

## **Bhagavad Gita online Class 70 on 28 Dec 2019 by Swami Dayatmanada (Lecture delivered online from Bangalore, India)**

Shanti Patha:

ॐ वसुदेवसुतं देवं कंसचाणूरमर्दनम्  
देवकीपरमानन्दं कृष्णं वन्दे जगद्गुरुम् ॥ १ ॥

Vasudeva sutham devam, Kamsa Chanura mardanam,  
Devaki paramanandam, Krishnam vande jagat gurum

*I worship Lord Krishna, Who is the spiritual master of the universe, who is the son of Vasudeva, who is the Lord, who killed Kamsa and Chanura, and who is the bliss of Devaki.*

सर्वोपनिषदो गावो, दोग्धा गोपाल नन्दनः।  
पार्थो वत्सः सुधीर्भोक्ता, दुग्धं गीतामृतं महत् ॥  
Sarovopanishado gaavo, dogdha gopala nandanaha|  
parthovatsa: sudheerbhoktaa, dugdham gitamrutam mahat |

*All the Upanishads are likened to the cows. The milker is Krishna, the son of Gopala. Partha is likened to the calf, while the drinkers are the wise ones. The nectar of Gita is the milk.*

मूकं करोति वाचालं पङ्गुं लङ्घयते गिरिं ।  
यत्कृपा तमहं वन्दे परमानन्द माधवम् ॥  
Mookam karoti vachalam pangum langhayate girim |  
Yat-krupa tamaham vande paramananda madhavam ॥

### **The Way To Transform Every Action Into A Yajna:**

In our last class, we have been discussing how Bhagawan Krishna's hints about the many ways in which we can transform every one of our activities into a great sacrifice or yajna. This concept of yajna is one of the greatest discoveries of our Vedas. Our rishis, through whom the Eternal Knowledge has been conveyed to us at a particular point of time, have indicated to us that the whole universe is the sacrifice of Purusha, or the Atman.

Everything that has come out of the Purusha. What we call the world is only the manifestation of Brahman, with names and forms.

Naturally the question arises, *what is the purpose of this creation?* It is a "self-game", like Solitaire. The Lord is playing with Himself. He wants to think, *I am not God*, and he wants to play the game. But His goal is to know that He is God. So the whole universe has come from God, and it is going back to God.

This process of coming down, as it were, is called involution, and the process of going up is called evolution.

In our last class, we saw specifically that the Lord mentions: *the goal of life is to go to God*. Any act that helps us in reaching God, any act that helps us manifest our own innate divinity, is called

sacrifice. If we are not consciously trying to progress towards our final destination, it is called worldly life. In truth, even the so-called worldly life also is indirectly helping us only to move forward towards the Divine Lord.

In Chapter 4, the 24<sup>th</sup> verse says:

ब्रह्मार्पणं ब्रह्म हविर्ब्रह्माग्नौ ब्रह्मणा हुतम् ।  
ब्रह्मैव तेन गन्तव्यं ब्रह्मकर्मसमाधिना ॥ 24॥

*brahmārpaṇaṁ brahma havir brahmāgnau brahmaṇā hutam  
brahmaiva tena gantavyaṁ brahma-karma-samādhinā*

*To him Brahman is the offering and Brahman is the oblation, and it is Brahman who offers the oblation into the fire of Brahman. Brahman alone is attained by him who thus sees Brahman in action.*

#### The Five Components of Every Action:

In every action that we do, there are five components:

- The person who is acting
- The purpose, the goal, or the object towards which he wants to move,
- How he wants to relate himself with that object
- The very act of establishing such a divine connection, and
- The result

In the olden days, the rishis often used to perform yajnas. They lit a fire and usually offered clarified butter (*ghee*). The essence of Vedanta is the Bhagawad Gita, and the essence of the Bhagawad Gita are the Puranas and the Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna, as well as the teachings of all great incarnations and saints: the Bible, the Quran, the *Tripitaka* (Buddhist scriptures) etc. These books are the outpourings, or expressions, of one's inner experience, and they all point out to the only goal: *you are God, you have come from God, and you are also travelling, inevitably, towards God.*

But if we can make this a conscious act, and take up a path that is most suitable to us (one that will take us to our destination quite soon) – that act, consciously done, and aimed at knowing who we are, is known as a yajna.

#### When will we all transform our lives into a yajna?

The 24<sup>th</sup> verse indicates that, it is possible, indeed inevitable, that sooner or later, all of us will transform our lives into an action of sacrifice called yajna. Some may do it in this life, some have done in the past, and others will in the future. No one who wants to reach God will be left out.

So this attempt to transform our sacrifice contains two elements:

- giving up what is not helpful (or is holding us back) and
- moving forward with the help of whatever can help us

Man's life is, incidentally, a gradual progress giving up what stops our expansion and taking active, conscious help from whatever helps us. This 24<sup>th</sup> verse is the goal: that is, God is reacting with God, and his object is God, and his action is God, and the result is also God. Indirectly, all of us are manifestations of God, so whatever we do is also taking us towards God.

As mentioned in the previous class, the number of acts is not limited to a few. Every act – breathing in, breathing out, eating, moving, talking, hearing, seeing, tasting, touching – at every given time, can be transformed into a spiritual act, called sacrifice. The only criteria we have to be continuously aware is: *if I am doing an act, consciously, only with the purpose of attaining God or attaining self-knowledge, that alone can be called a sacrifice.*

But the curious thing is, even if we do something unconsciously, sooner or later, this world will teach us that we have to give it up and move forward.

#### The Twelve Samples of Yajnas, Revisited:

The Bhagawad Gita gives us twelve samples of how some of the spiritual aspirants transform particular activities into acts of offering or sacrifice or yajna. Nor do they stop there. They expand through that particular activity into every act that goes on throughout their life in their bodies and minds. Thus, the starting point is a particular activity and the end point is everything. In other words, when a person is capable of giving up his sense of egotism, and comes to feel that it is God alone who possesses his body-mind, and only He is acting. Such a person's yajna or sacrifice is the highest.

Because the act is the highest, the result is also, correspondingly, the highest – which is called (beautifully) Brahma-karma-samadhi (ब्रह्मकर्मसमाधि). This is called Samadhi, but it is really Brahma-karma-samadhi.

Now we are going to deal with twelve types of yajnas. Please note that they are not exhaustive, only a few samples. The 25<sup>th</sup> verse says:

**दैवमेवापरे यज्ञं योगिनः पर्युपासते ।  
ब्रह्माग्रावपरे यज्ञं यज्ञेनैवोपजुह्वति ॥ 25॥**

*daivam evāpare yajñam yoginaḥ paryupāsate  
brahmāgnāvapare yajñam yajñenaivopajuhvati*

*Some yogis offer oblations to the devas alone, while others in the fire of Brahman offer the self by the self.*

That is, some yogis perform sacrifices to the Devas alone, while others offer their sacrifice – as a sacrifice by the self – into the fire of Brahman (also known as Brahma-yajna). Anybody, who consciously is striving to transform his activity into a sacrifice is known as a yogi. One who wants to unite with God is called a yogi.

We need to understand that distinctions or attributes such as Hindu, Christian, man, woman, young, old etc. don't really exist. Anybody who consciously is striving to move forward is a yogi. For example, a yogi may worship gods.

#### Various Manifestations of God and Their Worship:

According to Hinduism, God manifests through many of His powers, and comes to be known as different gods and goddesses. For example, if God offers wealth or bestows wealth we specifically call Him as Lakshmi. Likewise, knowledge is Saraswati, victory is Kumaraswamy (Skanda), and the removal of all obstacles is Ganesha. These different gods and goddesses are not separate beings, as mistaken by several non-Hindus, who also preach that Hindus practices polytheism, or the worship of many gods and goddesses. They don't understand that the Hindus possess better intelligence than that, and understand that it is only one God being worshipped, in different forms, names, and

powers. We can choose the form that appeals to us or according to our needs, because psychologically, when we do something happily, it not only gives us better results, but also grants us great joy. This is called the Law of the Chosen Deity.

When the Bhagawad Gita tells us that some yogis worship different forms of God, firstly, we should eradicate from our minds the misunderstanding that such people are not worshipping the supreme God but gods and goddesses different from Him. Secondly, through the form and the name through which they are progressing, everyone is taking a different route, as it were. Every such route suitable to every person is a royal road. No road is superior or inferior to any other.

When the yogis, endowed with sincerity or tremendous faith (sraddha) in the scriptures and in their guru, sincerely strives, the Lord, too, promises *tāns tathaiva bhajāmyaham* (तांस्तथैव भजाम्यहम्, / *reciprocate with them accordingly*). He also appears to them in that form, deepens and strengthens their faith in that particular path, leads them by hand, and helps them move forward. Ultimately, all gods and goddesses can be likened to different roads that lead to one destination from different directions. No path is superior or inferior to any other. Whatever helps a person to move forward is the superior path *for that person*.

There is another law: there is no restriction that a person should persist with the same route until the goal is reached. He or she can change the way: sometimes being a devotee, at other times a gyani or a man of knowledge, or a karma-yogi, or a meditator. So a change is permissible. Usually, though, a spiritual aspirant only likes one particular path that suits him better than the other paths. So it would be best for that person to hold fast to that view, and progress towards God without criticizing, finding faults or believing that the others are on the wrong paths.

#### Why it is not Good to Try To Convert People From One Path to Another:

One of the greatest tragedies in this world is people trying to convert others into particular paths – stereotyped, monotonous paths – even though neither the people who direct, nor those directed, are often consciously aware that that a particular path may not be suitable for them. As an example, consider the case of Vijay Krishna Goswami. He was following Keshab Chandra Sen, trying to worship God in a formless aspect, which was exactly what Keshab Chandra Sen would have liked him to do. Vijay Krishna Goswami would have also liked to go along with that, but as soon as Sri Ramakrishna saw him, he pulled him aside and told him that it was not a suitable path for him, and that he needed to approach God through the path of *with form*, using devotion, prayer, and self-surrender. And the advanced spiritual aspirant that he was, Vijay understood this immediately, cut off his connections (with Keshab Chandra Sen), came out (of Brahma Samaj) and progressed rapidly in spiritual life.

This is one of the most fundamental teachings of the Vedas, the Upanishads, and Bhagawad Gita, and also emphasized by Sri Ramakrishna in his beautiful, pithy Bengali saying, *jatho math, thatho path – as many people, so many faiths, so many paths* (all, without exception, leading to God only).

On that basis, there are many yogis worshipping different forms. Hinduism has a plethora of gods and goddesses (Lakshmi/Saraswati/Karthikeya/Ganesha/Shiva/Vishnu etc.) and each has many different manifestations. Similarly, Narayana/Krishna/Rama etc., and many other forms with different names, are all considered to be the forms of Vishnu. Again, Vishnu, Shiva and Brahma are not different, but simply different manifestations of Brahman, the one being referred to as God.

Some people, with tremendous *nishta* (*dedication*), clinging, or faith, and one-pointed devotion, worship these gods and goddesses. We need to remind ourselves that is not meant to encourage fanaticism, but for all of them to reach the same ocean.

You might have heard a beautiful Sanskrit *shloka* (hymn) that says: *Different rivers originate from different directions, but all, without exception, reach the ocean and merge into it, losing their distinct names, and ultimately come to be known as the ocean.* In other words, all rivers – the Ganges, the Yamuna, even the Thames, or the Saint Lawrence, consist of water, and are helpful in maintaining life, and the atmosphere, so that we can all live together happily, in good health, and progress in spiritual life. That is a type of yogi.

Another type of yogi is one whose philosophy is: *I am a small manifestation of Brahman. God is the whole, and I am a part. I try to merge my small self into that infinite ocean, and try to feel that I am that ocean.* This is also called Brahma-yajna, i.e., to consider oneself as well as everything else, as a manifestation of Brahman.

There is also another meaning for this word *deva*: *that which illumines, or brings us knowledge.* The five sense organs are also called *deva* in that sense. The eye is a god when it is in a single human body. When it is in one body, it is called ‘eye’. Collectively, it is known as the Sun god, or Suryadeva. So Suryadeva is simply that aspect of divinity which helps us see various forms. In this secondary sense, a person thinks: *my eyes are Brahman, my ears are Brahman, my skin is Brahman, my tongue is Brahman, and my nose is also Brahman.* Everything is Brahman.

What does this mean? That I am seeing Brahman, I am hearing Brahman, I am tasting Brahman, I am smelling Brahman, and I am touching Brahman. For example, if the wind is blowing, my skin feels the rush of the wind, at different times gently or violently, but it is always Brahman (called Vayu Deva, or the wind-god). Whatever forms, and colours (white, black, blue, green etc.) I see, it is a manifestation of God. What I see is God, whatever I hear – any type of sound – is also God.

Tantras specialize in helping us see everything as God more than many other *sadhanas* (spiritual practices). According to the Tantra system, in the whole world, there are millions of objects, and every object has a name. Every name can be sounded, but all sounds emerge from a particular alphabet.

### Shabda or Nada Brahman

For instance, any name can be sounded using the alphabet (i.e., from A to Z), and the syllables are the manifestation of the Divine Mother in the form of sound, called *shabda-Brahma*. So there is no good or bad word, because good and bad words originate from the same alphabet. Many people realized this fact, and tried to adore the Divine and invoke blessings (usually in the form of the Divine Mother) in the form of *nada-brahma* or *shabda-brahma*. When a person is singing a song, he is worshipping God, feeling God in the form of *shabda*, or sound.

Every sense organ can be used through its own speciality to make a sacrifice. For example, when a man is seeing a woman, if he is an ordinary person, he just sees another female person – whether as a mother, a sister, or a wife, or simply a beautiful woman. But if he is a spiritual person, he tries to see her as (a manifestation of) the Divine Mother. Thus, every sight, sound, and experience of the five sense organs can be sublimated into a spiritual practice, and so people take it as a special discipline to sublimate their sense organs. This is the secondary meaning.

Thus the primary meaning is to worship Surya, Chandra, Lakshmi, Saraswathi, Gayathri, Karthikeya, Ganesha, Shiva, Vishnu, Jesus, Buddha, Allah or any other form. The secondary meaning is: when a

person goes to a temple, he needs to use his eyes to see the image of God, ears to hear the Vedic chanting etc. The worship, too, has been done through the five sense organs. He doesn't (consciously) think, I am experiencing God through the five sense organs. But in truth, he is experiencing God only through his five senses.

Either way, some yogis take it as their special spiritual practice to use the sense organs to reach God. By sublimating them, everything experienced through them becomes only Brahman. Also, as mentioned earlier, every person suffers from *ahamkara* (egotism). But worldly people, instead of subduing or sublimating it, only strengthen it further by thinking – *I am rich, I am powerful, I am beautiful, I am talented etc.*

Some yogis, specifically, take their egotism and imagination, and offer it into the fire of Brahman. When something is offered into fire, it becomes fire itself. So when I think in my mind that my egotism is not mine, but belongs to God (it is Brahman), I too progress towards the Divine Lord.

In the 26<sup>th</sup> verse:

श्रोत्रादीनीन्द्रियाण्यन्ये संयमाग्निषु जुह्वति ।  
शब्दादीन्विषयानन्य इन्द्रियाग्निषु जुह्वति ॥ 26॥

*śhrotrāḍīnīndriyāṇyanye sanyamāgniṣhu juhvati*  
*śhabdāḍīn viṣhayānanya indriyāgniṣhu juhvati*

*Some offer oblations of hearing and the other senses in the fires of restraint; and some offer sound and other sensations in the fires of their senses.*

*Juhvati* means offering (not merely putting) it into a fire. The word offering itself indicates devotion, concentration, tremendous faith, and the person who is offering thinks (or should think): *I am not offering what belongs to me, but what I thought belonged to me, which I now understand belongs only to God. He is the One who has given me my body, the mind, the five sense-organs. In fact He became my body-mind and this world, so whatever this body-mind accomplishes is simply God offering Himself into Himself.*

But how to come to that realization? There are two types of spiritual aspirants mentioned here:

- The first type offer *shotradini indrayani* (i.e., the five sense-organs of hearing, seeing, touching, smelling, and tasting), as sacrifices in the fires of restraint.
- The second type offer sound, and other sense-objects as sacrifice, in the fires of the senses. Both these activities are called *yajna* or sacrifice, as explained below.

The first type of yogis try to control their sense-organs. They direct their eyes look only at whatever is necessary (and similarly with the other senses). For instance, when Buddhists (and members of similar sects) walk, they don't look at anything except at their toes (so that they can walk without falling or stumbling). They aren't permitted to look at people's faces etc. (as those sights would divert their minds and make them think unworthy thoughts, and thus become distractions). So they direct and train their eyes and ears to not look at, nor hear anything, unnecessary.

There is a beautiful Vedic prayer, meant to be chanted before studying the Upanishads:

ॐ भद्रं कर्णेभिः शृणुयाम देवाः ।  
भद्रं पश्येमाक्षभिर्यजत्राः ।  
स्थिरैरङ्गैस्तुष्टुवाग्ँसस्तनूभिः ।

## व्यशेम देवहितं यदायुः ।

Om Bhadram Karnnebhiih Shrnnuyaama Devaah |  
Bhadram Pashyema-Akssabhir-Yajatraah |  
Sthirair-Anggais-Tussttuvaamsas-Tanuubhih |  
Vyashema Deva-Hitam Yad-Aayuh |

*Om, may we hear only what is auspicious with our ears. Oh Devas (gods), may we see only what is auspicious with our eyes. Oh holy ones worthy of worship, may we live out our life span (i.e., until death snatches us away from us) engaged (only) in the praise and worship of God, with strong organs and a healthy body.*

### Is it Possible to See and Hear Only Good?

The question arises, is it possible to see, and hear, only what is good? Yes. Normally, we think people talk only worldly things. Sometimes, though, we hear (religious or spiritual invocations such as) the Gregorian Church priests calling for prayer, or the early morning *suprabhatham* (early morning prayer in Hindu temples), and similarly in other religions, too. However, usually these are few and far-between.

Whatever you are looking at, don't think it is a worldly object, but look upon it as a manifestation of God. A short but telling analogy can help understand this: There was a village, and it was on a hillock. It had a number of roads leading up and down, with a number of hillocks surrounding. In a particular location, there was a big stone, and people and animals used to rub their backs on it. Sometimes people used to do other, inelegant activities, too. One day, a person decided that it was a beautiful stone, and made a determination to make people revere it. He carved out of that stone, a small *shiva-linga*, and scattered around it some turmeric, flowers, sandal-paste and other articles of worship.

From then on, people stopped their mischievous activities. Instead, they prostrated before it, and offered flowers, garlands, and sometimes sweets and other food items which the young boys and others in that area used to enjoy.

Earlier, it had been an ordinary piece of stone. Now, it had transformed into an object of worship and greatest reverence. Those who have visited Kedarnath would recollect that the Kedarnath temple is a Shiva temple. Inside it is a huge piece of rock that is not even carved into any shape or form. Somebody might have had a wonderful spiritual experience sitting on or near it, leading him to believe that it was Shiva. Though it didn't resemble anything related to Shiva – it is just a huge rock – he started worshipping it. After a while, its popularity rose, and a rich man constructed a small structure around it, which is now known as the Kedarnath temple. Millions of devout Hindus visit it with great joy, and feel very highly satisfied. I too visited it, many years ago, and definitely experienced a wonderful spiritual atmosphere there.

Whatever we experience through the five sense organs, first of all we should stop seeing anything bad; only see what is helpful in spiritual life. Secondly, if we can't help noticing, we should elevate, or sublimate, our thoughts, and see, in everything, God alone.

A telling incident in the life of Sri Ramakrishna illustrates this beautifully. One day, Sri Ramakrishna was returning from Calcutta. On the way, he saw a public woman, waiting for customers. Everyone was looking at her, but Sri Ramakrishna saw in her only Mother Sita, waiting for Rama. Not only was

she herself Sita, but also her customers were seen not as lowly or fallen people, but verily as manifestations of Rama.

What was Sri Ramakrishna really doing here? He was performing that sacrifice whereby he offered all the experiences of the senses into the fire of knowledge. This is called *sainyama* (संयम) or self-control and transformation.

There is another set of people who consider shabdadeen vishaya (forms seen by the eye, and sounds, touches, smells, and taste) as offerings (*indriya agnishu juhvati*). The forms belong to the eye, and the eye is the manifestation of Surya, or sun; and the sun is the manifestation of Vishnu; and Vishnu is the manifestation of Brahman; so the eye is the manifestation of Brahman). Therefore, the eye is only the manifestation of Brahman. I offer this form into the eye, the eye into Vishnu.

Now what is the speciality of this second method? People following it will talk only about God, hear only about God, read only about God, take only *prasada*, and that too only what is necessary, and all the time, their only goal is to reach God.

This is the difference between the two methods. The first method is at the mental level, and the second is at the physical, external level. Both of them, through their respective paths, reach the same goal – which is to know that *everything is Brahman, so I am also Brahman*.

The next verse (27<sup>th</sup>) is:

सर्वाणीन्द्रियकर्माणि प्राणकर्माणि चापरे |  
आत्मसंयमयोगाग्नौ जुहति ज्ञानदीपिते || 27||

*sarvāṇīndriya-karmāṇi prāṇa-karmāṇi chāpare*  
*ātma-sanyama-yogāgnau juhvati jñāna-dīpīte*

*Some, again, offer all the actions of the senses and the functions of the prana as oblations in the fire of self-control, kindled by knowledge.*

The same fact that we discussed earlier, is now being presented in a slightly expanded way. The activities originate from all the organs: not only the sense organs, but also the organs of action, totalling ten (five of knowledge, and five of action). The first set are for getting the knowledge, and the second set for acting and reacting. There is also a third set of activities called the activities of the *pranas*. Within every living creature, (living means *prana*, which is one of the powers) this *prana* manifests in five different ways, for particular activities: *prana, apana, vyana, samana, and udana*.

Without *prana*, neither the organs of knowledge function, nor the organs of action perform their duties. But what is happening inside the body? Digestion, distribution of food, the activity of breathing in and out, and discharging what is unwanted or undigested food material, and finally, throwing or pushing the individual outside the body (death) at the allotted time. All these are accomplished by one *prana*, but depending on which activity it is performing, it is named accordingly.

This can be understood in a different way. If a man is married, he plays various roles: a husband to his wife, a father to his children, a son to his parents, a friend to his friends, an officer in his office, a sportsman in his club, a swimmer when he goes to a swimming pool. When he confronts his son, or a higher officer, it is a slightly different role. We all have multiple personalities in different situations. Like a person acting out a variety of roles harmoniously, *prana*, manifests through various activities.



All of them are offered into the fire of self-control called *yoga-agni* (*atma-samyama-yoga-agni*) as if he lights the fire of self-control called *gnana-deepithe*. He is illumined by that knowledge.

What is that knowledge? *That my sense-organs are for the service of the Brahman, in the form of the society.* My organs of action are also offered in the service of Brahman in the form of serving not only this body-mind, but all creatures in this world. All my pranas – and different functions of the pranas – are also sacrificial offerings towards the same Brahman.

In fact, as we chant every time we start studying Bhagawad Gita, the Bhagawad Gita is the essence of the Upanishads. In the Upanishads, there are various types of *upasanas*, or meditations, prescribed, and one of them is called *prana-upasana*. Prana is considered as manifestation of Brahman, either Hiranyagarbha, or Ishwara (which ultimately means Brahman) and worship that. By worship, we don't mean putting the prana somewhere else. It refers to the idea that I am seeing Brahman, through Brahman, for the sake of Brahman, that I am hearing Brahman for the sake of Brahman through Brahman. Without Brahman, this act of seeing is not possible, the act of hearing is not possible, the act of tasting, touching, smelling is also not possible. Constantly, the sole purpose of *gnana-deepithe* (illumined uninterruptedly and unceasingly, with the fire of that knowledge) is to become a yogi; I must become united with Brahman. It means, not just going and standing or sitting nearby, but actually experiencing that *I am Brahman*.

To achieve that end, *atma-samyama* (self-control) is a must. Here *atma* means the mind. O mind, do not think anything. Whenever we think, we notice that we only think in the form of the five sensory experiences. I am seeing somebody, I am recollecting somebody's talks, I am recollecting the tastes I have had, I am recollecting the smells or sounds or touches that I had, and we are acting and reaction only and through the five sense organs.

But what does a yogi do? He controls them (meaning he doesn't allow any worldly, lower, ungodly thoughts). He turns everything in his mind to God.

In the previous class, I mentioned an incident where a devotee was thinking slightly critical thoughts about Sri Ramakrishna, after noticing that so many dishes had been offered to him in a meal. Later, he saw Sri Ramakrishna take a handful of the food to his mouth, whereupon a big snake suddenly emerged from his mouth, snatched the food, and went back. That made the devotee understand that Sri Ramakrishna was not the eater, nor was he performing the action of eating. Sri Ramakrishna is Brahman, and Brahman in the form of a snake emerged from inside, consuming Brahman, in the form of the food, and becoming one with it. Hopefully, the devotee understood this at that time, or perhaps later on. Sri Ramakrishna was smiling, because he could convey that knowledge to other people.

Others, again, sacrifice all the functions of their senses and the functions of the breath, in the fire of the yoga of self-restraint, kindled by knowledge. Here, understanding of the divine reality is called the yoga of self-restraint or *atma-samyama*.

All the activities of the sense organs, and the organs of action, are offered into the knowledge-kindled fire of right understanding, right attitude, right concentration, right faith, exhausting the aforementioned five different techniques, as though to make Arjuna understand that a hundred other methods of turning every action into a sacrifice can be indicated. Now, Krishna is going to enumerate five more different methods in the verse 28, as follows:

**द्रव्ययज्ञास्तपोयज्ञा योगयज्ञास्तथापरे ।  
स्वाध्यायज्ञानयज्ञाश्च यतयः संशितव्रताः ॥ २८॥**

*dravya-yajñās tapo-yajñā yoga-yajñās tathāpare  
swādhyāya-jñāna-yajñāśh cha yatayaḥ sanśhita-vratāḥ*

*Some, likewise, offer as oblations their wealth, austerity and yoga; while others, of disciplined minds and severe vows, offer their scriptural study and knowledge.*

#### Other Examples of Yajnas:

Dravya-yajna, tapo-yajna, yoga-yajna, swadhyaya-yajna, gnana-yajna, these five additional yajnas are mention here.

Dravya means material. It could be money, power, position – anything external, concrete, that is possessed by a person in this world is called *dravya* or material wealth or objects. For example, when some guests (*athithi*) come, we can accommodate them, and offer things which are material, or dravya. If someone lacks foods, we can offer him food. Or clothes could be offered to a person lacking them. Whatever wealth we have, we can share with others.

#### The True Meaning of Service, Explained:

There is a beautiful story in the Bible: There was a devotee who served the world very much. Though he probably lacked much faith in God, after his passing away, he found himself in the presence of Jesus Christ, who said to him: *I am so happy, so pleased with you. Your devotion is without parallel. You served me so much!* The devotee was puzzled, and asked: *Lord, I didn't even see you! How could I serve you?* Jesus Christ replied in this most eloquent teaching: *When I came to you without any clothes, you clothed me. When I came hungry to you, you fed me. When I desired any type of wealth or had any need, you offered me the same!* Still puzzled, the devotee enquired: *Oh Lord, when did I do all this to you?* Jesus replied: *Anybody who came to you hungry, anyone who approached you without clothes, anyone who came to you for help, that person was !*

So, even if a person doesn't know that a needy person is also God, it doesn't matter. If he does it with love, helps him, serves him, it is only the Lord ultimately who is worshipped – knowingly or otherwise. It is a wonderful teaching that whenever we smile at somebody, comfort somebody, pray for somebody, offer help in a material or any other way, we are really only doing it for God. Swami Vivekananda extolled this idea by saying *Shivagnane jeeva-seva*.

If we do it consciously, it is much better, but even without conscious understanding, we are only serving God, because this world is none other than God Himself. This type of sacrifice is known as material sacrifice.

The Holy Mother had a beautiful saying: *Those who have, measure it out (meaning, distribute what you have unstintingly), but those who don't have, do japam, or prayer! Wish well, smile at them, encourage them, or inspire them!* Whatever material you have (not external things, but genuine love, encouragement, or inspiration etc.), and in whatever way we do it, it is also considered as tapo-yajna.

Tapas means austerity. To illustrate this with an example, consider the case of a person who could not fast, but wanted to, on a Shiva rathri day. He came very sadly to the Holy Mother, and said he wanted to fast, but was unable to do it. So he could not get the punya (merit). Holy Mother said: *Baba, don't worry. I will fast for you.* This is called tapo-yajna.

Many of her disciples said to her: *O Mother, we have taken the mantra, but we do hardly any japam at all!* The Holy Mother replied: *Baba, so many people come to me! They address me as Mother! And I can't deny them! But afterwards, they don't do anything! So I have to do it for them!*

We can do it, too: if we pray for others, that is austerity. If we can fast for somebody, that is a sacrifice of austerity. If we can take some trouble, denying ourselves, spending our time, our energy etc., that is also a type of austerity.

Many such examples could be given. A particularly mentionable one took place during the Second World War. On a ship was a person who was extremely sick. He was a very sincere person, so even in his nearly helpless state, he volunteered to go out and help others. The Captain of the ship was well aware of his nature, and asked him to rest, offering to serve in his place instead. The Captain himself was exhausted, only slightly better than the person he had offered to replace. This is called the sacrifice of austerity.

#### Sir Philip Sidney's Sacrifice:

Most of us probably remember the most beautiful incident in the life of Sir Philip Sidney. He lay on the battlefield, severely wounded and dying of thirst, next to another soldier who was also dying of thirst. Because he was the Commander, he was given what little water could be procured. When Sir Philip Sydney saw that the other soldier needed it far more than him, he exclaimed: *My son, thy need is greater than mine!* He promptly offered the meagre quantity of water to the other soldier, and himself soon died of thirst. This is called the sacrifice of austerity. Numerous such examples exist, but the essence is that whatever help or service we render for the sake of other people that involves sacrifice or hardship, loss of sleep, loss of anything, that is called tapo-yajna.

The third yajna is yoga-yajna. Yoga is the practice of spiritual discipline.

The Ten Commandments (*yamas* and *niyamas*) of Hinduism are as listed below:

- ahimsa (not causing harm to any being)
- sathya (truthfulness)
- astheya (non-stealing)
- brahmacharya (spiritual purity and continence)
- aparigraha (non-acceptance of gifts)
- shaucha (cleanliness)
- santosha (contentment)
- tapas (meditation)
- swadhyaya (self-study)
- ishwara-pranidhana (dedication to God)

The practice of any one of these virtues is called yoga-yajna. They are practiced as below:

- I am speaking the truth, because I want to attain the Truth
- I will not injure anybody, because that person is none other than myself – this is called morality
- I will never steal, because everything belongs to God; if I steal, I will reach God probably very late in life
- I will never accept anything from anybody, unless I am capable of returning it in some form
- Speaking the truth
- Not injuring others

- Not stealing from others
- Observing mind control
- Observing brahmacharya
- Accepting only what is required, that too with the intention of returning to that person either at that time, or later, called aparigraha, or non-acceptance of gifts

All the above form a part of yoga-yajna. We can also do these, for the sake of others. If we get any result from it, we can share it with others.

Take a simple example: If somebody is observing sathya, then every word spoken by such a person turns out to be true (i.e., comes to pass). For instance, if somebody comes needing another's help, he or she can pray to God for him. Blessings given by such a person will usually turn out to be true. This is called yoga-yajna.

Some people do dravya-yajna, or material sacrifices. Others do austerity-sacrifices, meaning sacrifices in the form of austerities. For some people, it is practicing/acquiring good qualities, then trying to do pranayama etc.

The Lord tells us that varieties of spiritual disciplines that would be sublimated on one condition: The doer thinks: *I am not doing it for any lower benefit, but for the sake of realizing God, for the sake of progressing in spiritual life, and for everybody's welfare, because everything around me, including me, is God.*

#### Two Other Types of Yajnas:

Two others types of yajna will be briefly mentioned, and discussed in detail in the next class:

- Swadhaya-yajna, or the study of scriptures.
- Gnana-yajna, or sharing and transferring spiritual knowledge

Regular study of elevating scriptures such as the Ramayana, Bhagavatha, Mahabharatha, Bible, Koran, Guru Granth Sahib etc., should be done, not with the idea of becoming a scholar in that scripture, not for worldly praise (as a highly intellectual person), not for giving lectures, but for the sake of the Lord, to fix one's mind on Him, so that one's mind would not go lower to other subjects but would remain fixed on Him.

As we continue this study, the idea of the existence of God, and his benevolence, and the goal of life, everything becomes very strong in our minds, and that is how we progress. This is another type of sacrifice.

#### The Meaning of Swadhyaya:

As mentioned several times before, swadhyaya also means (apart from the study of scriptures), swa+adhyaya, or self-study about whether one's outer life has changed, whether one really wants God (and if not, how to slowly turn one's mind towards God). This study of one's own self is also another type of sacrifice.

But there is also an economical benefit coming out of this. If I know what my thoughts are, I don't need to visit any psychologist or psychiatrist! In fact, I may be help other people, too!

In gnana-yajna, we practice all the above-mentioned things for the sake of attaining knowledge of *who I am*. Also, in a rather strange way, we perform gnana yajna as follows: The person who is expounding is performing one type of yajna; those who are listening are performing another type of

yajna. This is the meaning of gnana-yajna. One type of gnana-yajna is to look upon everything is Brahman, and another type is to distribute, unstintedly, whatever knowledge I have, to one and all. Anything becomes a yajna, but only on this condition: *I will do my best, with the greatest reverence and concentration and self-discipline, with the sole motive: I want to manifest my innate divinity and become great.*

So many yajnas have been enumerated so far. We will discuss other yajnas, too. I want to close this class on this note: These are not the only yajnas. We can turn our life into a continuous sacrifice through various activities. Any activity that I do, breathing in/out, eating food, talking, listening, including worldly activities, is also a yajna. This will be discussed in greater detail in the next class.

Shanti Patha:

ॐ वसुदेवसुतं देवं कंसचाणूरमर्दनम्  
देवकीपरमानन्दं कृष्णं वन्दे जगद्गुरुम् ॥ १ ॥

Vasudeva sutham devam, Kamsa Chanura mardanam,  
Devaki paramanandam, Krishnam vande jagat gurum

*I worship Lord Krishna, Who is the spiritual master of the universe, who is the son of Vasudeva, who is the Lord, who killed Kamsa and Chanura, and who is the bliss of Devaki.*

*May Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother, and Swami Vivekananda bless us all with devotion and knowledge.*