

# BHAKTI YOGA - PART 16

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 path of *Bhakti Yogā* or the path of devotion, there is a very important practice, and *Swāmiji* is going to discuss about this practice. There is a great misnomer, among many of our devotees, that it is quite possible to progress in spiritual life without purification of the mind, especially among the Hindu devotees. They can go to the *Himālayas*, can close the eyes, and go on repeating the name of God. And God will reveal Himself to him. And that is the end of the matter.

But it is seen many times... But the people, that they go and take the name of God, extremely impure, selfish! They do not have any love, caring, sharing or any of those virtues. How can such people be at all devotees of God?

**So who is a devotee of God? One who becomes like God.**

Can you imagine a God who is selfish, uncaring, unsharing, doesn't care what happens to His devotees or even non-devotees? Is it possible?

That is, you know, some people have wrong understanding about God. If that is the God, it is not the fault of the God. It is our misunderstanding about God.

Why? Because **who is that God? Where is that God? He is here inside us!** We are looking for a God who is outside. Why is He not giving me a feeling?

In this connection also it is very important to understand, and many times I have discussed this matter, the difference between feeling and knowledge.

I came to know, while studying history, that there was a man who went mad. He was a great devotee of God. But then he went mad and the contemporaries are writing about this... He went mad because he thought that God had absolutely no love for him. There is no hope of his ever getting salvation, or the grace of God, that's why he went mad. This is a human thinking.

We think in a certain limited way, and many times in a wrong way. And we attribute that God also must be exactly like us. In fact, God is exactly like each one of us.

There was a school and there was a drawing teacher. And one day he gave an assignment to the students, 'You draw something and show it to me'. So, he was going round to see what his students were drawing. And he found one small girl was trying to draw something, so he asked her, 'What are you trying to draw?' Because it was unlike anything he had ever seen in his life. She said, 'I'm trying to draw God'. 'Do you know how God looks like?' She said 'No, but when I finish, I will know'.

This is our idea of God, you know, **whatever we think that is our idea of God.**

God is always merciful. So what is our duty? We have to be loving, merciful. First towards ourselves. We are the people who condemn ourselves very much. That is one of the things which we are going to discuss today.

**So, it is not possible to progress in spiritual life unless our so-called inner growth corresponds with certain types of behavior on the outside.**

Just to illustrate this point, I'll give the example of *Totāpuri*. You know, *Sri Rāmakrishna's Guru Totāpuri*? He was such a type of person who went to a solitary place, and nearly for 40 years went on thinking about *Brahman*, 'I am *Brahman*! I am

*Brahman!*' And realized that He was *Brahman*. And you know, after that he came to *Dakshineswar*, and he instructed *Sri Rāmakrishna* also in the path he knew.  
( 05:07 mins )

But then something happened, which many of you are aware of, He was talking, everything is *Brahman*. He never accepted this world. He was very stern. I'm sure he was compassionate, but he was uncaring, unloving, as it were. He didn't accept a personal God.

Why should anybody accept a personal God? Is it necessary? You see the precise point we are discussing? **If we do not accept a personal God, we will not also accept the world. Because the world and God are obverse and reverse of the same coin.** If we don't accept personal God then we don't accept the world. If we don't accept the world, where comes the question of sharing and caring and all those things? No, it is not possible.

So He had to sit, literally, at the feet of *Sri Rāmakrishna* for 11 months to learn this lesson that your *Brahma-jnāna* inside is perfectly all right, but outside behavior doesn't show your *Brahma-jnāna*.

You know what happened? One day, He was sitting, talking very highly to *Sri Rāmakrishna* about *Brahman*. He never talked about anything else, 'Whatever we see, whatever we hear, whatever we experience is all *Brahman*'.

Unfortunately, just at that time, a temple servant had come to take a little bit of the fire to smoke his cigar. *Hookah*, we call it, you know? He did, he did not notice it at first. When the servant had taken the fire and was about to go, He took out His big tongs and was about to beat him. *Sri Rāmakrishna* saw it and started rolling, with laughter, on the ground. *Totāpuri* didn't understand, 'Why are you laughing?' In Bengali, you know *Sri Rāmakrishna*'s words তোর ব্রহ্ম জ্ঞানের দৌড় কতটুকু দেখছি ( *Tor Brahmo-jnāne dour koto tuku dekhchi* ) I am seeing the extent of your knowledge of *Brahman*. Just now you're telling everything is *Brahman*, and now you're about to beat another man.

You know he was about to beat, the servant escaped. Just imagine, instead of tongs he had a bomb, what he would have done? He would have thrown it at the servant. Because in anger we can do anything. Don't say, 'No, a bomb he would not throw. Only stick he will throw.' In anger, we can do anything. Fortune for the servant that there was no bomb. Then *Totāpuri* realized.

Why had He come under this passion of anger? Anger means what? If I love you, how can I be angry? Anger is possible only when I don't love you. Anger and love, they are diametrically opposed. They don't stay in the same mind at the same time. They can stay one after the other, not at the same time.

On the contrary, what had *Sri Rāmakrishna* done? He started His spiritual practice. On one side He used to go into the jungle and deeply get absorbed in the *Divine Mother*. But on the other side He also used to go and clean the lavatories of the people who clean the lavatories. And he started taking, you know, a bit of clay and some coins and say they are of equal value. All these practices are meant for purifying the mind.

Now, why can't we meditate, not caring with all these things? Simply It is impossible because **unless the mind becomes purified it's impossible to meditate.**

What is the cause of our non meditational state. When we sit and try to meditate, what is it? Various thoughts are running around like madcap, is it not? What is the cause? The cause is that the mind is not pure. Purity of mind is called in Sanskrit language, *Vedāntic* language. सत्त्व अवस्था (*Sattva avasthā*).

There are 3 types of states - सत्त्व रजस् and तमस् ( *Sattva Rajas and Tamas* )  
*Sattva* means absolute quietness of the mind.

According to the definition of *Yogā*, *Patanjali Yogā*, **when the mind becomes absolutely quiet what happens?** तदा द्रष्टुः स्वरूपेऽवस्थानम् ॥ ( *tadā draṣṭuḥ svarūpe avasthānam* ) **The soul, as it were, is established in its own nature. It sees nothing but its own nature.**

At other times, वृत्ति सारूप्यमितरत्र ( *vṛtti sārūpyam-itaratra* ) whatever thought comes it identifies itself with that thought. This is called *Māyā*, *Avidya*, ignorance!

**So what is the cause of our non concentration? It is restlessness of the mind.**  
**Why is the mind so restless? Because it is not pure!**

And all the practices, in every religion, in every method of spiritual progress, is to make the, first thing is to make the mind pure!  
( 10:06 mins )

**What is meant by purity of mind? It is to see that there is no other.**  
In other words what is called moral development.

We say this person is a very moral person. What is the definition of morality? A moral person is one, not merely who adheres to certain rules and regulations – he doesn't tell a lie, and he is a little bit caring, he is not that selfish, he doesn't harm other people.

Mostly morality identified with sexual faithfulness, a husband is faithful to the wife, a wife is faithful to the husband. There are so many chaste women among Hindus. What is a chaste woman? That they are very faithful to their husbands, but they are not at all spiritual! Not at all moral. It is just a kind of behavior, Victorian morality! If they had been born in this country in this age, they would be the first persons to start nightclubs. Because they were born unfortunately in a society which looks down upon this kind of behavior. What is the test of morality? Chastity? Spirituality!

**So what is spirituality? Seeing oneness in everything!**

**So what is morality? Seeing oneness everywhere!**

I and thou, there is no difference. Then I don't tell lies to myself. I don't harm myself. I love myself, I care for myself, I share for myself. When a person really comes to that bit of knowledge, identity, that I am the other, then he becomes what is called established in morality.

Until that time all these rules and regulations are like putting a thing in a machine, so that it goes on trimming, and cutting the edges, and softening it, until it becomes a perfect product.

So without morality, or purification of the mind, nobody can really progress an inch in spiritual life. Not only that, without morality nobody can be happy in this world! A lying person, a selfish person, he may have millions or billions, but he can never be happy.

This is another subject which I will not go into. But I will just mention **happiness is not what we possess; happiness is what we are!** Being and having are totally different things.

A person who has very little can be very happy. A person who has many things can be very unhappy. But we always think a person who has many things he must be automatically happy. So if my income is 100,000 pounds I am so happy. How happy Bill Gates must be by that calculation.

Even scientists are making research on the subject. 2 years back there was an article in Time Magazine, 'The Science of Happiness'. It is clearly proved, beyond basic

necessities whatever is added to that will not add one iota of happiness. It is a state of mind. **Happiness is a state of mind.**

The examples! Great example is the *Holy Mother*. What did She have in comparison with us? We are living, as it were, in the seventh heaven, compared to what She had. And yet, how much of happiness we have compared to Her happiness?

Anyway, our point is morality is not merely observing certain rules and regulations. But **morality is attaining to that state of mind, where we do not see any difference between ourselves and the other.** Elimination of difference is what is called morality. This is the first step. That's why in every religious path, the first step is purification.

Now I will read out certain things before I go into Swāmi Vivekānanda's these things. Those who tread the path of knowledge, *Jñāna-Mārga*, they cannot even go to a *Guru* and start studying of the Scriptures, unless they first acquire what *Shankarācharya* termed as *Sādhana-chatashtaya Sampatti*, the treasure of four great qualities.

What are they?

- 1) Discrimination between the real and the Unreal.
- 2) And renouncing, what we know definitely to be the Unreal.
- 3) Then, the group of six attributes as calmness; self control; self withdrawal; forbearance; faith; and self settledness.
- 4) And fourth - intense yearning for freedom.

This is what the path of knowledge indicates to us, as preliminary qualifications, even before we enter.

( 15:14 mins )

Suppose somebody wants to enter university, do you think from elementary school he will jump into university, or he has to go through these preliminary stages, GCSE and all those?

*Buddhā's* 8 fold practice, almost similar to *Pātanjali's* 8 fold path, *Ashtāng-marga*. Do you know what are those first two things?

- 1) Right view.
- 2) Right intention.

**This is called wisdom.** Then the next part -

- 3) Right speech
- 4) Right action.
- 5) Right livelihood.

**This is what He calls practice. It is called ethical conduct, then only comes in the end**

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- 6) Right effort.
- 7) Right mindfulness,
- 8) And right concentration.

So, what are these? First you decide this is my aim, I want to progress in spiritual life - Right view, and right determination. Then right effort, right way of living, right way of speech, right way of livelihood, etc. That is what is called Moral purification.

I also had discussed in elaboration, *Sri Rāmakrishna's* 5 commandments with... most of us are devotees of *Sri Rāmakrishna*. And the devotees of *Sri Rāmakrishna* follow, are supposed to follow, the teachings of *Sri Rāmakrishna*. Is a big book, *The Gospel of Sri Rāmakrishna*, 1000 pages, you squeeze.

What is the essence? 5 commandments!

What are those five commandments?

- 1) Practice the presence of God.
- 2) Cultivate holy company.
- 3) Go now and then, go to a solitary place.
- 4) Constant discrimination.
- 5) And live in this world like a maid servant.

Why is He, why is He prescribing all those things? He could have simply said, God's name has tremendous power, just go on repeating it. To repeat God's name constantly, we have to put all these things. Who can constantly repeat God's name? What happens? Suppose a person whose mind is not purified, do you know what happens? He gets so bored with repeating God's name.

You know, there is a *Swāmi* in *Belur Math*, very wonderful *Swāmi*. Once some devotees went there to him and said, '*Swāmiji*, when are we going to *Rāmakrishna Lokā*?' Every devotee of, initiated devotee of *Sri Rāmakrishna* believes after death *Rāmakrishna* will come with what is called chariot, nowadays not chariot, nowadays you know this Boeing 737, it's much quicker. And He will take him to His *Lokā*, and everything is open to him. So, when are we going to go to *Rāmakrishna*?

Then *Swāmi* said, 'Sit down. How long do you sit in front of *Rāmakrishna*?' He said, '*Swāmiji* we sit 20 minutes to 30 minutes'. 'And after that what happens?' 'We become very restless'. *Swāmi* said, 'How fortunate you are, you have not gone to *Rāmakrishna*

*Lokā*, because 24 hours for eternity you have to sit in front of Him. Just imagine what would be your condition. You will go mad’.

It is absolutely true. Because if we love enough, then our ability to tolerate anything depends directly proportionate to the amount of love we have towards something. So if we love somebody we can bear with anything.

So how to get that toleration? Why not start? That is why God has given all these opportunities for us to develop that love, that toleration.

Once you know, there was one very troublesome fellow here. And *Swāmi Bhavyānandaji* had to put up with him for several years. But he was a very patient man. I don't know whether I told you? You know, there is a *Swāmi* in Germany. He had recently come here. And at that time he was a *Brahmachāri* in Bangalore. So our *Swāmi Bhavyānandaji* went to Bangalore. And this *Brahmachāri* asked, ‘So how many *Swāmis* are there with you?’ He said, ‘Yes there are some *Swāmis* here’. ‘And do they give you trouble?’ So the *Swāmi* said, ‘Do you want to know?’ *Brahmachāri* said ‘Yes’. So he took off his cap and said, ‘Can you count one black hair?’ He said, ‘No, all white hair only’. ‘That is the answer’.

So God gives us this tremendous opportunity, of people who do not like us, whom we do not like, and all that. It's a tremendous opportunity for us to develop that infinite patience. And then the mind becomes calm and quiet under all circumstances. Though we do not desire troubles and suffering, miseries, but misery is really speaking, a gift of God.

*Holy Mother*, what did *Holy Mother* say? Misery is a gift of God!  
What did *Swāmi Vivekānanda* say? ‘If you want to progress quickly in spiritual life, then go and live amidst people who hate you’. Because you know, there's no choice for you but to think of God.  
( 20:15 mins )

So, what I'm saying is purification of the mind is the most important. Without purification of mind, mind will not be able to take God's name.

Sometimes mechanically, as you know, we... But you know what *Sri Rāmakrishna* said about mechanical *Japa*, giving the analogy of a parrot? You teach a parrot, you know, to repeat the name of *Rādhā-Krishnā*, he goes on repeating. Until what time? Until a cat catches it, and then what, what comes out? It's natural sound comes out.



So when difficulties come, the first difficulty that comes is enough to disturb our peace of mind, unless we develop purity of mind.

Though regular repetition of God's name has its own value. I'm not saying no. We hear so much of the power of the name of God.

*Chaitanya Māhāprabhu, Ajāmila*, he just uttered the name of *Nārāyana*, and even though he led an indifferent life he went straight to God's place after... Just by the power of the name of God.

These are all eulogies, just to encourage us. To say God's name is very wonderful, but it must be accompanied. That's what *Sri Rāmakrishna* had done. And He used to practice all these things to get rid of the negative qualities. Why was He cleaning the lavatory cleaner's lavatory? Latrine cleaner's lavatory? Why was he doing it? To remove the difference I and he both are one and the same. Both of us are the children of the Divine Mother.

So these are the... *Sri Rāmakrishna's* commandments. **'Live like a maid servant' means what? That means you don't own anything.** Not only house. You don't own your children, you don't own your husband, you don't own your wife, you don't own anything. You just, you are owned by somebody else.

Who is that somebody? God only! God owns the whole world. And He is looking after everybody. But as long as we think we own something, or we are owned by something other than God, then we are in deep trouble. It is to get rid of this idea. That we are all creation of God, children of God.

So, there is somebody who is looking after us. After everybody.

That is the idea of the maid servant. Don't get attached to anything. Attachment means you are caught, you are trapped, you are limiting yourself. This is mine. Everything else is not mine. If everything is God's creation, then what is the point of getting attached to a particular thing - I like these things. That is the idea.

According to Christianity, you know - purification, illumination and unification. The first thing is purification.

Whatever path we take, we have to purify our heart. That is why *Swāmi Vivekānanda* had started this *Rāmakrishna Mission*. Do you know why He started this *Rāmakrishna Mission*? At least for 2 reasons as far as I know.

One - He was a great student of history. He was wandering around *Himālayas*, after *Sri Rāmakrishna's* passing away, for several years. And He found monks, sitting in *Padmāsana*, under a tree and snoring.

Because you see, they... *Padmāsana* is alright, *Padmāsana* is very wonderful *Āsana*. You know why? In winter season it gives great comfort. You stretch your legs, you feel cold. You fold your legs, that's what you do, in bed what do you do? You fold, the more cold it is the more you gather yourself. But their minds were not pure. They cannot dwell on that idea, holy idea. So, what was the reason? The reason was they had not developed purity of heart.

If we live in the world in the proper way our minds acquire purity. There are both positive qualities, negative qualities. We have to tolerate many things which we cannot tolerate. We have to put up with things which are difficult to put up with. At the same time a great opportunity to love.

Why has God created this family life? So that we learn how to love and share. One becomes many. *Eko asmi bahunāma*, I was one, I want to be many. Want to be many - not cutting ourselves into pieces, but to identify ourselves progressively more and more with others. That is how we achieve purity of heart.

In my last class I had mentioned that spiritual progress is a 3 dimensional development. What is the 3?

- On one side we feel that calmness and purity.
- On the other side, we come closer to God.
- Also, by the same effect we come closer to the world.

( 25:14 mins )

Because God and the world are not two separate things. His world is here, God is sitting there, I'm sitting here. No! Me, the world and God are like a triangle. The moment we realize it then we progress in spiritual life.

All the differences will be greater when we are far away from the center. And the center is God.

So now *Swāmi Vivekānanda* specially takes the methods advocated by *Rāmānujāchārya*. *Rāmānujāchārya* was one of the 3 *Āchāryas* whose influence on Indians was enormous. And there are 3 *Āchāryas*.

- *Shankarāchārya*
- *Rāmānujāchārya*
- *Madhvāchārya*

*Shankara* represents the non-dualistic philosophy.

*Rāmānujāchārya* represents the qualified non-dualistic philosophy.

And *Madvāchārya* represents the dualistic philosophy.

And it is not a choice that we can pick and choose and say I will take either qualified non-dualism or none. No! It depends upon our state of mind.

**When we feel extremely disturbed we are in a state of duality.**

**When our mind becomes a little quiet, we are in a state of qualified non-dualism.**

**When our minds become absolutely one pointed, then we are in a state of non-dualism.**

So where are we now? So *Sri Rāmakrishna* was... once expressed this. He said, what is your philosophy? What is your attitude towards God? And you know what He said?

देहबुद्ध्या तु दासोऽहं जीवबुद्ध्या त्वदंशकः।

आत्मबुद्ध्या त्वमेवाहम् इति मे निश्चिता मतिः॥

*dehabuddhyā tu dāso'haṁ jīvabuddhyā tvadamśakaḥ |*

*ātmabuddhyā tvamevāham iti me niścitā matiḥ ||*

When I feel I am the body, You are my master, and I am your servant. This is called the state of duality.

When I feel I am the individual soul, then You are the whole, I am the part. This is called qualified non-dualism.

And when I know that I am the *ātman*, there is no difference between you and me.

So *Rāmānujāchārya*, though He propounded this... He is the most influential teacher in the world, and that too for 2 reasons.

1. One reason was that his philosophy suits most of us because it's a philosophy of devotion. Nobody developed the philosophy of devotion to such an extent as *Rāmānujāchārya*. Also *Madhvāchārya*.
2. And the second reason is, you know the South Indian temples you visit? The methods of worship that have been put into practice there, were the contribution of *Rāmānujāchārya*. Even today, the way *Pūjās* are, worship is conducted, is all the contribution of *Rāmānujāchārya*.

So, He was also a great teacher, great philosopher, very brilliant mind. He had written wonderful commentaries on the *Upanishads*, on the *Gītā*, and also on the *Brahma-Sutras*, the 3 canonical scriptures of Hinduism. And *Swāmi Vivekānanda* studied *Rāmānujāchārya*. And He takes this method and means to become, how we can become devotees. The first step is purity.

So method and means. In regard to the method and the means of *Bhakti Yogā* the path of devotion, we read in the commentary of Bhagwan *Rāmānujā*. So there are, 7 such methods are there, 7 such methods. These are called in Sanskrit

- विवेक ( Viveka )
- विमोक ( Vimoka )
- अभ्यास ( Abhyāsa )
- क्रिया ( Kriyā )
- कल्याण ( Kalyāna )
- अनवसाद ( Anavasāda )
- and अनुद्धर्ष ( Anuddharṣa )

What it means, I will discuss it right now. The attainment of devotion comes through **discrimination; controlling the passions; practices; sacrificial work; purity; strength; and separation of excessive joy**. These are the literal translations of these 7 words, technical words.

So the first of these is *Viveka*. We all know what *viveka* is.

What is *Viveka*? Discrimination means, the discrimination between the real and the unreal! But according to *Rāmānujā*, no that is not the meaning. According to *Rāmānujā* what is it? There is a beautiful verse in one of our major *Upanishads* called *Chāndogya Upanishad*, where it says.

आहार शुद्धौ सत्त्व शुद्धिः सत्त्व शुद्धौ ध्रुव स्मृतिः ।

स्मृति लम्बे सर्व ग्रन्थीनां विप्र मोक्षः ॥

*āhāra shuddhau sattva-suddhih, sattva-shuddhau dhruva smrtih ।*

*smrti-lambhe sarva-granthinam vipra-moksah ॥*

When the food is pure, then the mind becomes pure. *Āhāra shuddhau sattva-shuddhih*. *Sattva* here means mind becomes pure.

When the mind becomes pure, then the memory becomes strengthened. When the memory becomes strengthened, all bondages will drop off.

( 30:40 mins )

It's a most marvelous verse from the *Upanishads*. Of course different commentators gave different types of explanations but *Rāmānujā's* explanation here is that the food that we take is very important. What is the food? The rice, the *dāl*, the bread, the sandwiches, the hamburgers, all those types of foods that we, you know, push into our mouth is very important.

One of the important reasons why people suffer so much from diseases, you know what it is? It is wrong food. Foods are contaminated by 3 kinds of defects. 3 kinds of defects! And that is where we understand why, especially in South India, or even in North India also, that people are, 'Don't touch me'. 'Don't touch me'. 'Don't touch me'. Touch-me-notism has come. And it is not unreal, because *Sri Rāmakrishna* also could not touch the things touched or offered by impure people. Automatically His body used to recoil from certain things.

Here *Rāmānujā* explains *Viveka* or discrimination as, Discriminate between pure food and impure food. Avoid impure food.

So how does food become impure? By 3 defects.

What are those? जाति आश्रय निमित्त दुष्टात् अन्नः काया शुद्धिः विवेकः

When the food is free of 3 defects, then that food becomes pure food.

What are those 3 defects?

**Certain types of foods, by their very nature, are impure.**

What is the definition of purity? When the mind becomes one pointed that is purity. So what is impurity? The mind becomes disturbed.

Take for example, suppose you... If you're not accustomed to drink coffee, and you take a strong cup of coffee, what would be the condition of your mind? Or if you take alcohol what happens to your mind?

So, by the very nature, certain types of foods, say like onion and garlic, and strong meats, alcohol. Certain types of foods are somehow labeled as impure foods by their very nature. There's nothing you can do about it.

There was one... in South India, there is the custom of *Hari-kathā*, means talking about God for 3-4 hours every night in the olden days. Now they do it on TV. So, you see, there was one very famous *Hari-kathā* man. He was a *Brāhmin*, mostly they are *Brāhmins* only.

So this man was very fond of onion. Without onion he will not touch his food, *sāmbhar*. So, his wife was there and she used to cook. And one day he was giving the discourse, and incidentally this topic came out, about how bad onion is. For 2 hours, he spent talking about the defects of onions, how it will spoil a man. And his poor wife thought, 'What a sin I have been committing. I never knew about these things. I have been spoiling my husband. I will not do it'. So he went home after the discourse, and his wife cooked *Sāmbhar*, there was not even 1 onion there. He got so wild. He called his wife, 'Why did you not put onion? She said, 'You know, after hearing your *Hari-kathā*, I decided not to'. He said '*Khabardār!* From tomorrow onwards never again attend my *Hari-kathā*.

You know, in Bengal onions, garlic, these kinds of foods are considered to be very impure types of foods. And it is very true.

If we take care of our proper food, what is called *Sāttvika* food. How do we know? By experience we will know. Even among those so-called good types of foods certain types of food are agitators. Have you noticed that? Either indigestion, or blood pressure goes... or diabetic. How do you think diabetes comes? You eat too many sweets, or too much of oil, diabetes comes.

So in a balanced way, and through experience, take that type of food by which you know that you will be in good health, perfect health.

**This is the first type of defect associated, by its very nature.**

( 35:14 mins )

The 2nd type of defect is *Āshraya* means, you know, **accidental impurity**. Dust, dirt and hair and things like that, just join together and that is also impure food because they're bad for health.

So these are two, but there is one 3rd type of defect which is very difficult for people like us to understand, and especially in this modern times. The defect is - the person from whom this food comes, if that person is impure, then that impurity affects us. This, if you think it is a superstition or just one's own mental feeling. No!

*Sri Rāmakrishna* used to love everybody but He was never able to touch things touched by impure people, as though a scorpion had bitten Him.

Somehow our ancient sages had understood this fact. And that's why they said, 'Be away'. But unfortunately what happened is we do not know who is pure and who is

impure, therefore we associate certain castes, the low castes you know, automatically as impure people. And there might be some truth because of the way they live, the type of work they do, and all those things.

You know, even in this country Butchers are not allowed to take part in juries, in court juries, is it not. Why? Because by the very nature of their work they lose all feelings.

So, in South India this has become almost a mania. The South Indian *Brāhmins*, there is a saying you know. That never pass in front of a Muslim's house, and never pass from the behind of a *Brāhmin*'s house. Because all the Muslims, they throw all the rubbish in front of their house. And the *Brāhmin*'s, they pass all the rubbish through the back of their houses. They take bath 3-4 times a day, but they never clean their clothes. The same dirty things they will do and all those things.

So this food touched by impure people is very dangerous, very harmful to us. And there are real instances. I will give one instance. Once *Swāmi Vivekānanda* was invited by one of His friends to take food in a restaurant in America. Very costly restaurant. And *Swāmiji* accepted. He went there, and food was served. The chef himself came. And *Swāmiji* took one look at the chef, and He said, 'I will not take this food'. His host was horrified, 'Swāmiji but this is the best Chef. This is the best restaurant. This is the best food. I have, I have spent so much of money'. He said, 'No sorry I won't take '.

He didn't take. He came out. Then He explained, 'If I had touched that food this body would not survive'.

And there is a funny incident, which I also mentioned long back. I will do it... You know, *pūjāris*, the priests are supposed to be the most impure people on earth.

*Chaitanya Mahāprabhu*, a great soul, who was living in Puri. At one point, He was living there, and he used to mistake the sea for the river *Yamunā*. And He fell into it. Some fishermen went to fish with their nets. When they threw their nets, and a heavy object came up, they thought a lot of fish had come. And when they pulled up the net they found it was a man unconscious. It was *Chaitanya*. Anyway He was still alive. So they brought him to the shore, and put him on the shore. And in the process they had to touch. The moment they touched, then constantly the name of God was coming from their mouth, tears were streaming down their eyes with the touch of such a great soul. And it was not coming to an end at all. Hours passed.

The fisher-women, their wives were worried. They came in search of their husbands. Found them near *Chaitanya Mahāprabhu*, shedding tears. Then they fell at the feet of

*Chaitanya* and said, 'What is going to be our fate if our husbands are only shedding tears and taking God's name? How is the family to be maintained? Because they entered into an ecstatic state.

Then He said, 'Don't worry. Go to the House of a *Pujāri*, bring a little food from him and put it in their mouths, they will be alright'. And that's what they did. And immediately they became alright.

So, we have to be very careful. What type of people from whom we are taking... That is why going to restaurants and taking food, however nice it may sound, look, or taste, if the person who is cooking is very impure, it harms. I'm not talking about ordinary people, but devotees have to be very very careful about it.

( 40:15 mins )

It is abundantly proved in the life of *Sri Rāmakrishna*, *Holy Mother* and *Swāmi Vivekānanda*. Any impure person conveys his impurity. A pure person conveys purity.

I will mention one incident. You know there was an attendant of *Holy Mother*. And he was serving *Mother* for a long time, but he was not having any spiritual experiences. So one day he started weeping and said, 'Mother, I've been serving you for so many years. I hear that those who were serving *Sri Rāmakrishna* used to get various types of visions. I have been serving You for a long time, nothing is happening. Will you not bless me with something?' But somehow *Mother* blessed him that day and said, She touched and said 'You will have good experience'.

And he went and started meditating, and immediately he had such a wonderful experience. Divine visions! And he was in a very high state of mind. And a day passed. Next day or so he had to go to the next village on some work of *Mother*.

Then *Mother* cautioned him, 'When you go to the other place, don't eat anywhere. Straight come back here'. So the man said, 'Yes, I will try to do that'. He went, but it was past midday and he was very hungry. And he met a devotee of *Sri Rāmakrishna* and *Mother*. And the devotee knew this attendant of *Holy Mother*. And he said, 'Please come *Mahārāj* to my house. It is past midday. You must be very hungry'. So this man thought, 'After all he is a devotee of *Sri Rāmakrishna*. What *Mother* meant was, you know, don't take food from worldly people, but from spiritual people it's fine'. So he went, he took food. The moment he ate food all his ecstasy had come down on the spot.



I'm not saying that devotees are bad. What I'm saying is that at certain states of mind, even so-called ordinary devotees' types of food can affect us.

It is a well proven truth in the spiritual field .That's why in every religion these stringent rules are imposed - what type of food we should eat.

So these are the 3 defects of food. What are they?

- 1) By nature some foods are defective.
- 2) And if accidentally certain dirty things fall into the food that is another defect.
- 3) But the most important thing is, any defilement by coming into contact with impure types of people.

How are we to avoid this? After all, we are living in a world. Sometimes we have to go to a restaurant, sometimes we have to be invited.

And there's another type of food also *Sri Rāmakrishna* used to caution, for devotees, **'Don't eat food at marriage ceremonies and at funeral ceremonies'**.

So somebody asked why this rule is so? She said, in a simple way *Mother* had explained. You see at marriages what are people thinking of? Worldly happiness. So naturally those thoughts will affect. The food is there, you know? 'O, today is a wonderful day. We are all entering into heaven'. They don't understand ever afterwards they will be in the other place.

And why not at funeral times? Because that food is offered not to God but to some kind of spirits. And we devotees should never eat this kind of food.

In this respect also there is another incident. You know, there was a devotee, woman devotee, of *Holy Mother*. Very rich person. And when *Mother* was in Calcutta, this lady devotee invited *Holy Mother*, that come and do *Pūjā of Thākur* and take food. The main thing is *Holy Mother* should eat there. And being rich, you know, I think they took *Holy Mother* by car in those days. And being rich they prepared various dishes. Very delicious dishes.

And *Holy Mother's* habit was that she would not touch anything unless She offers it to *Sri Rāmakrishna*. And when I say, offering it to *Sri Rāmakrishna*, She really meant *Sri Rāmakrishna* should come and touch or accept those offerings. She could see *Sri Rāmakrishna* doing it. Or at least She could see a light coming from the body of *Sri Rāmakrishna* and touching the whole offered food, and then going back.

So, *Holy Mother* did the *Pūjā*, and she was praying. She offered the food. And She was praying, 'Please come and take'. No light was coming. *Sri Rāmakrishna* did not appear.

For a long time *Holy Mother* was praying, 'O Lord, you must take. These are devotees. They have invited me'. After a long hard prayer life a ray of light came from the face of *Sri Rāmakrishna* and touched the rice pudding, just the rice pudding, and went back. That means *Sri Rāmakrishna* was clearly indicating 'I can't accept this food'.

And that day, you know, after *Pūjā* is over food is to be taken by *Holy Mother*. But that day She only took a little bit of the rice pudding. She did not touch anything else, because *Sri Rāmakrishna* had not sanctified that food.  
( 45:36 mins )

So, these are all the experiences of great people. Certain types of foods, even from so-called devotees of God, at certain states of mind are injurious to that state. That's why we have to be very careful about food.

Only one exceptional rule is there. *Sri Rāmakrishna* used to say, 'One can accept food, under any circumstances, from one's own mother'. Because I don't think there would be any mother who entertains any impure ideas about the child .

So how do we protect ourselves? There is only one way. Whatever food we are going to eat we will have to offer it to God, either physically if possible, or mentally if we are going to a restaurant. You don't go on chanting *Brahmārpanam*... But do it mentally. Offer it to the Lord. Accept it as the *Prasāda*. But try to avoid as much as possible.

So this was the explanation given by *Rāmānujāchārya*. This same verse has been explained by *Shankarāchārya* in a different way. Again, His explanation of discrimination in the other statement, which is the discrimination between the real and unreal. That is different.

In this instance, in explaining this particular verse, He says regarding food, '**What is food? That which is taken in by us is food**'. **Not only through the mouth, but through all the 5 sense organs**. The eyes, the ears... So don't see anything bad, don't hear anything bad, don't smell anything bad.

So what is bad here? Don't, don't hear anything bad means what? Anything that brings our mind from God. That is, supposing you know, you smell some perfume and it reminds you of some object which is highly enjoyed. Then is it good smell or bad smell? It is a bad smell.

The idea is that that which takes our mind, agitates our mind, produces disturbance in our mind, takes it away from a higher state, that is bad!  
Whatever it, whatever it be.

So, here also, there are 3 types of *Doshās* are there. What is it? One should be very discriminative about this. Whatever we are taking in there should be no *Rāga dvesha and Moha*. These are the 3 defects.

*Rāga* means attachment.

- 1) Any type of experience, which is likely to produce attachment towards it.
- 2) Any type of experience which produces hatred or aversion in the mind.
- 3) Any type of attachment which deludes us, taking us away from the reality.

These are the 3, three defects we have to avoid with regard to experiences by the 5 sense organs.

So you see something and you like it very much. Then what happens? You are attracted towards it. And therefore, you are deviating from your path. You are hearing something and you are attracted by it. Then you are deviating from it. This is how attachment comes. It pulls us towards itself.

What is the other thing, the other end? It pushes us away. Our mind is filled with hatred, with aversion. We are not thinking about God. We are thinking about... When somebody insults you, for example, gives you pain. And after that you go and sit in the shrine room for meditation. What will you be thinking about? Again and again, I'm sure, you are only thinking more of that person. Is it not?

So anything that produces attachment, aversion or delusion.

**What is delusion? Taking the unreal for the real!** Taking the misery for happiness. Taking the impurity for purity. And what is unhappy as happy. What is non-self as the self. That is called illusion or delusion, *Avidyā*!

( 50:02 mins )

We have to be careful about these things. That is why *Shankarācharya* says that whatever we are experiencing, see that these 3 effects do not come. That means we have to be constantly alert to see that the mind is not contaminated otherwise *Mahāmāyā* is always open, it is a big trap like that!

*Shankarācharya* warns us, you know? A person who is careless, even for one second, and he is trying to cross the ocean of transmigration. And what happens. A Crocodile, the crocodile of delusion, he is waiting for this person when he will be careless. And one second's carelessness, it simply swallows the person and pulls him down. This one is in *Vivekachudāmani*, a beautiful book. He tells this.

And another verse He tells you know, when we are happy, you know what would be our state? Like a ball thrown from the top of a staircase, how joyfully it jumps from step to step, from step to step. But all the time what is happening? It's coming down! Carelessness, that is how it leads.

One example I will give you in an illustration. There was a devotee of *Sri Rāmakrishna*, called *Devendranath Majumdār*. He wrote most beautiful poems. He had wonderful visions in the beginning. Then *Sri Rāmakrishna* prayed, 'O Mother delude him a little, don't show him all these visions. He has got a family. He has to maintain the family'. And then his mind came down. He was a poor man, not very well to-do.

So he was employed by *Girish Chandra Ghosh*. What *Girish Chandra Ghosh* was doing at that time? He was running these dramas. And in dramas, the actors and actresses.. the actresses, what type of actresses? You know, in those days, no respectable person would ever act. In these days also most of the actors and actresses are not respectable people. They are high celebrities but are not respectable. Very impure life they lead. In those days only public people, public women, they used to take part. This man in spite of all his.. these things, he just by working, just because he had to work with them, slowly his mind was drawn.

For nearly two years, he forgot *Rāmakrishna*, he forgot religious life. Suddenly by the Grace of *Sri Rāmakrishna* he woke and said, 'What have I done? Where have I come down?' And he resigned his job, because he thought he cannot stand it any longer. Then slowly he came back to his old state. See the power of *Mahāmāyā* ?

If we are not careful, we can be drawn down, and down, and down. So, we have, according to *Shankarācharya*, not only the physical food that we take through the mouth, but we have to be careful whatever our eyes, our ears, our tongue, and our nose, and our skin - these 5 sense organs - Whatever we are doing, we have to be careful so that we will not be attached, we will not develop aversion, and we will not be falling under delusion. That process by which we experience everything, but we slowly progress towards God, that is called the practice of discrimination.

This is the only the first of these 7 methods of developing devotion, we will discuss the other points in our future classes.

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*Om Shānti Shānti Shāntihi* ॥

( 53:52 mins )

