

BHAKTI YOGA - PART 24

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 ||

Next, our topic would be ‘The forms of love-manifestation’. Here is a most wonderful topic – why *Bhakti-yogā*? The path of devotion is so natural and so much suitable for all of us.

According to *Vedantā* there are two main forms of spiritual practice.

1. The path of knowledge.
2. And the path of love.

You normally hear that there are four paths, 4 *yogās* –

- **Karma-yogā** – which is considered as a subsidiary path to both, either the path of *Bhakti*, devotion, or the path of knowledge. It is not practised exclusively. Only mention is there in the *Gītā* that in the olden times kings like *Janaka* used to practise it. But we don’t see the practice of it nowadays. It is very difficult to do *Nishkāma Karma*. It’s impossible. It’s possible only for a person who had realised God.

- As far as *yogā* is concerned, if you hear the word *yogā* – *Rāja-yogā*, the **path of meditation**. Now this has been taken both by the *Jnānis* and also by the *Bhaktas*. Very naturally they have to meditate. Exclusive path of meditation we do not see nowadays.
- So, the other two remaining paths are – **the path of knowledge**. And there are very few who follow the path of knowledge. Why? It is so difficult because human nature is so difficult. Our intellect may want one thing, but our nature may not be suitable for it.
- Whereas in the **path of love, devotion**, there are almost infinite opportunities for this love to express itself.

In South India there are so many orthodox Hindu temples. Now what happened, you know? Those who know the history of India, they know that the Muslims had practically destroyed all the temples in North India. But by the time their force reached South India it had become very weak and unsettled. So still there are centuries old temples, and along with the temples there are also traditions preserved.

Now, a huge Temple is like a huge city. Lots of activities are going on. So, lots of people's cooperation is needed. But that cooperation is not a paid cooperation. It's a type of work which is, it's a type of... Devotion is very much necessary for this. So they called it *Sevā*.

You know, a popular picture of Lord *Vishnu* that you get – *Lakshmi* is serving the Lord, She is massaging the Lord. Some wives, they object you know, why not the other way around?

The idea is – the woman is not serving a man, a wife is not serving her husband. The idea is that a devotee wants to serve the Lord. Now even these words – a devotee and the Lord – who is superior? It appears as though the Lord, you know, is lording it over. 'Since I am the Lord and you are only devotees so it is my birthright to be served. And it is your fate to serve me.'

This is not the idea at all. If you go deep inside it, actually who is serving whom? It is God who is serving us. Is God serving us? We may say, 'Where is this person, where is He serving us?'

Every breath you take God is serving you in the form of the air. When you are thirsty He is supplying you with this beautiful water. You know, why our earth is so special? Why there is life? Why this class, *Vedantā* class, today? Do you know? It's all because of one element only. You know, what is it? Water!

Any planet where there is water, there is hope of life. Is it right? If there is no water, there may be anything else, but there would be no hope of life. There may be other planets with life we don't know. We believe there are, but the point is this *Mahāmāyā* is there everywhere. Whether you go to India or Australia or UK or America – *Mahāmāyā* is there.

(05:18 mins)

Do you think they will be highly... There are some people, you know, they dream utopian dreams, you know, 'Oh, there might be highly evolved spiritual beings.' Highly valued? They might have better machines to kill each other. But the mind is the same, so they will also be fighting, quarrelling. Exactly life will be like this only. Don't make any mistake. And if you go to *Swarga-loka*, you know, Indian mythologies describe – there also there will be much, many more politics, many more quarrels than on earth. That is why I say this is the best place for realising the Good Lord!

So, a devotee has infinite opportunities to express his love. In the South Indian temples, the *Sevā Bhāva* – if you are loving somebody, then you want, naturally, to give your whole to your beloved. It's a very natural feeling. And if you don't have that feeling, 'I love you but I am not prepared to do anything for you.' It cannot be love at all.

Swāmi Sārādānandaji, interestingly you know, he had written this life of *Sri Rāmakrishna* – The Great Master. In one place he makes a remarkable statement. 'If the devotion of a devotee can be measured in how much money he spends in the service of devotees.' If anybody says I am a great devotee but not prepared to open his purse...

You see, you can easily understand what I am talking – if you are a mother. If you have a baby, is there anything that you would not do to make your baby happy? Or do you go on calculating hundred times, 'Shall I buy 1 pound worth of chocolate or 1 1/2 pounds worth of chocolate?' Would you go on calculating? Even, your very life you are prepared to give, not to speak of these material things.

So, the idea is the moment we start loving someone, somebody we would like to offer everything that we have.

Though not a very elegant example, I can tell you, you know, there are people who collect old things, antiques. You know, a chair which is falling almost to pieces, but they are prepared to pay even hundreds of thousands of pounds just because it happened to be antique. Are they paying for the antique chair, or are they paying for their love? What do you think?

If I don't love it, I would rather go for a new piece which will last for another 150 years. I'm thinking of my reincarnation. You know, I don't need to spend money when I reincarnate and come back here.

Sri Rāmakrishna was very very miserly in this sense, He was extraordinarily careful not to waste a single penny unnecessarily. You know, there are instances.

Swāmi Sārādānandaji, he gives quite a good number of examples. One day *Sri Rāmakrishna* wanted to have a smoke. And somebody has taken out a matchbox, wanted to light it up. *Sri Rāmakrishna* immediately said, 'Why do you want to waste a match stick? Cooking is going on in the *Nahābāt*, bring a piece of firewood.' Because firewood is free, it is burning there. Do you think *Sri Ramakrishna* was miserly? He would give his life for anything, but not to unworthy things. For His loved things.

The same thing happens, you know, every family loves its children. For their children they are prepared to do anything, but let some good cause, an appeal be made, very little.

So the idea of *Sevā*, service is very prominent in South Indian temples. Since ancient times, hundreds of... Since many centuries, how they have collected *Brāhmin* families and they have given one particular task – somebody would collect flowers, make garlands; somebody would tend the gardens; somebody would sweep the floor; somebody would fetch the water; somebody will be doing the worship; somebody will be distributing the *Prasāda*. Every family has its, what is called, family ownership. We are the rightful person for doing this *Sevā*.

So, there was this story of... I told you, also, last time. One of the most important of the 12 *Ālwārs*. *Ālwār* means a great devotee of *Lord Vishnu*. There are supposed to be 12 important ones. The best devotees of *Lord Vishnu*.
(10:07 mins)

One of them was a woman called *Āndāl*. So, her family, her father, his business was to collect the flowers, make garlands, beautiful garlands, and offer it to the Lord. This is incidentally, this has nothing to do with it. But this is also *Sevā*, you know? That is why this point is important.

This girl had been a naturally born lover of Lord. She was born only to love Lord. She didn't love anybody else, anything else. So, her father used to get up early in the morning, collect the flowers, make garlands, and by that time several hours have passed.

And for you to understand what I am talking about, you should actually see the garlands, otherwise you will have no idea what I am talking about. You know, there are

flowers, this big big chrysanthemums. It will take only half an hour to make a big garland, because you just pass on the thread.

But there are small, what we call, *kanakāmbaram*, I don't know what is the name in English, small flowers. You know, like the pink colour, white colour, blue colour – very colourful, but small flowers. Like a small tube, like that *Rajnigandha*. Like that, but small. They make this big garland, thick garland. I think a few of you must have seen in Bangalore and other places.

To make that small flower this big; and it is a huge Garland they make to adore the divine Lord. It takes hours and hours and hours together. And how much patience you must have. But, what they do, they go on taking the name of God. With each flower they take the name of God. And most beautiful garlands they make.

So, this father used to make that. He considered himself blessed because he was given that opportunity of making, of serving the Lord. He never considered it as a kind of duty, job. So, this daughter... He used to hang it on the wall and go and take bath, because in South India you can take bath any number of times it is so hot.

So the daughter meanwhile, she will take the garland, nicely decorate herself. And she will take the name of The Lord. And before her father comes she will hang it down. And then the father comes. He is very pleased with his handiwork, takes it and gives it to the Lord. Many days passed this way.

One day he happened to come sooner than expected. And found to his great horror that his daughter was wearing it. Naturally as a devotee he was horrified that the garland meant to be offered for somebody else...

You know in India this idea is there, we call it *Ucchiṣṭa*. Anything that is used by somebody else should not be used. Supposing, you know, you want to offer to *Sri Rāmakrishna*, some nice sweet or food. You don't eat, or you don't allow anybody to eat it, and then go and, happily go and offer it to Him. It should be offered to Him first.

You know, there are incidents which are so marvellous in this connection. There was a great devotee of *Sri Rāmakrishna* called Rāmchandra Dutta. And one day he felt like bringing some *jalebis*, it's a kind of sweetmeat, you get many times here, on Sundays especially, and give it to *Sri Rāmakrishna*, because *Sri Rāmakrishna* loved it. So he was bringing it. On the way a poor boy begged him, 'Sir', he saw this *Jalebi* and said, 'Sir, please give me a little. I want to eat it.' So, Rāmchandra Dutta felt, he's not putting his fingers into this and eating, I will give it to him. So he gave one piece to that boy and he came.

Sri Rāmakrishna said, 'I could not touch your food. Did you offer it to somebody else on the way?' *Sri Rāmakrishna* didn't know anything about it and *Rāmchandra Dutta* had to admit that yes he had given. Then *Sri Rāmakrishna* warned him, 'Never again do that. Whatever you have to offer you bring it straight to me.'

Now do not come to a judgement why *Sri Rāmakrishna* was so particular, after all what is so wrong? After all, a poor boy has been served, and food has not been contaminated.

It is a contamination, because there is a deep psychology behind it. If you are determined to do something, go and do it. Don't go on deviating yourself from here to there.

If you want to come to *Vedantā Centre*, come straight to *Vedantā Centre*. On the way you see *Tesco* and say, 'No, there is enough time and even if I go late it doesn't matter. *Swāmi* will be talking the same things over and over again. So let me finish both, you know, *Sukāriya* and *Swāmikāriya*. Don't do that because... There is nothing wrong in it, but what will happen is your mind becomes scattered. You won't attain concentration of mind. Once you reach the goal, you do whatever you like, because you have already fulfilled your mission. But before doing that don't do it.

(15:13 mins)

This is the trouble with us, you know? You want to read some book and the book is a little bit away. Nearby there is some book, 'Anyway who takes the trouble of going all the way, let me read this book.' There is nothing wrong in it. It may be even a better book, but No, it's not a good discipline. We are talking about discipline of the mind. So, *Sri Rāmakrishna* warned *Rāmchandra Dutta*.

But there is another incident. *Holy Mother* used to do *Pūjā* to *Sri Rāmakrishna* when She was at *Udbodhan*. One day She was sitting for *Pūjā* and offerings were there, open, and there was a baby in the house. And the baby, you know, he was crawling, he entered into the shrine room. And straight like a, you know, American gun, his eyes locked on the sweet, and he was crawling towards it. *Holy mother* saw it, you know you can't offer to anybody unless it is offered to...

So, She was trying to tell, 'My child, please wait a little. First let me offer it to *Rāmakrishna*, then you will have everything.' But do you think A child will listen to it? No! Then *Holy Mother* had to say, 'Alright My *Gopāla* come and eat.'

Now, did She do anything wrong? Because She really considered him as *Gopāla*, as Lord, child *Krishna*. That is why there is nothing wrong. Because She could really feel that this is *Gopāla*, 'I am not offering to anybody else, I am offering to only *Rāmakrishna* in the form of this baby.' But in your mind you don't have that kind of

concentration, that kind of devotion, realisation. And that's why it is... Until you reach the goal you have to be very careful about these things.

Father of Āndāl was horrified, 'Since how long have you been doing it?' She was truthful. She said, 'I have been doing it ever since I was a child.' What could he do, the poor father do? So he thought, 'O Lord I did not know that this was happening, please excuse me.' He went, he threw that garland away. Went out, collected flowers, some more flowers, made a garland and took it to the Lord.

Then that same night, there was a dream. The priest had a dream. The Lord appeared before him and said, 'See, the garland offered by this man today is not liked by me. I want the garland put on by his daughter, and after that only I like it very much.'

Why did He say that? Why was She decorating herself? For Her pleasure? It is for pleasing the Lord. She is doing that great service. She knew that if I do this then My beloved will be pleased.

It is very difficult for us, you know? If I eat, my beloved will be pleased. It happens every day of our lives. A mother, you know, suppose she prepares a sweetmeat. Only a small piece is there and the baby wants to eat everything. If the baby eats everything, is not the mother pleased? Or is she displeased, 'O she did not leave anything for me.'

You know, brothers often quarrel? Because you know, whenever there is something to be divided... So, there were two brothers and somebody had given him a sweetmeat. Now, you know, both of them wanted to divide it. Because, you know, both of them are thinking that if I divide I will get the better, the larger portion of it. So they went to their grandfather, 'This is our problem, we are not able to decide who will cut the sweetmeat.' The grandfather said, 'That is no problem at all. Let one brother cut it, let the other brother choose it first, which part he wants to eat.' Now they will not cut, you know, uneven parts.

So, the God, do you think He wants things? He wants to please you, He wants to serve you. He is serving us 24 hours a day.

Sri Rāmakrishna was talking to *Lātu Mahārāj*, *Swāmi Adbhutānanda*. *Lātu Mahārāj* was serving *Sri Rāmakrishna*. *Sri Rāmakrishna* was asking him, 'My boy *Leto*, what do you think your *Rāma* is doing now?' It was night, everybody was sleeping. Then, the boy, he was very innocent, he said, 'What do I know what my *Rāmji* is doing?' He said, 'Do you know He is keeping awake and protecting everybody.' This boy was astonished, 'What? Instead of our serving the Lord, that the Lord is to serve us?' *Sri Rāmakrishna* said, 'Yes my boy!'

What happens if God sleeps? If the *Vāyu-devtā*, the air God, takes a holiday for five minutes, what will happen? If the clouds do not pour water what will happen? It is **the Lord who is serving us in the form of the *Panch-Mahābhūtās*, five elements!**

All the food that we are getting, who do you think is giving us? It is the Lord! What have we to offer to the Lord? There is nothing much. Even we ourselves do not belong; we are also products of the five elements. So, what is it that we can give to the Lord?

(20:31 mins)

That's why in the Vesper-time we, in the traditional temples, you know, we offer five items. On special days we offer light, water, cloth, flower, and finally the fanning The Lord. These are representations of the five great elements, *Panch-Mahābhūtās*. The idea is that everything belongs to you.

Anyway, the point we are trying to make here is, a devotee has infinite opportunities to serve the divine Lord, in the form of expressing his love in so many ways, in myriad ways. *Swāmiji* is discussing these things here.

So the first thing that happens is **when there is love there is a reverence!** It's a wonderful idea.

A mother loves her baby. Does she revere the baby? Have you ever put that question? You know, we use 2 words - respect and reverence. If there is an elderly officer to you, elderly person, you respect the person but you may not revere him. Reverence can come only where there is love. And why do we revere a person? Because we cannot love a thing in which we have no faith, no hope.

That's why the **3 theological virtues of Christianity**. Do you know what they are?

- **Faith**
- **Hope and**
- **Charity**

Have you heard about it? Faith, hope, and charity.

First there is faith.

And then there is, **wherever there is faith there is hope**. Without hope there can be no faith.

And if there is hope there is love always.

These three go together. But the foundation at the beginning, the grossest expression is Faith.

So, a mother has tremendous faith. This baby, It's a baby now but there is tremendous potentiality. It will grow. Who knows what it is going to become in the future? Though the mother may not express it overtly in that way, but deep inside, her heart tells, my beloved baby is going to be something in future. It is that faith, that hope, that's why

the love comes. That's why the reverence comes. A mother may say, 'Hey you fellow, come here.' But it is told with reverence. There is a reverence. Wherever there is love there is a reverence.

"First there is reverence. Why do people show reverence to temples and holy places? Because He is worshipped there, and His presence is associated with all such places. Why do people in every country pay reverence to teachers of religion?"

It's an interesting question because wherever there is a symbol of God, be it a place, be it a book, be it a person, be it anything associated with God. You know, suppose there is a flower associated with God. Most of us use flowers, you put flowers in the vase, flower vase. And what happens when they fade? Immediately you take them out and throw them out.

But supposing somebody gives you a flower offered to *Sri Rāmakrishna* or *Jesus Christ*, what do you do? Could you trample it under your foot? Because it is not the flower that is the important thing. That flower is a symbol because it leads you to the idea of God.

You know, sometimes small children, they draw on a piece of paper. Nobody can understand what they are drawing, only they understand it. He says, 'This is daddy.' If you look at that daddy, God also will not recognise that daddy. But sometimes the parents frame these things and put it there. Why do you think they do that? It is not the thing in itself which is valuable. It is a symbol of one's love, one's reverence. 'This is my child that has done it.'

So there was, here, you know? One day, after Sunday talk, I was standing out. And devotees make *pranāms*, touching my feet. So one day people were touching, and one young girl, young woman, she said, 'I am horrified! How could one human-being touch the feet of another human-being?' She exclaimed! Of course, you know, there is no way to explain to her. They are not glorifying me. Or they are not trying to become, you know, inferior to me or to anybody else. It is an association, it is a symbol.
(25:13 mins)

That is why in Sanskrit there is *Guruputreshu Guruvat, Guruvat Guruputreshu*. If you see the children of a *Guru* you revere them as the *Guru* himself. The children may be absolutely worthless. And we see that in the life of *Sri Rāmakrishna*'s direct disciples.

You know, there was one nephew of *Sri Rāmakrishna*, *Ramlal dādā*. He was the temple priest of *Dakshineswar*. And even today his family members are the priests there. Whenever this *Ramlal dādā* used to come to *Belur Math* all the direct disciples of *Sri Rāmakrishna* used to show so much of respect to him. Even though he was a householder and he was not at all that spiritual a person, but they used to show. Why?

Because anybody who belongs to the *Guru* reminds us of the *Guru*. And in any case what is the problem in revering somebody?

I was reading a funny incident, you know there was a great man, I forget the name. And one day he was going in the street. And he was in the habit of lifting his hat and showing respect to everybody. So, everybody used to, what is called, give it back to him, they also used to show respect to him. He came across one person, he took off his hat and bowed his head. The other person he did not. He simply kept his head as though this person was a worthless fellow, and walked off.

Somebody who knew this person questioned him, 'You know, this person did not return your salute. He showed disrespect to you. Why do you do that?' This man made a remarkable answer. He said, I don't mind if somebody doesn't. I am not doing it expecting that somebody should return it to me. I see God's grace in everybody and that is why I am respecting that. Then he made a ... 'But for God's grace I may be that person tomorrow, who knows?' It's a remarkable statement! I do it not because I expect anything. I do it because it's good for me to do it.

Because, you know, funny statements are there. There was a very narrow path where only one person could walk. So, two persons happened to be walking towards each other, opposite to each other. There is place only for one person to walk, so the other person has to give way. So the other person saw this person coming and he said, 'I don't give way to fools.' The other person lifted his hat, stepped aside and, 'I give!'

You know, *Sri Rāmakrishna* used to revere everybody, even an insect. *Holy Mother*, She said, 'Never touch even an insect with your foot.' You know, it is the habit of so many people, they touch dogs or a cat with their feet. The point is that reverence must be shown. And saints do it because they see God in everybody.

As an example, *Sri Rāmakrishna*, you know how He conquered his devotees? Girish Chandra Ghosh used to say, later on, 'In this incarnation *Sri Rāmakrishna* conquered people by His humility.' He used to salute people. And that is, it is a big story I won't go into it. That is how... it was not a sure show, it was genuine respect.

And you know, there is some psychological point here which we have to understand. Supposing, it's a very ordinary person who thinks of himself, doesn't have high opinion about himself, and always thinking, 'O, I am just a very ordinary person', or even 'I am an inferior person' – like that. Suppose another person goes and shows him great respect. The other person will be embarrassed in the beginning, but then you know what happens? If he goes on showing respect to that other person, slowly the other person also tries to change, 'I must be worthy of this respect.' Have you noticed that?

Somebody is showing respect to you, at least in the presence of that person you will try to behave in a better way. Is it not a fact? And if somebody genuinely is showing reverence and respect to anyone of us, then we will be ashamed to do things. We will try ourselves to do things to be worthy of that respect. Even though we may not have that worthiness we try to attain to that worthiness.

Now this is something innate to all great people. **A great person always sees greatness in everybody else.**

(30:10 mins)

There was one man who met *Swāmi Vivekānanda*, and also another great Prince of Russia. Later on, this person, he was asked, 'What were your impressions about *Swāmi Vivekānanda*?' You know, he gave a remarkable statement. He said, 'In my life I have seen only two great people. One was *Swāmi Vivekānanda*, one was this Prince of Russia.' 'Now what was so great, what did you see, what greatness did you see?' He said, 'In their presence, they are the only two persons who made me feel that I am also great.' They never ... You know it is not a pretence. It is a genuine feeling!

That is why *Swāmi Vivekānanda* used to inspire everybody. The reason is He believed in his own innate worth, and He also believed in the innate worth of everybody else.

I mentioned one incident you know? It is worth repeating, because it has to go into our brains. *Swāmi Sāradānanda* was sitting at *Vārānasi*. Because everybody knew he was the author of this great book, 'The Great Master', so they used to read out the book. Whenever there are doubts they used to ask him and he used to clear the doubts.

One day... He was returning to Calcutta. So the previous night they were sitting, They were not reading anything. But suddenly there was a kind of, what is called, gossip. Some of the inmates started criticising one Monk, I think, who was a disciple of *Holy Mother*. 'How could a disciple of *Holy Mother* become so degenerate?' You know, it was true that the monk was misbehaving, and it was true what they said about him. It was true.

But *Swāmi Sāradānanda* didn't like it. He sat very grave, after sometime he said, 'You people don't know what you are talking about. What was the statement you were making, how could a disciple of *Holy Mother* degenerate so much? Do you know anything about *Holy Mother*? Maybe after 10 years you will see this person changed so much. Then you yourself will make a statement, Aah what is so surprising about it? After all he was a disciple of the *Holy Mother*. And *Holy Mother's* grace can change even a straw into a saint. How do you know what he is not going to become after 10 years? How do you know he is not going to become a saint after 10 years?'

Just as a matter of curiosity, you know, if you had met Girish Chandra Ghosh, just when he used to drink and visit nightclubs and all those things, would you have ever thought that one day this man is going to be a great saint, not in the next life but in this life? Would you have thought that? But you know that's what exactly happened. When he came into contact with *Sri Rāmakrishna*, and his whole life changed.

Not only Girish Chandra Ghosh there is another, Kālipada Ghosh. And there was another person, one devotee who was supposed to have become drunk and he used to come at mid-night to *Mother's* house. But the same person before death he became so changed. From his mouth is only coming '*Rāmakrishna, Rāmakrishna.*' And he passed away that way. You remember? Padabhinod! He was the person who became like that.

You know, when this person used to come to *Mother's* house at midnight, drinking and singing, all sorts of things. Could you have thought that within a few days this person's whole character will change? He would become a saint. Could you have thought that?

Holy Mother was the only person who said that, 'After all *Sri Rāmakrishna* loved him. How could he go down to dogs? He was my child. He was playing in the dirt and in the end I had to take him up, clean him up and take into my lap.'

Who knows what a saint cannot do? What an incarnation cannot do? What God cannot do?

There was a great soul called Albert Schweitzer, you know. He went to Africa and he served people. And he wrote a book, 'Reverence for all'. It's a remarkable book. And he said, you know, he did not know the language of the Africans. He said, 'I found no difficulty in telling them about moral life, about the teachings of Jesus Christ.' You know why? Because he said there is an innate capacity within each one of us, whatever be the language, to understand and grasp the truth. Wherever there is truth people can grasp. He found out from his life. Though he was not proficient in the language. But he was trying to convey how great Jesus Christ was. And they could understand in spite of the language barrier. Why? Because there is the same capacity, divinity hidden within each.

(35:11 mins)

So, *Vedantā* tells us it is not only human beings, even an insect has divinity within it. Not only an insect, even a non-living thing also has the same capacity. It will manifest in course of time. That is why great souls love us.

Swāmi Vivekānanda, how much He was betrayed by people. Do you think He would have continued His act of serving people if He had lost faith and hope in us? But He

was not looking from our standpoint. He was looking from - 'Each one is potentially divine.' He knew it! It will come out sooner or later.

One disciple, you know, of *Swāmi Vivekānanda*, he wrote a letter in a depressed state, 'Oh I have gone down so much. What is going to happen to me?' *Swāmi Vivekānanda* wrote back, 'You go down as much as you want to go. I will go down and catch hold of your hair and lift you up. You are my disciple. I will do that.'

You see, that is the faith. They know our capacity. They know our true nature. We don't know our true nature, that's why we have doubts about ourselves. But they know, they have no doubts. But they also know some people can manifest sooner, some people only manifest only later.

So, *Sri Rāmakrishna's* life, *Jesus Christ's* life. You take the example of *Jesus Christ's* life. You know He loved those who are downtrodden, prostitutes, publicans. He loved more than the people who are showing off official, you know, religiosity. That's why the others didn't like Him very much. 'Why do You go to publicans? Why do You go to sinners?' They were called sinners. 'Why do You encourage, mix so much with the sinners?'

Because He knew that the sinners have more capacity to manifest their divinity than these hypocrites. Because they somehow feel... Most of the people that sin, they do not sin because of their nature. They sin because of circumstances. And that's why *Swāmi Vivekānanda* used to love.

Chaitanya Mahāprabhu, He used to embrace everybody. That's why millions of the so called oppressed castes in India had become *Vaishnavas*, followers of *Chaitanya Mahāprabhu*. Why? Because He did not make any distinction between them.

You know, it's a very surprising thing. The great *Shankara* who said everything is *Brahman*, He made so many barriers. He was highly conscious of his *Brāhmin* caste. Whereas *Rāmānuja*, a great devotee, the moment He got his *Mantra*, you know, I told you one day. He went to the top of the temple, and He proclaimed to everybody, 'Come on! Hear this *mantra*! And whoever hears this *mantra* he will get salvation.' His Guru told him, 'but you yourself will go to hell.' He said, 'Doesn't matter! One person going to hell but thousands of people getting liberated that's marvellous.'

And there is a sequel to this you know? On a birthday celebration of *Sri Rāmakrishna* at *Belur Math*, this drama of the life of *Rāmānuja* was being enacted. Now *Swāmi Brahmānandaji* was the President. He was very reluctant to initiate devotees. After witnessing this drama, next morning, He called His attendant and said, 'Call everybody! Whoever wants initiation I am going to initiate him.' And taking that opportunity lots of people availed. From that time onwards He started initiating

people very liberally. Before that years and years used to pass. But after this, witnessing *Rāmānuja*'s life He started giving very liberally.

So, reverence to holy places, reverence to holy books, reverence to holy persons, reverence to anything that is associated with great things, with holy things – all these things are good disciplines for us. And then what happens, if there is love there is reverence. But if there is no love... But if we go on showing reverence then love will come.

This was the great principle William James, in the 19th century, had discovered. He discovered a great psychological truth that always actions follow feelings. But the reverse also is true. Actions also produce the feelings. So you go on showing reverence, even if you don't have reverence, after sometime you feel really reverence is coming to you. And once the reverence comes the love comes because reverence is nothing but a manifestation of love.

(40:08 mins)

That is what *Swāmiji* is telling, when devotees bow down, say to *Sri Rāmakrishna* or to a *Swāmi*, do not take it as a degrading act. The *Swāmi* is not elevated. Don't think that I feel that I'm in the seventh heaven because you are... Sometimes the devotees are a nuisance. You know, I am standing and they are making *Pranām*, not getting up at all. Not getting up at all, and I am standing unmoving, it's becoming very uncomfortable. I'm thinking I may fall down. You know, it's alright, make *pranāms* quickly and get up. What I am saying is it is also a service.

This lesson I have learnt, there was a *Swāmi* called *Swāmi Achalānanda* who wrote this *Rāmakrishna Manglāsāsanam*. Once he went to do relief work and there... You know, he was a *Swāmi*. In India many people make *Pranāms* just because a person is a *Swāmi*. They don't know anything about the *Swāmi* but just by seeing the cloth they will show respect.

So one old woman used to come, and whenever she sees him anywhere, immediately she bows down. Then the relief work was over. The *Swāmi* came back. He narrated this incident. Then he told me... I was telling that, 'O, does she really have reverence to you?' and all that. He said, 'I don't know. But if she feels happy by doing *pranāms* to me, what is it that I lose?'

You know, I never thought about it in this way. The *Swāmi* is telling, you know, from the other side if the person feels happier by doing *pranāms* to a *Swāmi*, it's a great service, it's a great privilege.

And I also told you the incident from the life of *Rāmānuja* – how He asked His disciple so that *Rāmānuja* could go and make *pranāms* – do you remember that? You know, these are incidents which are worth remembering.

There was an old man who became a disciple of *Rāmānuja*. Now, you see, who is greater according to Hindu traditions – the *Guru* or the disciple? So who should make *pranāms* to whom? *Pranām* means saluting, touching the feet. Who should touch the feet of whom? The disciple is to touch the feet of the *Guru*, or the *Guru* is to touch the feet of the disciple?

So, this old disciple asked his *Guru* ‘What service can I render to you?’ Because every disciple wants to render service to his *Guru*. Then *Rāmānuja* told, ‘Yes I want a service from you. Every day I will go to the temple in the morning and at about noon I return’. And this old disciple's house was on the way to *Rāmānuja*'s house, it is in between his house and the temple. That, ‘When I am returning you wait for me at your home. I want to wash your feet and drink the water of that feet.’

Because it is a custom for ordinary people to drink the water after washing the feet of an elderly *Brāhmaṇa*. And anybody who wants to acquire devotion, it should be part of their ritual. In South India there was a tradition like that. There is a tradition even now.

So *Rāmānuja* told the disciple – this is the service. ‘Because you are the elderly *Brāhmaṇa*, and I want to have devotion to God, so you will wait for me, I will wash your feet and I will drink your water.’ The disciple said, ‘If that is my service to you I will gladly do it.’ See the paradox?

Every day *Rāmānuja* used to go, stop on the way, wash the feet of his disciple, drink it. And then, you know, the disciple never thought I am greater than my *Guru*. He said, ‘This is the service I am rendering to my *Guru*. If it can make my *Guru* happier, then I am rendering my service to Him.’ So it went on for many days.

One day *Rāmānuja* was preoccupied with thinking something, and He completely forgot. He came home and He carried on with usual eating food and all those things. And whole day passed. At about night when He was about to go to bed He remembered. ‘Today I did not go to my disciple's home. And the poor man will be waiting for me without taking food.’ He will not take food until *Rāmānuja* comes, washes his feet and finishes that ritual. So, immediately He hurried, and He knew that the disciple would be waiting. And He washed his feet, drank his... And said, ‘I am sorry about it. Now you can go eat your food.’

So this is the idea, what is called attitude. If I am talking to you about *Vedantā*, it is not because I am great, it's because I want to share my thoughts with you. This is my

service. Whether you are benefited or not I don't know. But I am certainly benefiting. I remember all these incidents more. Even the jokes, you know, I remember both. Because I go on telling you the jokes. I know you don't remember most of the things. And it's good. Because, you know, you will get bored. Because if you remember everything you won't come a second time.

(45:21 mins)

So, the thing is this is my service to *Sri Rāmakrishna*. I don't know... I am not expecting that it will go deep into you, you are going to be saints next day, and all those things. But it will have an effect because **whatever we are experiencing nothing will be forgotten**. It will go and stay deep inside. But one day it will come out.

You see, I myself am surprised, you know. Sometimes wonderful ideas come to my mind, so I think, I'm not such a bad person, such good thoughts come to me, ideas come to me, marvellous ideas! I am very happy. So, I am thinking maybe my mind is very very deep. Then after a few days I read some old book – all those ideas are there. Then I say 'O, I have read this book 20 years back, and what I am talking now are those ideas which are there. I had forgotten that I have, those were the ideas I have taken from that book.'

I am just illustrating that whatever you are hearing, don't think they are going out. They will be there in your mind, whether you want it or not. Once they go there they are like leeches. They will be holding on to your deep unconscious. They will come to your aid, definitely. So that is the great benefit of having *Satsanga* or reading good books. Nothing goes in vain.

You repeat God's name once. That is what *Rāma* had said, you know. When *Vibhishana* came to surrender himself. Everybody was telling, 'This fellow is a spy. He has come to find out about your army and to cause harm to you.' *Rāma* said, 'No, if anybody once in his life wholeheartedly says, Oh Rama I belong to you, and this is my vow I accept that person as my devotee. And I will do everything to help him, to serve him'. This is *etad duratam mama*. Once only we have to say sincerely, 'Oh Rama I belong to you.'

Lest you may think it is only *Rāma*'s words, what did *Sri Rāmakrishna* say? 'Anybody who prayed to God sincerely,' How many times? 'Once in his life he will have to come to Me.' Do you remember that? It is there – *Sri Rāmakrishna*'s teachings. It is true.

It's because, the psychology is, whatever we see, or hear, or touch, or taste, it will never go out from our minds. But the thing is it may not come at all times. But when the right time comes it will come from deep inside – 'I am here, I will help you.'

That's why *Swāmi Vivekānanda* said, 'If the power of bad thoughts in your unconscious are there to harm you, the power of good thoughts in your unconscious

are there like gods to come and save you.' So cultivate good things and they will go deep inside you and bring slowly gradual change.

So, reverence for everything! And also another way of looking at it is, you know, a saint very naturally reveres everything in this world. You know why he does that? In the Gita it is said -

विद्याविनयसंपन्ने ब्राह्मणे गवि हस्तिनि।
शुनि चैव श्वपाके च पण्डिताः समदर्शिनः॥

*vidyā-vinaya-sampanne brāhmaṇe gavi hastini
śhuni chaiva śhva-pāke cha paṇḍitāḥ sama-darśinaḥ*

A *Pandita*, you heard the word *Pandita*, in English language also it has entered. *Pandita* – who is a *Pandita*? The colloquial meaning, you know, contemporary meaning is one who is, who knows, has much information about some subject. That's not the meaning of *Pandita*.

Those who see a learned *Brāhman*, a cow, an elephant, an outcast, an eater of dogs and a dog equally as the same *Brahman* he is a *Pandita* - *paṇḍitāḥ sama-darśinaḥ* - equal sighted. Equal sighted means they see everything as God only, manifestation of God only.

We see the illustrations of this in the life of every saint practically - *Ghazipur, Pāvāri Bābā* - how did he look upon the thief? How did he look upon a dog? You know, a dog came to steal a piece of bread from his hut, cottage, and it was running away. So the saint started running with a pot of *ghee*, 'O Rama the bread is too hard your teeth may break. Let me put a little bit of butter on it.' He was not seeing a dog. He was seeing God himself.

(50:08 mins)

This is the natural vision - a saint is one who sees nothing but God. So if we want to become saints we have to do it sooner or later. So why not do it right now? And don't think that there is plenty of time. When I realise God then I will start seeing, until that time let me give a good slap to everybody, anybody who wants.

There was a priest you know? One day he was bitten by a dog. He was walking in the street, he was bitten by a dog. So he went to a doctor because he didn't know if it was a rabid dog or not. There were lots of patients. So he sat in the reception room, and he took up a notebook and started scribbling. After some time his turn came and The doctor came out and said, 'Now come, I will examine you.' And then he noticed this man was writing. So he asked, 'What are you writing?' He said, 'You know there are so

many fellows who criticised my preaching, I am writing down all those names of those fellows. If I become rabid I want to bite them.'

So, don't think when I become a saint I am going to revere everybody, but now I will behave exactly as... No! What a saint does... how did he become a saint? By developing a saintly quality with great effort. Then what is achieved with great effort now, becomes very natural. Then he becomes a saint. But this very habit leads one to God realisation.

That is what is called *karma-yogā*. Part of the *bhakti-yogā* is also to reverence everything. The subject is so very important. Anybody who has irreverence, that person will not progress in spiritual life. Sooner or later he has to correct. He may be wrong.

So can we have reverence in this connection, say for a terrorist? For Hitler or Saddam Hussain? Yes! So, that's why many times I raised this question, you know. Supposing Hitler, Saddam Hussein or people like that, they go to *Holy Mother*. How do you think She will look upon them? Do you think She will look upon them as we are looking upon them? No! She will look upon them exactly as She is looking upon all of us.

It was Her statement, 'My son Sarat and my son Amjad they both are my children.' Amjad was a Mohammedan robber. It was not an empty statement. She lived showing reverence. That is why there were also financial benefits from that, do you know? This man was a robber. Even after coming in contact with *Holy Mother* still he was robbing. But he did not rob *Jairāmbāti*. Because, you know, he knew, 'My mother here is *Holy Mother* who respects me so much. How could I lose my respect in Her place?'

So, develop reverence for everything. It is not a degrading thing to bow down or to show reverence. It is to bring out the Divinity hidden within each one of us. That is one of the greatest aids. In fact I would say **reverence is the greatest spiritual quality**.

Once you have reverence for everything you don't need to do much. Because reverence comes only from love. And if you have become such a great lover, you can only love God. You cannot love anything unless you see godliness. You may not use the word God, but in ordinary terminology also that's what we do, do you know?

Suppose there is a fan of a football player, what is that - Beckham! There is a fan. How do you think the fan looks upon Beckham? Or a rock musician, you know, they all look like our *rākshasas* described in *Chandāmāmā* stories, you know. But the fan of this rock musician, for him, in his eyes how do you think that person is looked upon? As God! You know, because he loves that music, whoever can give that kind of music is a God.

Similarly if we don't use the word God. Supposing you love some type of food. What is that food to you? Is it not God for you? You know, supposing you are very very thirsty and there is no water to be had anywhere and you are about to die. At that time somebody manages to bring you a bottle of cold drink or good drinkable Cold water. Is not the water God to you at that time? And is not the person who brings that glass of water to you a God to you?

Who else is God? **The idea is when we go on reverencing everything it produces love and we understand ultimately love leads us to God.** This is the fact which *Vedantā* is telling – that love, not lust but love – it ultimately leads to God. Because God is love! That is the point of reverencing everything in this world

ॐ शान्ति शान्ति शान्ति: ॥

Om Shānti Shānti Shāntihi ॥

(55:35 mins)