

BHAKTI YOGA - PART 17

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 ||

How to acquire Bhakti or devotion? Swami Vivekananda had taken the means indicated by a great Indian teacher called Ramanujacharya. There are *seven* such means as we had discussed. In every religion, it is the same process, the process of purification. Why should we purify ourselves? Can't we just sit, close our eyes, and go on thinking of God? As I said, what is God? The name for everything is called God. The whole universe or creation and ourselves and God -- when these three become unified, then that is called God. If we have to realize God, then there should be no distinction among ourselves, the world and God. In order to achieve this harmony or unity, we will have to practice mental purification. (2.00) This purification of the mind involves three things. First of all, it makes the instrument absolutely pure. Secondly, it

achieves harmony or unity with everything, and through these means, it achieves complete identity with God. Interestingly, according to the path of knowledge, those who tread the path of knowledge from the very beginning, say “I become one with God (*aham brahmasmi*, i.e. I am God)”. There is a misunderstanding among devotees that I don’t want to be one with God, but that is a very preliminary stage because we feel we are separate from everything. Naturally we feel that we would be separate from God also. Even according to the path of devotion, there are four types of liberation or achieving the goal. In a way of speaking, there are four steps: a lower step, next higher step, next higher step, and the last step. These are called, *sālokya*, *sārūpya*, *sāmīpya*, *sāyujya*.

What are these four? First, when a person acquires tremendous love for God, he lives as it were, in the same world as his God, his chosen deity¹. For example, consider a devotee of Ramakrishna -- if his devotion is sufficient, he goes and lives in the world of Ramakrishna, or Ramakrishna-loka. A devotee of Vishnu goes to Vaikuntha, a devotee of Shiva goes to Kailasa, (4.02) a Christian devotee goes to the Kingdom of Heaven. They are different names, but he lives at a long distance from God, as it were, he lives in a remote village and God is living in the capital in a hugely protected building. But he knows, ‘I am very safe, I am in the same world in which God lives.’ When his devotion increases a little, he naturally imitates his chosen deity, he dresses like his chosen deity. You know, imitation is the sincerest form of admiration (not flattery). It could also be hypocrisy². Now, *sārūpya* means ‘of the same form’. How do we know? Remember the incident in the life of Sri Ramakrishna? He wanted to have the vision of Rama. What did he do? He meditated upon Hanuman. And what did he become? Hanuman-like – even he grew a tail! He meditated upon Radha when he wanted to have a vision of Krishna, and his movements, his face, everything became like Radha. Thus, you see, intense thinking makes us **alike on** (like?) the object we are thinking (**of**), not to speak of mentally, but even physically, physiologically our very body changes. (6.00). It is a wonderful thing. It has both sides: a good side and a bad

¹ [Comment] Is this *sālokya*? Not explicitly mentioned in the lecture.

² Every humble politician in India puts on Gandhi cap. You will not understand it. He wants to cheat you, ‘I am a Gandhian, I am like Mahatma Gandhi, you can trust me, so you can vote for me. After you vote, I will see what I am going to do with you.’ (5.10)

side, but we can only take the good side -- we can see that if we intensely think of our *Ishta-devata*, we become like that. Apart from the body becoming like that, just imagine what does the devotee go on thinking. He goes on thinking about the divine qualities (*guna-dhyana*) and his face, his appearance, his thinking, his habits -- everything becomes, as it were, of the object on which he was meditating. That is called *sārūpya*. (6.42) As his love for his chosen deity increases, he goes on going very near, as though he is standing absolutely next to him. It is called *sāmīpya*. Then, lastly when his devotion becomes perfect, there is absolutely nothing to distinguish him from the other one, it is called *sāyujya*. These are not stages to be attained after death³, they can be attained right now, and we are all doing that. Just now it came to my mind, how many people cut their hair in peculiar ways? I don't know, now probably the monastic members have become great celebrities. People go on shaving, put on orange clothes, and all those things. Our habits, our very physical body, everything changes. So, how to achieve that devotion to God? You go on imitating what these great souls have done. Take as an example Sri Ramakrishna's life. What did he do? When he wanted to have tremendous devotion for Mother, he wanted to have the vision of the Mother. How can one have a vision of the Mother? By having intense devotion. Incidentally, I told many times, but I will tell many times more, that having a vision of Mother does not mean "seeing" something. I am seeing you – you don't call it vision, isn't it? But suddenly in the midnight I appear in your house, and then disappear after a second. What do you call it? Vision! Don't get frightened – I am not going to do that. (8.34) What is a vision? Vision is to become similar to the object we are meditating upon. If Sri Ramakrishna wanted to have (**vision of the Mother**) – he was not wanting to see the Mother, some woman **he has ever demanded, may be, to be in front of him**. What did he want? He wanted to be like her. These are mystical things you have to understand. Surrendering our will to God's will – what does it mean? There is no difference between one and the other⁴. So, you see, to have the vision of God means to become one upon which we are trying to meditate. (9.17) And how do we do that? When our love becomes so intense, we think of nothing else other than what

³ postmortem stages

⁴ Recall the song "*Sakali tomari ichha ...*" that we sing.

we want to achieve or become – that is the way. Love means what? We have to be very clear. Many of us identify love with emotion. 'I love you' --- how do you know? I become very happy when I see you. And when I am not happy, what do I do? What is your conclusion? 'I don't love you' -- Is it not? That is not love! Love means, between I and you there is no difference. Complete identification – that knowledge is called love. Take an ordinary example. A mother loves her baby very much, which means, there is no difference between the mother and the baby. The mother is prepared to give up her life, if necessary, for the sake of the baby, isn't it? That shows complete identity. Love means, thinking intensely, so much so that there would be no idea I am different from the other. That is called real love. That knowledge "I feel no difference from my chosen deity" – that is called real bhakti or devotion. In order to achieve that, naturally, the mind should not think of anything else. This purification of the mind really means, I will not think of everything else. First of all, it is to make the body and the mind proper instruments, fit instruments. This process of purification has two parts, even in ordinary things. For example, you have a car, and you want to go to a long distance. What do you do? You take the car to a service station. What does servicing mean? If there are any defects, then the service station will rectify those defects. And if something has to be done to make the car a very fit instrument, like putting air into the tires, seeing that every part is working properly, (optimum working condition) that is called servicing. (11.33). The same thing applies here also. First, remove all the defects. Second, such a fitting instrument will fulfil our purpose. In this process, there are seven things that can help us.

In the last class, we discussed about one particular step: *Vivekā*. *Vivekā* means discrimination about food. Here food means not only the physical food that we eat, but whatever we take in through our five sense organs. It must be free from impurities. It must be just the right food, and we should be able to digest it and make it ours. The second step is called *Vimoka*. What is *Vimokā*? (*ka ??? anabhisvanga [could not catch it correctly]*) – according to Ramanuja, that is the definition given, i.e. controlling the passions is the next thing to be attended to. This is also to restrain the sense organs from going to the objects of the senses. To control them and to bring them under the guidance of the will, is the central virtue in religious culture. Then only comes the

practice of self-restraint (12.59) and self-denial – all the immense possibilities of divine realization in the soul do not get actualized without struggle, and without such practice on the part of the aspiring devotee – this is the second step.

In this step again there are three parts. The first part is: Do not allow the senses to run towards the objects that are likely to pull us down. Many times, our problem is (like this): suppose a man comes with a gun pointing at you and is ready to discharge the gun. It does not need a lot of cleverness to say that I have to run away from this person. But if a person comes with a nice *rosogolla* saying: ‘Come on, I will give it to you to eat’, can you recognize what this person wants to do? There is a beautiful story illustrating this. You know the Panchatantra stories? There was a village, and there was a tiger in the nearby forest. It became old, so it could not easily catch its prey, and it was starving. It wanted to get some food. It saw a brahmin near a river, and the tiger thought, ‘I have to trap this person.’ So, the tiger entered into the river water and appeared as if it had collapsed. Fortunately for the tiger, from its earlier killings, it got a golden bangle. It sat down in the river, with the golden bangle hanging. The brahmin was passing that way – he saw the tiger and wanted to run away, but the tiger said: “Sir, now I have become a religious tiger. I don’t do any harm; don’t you see I have become a Vedanti⁵? All my teeth have fallen off. You see my golden bangle, please come near.” He did not want to come. (The tiger continued) “The only purpose of calling you is that before I breathe my last, I want to donate this to a worthy brahmin, and I don’t see anyone worthier than you here.” The fellow understood that the tiger, though old, could be very dangerous, but the greed for that golden bangle made him go near. The tiger, with yogi’s uplifted eyes, was waiting there. As soon as he came near, the tiger caught hold of him, and ate him up.

What is the point here? It is extremely difficult for us to stop ourselves from going near the objects that tempt us. We know in our heart of hearts that it could be dangerous. But yet you think, ‘just a little, just a little’, and how just a little of this will lead us into bigger trouble -- I think I told you about a real incident in the life of my predecessor, Swami Bhabyananda. He was at Vrindavan. And there was a south Indian swami – he was very good, holy monk – he used to be an outsider (not from our

⁵ Here it means ‘without teeth’, all my teeth have fallen off (15.02)

order). Now and then he used to come to the Vrindavan hospital. Because he was such a good man, the other monks from our center used to invite him for lunch whenever he came. On one such occasion, when he was eating, he mentioned. “I have a friend at Delhi, and I want to go and see him. But I do not have money. Could you lend me two rupees for buying the train tickets? When I reach there, my friend will give me back that money, and I will give it back to you.” So, all the sadhus collected a little bit of money⁶ and they gave it to him. He bade them goodbye and went to the railway station called Mathura (near Vrindavan). The train was at night, he bought the ticket with about twelve annas in those days, still one rupee four annas were left. He went to have a darshan of the Lord in the temple. Outside the temple, all the sweetmeat shops were there. He thought, I would eat a little bit -- I have not eaten sweets for a long time. I would just eat a little, so he took out one anna (which is like a few pennies) and he bought a little bit of sweet. That acted like a hook ... a little bit more, and he gave out one more anna, another anna, another anna -- in no time, he had eaten sweets for one rupee four annas. Those were the dirtiest, most disease-ridden sweets with dust and dirt on them – that made the sweets more attractive. This man ate those sweets within one-an-a-half hours. He started purging, and soon it became worse. Ultimately he fell down by the roadside, became unconscious. Fortunately for him, there was a horse carriage man who used to come to work Mathura but live in Vrindavan -- he saw this holy man, a monk, and took pity on him. He knew our Mission had a hospital there, so he put him in the cart, and brought him there. It was midnight when the sadhu was brought. There was knock at the door of Swami Bhabyananda – he was the local doctor at that time, and there was an emergency case. He went and was shocked to find that was the monk who took the money from them and went away! So, they had to give him ‘drips’. On the next day he regained consciousness and became alright. Then they asked him about what happened. (He said), “I had not eaten sweets for a long time, I thought I would eat a little, but as soon as I ate a little, my appetite had increased, and I went on eating, until this happened.” (19.34) So, whenever we are slack in our mind and say, “I will just watch the TV only for five minutes,” and by the time you turn it off, you know what happened.

⁶ Just imagine, even two rupees had to be collected, because it was in the 40's.

Everything is like that. Narada was a great teacher of devotion. He said, even if these troubles start like small wavelets, when they go on adding one after the other, in course of time, they become like a big strong wave, which will drown even a big ship underneath. To quote Shankara in Vivekachudamani (20.20), when we enjoy something, and our mind becomes absolutely slack, loses control – like a beautiful ball thrown at the top of the staircase. How does it come down? Dancing and dancing, it touches a lower step and then flips up, touches a still lower step and then flips up, until it finds itself at the very bottom. Sri Ramakrishna used to say, there is a place called *Maidan*, and it is a very sloped area. The carriage was coming down the slope that I could not find. It appeared, as though it was only a little bit of slope, but my God, when I looked back, how many feet high it was! So is the tendency of the mind, whenever we allow our mind to go to enjoy something, immediately *mahamaya* will catch us, little more, little more, until we are completely pulled off-balance. That is how we are trapped. Do you know how animals are trapped? To trap a rat, a big piece of cheese will be placed inside the trap, and a small piece of cheese will be outside the trap. What happens? The rat comes, attracted by the smell of the cheese, and it will eat the small piece which is outside. That eating of the small bit increases its appetite so enormously, that it does not care for anything. Simply it will rush inside the trap and be caught. So, the first thing is called *pratyahara*, the ability to withdraw the sense organs (**from the objects of desire**) – no I do not want to see it. The time is over. I do not want to enjoy. I do not want to hear anything. It needs tremendous will power, discipline to do that. You know while talking, suppose you are in the habit of meditating at a particular time, say 6 o'clock. Some neighbor or friend comes, you couldn't say no. It becomes 5 o'clock, you start talking, it is 5.55, you think I will just talk for 5 minutes, and then I will bid goodbye and go. When it becomes 6 o'clock, (you think) I will talk for another five minutes. By the time you know, it will be past your meditation time. Has it not happened to you many times? We have to be completely disciplined and say, "It is 5.55, look, it is my habit. Sorry about it. I have to go now." Even our Swamis could not observe all the time this kind of (23.07) discipline. There was a swami, Swami Madhavanandaji, probably you have heard he was Holy Mother's disciple, He was well-known for his discipline. Suppose you don't have a watch, and

in the evening, you want to know what time it is. You know that approximately it is six, but you don't know the correct time. Go on watching his window. The moment his lights are turned on, it is 6 o'clock in the evening. Not one second before, not one second after. That may be an extreme case, but we need that kind of discipline. The first thing is to restrain the organs from going towards the objects of the senses. What is the way to do it? We have to be frank -- we don't have that much self-control. The best way is not to go to the objects at all. That is why the Buddhist monks say that you have to look at three feet in front of your feet -- you cannot look beyond that, let alone looking here and there. Nuns, monks, they are all supposed to be disciplined like that⁷. So, that is the first part. The second part is that to control them, it is sometimes necessary -- we are living in this world, even if we come in contact with the objects of the senses, have some control, restrain them. The third step would be to bring them under your willpower. What is the problem? The problem is not the sense organs, the problem is our desire. When we don't have desires, what can the sense organs do? (24.55) So, the third step is a very positive step. What is it? I will employ my sense organs to see God, only to hear about God, only to smell God, only to taste God. How do we taste God? Via *prasada*. When you offer some sweets or fruits, it becomes part of God. Then you eat it. You cannot cut Him apart, he is infinite. But He can be in every bit and part, that been offered to Him -- that is the idea. So, you be in touch with Him with these very sense organs, you employ them so that they will only be aware of God and nothing else. That is called directing all the sense organs towards God. This question very often comes to us. Once one of the direct disciples⁸ of Sri Ramakrishna put a question, how can I control lust? He was expecting an answer like 'Don't read bad things, don't talk about bad things, don't look at bad things.' Sri Ramakrishna did not say that. What did he say? You increase your lust a million-fold but direct it towards God. How can you control anger? Don't control anger, increase your anger, but direct it towards those things that obstruct your spiritual progress. Don't control your greediness, increase your greediness, but **consider** what is worthy of acquiring?

⁷ But don't do that while driving!

⁸ He was a young man, Swami Turiyananda.

Only God is worth acquiring, everything else is only trash. But it is not possible for us to do that. That is why these three steps have to come.

First, don't allow the sense organs to go. Next, even if even have to go to some extent, have control over them. And lastly, direct all those things towards God. Now, there is a discipline called *tantric* discipline. According to Tantra, there are three types of worships: *pashu*, *veera*, *daivi*. *Pashu* means animal, that is why Lord Shiva is called *Pashupati*, Lord of the animals. He always moves with animals. What does he ride upon? A bull. What does he put upon up on his body: A snake. These are symbolic. We are all like snakes. We are all like bulls. What is a bull? A bull is a symbol of *ahamkara*, terrible *ahamkara*, stubborn *ahamkara*, (like *mahishasura*). What is a snake? Perfect control over the mind -- *kundalini shakti*. *Kundalini* is always symbolized in Indian religion as coiled up snake. (28.00) He is the master, he rides the bull, and this snake, instead of being a poisonous thing (28.06) becomes a beautiful ornament in his hands. He has perfect control. That is why he is called *Pashupati*, Lord of the animals. When we are in the state of *pashu*s, that means we have no control over our minds, the scriptures say, don't go anywhere near the objects of temptations. When we somehow purify ourselves to some extent, we are allowed the second stages called the 'heroic *sadhana*'. Those very objects which have the tendency of pulling us down – you have to confront them. One is away (? not sure), so you close your eyes, but you cannot always close your eyes, that does not show self-control. You open your eyes, see it, and if you can face them, and not fall under temptation – then you are really a hero (वीर). *Veera* (वीर) is a Sanskrit term, it means one who has tremendous power over himself, a strong man. So, for them, the very objects which the lower aspirants have been avoiding, you deliberately confront them. The *panchamakaraas*⁹ as they call them, you confront them deliberately and test yourself. (29.34) And if he has really done the first part, then the next part will not be that difficult. When he has progressed so much, comes the *Divya* state. *Divya* means divine, he is no longer not only not tempted by these things, but also those very objects would remind him of God. For example, Sri Ramakrishna used to say, in Tantric practices, there is a word called *Karana*. You know what is *Karana*? The Sanskrit name for *Karana* is *Somarasa*,

⁹ Five Ms -- *madya* (alcohol) *māṃsa* (meat), *matsya* (fish), *mudrā* (gesture), and *maithuna* (sexual intercourse).

(wine or alcohol). The moment he used to hear that word *Karana*, he used to become intoxicated. Why do people have wine? They want to be intoxicated by drinking. Here the person getting so much intoxicated by drinking the nectar of the divine name. “I don’t drink ordinary wine; I drink the nectar of the divine name and get intoxicated”¹⁰ – Sri Ramakrishna used to sing that song. That is the stage of the divinity – those very objects only remind us of God. This is what Ramanujacharya used to call *Vimoka*, absolutely controlling the passions, and then directing all those passions towards God. (31.09) That is called *Bhakti* We are slaves to emotions or passions: *kama*, *krodha*, *lobha*, *moha*, *mada*, *matsharya*. If we run away, then all these energies will go to waste. In spiritual practice, what do we do? We gather these very passions but direct them towards God. That is the only way we can ever become *bhaktas* or devotees. How do we do that? Is it so easy to do that? So, the third part is *abhyasa*. A frequently asked question is: “How can I control my mind?” The word for ‘mind’ in Sanskrit and Bengali is ‘*mon*’. My teacher Swami Yatishwarananda – people used to come to him with the same question. He used to say: “First, have you got a mind (*mon*¹¹)?” By that he meant: ‘Are you really 40kg worth? Or really one *chhatak* or one gram worth? Have you got a mind? What type of mind is that? Have you got any power?’ Have you ever seen in India they use the ox-carts, drawn by bullocks? Have you seen any brake on those bullock carts? When you are having bullock-carts you don’t need a brake but when you have a car that is traveling at 60-70 miles per hour speed, you need a brake. This kind of mind doesn’t need a brake – first improve it through discipline and daily practice. (33.04). So what is the way to control the mind? This is the common question in every religion, by every aspirant, in every age. There are two answers. Whatever be the religion, whatever be the country, whatever be the time: *abhyasena tu kaunteya vairagyena ca grhyate*¹². The first thing is *abhyasa*: try to control, practice the spiritual disciplines again and again. How long? Until you are able to do it without effort. Second, without dispassion, mere practice will not do – practice we are all doing, we are all doing japa, meditation for years and years and years, but why doesn’t the mind come under control? Because dispassion is not there! You are terribly interested in

¹⁰ Ami sura paan korine, joy kali bole Sudha ras khai. (in Bengali)

¹¹ Mind = ‘mon’, and also ‘mon’ in Bengali means a maund. a weight of nearly 40 kilograms.

¹² Bhagavad Gita 6.35

many other things, that will not do. Slowly develop that dispassion. Dispassion does not mean lethargy. Say, I am not interested in cars – even if you talk of Mercedes-Benz or even the Formula One car, but I am not interested. That is not dispassion. You try to make a deaf fellow listen to Beethoven symphonies. Do you think he will be interested? I should have the capacity, but I should not be interested in it -- that is called dispassion. With full awareness we would face the problems, and then try to sublimate those feelings. Dispassion is very important. That is the way to slowly improve.

Sri Ramakrishna used to say, there is nothing that cannot be achieved through practice. Hindus believe in rebirth. (35.01) Our religious beliefs have tremendous power, either to encourage or to discourage us. In the west, many people do not believe in rebirth. So, what is the result? Suppose there is a person, he wants to be a musician, but he has a croaky voice. One of our swamis was tremendously interested in singing; he wanted to sing, and he learned a little bit of singing. Every time a celebration comes, he wanted to sing, but he was never allowed because he was not at all a good singer, (35.42) (he was a) bad singer. Once on a celebration day. he went to the head and said: “I want to sing.” The swami said, “You be ready. At 12 o’clock let everything be over – if there is any shortage of the prasad to be distributed, I will ask you to come and sing¹³.” If you cannot become a good singer in this life, don’t give up, because you go on practicing it, and (due to) this desire, this self-discipline, this practice, in the next birth you will be born with a better instrument, better voice, better stamina, better environment, everything. That is how, every greatness is achieved slowly -- not in one life, but over many lives. But if you don’t believe in rebirth, then there is going to be a problem, because (you feel), ‘I can never become’, and then you become discouraged. In Bhagavad Gita we get this question: “O Lord, you are asking me to practice spiritual disciplines, Suppose I go on doing it, but cannot achieve the goal, then I will lose this worldly enjoyment, and I will lose God also (Ito bhrastah tato nastah).” The Lord said: “No. When you will be reborn, you will start from exactly where you left it off, and in course of time, you will reach it.” Otherwise, there is no hope for most of us. We have to be disappointed in many areas of life. But

¹³ By then, people will run away!

there is no need to be disappointed, because the Law of Karma is inexorable, you do some good, the result will come – may not be now, may be later, may be in the next life, but what does it matter? It will come, there is no power on earth that can stop it. That is why, it is a wonderful doctrine to believe the Law of Karma, never get disappointed, there is nothing called failure. What is a failure? You need one more attempt. That is what is called failure. You also learn from your failure. (38.06) All greatness is achieved only through failures, you know that? There was a great scientist called Edison. He was trying to discover light filament. A few thousand experiments have been done over several years, but nothing brought good result. His assistants were completely disappointed, frustrated. They said: “Sir, we have done ten thousand experiments, and did not get the result. Let us give up this project.” Edison said: “No. Now we know ten thousand ways how it will *not* work. Now, let us find how it is going to work.” In a short time, they found out the light filament, and even now we are using the same thing. So, a great man never gives up hope. That is one of the most important things – go on practicing, and the result must come. There was a fellow suffering from cold. He started coughing, went to a doctor, and took medicine. After three weeks also he was still coughing, so he went back to the doctor. The doctor heard him coughing, and said, “Your cough now sounds much better.” The patient said: “Of course it will sound much better, I have been practicing it for three weeks!” You see, even a bad singer, bad speaker, if he goes on practicing enough with sincerity, prayer, awareness and **using** right methods, then he will have to succeed – there is nothing called failure. Failure is only a delayed success, that’s all. Sometimes it is very good to fail also, because it will give us lot of time. Some of the spiritual aspirants pray for failure, do you know that? (40.00) Once there was a direct disciple -- he was appearing for a college exam, and his parents told him as soon as you pass, we will get you a beautiful bride. He never wanted to marry, so he prayed to God to make him fail the exam. He did fail and became one of the greatest spiritual personalities. He was Swami Premananda. So, always keep in mind *abhyasa* in spiritual practice, means repeatedly practicing it. How long? As long as we have not achieved the goal. No frustration, no disappointment, no looking back – go on doing it, that’s it.

Then comes *Kriya*, this is a most wonderful thing. Many western philosophers bring the charge that Indian religions are lacking in ethics. (41.00) They don't care for the service of humanity. Hear what Ramanujacharya said: without first getting rid of our obligations, it is impossible to progress in spiritual life. One of the most important spiritual practices is *Kriya*. There is no exact English translation for this, I have to explain it. Every Hindu¹⁴ is obliged to do five kinds of sacrifices – they are called *pancha-maha-yagna*. What is the meaning of this? By our very birth, by our very living, we are indebted to five types of creatures. First, we are indebted to the *Rishis*, our ancient people, because of their knowledge, because of their sacrifices, we are what we are now. A *rishi* means a discoverer of truth. (42.04) It could be a scientific *rishi* – in ancient India, people did not differentiate between secular knowledge and spiritual knowledge. A discoverer of a mathematical truth is also a *rishi*, a discoverer of a medical knowledge is also a *rishi* – you know about Sushruta, Charaka, Aryabhatta, Narada¹⁵, Bharata¹⁶. All these sages are great in their own fields – they have passed on their discoveries to us without taking copyright¹⁷. God has given that knowledge, and it should be given back to people! What will happen to me if I lose this? Nothing will happen. God will give you, look after you. Every person's needs will be met, not one person's greed. So, *Kriya* means we must perform these five sacrifices. First, we are indebted to the sages, this is called *Rishi-yagna*. How do we get rid of it? Whatever knowledge helped us, let us pass it on to others. Second, we are indebted to our ancestors – after all, their genes are present in our bodies. We are what we are because of them. (44.00) Let us worship them, let us revere them, let us look upon them. Every year Indians make offerings during *shraddha*, *pinda-dana* etc. Here also, people go to the crematoriums and offer flowers etc. It is to show respect that it is because of you that I exist today. All these have only one meaning – develop reverence for everything. The third thing, we are all indebted to gods. People don't believe in gods and goddesses these days, but Hindus are supposed to believe that there is a

¹⁴ Specially the householders.

¹⁵ Not the teacher of devotion, but a teacher of dance.

¹⁶ Bharatanatyam has been named Bharata *rishi*.

¹⁷ Now-a-days, everyone copyrights, they call it intellectual rights. That is why the hackers go on hacking all these MP3, movies etc. If there is one person who adds DMS rights, another person takes away that one and you can freely copy everything.

rain-god, there is a fire-god, there is a wind-god, there is a harvest-god, there is a garden-god, there is a plant-god, there is a mountain-god, there is a river-god or goddess. Is it true? Yes, it is true. You know, Swami Vijnanananda, one of the disciples of Sri Ramakrishna. Sri Ramakrishna had wonderful reverence for the Ganges. (45.03), and he never allowed people to dirty the water in any way. You can use it, but not dirty it. Swami Vijnanananda (Hari Maharaj) thought, Sri Ramakrishna is an old sentimental man, he has been taught to do this kind of things. Later on. he said, “One day I was sitting in Allahabad at the banks of Ganga , and I saw a goddess form with three hair braids floating on the river. Then I realized, what Sri Ramakrishna said was not a figment of imagination -- it is very true.” There are so many realities that now-a-days we don’t believe. There are gods, there are goddesses, there are malevolent spirits which can do harm¹⁸ -- all these are true. (46.02). What we do not see, we should never say that they don’t exist. They are all there. The point is, we are indebted to the gods for what we are enjoying today, it is because of their blessings. How do we get rid of their debts? By offering them what is their due. That is why every day you say *Brahmārpaṇam* (ब्रह्मार्पणं), you pray to them, “O Lord, please be gracious”. They don’t want your things – they are giving after all, but they want the person to be grateful. They will be pleased if whatever we get, we offer. When Hindus plant anything, the first fruit must be given to God. They tie it with a red or a yellow cloth, so that others will know it is reserved for offering to God. This is a wonderful habit to be grateful to the gods. (47.00) We are all very much dependent upon other human beings. We don’t realize ... we come wearing nice shoes, but do we know where these shoes are made? May be a poor man in Hong Kong is working 14 hours a day under horrendous conditions, so that we can enjoy it today here. You pay a little money, but does it go to that poor man? Most of it goes to the middleman! So, the least we can do is, the people who are surrounding us, if they are in need, whatever we can do, let us do it. That is how we discharge the debt to fellow human beings. It could be even a sweet word, or it could be a smile.¹⁹ What do we lose by smiling? It is a peasant thing. We all like people when they smile at us, isn’t it? So, others will also like when we

¹⁸ Not that they will do harm, although there are a few who can do harm.

¹⁹ There was a government announcement: You must pay your taxes with a smile. One man said. “I tried it, but they didn’t accept it.” What they meant was, be happy while you are paying taxes.

smile at them. Try to help as much as you can. If you cannot help, then you pray for them. Holy Mother used to say: “*Jaar achhe maapo, jaar nei, japo*” – it is a beautiful Bengali phrase, which means: ‘if you have then you give, if you don’t have anything to give, then you pray to God on their behalf.’ What do you lose? This is how you discharge the debts to our fellow human beings. This is called *Nṛyajña* (नृयज्ञ) or *nara-yajña*. Not only human beings, we are dependent on everything non-human too, like animals, plants, mountains, rivers. Therefore, we must be very careful – if you see some stray animal suffering, then try to help it. If you see a plant, don’t harm it. Sri Ramakrishna used to say, you break a branch of a plant, as though you have broken a part of my body, because they identify themselves so much. He was not saying you don’t eat the fruits or cut the branches – whatever is needed for your survival, you do that, that is permitted, but anything beyond that is hurting them. Plants have tremendous sensitivity. That was the greatest discovery of Sir Jagadish Chandra Bose. Plants can respond to you, they can hear you, they can talk to you. If you talk to them, then they will be very happy, but don’t talk too much to them – they also feel hurt²⁰. The idea is, there is nothing (50.19) where the divine is not manifesting, even in the so-called non-living. We don’t believe it. Does a stone have divinity in it? Sri Ramakrishna said: one day I was walking at the bank of the Ganga, I saw a stone jumping and following me. He said: “At first I did not believe it; this must be my hallucination. I rubbed my eyes, looked at it. When I stopped, it stopped. When I started walking, it started following me.” Everything is alive, that is called *brahman-consciousness*. *Sarvam Khalvidam Brahma* – you cannot say it is a rock, this is mud, this is only water (51.01), this is only a star, this is only a planet, they have no life – no, life is potentially there. So, we have to revere every plant, every mountain, every river – anything that helps us, we have to revere. The idea is, develop reverence for everything. What is reverence here? Witnessing the manifestation of divinity in everything. When we have God-vision or vision of Brahman, that is what happens.

²⁰ There was an American lady who heard that talking to a plant is very good. She took it so seriously that day and night she started going to the plant and talking to them. One day she was absent. Her husband went to the plant and asked: how could you bear so much talk? They said: who listens?

There is nothing that is not divine. There is no division as living or non-living. This is called Kriya.

Then comes *Kalyana*. *Kalyana* means we must lead a way of life which is highly conducive to our becoming devotees. Among these, in the list of qualities conducive to purity as given by Ramanuja, the following are enumerated.

- *Satya* or truthfulness,
- *Arjava* or sincerity,
- *Daya* – doing good to others without any gain for oneself,
- *Ahimsa*, not injuring others by thought, word or deed,
- *Anabhidhya* – not coveting other's goods, not thinking vain thoughts, not brooding over injuries received from another.

These are the most wonderful qualities every devotee has to develop. Who is a devotee? A devotee is one who loves God, and love is a quality as Eric Fromm has shown – it does not know what is called exclusiveness. It means that, if we have the quality called love, then I love this person or this thing, but I do not love that person or that thing – you cannot have that kind of exclusiveness. (53.15) An example: open your eyes, you are looking at me, hopefully²¹. Can you say, I will only see the swami, but I will not see at the lights, I will not see the microphone, I will not see anything else? You cannot exclude. So, love is such a quality which does not know what is called exclusiveness. It loves everything – it loves God, it loves non-God. In the eyes of love, there is nothing that is unlovable. That is called truthfulness, to love everything.

Then comes *Arjava* – means straightforwardness. We will discuss it in the next class, but I am giving you a foretaste. *Arjava* means, you are what you appear to be. You appear to be one thing, but you are something else – that is not straightforwardness, that is called crookedness. Why should we practice straightforwardness? You cannot pretend that you are loving. Pretending you are loving is anything but loving. It is actually a heinous quality because you are giving the appearance that you are loving, but you are not loving at all. It is deceiving other

²¹ Sometimes, people develop such wonderful quality – like some students glaring from behind the goggles at the teacher but are fast asleep.

people, which is such a terrible quality, and in the modern age, we are all specially trained to do that. Bank advertisement: “We are here to make money for you!” How straightforward are they? The husband is sleeping with someone else, and a phone call comes, he says, “I love you.” Who is going to suffer? If I pretend that I am loving but I do not love, who is the sufferer? The law of karma inevitably comes back to us, it entraps us. If I love, then I am a happy person. If we don’t love – this is another point we have to understand, love and happiness are synonymous, two faces (of the same coin). You can’t be happy and be unloving at the same time. You must be happy then you love and if you are love then you are happy. If you don’t love, then you can’t be happy – they go together. If I want to be happy then what should I do? I must develop love. I want to be happy; everyone wants to be happy, isn’t it? So that is straightforwardness. Straightforwardness is a most desirable quality. Everybody loves straightforwardness. Why do we love babies? Because they are incapable of pretending. Have you ever seen a baby pretending? It is impossible. But we teach them later on. We say that otherwise you cannot survive, you are a fool, a naïve person if you go on doing what you pretend to be. We will discuss these things in our next class.