

GOSPEL OF SRI RĀMAKRISHNA - PART 12

SWĀMI DAYATMANANDJI

ॐ जननीं सारदां देवीं रामकृष्णं जगदगुरुम् ।

पादपद्मे तयोः श्रित्वा प्रणमामि मुहुर्मुहुः ॥

Jananim Sāradam devim Rāmakrishnam jagadgurum।

Pādapadme tayoh shritvā pranamāmi muhurmuḥuḥ ॥

ॐ तव कथामृतं तप्तजीवनं

कविभिरीडितं कल्मषापहम् ।

श्रवणमङ्गलं श्रीमदाततं

भुवि गृणन्ति ते भूरिदा जनाः ॥

Om tava kathāmṛtaṁ tapta-jīvanaṁ

kavibhir īḍitaṁ kalmaṣāpaham ।

śravaṇa-maṅgalaṁ śrīmad ātataṁ

bhuvi gṛṇanti te bhūri-dā janāḥ ॥

We are meditating on the 5 commandments of *Sri Rāmakrishna* that occur in *The Gospel of Sri Rāmakrishna*. In our last class, we had been discussing about what is *Vivekā*. *Sri Rāmakrishna*'s 3rd commandment of *Sādhana* is always a *Sādhakā* must practice discrimination.

What is discrimination according to *Sri Rāmakrishna*?

Everything is temporary, only God is eternal, permanent.

And this is a fact of life. He was not teaching something which we need to believe. There are certain things we need to believe, based upon the teachings of the Scriptures - That God exists, that God can be seen, there is life after death, and there are other worlds. These are things which are not available to us.

But everything here is temporary is a day to day experience. Here is a person, he seems to be absolutely fine, and he pops off in no time, for whatever reason. Everything is changing. We are changing. The whole cosmos is, as if, running at mind boggling speed. And that which is time, within time, that is called change.

And most people are not aware. They say, 'Yes, yesterday I was one day younger, today I am one day older'. At what rate we are changing? At the speed of lightning - How Light travels. And at that speed everything in this world is traveling. There is nothing static, sitting there. The table, we think, is not moving at all.

So, the whole life - **Creation is a change. Sustenance is a change. And death or Dissolution is another change.** So everything is changing in this world.

That fact if we can really keep in mind - what does it mean? It means we may be young, we are going to become middle aged, old age, many of us are old aged people. And one day we have to quit this place. And what is so special about quitting this place? Everything that we are clinging, we are feeling this is mine, I don't want to give it up, even a small bit of it - Everything we have to leave behind, including this, such a precious body. If we can everyday keep this in mind, slowly our character will change.

And in any case, without discrimination, life is impossible. 24 hours a day, we are practicing discrimination. Even in the state called *Sushupti*, we are practicing discrimination, albeit mechanically, unconsciously.

How are we doing it? Suppose I am sleeping on my bed, deeply unconscious, which we call *Sushupti* or deep sleep. And a particular position becomes very uncomfortable, or even slightly uncomfortable, and immediately without thinking, I change my position to a comfortable situation. And this is how we are practicing unconsciously.

If a mosquito tries to sting us, and we are driving it away, or killing it away, that is practice of discrimination. But if we can do it consciously and concentratedly, by keeping certain things in view. For most of the people, discrimination, like animals -

immediate survival and instantaneous pleasure. These are the two things only that guide the discrimination process of every animal, including human animal.

(05:22 mins)

But that is not true discrimination, that is more like instinct. When we are driving, we are also practicing discrimination. Keeping in view those who are in front, at the back, by the side, and the conditions of the road, everything. We do not call it true practice of discrimination. That falls under what we call instinct.

When man promotes himself from the state of an animal to a human being, then he should enter into the next stage of evolution, which is called reasoning. Reason is a special gift. That is why Aristotle had categorically mouthed it - Rationality, man is rational. Should be rational, not we are rational. We still follow our instincts.

And that is the fact *Sri Rāmakrishna* was telling - what is discrimination? Everything is temporary. Only God is permanent.

And the strange psychological fact is, all of us long only for permanency in a particular way. When we are unhappy, we want to change it to happiness. But when we are happy, we do not wish to change it to unhappiness. When we are healthy, we do not feel, want to feel, to become sick. When we are rich, and then we do not want to change it into poverty, or suffering.

So the instinct is always from a lower state to a higher state. But most of us instinctively practice this discrimination only with regard to our worldly condition, which includes our physical health. But it is surprising that many people do not take into consideration what is called mental improvement, emotional improvement, which is called from a lower state of emotional intelligence to a higher state of emotional intelligence.

What do I mean? Supposing circumstances are very good, and we are very happy. We try to cling to them. And our emotions feel Life is good. But no life ever allows anybody to sit so comfortably. In a matter of seconds life can change. Somebody can prick into our egotistic balloon. Or it may be social circumstances. It can be the whole of nature, like we are undergoing Covid. So it could be anything like that.

Then even some things like, we depend upon many people. For example, we want servants to clean our house, to tend our gardens, to prepare our food, to do shopping for us, and to drive our vehicles. If circumstances do not allow us to have these people, and many, many times this can happen, either because of our fault or outside

circumstances, we feel totally helpless, we become worried. And that is an emotional state.

You may ask, 'What can a person do at that time'?

The first thing is recognition of the fact. 'O Yes, this has happened.

Are the circumstances going to improve? Maybe, but may not be. Maybe it may take some time. May not be, or it may be a permanent condition. If so, should these circumstances make me miserable'?

That is where the intelligence comes, discrimination comes and says, 'Well I accept the fact, life is difficult. I do not have enough things to be happy. All right, but I will not be bogged down, cowed down by the circumstances. I have to carry on my own life. So I must develop enough powers of defense, so that nobody can prick our easily prickable ego or emotion'.

(10:28 mins)

Emotions are very very fragile. And strange thing is if someone is giving us positive emotion, then that is also very fragile . Of course rarely we get any positive emotions, most of the time our condition is to adjust to changing circumstances.

But sometimes the conditions could be really really horrible. And sometimes seem beyond all hopes. At that time also our discrimination should flourish. What is the discrimination? 'Of course circumstances are like that. And I, my body, may not be comfortable, but I have nothing to do with these things'.

Let me cite an example, *Māhāpurush Māhārāj*, *Swāmi Shivānandāji*, He was old. He was, of course, our 2nd president of the *Rāmākrishna* order. And He was suffering from asthma, because of old age. But young people also could suffer, for example *Swāmi Vivekānanda* was less than 40 years, but He suffered terribly from asthma.

So *Māhāpurush Māhārāj* was unable to sit, lie down, lean. And none of those things really helped Him breathe freely. Asthma means not possible to breathe freely. So He said, 'Let me go into deep meditation'. He was remarking very beautifully, 'Being an old man's meditation, immediately I rose above the body consciousness. And I was there in that state for nearly 45 minutes. And when the mind became a bit aware of the external world, I found that the body had obtained quite good amount of rest, and I was very happy'.

Old man's meditation doesn't mean that we are old, and old people's meditation. No, it means a person who has been practicing meditation for a long long time, and a

person has become, spent many years and become old, improving his state of meditation. That's what is called, old man's means the best type of meditation, much advancement in meditation.

So what is *Māhāpurush Māhārāj* trying to tell? He is telling, the body will be old, and it can be subject to everything, but I have nothing to do with it. If my mind is absolutely fixed on God, I'll be extremely happy.

This is the lesson we have to learn from every event that happens in our day to day life. Family is going on well, everybody's happy and healthy. But suddenly circumstances come... How many lakhs of people have died because of this covid, which a few months before nobody would have been able to predict. Now sometimes, there may be only one member earning livelihood, now that person is gone. Or so many people, as we know, have been losing jobs steadily because of the economic conditions. So anything can happen.

What should we do under those circumstances? Should we become depressed? There will be difficulties for some of us, for most of us I would say, but the inner personality has to be developed.

What is this inner personality? That I do not need to be depressed. That is where emotional intelligence comes into being. Being rational, practicing reason, is one definite method of how we can improve our happiness, our well being, our positiveness, everything.

And that is what... What am I talking about, in the context of *The Gospel of Sri Rāmakrishna*? *Sri Rāmakrishna*'s teaching that we have to develop, practice discrimination, is not only conducive to spiritual life, but it is conducive to worldly happiness, worldly health, and worldly well-being as well. It is in other words indispensable.

(15:22 mins)

That's why the great *Shankrāchārya* had written a very voluminous tome, book, and named it *Vivekachudāmani*, which we had just fortunately completed a few weeks back, and we are now in the process of summarizing them.

So according to *Shankrāchārya* the foremost requisite for treading the path of knowledge is *Vivekā* or discrimination. It is, that is, *Vivekā* is indispensable whatever be the path we tread.

So, what is *Vivekā* here? *Shankrā* defines it thus – **A firm conviction of the mind to the effect that *Brahman* alone is real, and the universe unreal.**

Again these are extreme words. From the *Advaitic* point of view they mean something else. But from our practical standpoint, where we are standing right now, we do not need to take that this world is unreal. All that we need to cognize, which is our day to day experience, everything is subject to change. And death also is one of the six factors of every being on this Earth.

So that is what He means.

This process of discrimination is useful only for those who are far advanced in spiritual life. But most of us are far from it. We are not aware of what is unreal, even though we are living in its very midst, not to speak of what is real. Of course we don't know what is real, excepting learning it from our teachers, from our *Gurus*, or from the scriptures.

But do we know that the world, we are living right amidst it, is really unreal? In what sense? Things are changing, circumstances are changing, people are born, people die, and anything can change. Which I have put in an euphemistic manner that **anything can happen to anyone, at any time, at any place, in any way**. And that is what we are witnessing everyday.

So this is what *Sri Rāmakrishna* means. Accept the fact, there is no need to guess it. Anything can happen to anybody, at any time, at any place.

What is useful for us is to find out what makes us sane, rational, strong, pure, cheerful, balanced, and of course, truthful.

Many books are coming out which are categorized as self help books. Many years back there was a very beautiful book, very wonderful book, which has become what is called best-seller, selling in millions, even today, *The power of positive thinking*.

So this is what discrimination must help us. We have to, through our rationality, discrimination, find out what is the truth about the world. Accept it, and do our best to be positive, cheerful, strong, pure, and move towards God, or truth.

Without discrimination man can never make progress. Any progress in life is always preceded by discrimination. Simple example – there is a pharmaceutical company. They've been selling a medicine for a particular disease and it has been really useful, but it has a lot of negative reactions. So the person's employ researchers, and the researchers discriminate. What is this that is helping? What is it that is producing the undesirable side-effects? And they try their level best to reduce their side-effects.

And without that discrimination, life goes on in exactly the same way, bringing more, heaping more misery.

(20:09 mins)

So without discrimination no man can ever make progress. And not to speak of human beings, even animals, they learn through experiences and go on practicing this discrimination. And they become quite manipulative, quite clever in doing things which can surprise us.

So, what is the burden of what I have been talking for so many minutes now? That discrimination is most useful for spiritual life. But it is also very useful if we want to live a worldly life. That means a strong healthy body, a very positive, creative, rational mind. That is absolutely indispensable for happiness in this world. So without discrimination man will always be suffering only.

To properly develop this faculty of discrimination, which faculty we already have, each one of us, within ourselves. In a way of speaking each soul is potentially rational. As I mentioned earlier, man is a rational animal. It is there, but it must be isolated, studied.

And then, first thing that we need to do is relate it to our emotions. **Emotions should not dictate or modify rationality.** Most of the time that is what happens. If something seems to be immediately pleasant and comfortable, our rationality tells us, this is the thing I have to do in future also. Many times it is counter-productive.

But if the rationality is really strong, and really we're practicing it, it should not be related to the emotion. On the other hand, it should modify our emotions.

Even though Aristotle told us man is a rational animal, rarely we come across a rational person who is really rational. Either he thinks he's rational, even though everybody recognizes him as irrational. But still, he would like to be praised highly, 'O, this person is a very rational person'.

Rationality is linked invariably with intelligence. But that is a great mistake we are making. **Without intelligence one cannot be rational.** But even if a person has got intelligence, that alone is not sufficient. Because often, emotion uses the intelligence to make things rational, which is called anti-rational. Which in English we call it rationalising, making something irrational appear as rational. So this intelligence is necessary.

In fact, 4 things are necessary if we want to make really our rationality, which is in an infant state now, infancy, to grow into a young, very strong discriminating power. Let us discuss what are those 4 things?

If we have to develop the power of discrimination properly, we need at least 4 conditions to be fulfilled.

- 1) What is the first condition? **Awareness.**
- 2) What is the second condition? **Rationality.**
- 3) What is the third condition? **A well defined goal.**
- 4) And what is the last condition? **Sufficient will power.**

If we have to develop discrimination, *Vivekā* – Awareness, Rationality, a well-defined goal, and sufficient willpower.

Let us discuss these 4 points one by one. The faculty of discrimination will be absent, or does not help us, if these 4 requirements are not met.

(25:02 mins)

The very first requirement is awareness. Most of us wade through life as sleepwalkers, doing things mechanically, blissfully unaware of what we are doing. *Laya*, or sleep, or mechanical spiritual practice, is one of the very first obstacles to *yogā*. Until one develops the habit of doing everything with awareness, there will be little or no progress. If only we can cultivate a habit of keeping a watch on whatever we do – whether it is talking, reading, cooking, or meditating – a lot of problems, both physical and mental, can be avoided. Certainly it saves time, money and effort.

I will give you a very curious example. Sometimes devotees cook what we call *pāyesh*, rice-pudding, and bring to the *Āshrama*. Either to be offered to *Sri Rāmakrishna* or to the *Sādhus*. And many times what I found, that the rice is half cooked, and there will be lots and lots of sugar. Over sugaring what we call. And so many undesirable things, or fill it up with a lot of this *elaichi*, cardamom, and also a lot of nuts, a lot of what we call *drākshi*.

So what am I talking about? Really you find anything, excepting these things, there is no *pāyesh*, very little *pāyesh*.

Suppose this person develops this faculty of awareness. Last time I prepared it was disproportionate. The milk was disproportionate, and the amount of sugar was too much, and too many of the ingredients are added, and the rice did not boil properly. If all these things I have done, this time I have to be careful not to do those things.

And most of us know that there is a company called McDonald, and they sell a lot of things. One of the best things I appreciate of this company is, they have reduced everything to scientific calculation. So much material, each material so much, everything has to be cooked exactly to the time, mixed in the absolutely right proportions. The result is more or less throughout the world, wherever you taste McDonald's things, I'm not saying anything about health or unhealth, It tastes exactly the same, because it is scientifically honed. And they won't allow even this much deviation from it.

If all of us, whether we are reading a book or cooking, tending to a garden, whatever we are doing, or even talking on phone. I have heard so many devotees speaking to me. First thing is, 'Māhārāj, how are you'? I say, 'I am fine'. And I ask, 'How are you', and they also reply the same, more or less you know. But after two minutes, 'Māhārāj, how are you'? 'I said I am fine'. After two three minutes, 'Māhārāj, how are you'? I said, 'You go back to my first time I replied how I am, don't ask this question next time'.

So, if they only keep well, time is saved, the money we pay for the telephone call is saved, and the conversation becomes meaningful.

That is why my *Gurudev Swāmi Yatishwarānda Māhārāj* used to tell the first condition, if we wish to progress in spiritual life, is to cultivate awareness. Constant awareness! Every time I'm doing *Japa* – is my mind there? So put a part of the mind as a watchman.

That's what *Sri Rāmakrishna* used to do. He divided His mind, and a small part of His mind He said, 'You watch whether this mind is really thinking of the Divine Mother, or just running hither and thither'? And one day He had a vision. A young *Sannyāsin* with a trident appeared before Him, and threatened Him, 'If your mind thinks anything else, I will pierce you with this trident'. So this is what *Māhārāj* meant – constantly be aware.

(30:13 mins)

Aware! Aware! Aware! Awareness means awareness, means awareness. So this is the first thing.

If we can only develop this habit of awareness, whether it is talking, reading, cooking, meditating, a lot of problems, both physical and mental, can be avoided. Certainly, it is a great time saver, money and effort.

I'm quoting a beautiful collection of very useful hints.

"Even though it was the Master's Day of Silence, the traveler begged for a word that would guide him through life's journey. The Master nodded affably, took a sheet of paper and wrote a single word on it: " Awareness."

The visitor was perplexed. "That is too brief. Would you please expand on it a bit?" The Master took the paper back and wrote: " Awareness, awareness, awareness.""But what do those words mean?" said the stranger, helplessly.

The Master reached out for the paper and wrote: " Awareness, awareness, awareness means AWARENESS."

This is a beautiful quotation from a book called '*One Minute Wisdom*'. by Anthony de Mello. He was one of the greatest Christian retreat masters. And he was a really universal person. He was not biased towards Christianity. He used to take useful teachings, even humorous stories, which help all of us, and he compiled several books. How we can really get nuggets of wisdom from his books – Anthony de Mello S.J.

Next – Psychology tells us that just by being aware of our thoughts, emotions, motives and actions, many a problem can be nipped in the bud. Even if the problem persists, it would be easier to deal with, and much suffering could be avoided.

One of the functions of a true teacher is to keep a watch over the aspirants behavior, and warn him of the impending trouble, even before it surfaces. Here, the teacher is doing what the aspirant should have done himself. I will give you, many times, I will give you living examples.

There was a devotee of *Sri Rāmakrishna*, a young man, and he wanted to hear sweet words from women. And there are some women who are much elder in age to him. And some of them used to consider this young man, with what is called *Vātsalya bhāva*. Motherly, parental attitude. *Sri Rāmakrishna* warned this young man, '*Sādhu sāvdhān* these are all *Māyā*'s biggest traps'.

At first it appears to be only just precautions. But this attitude soon turns into something extremely undesirable. In other words, when a man and woman, in the right age, meet together, however pure they are at the beginning, it turns out very sour and spoils everything. That was the incident we read in the '*Gospel of Sri Rāmakrishna*' in *Sri Rāmakrishna*'s life.

That's why *Sri Rāmakrishna* was very careful. To set an example, He would not sit with women for a long time. He would not even allow *Holy Mother* to be with Him for a long time, for that matter.

So what happened to this young man? Later on he must have realized, because he had fallen. He did not heed the advice of *Sri Rāmakrishna*. After falling he came to his senses. Of course we do not know what happened to him afterwards.

Sri Rāmakrishna was not merely cautioning. He is reminding us - the power of *Māhāmāyā*.

So, I also have to mention here, there is a special Buddhistic sect called *Zen Buddhism*. *Zen Buddhism* means *Dhyāna Buddhism*. In India, meditation in Sanskrit is called *Dhyāna*. This *Dhyāna* aspect is much emphasized by one particular sect of Buddhism. When this Buddhism spread to China, it became *Chān*. *Dhyāna* became C H A N - *Chān*. And subsequently when it spread to Japan that word *Chān* degenerated into Z E N - *Zen*. Really, what it means is meditation, *Dhyāna*.

(35:42 mins)

And their special *Sādhana* is to be continuously aware. And there was one great person, I think Goenka. He started a very beautiful system called *Vipāśana*. And many people attended. The purpose of this *Vipāśana* is, in fact the practice is, just you be aware - how you are sitting, how you are breathing? How the breath, air is going in or out? Whether your limbs are moving? What sensations you feel throughout the body? Especially at certain points in the body, for ex. below the nose. Between the lips and the nose, that is supposed to be the least sensitive area, that people focus upon it. Then even sensations can be detected there.

So when a person becomes sufficiently observing, developed observational powers, the power of observing, then that person directs all that energy towards the mental changes that take place - What type of thoughts arise?

I'm going into details because this is called practical spirituality. So a person is talking with another person. First of all if he is aware -

- What are we talking?
- Are we wasting our time?,
- Am I wasting the other person's time?
- Is he wasting my time?

- Are we talking anything that is useful, or the purpose for which we are coming together?
- Next, why am I talking such a long time with this particular person?
- Is it because the person is so attractive, so likeable?

So I'm liking this person. In which case, the talking is only a secondary effect. But the person is pulling me by the power of his or her attraction. That is the primary thing. And that attraction is giving me unconscious pleasure. Therefore, I am talking to this person.

Or, do I want to run away from something? Something is bothering me, that's why this is one way of escaping, for a few short moments, from that agonizing mental condition.

Or, am I expecting something from this person, if not now, in future? I might be promoted, or I might get a better job, or something positive in my life can take place. So these are called motivations, motives. Am I aware of my motive? Not only of immediate benefit, but of long-term benefit, of future benefit.

Or, am I talking with this person, so that I can curry into his favour? Or I can take advantage of that person, I can squeeze something for my own selfish purpose.

So many things! The net of *Māhāmāyā* is very very widely spread. But if a *Sādhakā* is aware that these are the motivations, then the control of the mind, that means controlling those motives, or getting rid of them if they're not helpful in my spiritual life, or even in my, what is called worldly life - In every way this awareness helps us very much. So, this awareness is very important.

Psychology tells us that just being aware of our thoughts etc, that many a problem can be nipped in the bud. Even if the problem persists, it would be easier to deal with. And much suffering could be avoided.

(40:06 mins)

One of the functions of the *Guru* is to keep a watch over the aspirants behavior. And warn him of the impending trouble, even before it surfaces.

Something comes to my mind. I have to share it with you. That was the time when *Māhāpurush Māhārāj* was the president. And there was some famine nearby areas, and

Rāmakrishna Mission organized a famine relief work. One *Brahmachāri* was sent there. And he did it extremely conscientiously, very sincerely, with great devotion, and very very efficiently. And the camp was closed. And the volunteers and the *Brahmachāri* returned.

They came to *Belur Math*. The volunteers straight went to *Māhāpurush Māhārāj's* room. And He inquired about the work. He was happily pleased when He was told that the *Brahmachāri* really did marvelous work. He was highly pleased. Meanwhile the *Brahmachāri* went to take bath, and then he paid a visit, did *Pranāms* in the temple to *Sri Rāmakrishna*, and then came to *Māhāpurush Māhārāj*.

The moment he entered, *Māhāpurush Māhārāj* started scolding him right and left for several minutes non-stop. We can only imagine what is the reaction of that *Brahmachāri*. That he was full of pride, full of self satisfaction, 'I have done the best job I can, perhaps better than others. And *Māhāpurush Māhārāj* will appreciate me, pat my back'. Maybe that was his thought, we do not know.

But the moment he entered into the room, right in front of the devotees who were all praise for him, *Māhāpurush Māhārāj* started scolding him left and right and center. Of course, in those days, the juniors never contradicted the seniors. Nowadays it is a different story. They start scolding us, then we have to suffer - Parents have to suffer from children and teachers have to suffer from students. *Swāmi's*, senior *Swāmis*, have to suffer from junior *Swāmis*, or even *Brahmachāris* for that matter of fact. Times have changed. Of course it is wisdom to accept the changed conditions, and be as cheerful as possible.

So, this person, he had to bear with it. And then after some time he made *Pranāms* and went back. And again at nighttime, all the *Sādhus*, *Brahmachāris* came, made *Pranāms*, and got His blessings, maybe a bit of talk, they went.

But this *Brahmachāri* was standing there. And *Māhāpurush Māhārāj* looked at him and said, 'My child, did you know, do you know why I scolded you in the afternoon'? Of course the *Brahmachāri* did not know. He said, 'No *Māhārāj*, I don't know why you scolded me'. *Māhāpurush Māhārāj* said, 'I see the seed of *Ahamkāra*, egotism, has already started growing within you. You may not be aware of it now, but after few years, you will look back and say, what a marvelous job I have done'.

'Especially if you compare it'. That was not *Māhāpurush Māhārāj's* words, this is my insertion - 'Especially when you are aware, how the present day people are conducting reliefs etc. Then there is every chance that your egotism will go beyond

any control. I perceived it, I burnt it to the very roots, and you will never again become proud'. What a grace *Māhāpurush Māhārāj* had bestowed upon this *Brahmachāri*.

If at any time that egotism is to, even the hint of that egotism, 'I did very well' were to spring up, immediately *Māhāpurush Māhārāj*'s scolding will open his eyes and say, 'It was *Thākur* who sent me, it was *Thākur* who gave me the inspiration. It was *Sri Rāmakrishna* who got the work done by me. It was the people who donated whatever I had distributed. And it was *Sri Rāmakrishna*, in the form of the poor and indigent people, who received the help. I am just an instrument, and I have been given that opportunity, and that is my greatest blessing, Grace of God. He has given, utilized this unworthy instrument, for fulfilling His mission'. This kind of thoughts, spiritual thoughts, will come which will help that person to progress.

(45:14 mins)

What are we talking about? If we are aware, many problems, even before they sprout, even when they are in a seed state, can be avoided by virtue of this one wonderful spiritual quality called awareness.

How does one develop awareness? **One develops this awareness through constant practice.** There is no shortcut.

The second requirement, if we wish to develop *Vivekā*, is reason and a developed rationality.

Vivekā and rationality are not exactly the same.

-Rationality is to accept, understand, gather and analyze, understand the facts in the right way. That is called rationality.

-But to use that rationality, so that we can progress in life, that is called discrimination.

But without rationality, you can understand, we do not go any far, not even one millimetre.

In this context, one of the ancient Sanskrit sayings -

आहार निद्रा भय मैथुनं च सामान्यमेतत् पशुभिर्नराणाम् ।

बुद्धिर्विशेषो तेषामधिको...

āhāra-nidrā-bhaya-maithunaṃ cha samānam_etat_pashubhir_narāṇām

buddhi: _visheṣho teṣhāmadhiko...

Hunger, sleep, insecurity and sex-urge are common to men and animals. But the understanding of *Dharma*, *Vivekā*, is the extra quality of man, which makes really what a man is. This is a quotation from a beautiful book called हितोपदेश (*Hitopdesha*) *Upadesha* means instruction. *Hita* means a good instruction. The instruction which will help us, both in secular as well as spiritual life. Without *Dharma*, he is just an animal.

The word *Dharma* may be loosely translated as right conduct and behavior.

- Which is the result of right knowledge.
- And right knowledge can only be got from being rational.
- To be rational means to be objective, to be fair, and just.

So what are we talking about?

-If we can judge things objectively, with fairness and justice, that will lead us to right knowledge. Not distorted knowledge.

-And right knowledge leads us to... only can be got from being rational.

-And only right knowledge can lead us to the right way of life, which is called *Dharma*.

That means, first of all, we have to be objective, rational. Rationality gives us right knowledge. And right knowledge leads us in the right way of life. And that will help us to develop what is called rationality. It is the only way of doing anything rightly.

Man is a rational animal is a well known adage, but experience definitely shows that human beings are rarely rational, they are emotional and they are instinctual.

There was a great saint in the 16th century in France. He was called Francis de Sales. And he was a very practical teacher, and he puts it so succinctly thus, "We are human only because of our reason. And yet it is very rare to find people who are truly reasonable. Self love frequently falsifies rationality; and leads it into a 1000 kinds of injustices, which though often small, are nonetheless dangerous. We fought our neighbor for a trifle, but excuse ourselves for a major fault. We desire to sell for a good price, but buy at a bargain. We demand that justice be meted out in the house of another, but want mercy in our own. We wish people to take our remarks in the right light, but we are sensitive and prickly about what is said to us. If we take an aversion to someone, no matter what he does, we find him at fault, and ceaselessly badger and

annoy him. We are punctilious about maintaining our rank, but want others to be humble and accommodating. We readily complain about our neighbor, but are annoyed when he complains about us. What we do for others, always seems considerable to us; but what he does for us, always seems to be insignificant. Be just in all your actions. Always put yourself in your neighbor's place, and put your neighbor in your place. And then you will judge fairly. Imagine yourself the seller when you are buying. And put yourself in the position of the buyer when selling. And then you will sell and buy fairly. We lose nothing by living generously, nobly, courteously, with a royal, just and rational heart. Examine your heart often to be assured that it is behaving towards your neighbor as you would want him to behave towards you. Therein lies true reason". This is a marvelous quotation, any number of times you have to read - *Introduction to the Divine life* by St. Francis de Sales.

(51:52 mins)

Most of the ills and suffering in the world can be attributed to irrationality. Just find out. Some country illegally, immorally, forcefully, wants to grab some other person's land. Why? Because they claim, 'O, our ancestors had it. It belongs to us'. Is it rational now? For a bit of land, how many people's lives can be lost.

And also I have to, I cannot refrain from mentioning here, how much cruelty we are practicing towards animals. I am, what you call, fair enough to understand, everybody will not be a vegetarian. But then there is something called a limit, a *Seemā*, that where we confine. Just rationally, don't too much become a glutton, or become a greedy person.

Okay, occasionally, *Sri Rāmakrishna* never forbade anybody to eat a bit of fish or a bit of meat. That means He was very practical man, rational man. First of all, if He forbids nobody will listen to Him.

But He has to approve and say, all the attention should not go only towards taking detailed care of what I'm eating, what I'm not eating. But it doesn't mean I can do whatever I like. *Sri Rāmakrishna* later on He used to tell, 'Nowadays I cannot even watch the sacrifice of an animal'.

So, the root cause of all the suffering that we encounter in this world is because of irrationality. And the root cause of irrationality is narcissism, selfishness. Would to God, more of us who are more rational and reasonable.

And now I'm going to support this beautiful teaching from St. Francis de Sales by Erich Fromm. He is one of my most admired authors. He was a social psychologist. He studied societies, and prescribed, diagnosis's their ills. And also prescribes the means, how they can become better societies.

On this admirable quality, which quality? Narcissism. Narcissism means selfishness. Because people are selfish they justify whatever they do. And that is called irrationality. What is this Erich Fromm saying about this quotation?

“The narcissistic orientation is one in which one experiences as real only that which exists within oneself, while the phenomena in the outside world have no reality in themselves, but are experienced only from the viewpoint of their being useful or dangerous to one.”

(55:09 mins)

So if we want to be rational, the first thing we have to deal with is pay attention to selfishness. Of course the word selfishness has also a positive meaning. We have to understand that.

When I was a *Brahmachārin*, just joined at our Delhi *Āshrama*, one *Swāmi*, senior *Swāmi* from South India came. And in my naivety I went and asked him what is the way to progress spiritually? And he looked at me and said, ‘Be selfish and you will progress spiritually’. And that puzzled me for many years. Everybody is teaching selflessness, and this *Swāmi* is deliberately provoking me, saying be selfish.

It took me many years to understand what he really meant. You have joined this *Āshrama* to become more spiritual, and pay attention to that. That is called true selfishness. Now you are trying to be unselfish forgetting your goal in life. You just remind yourself, I'm a very selfish person, I want to progress in spiritual life. And whatever is opposite, or whatever cannot make me spiritual, tries to pull me down, I must mercilessly destroy it. And I must develop those qualities which will help me. That is true selfishness.

Truly to be rooted, to be centered in the self, with a capital ‘S’, that is selfishness. Now what we are doing is, we are trying to be selfless. And that means it is truly selfishness, with a lower ‘s’, and it takes us down and down into the morass of this secular world - तपत्रय (*Tāpatreya*)

One of the great characteristics to get rid of selfishness, to the opposite of narcissism, means selfishness, is to be objective. It's a very very rare quality. In English language we use a beautiful word, ‘to put oneself in the shoes of the other person’.

So, this Erich Fromm continues, what is called objectivity?

“It is the faculty to see other people and things as they are, objectively, and to be able to separate this objective picture from a picture which is formed by one's desires and fears.”

“All forms of psychosis show the inability to be objective, to an extreme degree. For the insane person, the only reality that exists is that within him, that of his fears and desires. He sees the world outside as symbols of his inner world, as his creation. All of us do the same when we dream. In the dream, we produce events, we stage dramas, which are the expression of our wishes and fears (although sometimes”, we also exhibit “our insights and judgment) and, while we are asleep, we are convinced that the product of our dreams is as real as the reality which we perceive in our waking state.”

“The insane person or the dreamer fails *completely* in having an objective view of the world outside; but all of us are more or less insane”.

I repeat “all of us are more or less insane, or more or less asleep; all of us have an unobjective view of the world, one which is distorted by narcissistic”, that means selfish, “orientation.”

This beautiful quotation is from a book called ‘*The Art of loving*’. It is one of the most marvelous books. Every spiritual aspirant must go through it, in order to understand scriptural teachings much better.

- Needless to say, that without objectivity, there is no getting rid of selfishness.
- Without selfishness being gotten rid of, we cannot become rational.
- Without being rational we cannot practice *Vivekā* or the power of discrimination.
- We would not even be human if we do not become a rational person.

(1:00:18 mins)

So all these points are totally involved in understanding *Sri Rāmakrishna*’s that 4th commandment - Practice discrimination all the time.

And *Sri Rāmakrishna* was one of those greatest souls whose rationality is so sharp that even it defeated people who prided themselves, that we are modern educated people, and we are very very rational type of people .

Now I will tell you something very interesting and close this talk. *Swāmi Vivekānanda* studied both Eastern and Western philosophy. *Narendranāth*, even when He was visiting *Sri Rāmakrishna*, He prided Himself, 'I'm very objective, very rational. Nobody can defeat me in argument because I'm so rational'. And He had that kind of, a bit of true also, but a bit of pride.

So one day, unconsciously *Narendranāth* used the word '*blind faith*'. *Sri Rāmakrishna* jumped on Him, caught hold of Him and said, '*Naren* are there two kinds of faith? One is blind faith, unseeing faith, and another is seeing faith'.

Hot ice-cream is a contradiction in terms. Seeing faith is a contradiction.

If you are seeing - that is a fact.

But if you believe somebody, some trustworthy person - that is called faith. So, all faith by nature is blind. Blind in the sense not irrational.

But we find there are people who are very very unselfish, noble, and very spiritual. And whatever they speak, that is only truth. So we have no option but to have faith in their words, in their instructions.

So blind faith - faith is blind until it is turned into realization, into a fact.

So, so many of us, we have that faculty, we have to develop that faculty.

And in order to develop that faculty,

- I said **we must have rationality.**
- **We must be objective.**
- **We must be aware.**
- **We must have set goals.**

And when we understand this, in such detail, then, we think, 'O, my god, so much of meaning is involved, in *Sri Rāmakrishna*'s that 4th commandment - Practice discrimination always.

These are beautiful points. There are some more points we will discuss in our next class.

Om Jananim Sāradam devam Rāmakrishnam jagadgurum |

Pādapadme tayoh shritvā pranamāmi muhurmuḥuḥ ||

May Sri Rāmakrishna, Holy Mother and Swāmi Vivekānanda bless us all with Bhakti.

(1:03:45 mins)