to practice concentration, but his mind is not pure, he has bad desires in his mind, all the energy (**fuels impure thoughts and**) goes to the channels of the passion. Suppose a person is short-tempered; he practices concentration and becomes a powerful concentrator-- what do you think will he become? A ferocious short-tempered person! When a person is lustful and his concentration is increased, what will happen to him? He becomes worse -- an example is Ravana.

Then there are Hindu mythologies. All the Hindu mythologies are allegorical stories trying to help spiritual aspirants progress towards spiritual life. (25.07) Just to take an example: (**consider**) the story of Prahlada – his father was a demon, but he himself became a great devotee of God. What does it mean? It means, we are, to begin with, worldly people, secular people. How long would we remain as worldly people? Only for some time. Then our minds will invariably turn towards God. Prahlada represents that mind which has understood that I have to go back to my origin, which is God, nothing can be destroyed. But even the worldly person, Prahlada's father is also a divine being, and that also has to be purified. You know the story, where Prahlada's father tortures him, and asks him to give up God. "No, I cannot give up God", he replied. It is not that he was unwilling to give up God, but he was unable to give up God. God possessed him so much! Whereas, in our case, we possess God, God is in our hands. That is why, sometimes, we hold Him in our hands, and when an occasion comes, He just slips away from our hands. Whereas, in the case of Great souls, we (**great souls**) are in the possession of God, so we

(great souls) have no freedom to give up God. He is never going to give us up. It is a one-way traffic. Once you enter into it, there is no coming back. So, in the final scenario, Prahlada confronts his father.

His father asks him: “Where is your God?”

He asks a counter question: “Where is not God?”

His father says, showing a pillar, “Is God in this pillar?”

“Of course, if you have eyes to see. God is everywhere! He is there also inside.”

“Let me see whether He is there.”

He took up a mace and broke the pillar. Then immediately the Lord came out and destroyed. What is it that the demon destroyed with his mace? What is the symbolism of the pillar? The pillar is the symbolism of ego! What is it that separates us from God? It is the Ahankara, the egoism. As soon as he broke the egoism, out comes God. What little impurities are there, the Lord finished them off. Can the Lord destroy anybody? He can only absorb everything to himself. So, this Hiranyakashipu also became blessed by that.

This is an allegorical story. And all the stories, whether it is Ramayana, Mahabharata, or the individual stories – these are all examples of how to understand these. There is an exoteric meaning, and there is an esoteric meaning in these mythologies. What are we talking about? All about symbolism. These are all symbolical of our attempts. So, an important question that we have to resolve now is: What is the relationship among spiritual life, rituals, and symbolism? Our goal is to progress in spiritual life, (28.53) specifically taking our emotions, transforming them, purifying them, concentrating them towards God. So, that is the path of devotion.

What is a ritual? In the last class, I have given a definition. Any act that takes us towards God, reminds us of God, takes us nearer to God, is a ritual, a sacrament – otherwise it just becomes a mechanical action. Any action,

breathing, sitting, listening, whatever we do with our five sense organs, all these actions can be directed towards God. When that brings us nearer to God, it becomes a ritual. Ritualism employs lot of these symbols, because we have no other way except using symbols. Either it could be a sound symbol, or it could be an image symbol (30.03) or it could be an idea symbol. Everything is only a symbol. Why is everything a symbol? Precisely because except God, everything else is unreal. If something is unreal, it can only be used as a symbol. If it is real, then there is no need to make it a symbol. Suppose you are very angry with somebody who does not understand your language. How are you going to let him know that you are very angry with person, and you are going to beat him up? Show your fist! Universally, even a dog understands when you do like that. What is this? This is a symbol of what you are feeling towards the other object or person, and you want to convey that feeling, right? Every day we are doing these things, though unconsciously. (31.07) So, mainly there are three types of symbols that we use now. These are

1. Sound symbols -- *mantras*, mystic syllables fall into that category
2. Visual symbols called *Pratīka* – *Pratīka* has further subdivisions that I will come to, and
3. Ideational symbols.

First, I will deal with ideational symbols. Any idea, any thought that occurs in our mind is a symbol. It is not the reality, but it can only be a made a representation of the reality. (32.05) So, the Vedic seers have developed a particular technique called *ahamgraha upasana*. You can understand the first word, *aham*, means I. This *aham* has to be thought of as something superior. What do we do now? I am a human being, I am a man, I am a woman etc. Now, do not destroy this ego, you can't also, but transform it. How to do it? 'I am a

child of Sri Ramakrishna' --- this is the precise meaning of initiation. What does the Guru do during initiation? He does two things. The first thing is: he imparts a mystic syllable, a mantra. The second thing that he does is: he establishes a relationship between the devotee and God. He says to the God, your chosen deity, in this case Sri Ramakrishna as an example, that you are a child of Sri Ramakrishna, you are not a child of Mr. and Mrs. so and so, and he tells Sri Ramakrishna "From now onwards you look after your children." That is why we say, "Oh Lord, whatever I have done in my past, whatever I am doing now, whatever I am going to do in future, I offer everything to you. Accept me as I am, and from now onwards, you pull me towards you." What the Guru does at the time of the initiation is, he opens, as it were, the eyes of the devotees and says, "So long as you have been considering the worldly parents as your real parents, but they are only your foster parents. From now on, you belong to the Divine Lord, you are a child of the Divine Lord." Thus, he is establishing a divine relationship between the devotee and God. So, what is the mantra meant for them? The purpose of the mantra is only one: do not forget your real parents. Every time you utter that mantra, you have that understanding, 'I belong to Sri Ramakrishna'. What is the meaning of the mantra? 'I am a child of Sri Ramakrishna; I am a child of Sri Ramakrishna ...' Every time you utter the mantra, you have to remember this, until it becomes an unbroken knowledge. (35.00) That is called *mantra-siddhi*, and *mantra-siddhi* will take place. So, the simplest form of *ahamgraha upasana* in the Vedic times is: Meditate upon your mind as Brahman, because in those days the personal types of worships were not encouraged. The whole trend of the Upanishads is impersonal – no question of Vishnu or Shiva or anybody else, only pure consciousness, the highest divine reality. So, *ahamgraha upasana*, is it prevalent now? Yes, it is prevalent in a smaller section of the people who follow the path of knowledge. They are also initiated into a mantra – it is not called a mantra, it is called a

mahavakya. There are four such mahavakyas. Every monk is initiated into one of these four mahavakyas. Our *mahavakya* is 'Aham Brahmasmi' or 'I am Brahman'. (36.17) This is one example of *ahamgraha upasana* -- transform the lower ego into identification with the divine itself, merge the individual self in the Supreme Self. This is just an example. There are plenty of such *upasanas* in the Upanishads and other Vedas. The second type is *nama upasana*. Nama means name, the names of gods and goddesses are very effective vehicles for us. In this connection, I have to tell you about one example: Swami Vivekananda had seen Sri Ramakrishna in the form of a mantra. Just as Sri Ramakrishna had seen the Divine Mother in the form of *shabda-brahma*, Swami Vivekananda had one day a vision of Sri Ramakrishna in the form of a twelve-lettered mahamantra 'Om namo bhagavate Ramakrishnaya'. In South India, among the *vaishnavas*, there is the famous twelve-lettered mahamantra: 'Om namo bhagavate Basudevaya'. There are others like the *panchakshari* mantra 'Om namo Shivaya'. or the famous *ashtakshari* mantra: 'Om namo narayanaya'. So, the *dvadasakshari* mantra is 'Om namo bhagavate Ramakrishnaya'. (38.02) After having that vision, Swami Vivekananda composed the hymn "Om hrim hritam" that we sing every day. When you look at the first letters, you see 'Om namo bhagavate Ramakrishnaya' distributed among the four. He just did not sit down and write, only after this vision he wrote. This is called *nama upasana*. It is a big philosophy by itself – I will not go into it. One of the most important spiritual practices of every Hindu devotee⁴ is doing japa. Japa does not mean merely repeating the name of God but remembering God. Repetition can be done unconsciously but remembering can only be done consciously. So, japa has utmost importance to such an extent that we are advised to never forget the name of God. Go on repeating it. And it has tremendous power. Why? It is for two reasons. One reason is: the mantra

⁴ Those who follow the path of devotion.

itself is imbued with that divine power. It is the discovery of a great soul. You cannot sit and compose the mantras. You have to get it from a great soul traditionally. Secondly, it becomes powerful because it comes from the mouth of a person who himself is experiencing that power. That is why you cannot simply take mantras from the books or from the Internet. One must get the mantra from a person who is sincerely practicing it, because a person who is practicing it, endows the already endowed mantra with his own power (40.03). That is why, this system of Guru-relationship that we discussed had assumed such vast proportions in Hinduism, to the extent that there is a saying, if Guru and Govinda suddenly come and stand in front of me, to whom do I bow down? To the Guru and not to Govinda, since is the Guru who has shown me then way to Govinda! So, this is called *nama upasana*. And this name upasana ultimately helps us to attain deep meditation. Any pratika or image that we want to take help of, has its own limitations. You have to go to the shrine room or some place, open your eyes, and then go into imagining so many things; may be the body will not be in such a good condition, it can be in a paralytic state. Sometimes we may be too tired. Suppose at 11pm you want to worship God. Is it possible for you to go to the shrine room and do all those things? But this *nama upasana*, worshipping the divine name in the form of sound⁵ is so easy! Close your eyes, and you can remember God. It is so wonderful. You can do it while on a train, you can do it while you are working -- you can do it at any time or place, whereas worshipping the picture etc. requires special preparations. (42.00) Here there is no such thing necessary. So, *nama upasana* has become vastly important for every devotee. Usually every devotee is initiated with a particular mantra by his own particular guru, and thereafter he worships his chosen deity to the extent possible, through the ten types of items or sixteen types of items. On special days, we do sixteen items worship, but the most

⁵ Sound here means an idea.

important thing is nama upasana. This nama upasana or worship through the name and worship through the image go together. Nobody sits there and goes on throwing flowers at the deity – what they do? They utter the mantras. For every ceremonial act, there is a particular nama or mantra with which it is associated. If you go the traditional temple, you will see (43.02) for the flower one type of name, for the sandal paste another type of name, for fruits another type of name. For every type of item there is a particular mantra⁶ with which it is offered. Which is more important? It is the mantra that is most important.

\ But sometimes our minds are very restless. When the mind is restless but there is a desire to practice spiritual disciplines, the most important practice is worshipping of the *pratīka*. The meaning of the word *pratīka* is ‘going towards’. Here, suppose there is an image of Sri Ramakrishna, and I am trying to worship. What am I trying to do? I am trying to nearer to Sri Ramakrishna. Only then the action is justified as real worship. Suppose I am offering flowers and I am thinking of something else⁷. Do you think that will be real worship?

So, the most important of these things is *pratīka*. *Pratīkas* have a subdivision which is called *pratīma*. What are these two things? They are icons. There are two divisions among icons: iconic and aniconic. What is iconic? An icon is not an image but a symbol, for example, a cross, or the sound Om, or a *swastika*, or a *shivalinga*. (45.04) You know, *shivalinga* is a small stone; *Sālagrāma* is another piece of stone; a water pot with a coconut and some green leaves represents mother *Shitalā*. These are called *iconic*, because there is no three-dimensional representation. These are vast in number, every religion has produced them, and Hinduism excels every religion in making these iconic symbols. Then, there are *aniconic*, because three -dimensional images are made, like Ganesha, Kartikeya, Rama, Krishna, Vishnu, Divine Mother. There

⁶ I was saying ‘name’, but it is not merely a name, it is a mantra.

⁷ May be, I am thinking of the ongoing cricket match. We are very fortunate that Sri Ramakrishna is not here to observe how we worship. Otherwise our cheeks would have been red with his beatings, which happened to Rani Rasmani.

are subdivisions like child Rama, grown-up Rama, married Rama, ascetic Rama (46.05) – these are the three-dimensional images which have become so popular in Hinduism today. Sri Ramakrishna had also worshipped such a three-dimensional picture. He also used iconic images like yantras, mantras, mandalas, and all those things. So, these images these days play a very important part. In Christianity, if you go to a church, you will see that there are two things: one is a cross, cross is an icon, whereas the actual picture or image of Jesus Christ is aniconic, it is an image -- an icon or an image, usually either one or both will be there together. Jesus Christ will be seen hanging on a cross. It is symbolic. It is there to remind us about the life of Jesus Christ and what we are supposed to do etc. In this regard, the cross is one of the greatest symbols. For every devoted Christian, the cross is the greatest symbol. As soon as he sees a cross, he is reminded of God Himself. So, how do Hindus or Vedantins understand or interpret this cross? It is like that Prahlad's story. What does the pillar represent in that story? (It is the) *ahankara*, that has to be destroyed. In this case, the huge central stake in the cross represents the huge ego that we are all living with and exhibiting it more and more. And what does the cross symbolize? Not me, not me, which means 'thou', that is how Vedantins do it. But, in a way, the Christians also do it. How do they do it? Cross is a symbol of suffering. Jesus Christ suffered so much that he died, and then only he has risen, only after three days. Unless somebody dies, or undergoes all these suffering, he cannot rise as a divine person. It is a wonderful symbol, and its effect on devoted people cannot be imagined. To other religious people the cross may not be of so much significance, just as how much holiness the symbol 'Om' signifies to every devoted Hindu. So, we are born with certain kinds of affiliations. To understand the symbology in other religions, other cultures, we need a vast amount of sympathy. Some people, of course, misuse these things, that is not our problem. (49.14). Now I will come to a very

important part: *pratīma* and *pratīka*. *Pratīka* means something that which slowly draws us near God. Part of this symbolism is called *mudras*. *Mudras* are particular gestures. I will give you one example. During worship, when we are doing an offering, the worshipper takes the left hand and draws a half-moon, like a half-circle above the flower or usually the food offering. Covering of that sacred thing (some impurities may be there). Especially, our gaze is an impure gaze, do you know that? I will tell you an interesting thing. A pujari or priest is one who is supposed to worship God on our behalf, and the best of food materials like sweets, fruit etc. are offered there. Suppose he is worshipping for 4 or 5 hours -- Hindu worships go on and on. Don't you think he gets hungry? When he sees the food that is to be offered to God, what do you think about the thought that comes to his mind? And the devotees are also sitting there for three hours. Nice rasagollas and rajbhogs are there in front in huge heaps. What thoughts do you think will the devotees have? Suppose there are children. They might say,

-- "Mom, I want one of those things."

-- "Come on. Keep quiet! That is very sacred."

But what is the thought that is passing on? 'How long is this worship going on? When is the prasada going to come out?' So, our thoughts are usually impure. Therefore, to remove these impurities, this mudra is advocated. (51.17) Through this mudra, symbolically as though we are covering the food items, so that nobody can see it except God. It is like a plexiglass where only God can see and nobody else can see⁸. And then there is *dhenu mudra*, *dhenu* means cow. This represents the udder of a cow. What has the udder of a cow got to do here? Just as the cow is a representation of Mother, she feeds and nourishes the baby – whatever I am going to do, may it nourish me physically, intellectually,

⁸ There are some cars, where from the inside you can see the outside, but from the outside you cannot see the inside of the car.

morally and spiritually. These mudras or gestures are used in worships in plenty.

Now I will come to *mandalas* and *yantras*. Dr. Jung, a great psychologist discovered that where we are thinking of certain things, and we are asked to draw something, invariably, if we don't consciously draw, the drawing that is produced by us can tell the psychologist what we are thinking about. This fact discovered by psychologists is used for therapeutic purposes. For example, if a child is mentally disturbed due to a shocking incident, how does the psychologist discover what is really troubling the child? (53.11) The psychologist asks the child to draw something. Being a child, he does not think, 'I have to show something to the psychologist.' Somehow, the child draws such a thing that can be interpreted by a trained psychologist. In one such recent example, when the tsunami was there and children lost their parents and family members, one child was asked to draw her experiences. She drew something where there is a huge amount of water and a tree was falling, the houses collapsed, and some dead people crawling under. The psychologist could understand that, that event shocked the child and it had not made her a normal child. This is only an abnormal example that I am giving. But Dr. Jung had discovered (54.09) that at certain states of meditation⁹, the hand draws certain *mandalas*, certain types of diagrams. The philosophy behind these diagrams, I mentioned one example today about a triangle, but a mandala or a yantra consists of triangles, circles, squares and lotuses. Lotuses represent states of consciousness. And every point in that particular yantra or mandala is symbolic, every point has its own special mystical syllable. The whole thing is filled with certain mystic syllables. The guru or the teacher explains the symbolism of these things to those who are initiated and asks them to meditate upon that particular *mandalas*. The point that we have to understand

⁹ He used to meditate.

is, these drawing are not artificially created diagrams, but certain high states of mystical experiences automatically produce these mandalas. Therefore, one way to attaining to that high state of consciousness is: as if somebody has constructed a kind of staircase, and somehow, he discovered it -- he came down and was inviting everybody that this was the way to go up. (55.42). You go through the staircase. A mandala is exactly like the rungs of a staircase, step-by-step it takes us to the higher states of consciousness. In the next class, I will briefly explain about these mandalas, yantras, and one particular yantra that is very popular in south India – it is called Shri Chakra. Chakra, antra, mandala are very important parts of not only temple worship, but in spiritual practice too. We will mention briefly and then proceed further with discussions on Bhakti Yoga.