

## **Bhagavad Gita online Class 72 on 25 Jan 2020 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 ॥  
Sarvopanishado 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 ॥

*I remember with devotion the divine grace of Krishna who can make the dumb speak and the lame cross high mountains. I extol that grace which flows from the Supreme Bliss manifestation of Madhava.*

In our last class, we discussed how the Lord explains how every sincere spiritual aspirant, i.e., one who has the following qualities:

- Is very sincere
- Has a definite goal
- Is committed to God-realization
- Is prepared to follow all the instructions given by the scriptures through the mouth of the guru

Such a person should attempt to convert his or her whole life to a yajna or sacrifice. As discussed earlier, according to the Vedantic concept, the whole of human life is an attempt to get rid of the debts that by our very birth we owe to five beings:

- The rishis,

- The different gods and goddesses (who are only manifestations of the Supreme Lord)
- To our ancestors
- To all human beings, and
- To the five *bhootas* in this world (*pancha bhootas*, or the five elements that form the basis of all cosmic creation according to Hinduism)

Cultivating the right knowledge, called knowledge sacrifice or *brahma-yajna*.

The Lord enumerates 12 such yajnas as examples. In fact, any act, performed with the intention of reaching God is called a yajna. Even unconscious or natural physical activities such as breathing and sleeping could become a yajna.

#### Can A Person Continue to Perform Yajna Even When Asleep?

There are two varieties of sleep: the dream-state sleep, and deep sleep. When we go to sleep, we first go through the dream-state, and then to deep sleep.

If we can prepare ourselves in the waking state, by thinking, talking, reading, doing good actions etc., then our dreams that follow would also be good, divine dreams, and so forth.

Many of us are well-aware that we become what we eat – not just the physical food, but the food that goes through the five sense organs. Impressions of our experiences in the waking state come in the dream state. So, in a manner of speaking, our dreams are indirectly under our control. To control dreams, we need to control our waking state.

This attempt to lead a divine, Godly, spiritual life in the waking state is called spiritual practice. That is what God means by saying that any act can be transformed into a yajna.

The English translation of yajna as sacrifice does not give us its full or sufficient meaning, as the word sacrifice implies that something that should not be lost is being lost. However, yajna means offering to the Divine Lord, with the greatest joy, and by degrees, reducing our egotism.

This means that if a person performs every act to please the Divine Lord, and endeavours to diminish his egotism, then his dreams, too, would be of a divine nature. By the same token, our dreams can be considered as tokens of our weaknesses, defects, and as a means of learning valuable lessons about ourselves. Psychologists are trained to do exactly that. They interpret the dreams that a patient has, and treat it as a means of finding out the problems or ailments associated with his subconscious mind.

Thus, if we consciously do what we know to be the best activities, then our subconscious mind, too, becomes very aware of our defects, and can show us our shortcomings. Curiously, sometimes, a sincere devotee sometimes gets such dreams, wherein someone points out to him where he is going wrong, and how he could correct himself. Several examples of this phenomenon could be mentioned in this context.

#### Example from the Life of Swami Brahmanandaji Maharaj:

Swami Brahmanandaji was considered as the spiritual son of Sri Ramakrishna. Long after Sri Ramakrishna attained mahasamadhi, Swami Brahmanandaji had a desire to collect the

teachings he had heard from Sri Ramakrishna, and gradually, he started compiling them. One night, Sri Ramakrishna appeared to him in a dream and told him: *I did not say this, why do you attribute it to me? I was only repeating what I had heard from someone else. So please correct it.*

Here, even though Swami Brahmanandaji was unconsciously (and of course unintentionally) attributing something to Sri Ramakrishna, the latter appeared before him to correct him, because it would be false if it had been understood as stated by Sri Ramakrishna.

#### Another Example from the Life of Sri Ramakrishna:

One day, having finished his meal, served by the Holy Mother at the *nahabat*, was leaving. Holy Mother knew that Sri Ramakrishna was fond of chewing some spices after a meal, and therefore she had given him something to chew immediately. Also, she had tied a bit of it to his upper cloth, for his later use. But the moment Sri Ramakrishna stepped out of the Nahabat, his feet were dragging him, as it were, towards the Ganges. Wondering why he was being dragged in that manner, he addressed the Divine Mother directly: *Mother, do you want me to drown? Shall I drown myself?* At that point, the Holy Mother cried out, and Hriday arrived to take Sri Ramakrishna away.

The purport of this incident is that even unconsciously, the Divine Mother would not permit him to take a wrong step, or commit a mistake unintentionally (something that he would of course never do consciously).

Numerous such examples are available. If a man commits to sleep and get a good rest (as that would allow him, the next morning, to joyfully to contemplate the Lord and go about his duties to please Him), what results is not an ordinary person's sleep. Worldly people, too, want to sleep well, in order to be fresh the next day to enjoy the world better.

Therefore, in either situation, every act of a spiritual aspirant, including sleeping and breathing, is to be dedicated to the Divine Lord. But the Divine Lord has given only twelve examples of yajnas:

- Worship of the gods, called *daiva-yajna*
- Cultivating the right knowledge, known as knowledge sacrifice or *brahma-yajna*
- Controlling the sense-organs, called *indriya-samyama*
- Rejection of the sense-objects, called *indriya-artha-samyama*
- Mind-control or *atma-samyama*
- Various material, emotional, and intellectual sacrifices, as well as all the sacrifices done through the body and the mind, using wealth, knowledge, intellectual power, or any other physical and mental faculties, are called *dravya yajna*. For example, a good singer can use his musical talent, not for deriving sense-pleasures, or for earning name and fame or money, but for singing to please the Divine Lord. Sri Ramakrishna was an extraordinarily great singer, but we don't have a single example when he sang for his own pleasure, or that of an audience. His sole aim, when he sang, was to please the Divine Mother. No one should claim that he is unable to sacrifice anything

because he has no possessions. If nothing else is possible, even speaking sweet words with the motive of pleasing God constitutes a sacrifice.

- Austerity-sacrifice or *tapo-yajna*. People perform various austerities. Example: Some people fast on every 11<sup>th</sup> day of the lunar month (*Ekadashi*). If it is done for health reasons, it is for self-satisfaction only. But if the intention is to think of God more intensely, that is called a yajna, a sacrifice.
- Observing, and developing beautiful spiritual qualities, called *yoga-yajnas*. This has two parts – *yama* and *niyama*. *Yama* is controlling and getting rid of negative, worldly and unspiritual qualities (and the required spiritual qualities developed or enhanced). *Niyama* is acquiring the really spiritual qualities which can advance us in our journey. Thus *yoga-yajna* is the practice of spiritual qualities for the sake of realizing the Divine Lord.
- The study of the scriptures, also called *swadhyaya-yajna*, not for the sake of becoming renowned as a great scholar but to under the true meaning of the scriptural injunctions. It also means a deep churning of the mind, in order to study it deeply.
- The realization that we belong to God, that God belongs to us, and we both belong to each other and are one and the same, known as *gnana-yajna*.
- The control of the breath (done for a divine purpose), or *pranayama-yajna*.
- The control of one's food, called *niyatahara-yajna*. Food is of two types
  - physical food, or the articles normally consumed by people, and
  - whatever is taken in through the five sense-organs. If we can control ourselves, so that only what promotes our spiritual welfare is taken in, it is called *niyatahara-yajna*.

These twelve yajnas are examples given by the Divine Lord to Arjuna, and through him, to all of us. In the thirtieth verse of the Bhagawad Gita:

अपरे नियताहारः प्राणान्प्राणेषु जुहति ।  
सर्वेऽप्येते यज्ञविदो यज्ञक्षपितकल्मषाः ॥ 30॥

*Others, with well-regulated diet, offer the vital airs, into the vital airs. Some arduously practice pranayama and restrain the incoming and outgoing breaths, purely absorbed in the regulation of the life-energy. Yet others curtail their food intake and offer the breath into the life-energy as sacrifice. All these knowers of sacrifice are cleansed of their impurities as a result of such performances.*

The Lord says something very encouraging, inspiring and strengthening here: All these people, regardless of what types of, and what sacrifices they are doing with the keen intention of progressing in spiritual life (which really means pleasing the Divine Lord):

- have their past sins destroyed by the very idea of the yajna,
- are not committing any sinful acts in the present,
- are acquiring merit through which their hearts are purified, and
- will ultimately reach the Divine Lord

Example Given By Sri Ramakrishna (Mentioned In the Previous Class):

The Hindu Puranas speak of the great sage Veda Vyasa, the founder of a school of Hinduism. Once he was about to cross the river Yamuna, and on the bank encountered a group of gopis who were returning home from selling milk and other products, and were similarly intent on crossing the river. However, the river was in spate, and no boat was available. The gopis, aware that the sage possessed great spiritual power and could easily help them cross the river without a boat, requested him for help. The sage consented, provided they offered him whatever food items they had to assuage his hunger. The gopis offered him all the leftover food items, which he collected and consumed. Thereafter, he prayed to the river: *O Yamuna, if I have not eaten anything, please part and let us cross you.* The moment he uttered this prayer, Yamuna parted in the middle, and the sage and the gopis crossed the river easily (much like the story of Moses and his followers crossing the river Nile), leaving the gopis mystified.

The explanation for this is that though Veda Vyasa had put the food into his mouth, he had done so with the idea that he was not eating it, only offering it to the Divine Lord residing inside his body in the form of jataragni (जठराग्नि, or the digestive fire in the abdomen – also called vaishvanara (वैश्वानर). This digestive power, present in every being, is the power of the Divine Lord.

How do we know this? Because in the fifteenth chapter, verse 14, the Lord says:

अहं वैश्वानरो भूत्वा प्राणिनां देहमाश्रितः ।  
प्राणापानसमायुक्तः पचाम्यन्नं चतुर्विधम् ॥ 14॥

*From outside, I help the production of food in the form of the sun, the moon etc. and when living creatures ingest this food, from within them, I digest it for them so that they can live (with the sole purpose of adoring the Divine Lord – really none other than their own Self – knowingly or unknowingly).*

### The Three Types of Karma

The Lord says that all these become totally bereft of karma-phala (कर्मफल, or the results of past actions). According to Vedanta, this karma is of three types:

- Prarabdha (प्रारब्ध), denoting karmas that have already started to bear fruit in this life,
- Sanchita (सञ्चित), meaning past karmas that are stored but not yet fructified, but are likely to do so at the right time in future births (according to Hindu belief)
- Aagami (आगामी), referring to the karma that is yet to be performed in future lives through the activities of the present life

The Lord says that through the practice of this yajna, all the sanchita and prarabdha karmas would be totally destroyed. When a person progresses in spiritual life, he gradually becomes divorced from his identification with his body and mind. The result of any action can only affect the mind and the body. When a person is firmly established in the idea that he is neither the body nor the mind, no karma can attach itself to him. When such a person attains the Divine Lord, then all his karmas are totally destroyed (in the sense that he has no

identification with his body or mind, and therefore no karma can affect him; even if it does affect his body/mind, it doesn't really matter), as illustrated in the following example:

Imagine a potter making various kinds of pottery with the help of a potter's wheel, at noon. Having just placed some clay on the wheel, he is in the process of shaping it by spinning the wheel, when his family calls him for lunch. The potter just gets up and walks away to have his meal, leaving the wheel still spinning (until its momentum is exhausted). At this point, engaged in a completely different activity, the potter is temporarily oblivious to the wheel, which is still spinning. The potter in this example is the spiritual aspirant, and the food is his identity with the Divine Lord. His body/mind might be still affected by the *prarabdha* karma, but that does not bother him, because he no longer identifies himself with that body/mind.

#### Example from the Life of Swami Shivanandaji Maharaj and Bhagawan Ramana Maharishi

- Swami Shivanandaji Maharaj, the second President of the Ramakrishna Order, was suffering from severe asthma, and as a result, could neither sit, nor lie down, nor stand up. The very act of breathing became a struggle. The Swami then reflected on what he could do to get some relief, and sat down to meditate. Deep meditation was something he had long been accustomed to doing, and he could, in the process, free himself from the shackles of the body/mind. After about an hour of such meditation, when he came down to normal consciousness, he discovered that both his body and mind had rested greatly, and was much relieved. Just by withdrawing his conscious identification with the body/mind, he managed to avoid a lot of suffering.
- Bhagawan Ramana Maharishi, at one time, had developed a carbuncle (a form of cancer) in his arm. Aware that the carbuncle was exceedingly painful to even touch, a surgeon wanted to administer anaesthesia before surgically removing it. However, Bhagawan refused, and asked him to simply go ahead with the surgery, i.e., without any kind of anaesthetic being used. Throughout the procedure, Bhagawan showed no signs of being in pain, and continued to look at his hand as though it belonged to someone else, leaving the surgeon flabbergasted. This example shows that Ramana Maharishi, despite having a body, did not have any identification with his body.

From the worldly point of view, there is good karma-phala (*punya* or merit) or evil karma-phala (*paapa* or sin). *Punya* gives happiness, while *paapa* results in suffering. Now for a person who has withdrawn, even *punya* is a terrible bondage, because, like *paapa*, it relates to the body.

From the psychological viewpoint, when we are suffering, we would all love to be detached. It is only when we are very happy that detachment becomes extremely difficult. Thus, all the aforementioned people, whatever form of sacrifices they are doing (and thus progressing towards the Lord), without exception become freed from the effects of karma-phala.

In fact, liberation is simply the complete cessation of all karma-phala. When there is no karma-phala, there is no body/mind, and that state is known by various names such as *mukti*, *moksha*, liberation, salvation, nirvana, Kingdom of Heaven, paradise, *satori*, *samadhi* etc.

In the 31<sup>st</sup> verse, the Lord says:

यज्ञशिष्टामृतभुजो यान्ति ब्रह्म सनातनम् ।  
नायं लोकोऽस्त्ययज्ञस्य कुतोऽन्यः कुरुसत्तम ॥ 31॥

*Those who know the secret of sacrifice, and engaging in it, partake of its remnants that are like nectar, advance toward the Absolute Truth. O best of the Kurus, those who perform no sacrifice find no happiness either in this world or the next.*

#### What is the Result of Performing This Yajna?

All those who perform this yajna become the tasters of the remnants of the yajna. When food is offered to God, it is also called a yajna (*Brahmarpanam*), and the food that is offered to God becomes *prasada*, which really means *amruta* (nectar of immortality). Because God accepts that food, He permeates that food for our sake, visibly, so that we can feel that it is the Divine Lord. Earlier it was merely food; now it has become God Himself (or *Annapurna Devi*).

As a result of this sacrifice, everyone who performs it is drinking this nectar, as it were, and goes to the Eternal Brahman. Whatever the type of sacrifice he is making, the ultimate goal is only God realization. Every such person goes towards God, and through Divine grace, they can't/won't be stopped until they reach God, become one with Him, and are finally freed from the shackles of repeated births and deaths.

#### Is There Any Other Way?

In the above verse, the Lord emphatically states that there is no other way. If one doesn't practice yajna and convert one's life into a continuous sacrifice for the Divine Lord, i.e., not progress constantly towards Him, then there is simply no way one can attain Him. Only those who, through tremendous effort, with their thoughts, words, speech and actions directed towards Him can reach Him without fail.

Two points become clear here:

- We have no choice but to somehow convert our life into a sacrifice. Even the poorest person can convert his life into a yajna if he fulfils certain conditions. He must become selfless, i.e., do everything for the Lord, look upon everyone and everything he encounters in his life as manifestations of the Divine Lord. Only sacrifice can give that Divine Vision, and those who practice this will unfailingly reach Him – this is a promise made by the Divine Lord. On the other hand, selfish/worldly/unspiritual/materialistic people fail to attain happiness not only in the afterlife, but also in this very life! This is a wonderful spiritual truth, because selfishness is the greatest unhappiness; indeed, people do not realize that selfishness is just another name for unhappiness. Even under the best or most favourable circumstances, a selfish person has the mental attitude of misinterpreting everything as being unfavourable or unhappy, whereas a spiritual person would interpret the same circumstances as most favourable, Divine Grace etc.

### Example from the Life of Nag Mahashay

Once, Nag Mahashay, a prominent householder devotee of Sri Ramakrishna, was lying on a cot in his village (Deobhog) when a wild cat jumped on him, gouged his eye, and ran away. It bled profusely and was of course extremely painful, but what was his reaction? He declared that it was the prasada of Sri Ramakrishna, that Sri Ramakrishna was correcting him for some past misdeed of his. This attitude is, of course, one of the greatest sacrifices.

### Another Example of A Great Sacrifice, From the Mahabharatha

This is a story from the Mahabharatha, recounted by Swami Vivekananda in his book, Karma Yoga. After winning the war at Kurukshetra war, Yudhishtira became the emperor of Hastinapur. Despite ruling a vast kingdom, he was deeply guilty and remorseful for having caused the death of 18 akshohinis (almost two million) of warriors, and untold misery to their kith and kin. Lord Krishna advised him to perform a *Rajasuya* yajna (an extremely expensive religious ceremony that only greatest and richest of kings and emperors could afford).

Accordingly, Yudhishtira collected a great deal of money and materials and performed the *Rajasuya* in so grand a manner that it exceeded everyone's expectations. Every day, many thousands of priests, Brahmins and others came to attend, were fed sumptuously, and parted with very generous gifts. On the concluding day, after an excellent feast, all the guests, as well as the Pandavas and the officials, were resting in the hall, all of them convinced that this was the grandest sacrifice in living memory.

Suddenly they noticed a mongoose, half of whose body was golden, rolling among the remnants of food. Shortly afterwards, the mongoose stopped rolling, turned towards Yudhishtira, and addressed him in a human voice: *O Yudhishtira, do not feel proud! This is no sacrifice at all!* As the assembled people looked on in stunned astonishment, the mongoose explained further: *Once, there was a poor brahmana family, consisting of the old couple, their son, and daughter-in-law. At a particular time, when the whole area was in the grip of a terrible famine, the family stood on the verge of starvation from not having eaten in several days. Finally, the old brahmana somehow managed to procure a small quantity of grains, which he handed over to his wife. She cooked it, and after dividing it into four portions, they all sat down to partake of it. Just as they were about to eat, a hungry brahmana appeared at their doorstep and declared that he was dying from hunger, so could they give him some food? Recollecting the scriptural injunction athithi devo bhava (अतिथिदेवो भव, a guest is a divine being), the old brahmana offered him his portion. The guest ate it, and exclaimed that the small quantity of food had only served to whet his appetite! Then the old brahmana's wife gave up her portion, but the guest was still unsatisfied. Subsequently, his son and daughter-in-law gave up their portions, too, and finally the guest was satisfied and went away. But all four of them died of starvation, and immediately ascended to a high plane called Brahmaloka.*

*Continuing the narrative, the mongoose said that to satisfy its own appetite, it went to the place where the guest had eaten, and discovered that a few grains had fallen from his plate on the floor. Wherever the mongoose's body touched the grains, it turned golden, and thus half its body became golden. Ever since, it had been going from place to place (wherever such sacrifices were*



*being performed), in order to turn the other half of its body golden, too. But so far, despite rolling on the sanctified food in many places, it had failed.*

*When it heard about Yudhishtira's sacrifice, it came with great expectations (as he was considered to be the very embodiment of Dharma), only to meet with failure. Therefore the sacrifice was selfish in nature, as it had been done for a selfish purpose, not spiritual realization.*

#### Who is Fit to Perform a Sacrifice?

Swami Vivekananda says that a true sacrifice can be done by householders, monks and others. The sacrifice made by the brahmana family was the greatest, because what they sacrificed was not a little bit of food, but their very lives, as a result of which, they attained the eternal Brahman.

The Lord assures us that no spiritual practice ever goes in vain. Even a little effort, a small amount of practice, is rewarded a million-fold by the Lord, and ultimately leads us to the goal of our life – moksha, or liberation – regardless of our religion. Anyone who is trying to get rid of selfishness through various activities is performing a yajna. In fact, yajna means getting rid of selfishness through various activities like japa, meditation, visiting tirthas (holy places), doing annadana (donating food) etc., with the sole purpose of getting rid of the idea of “I” and “mine”. That is what takes each of us to our essential nature, which is divine.

Anyone who doesn't transform his life into a yajna at least in a small way is going to remain in this world for a very long time. Evil people will of course suffer the consequences of their misdeeds for a long time, but even good people who perform meritorious actions with the purpose of acquiring merit (so that they can ascend to higher *lokas*, or planes of existence) will remain in this world for a lengthy period. This is what the Divine Lord is warning about: while the partakers of this nectar (remnants of the sacrifices) go to the Eternal Brahman, even this world is not for the non-performer of the sacrifice. Thus a selfish person can't be happy even in this world, what to speak of the other world!

There is a tremendous meaning in saying that selfishness is suffering, unselfishness is enjoying. Because true happiness belongs to the Divine Lord alone.

Moving on to the 32 verse:

**एवं बहुविधा यज्ञा वितता ब्रह्मणो मुखे ।  
कर्मजान्विद्धि तान्सर्वानिवं ज्ञात्वा विमोक्ष्यसे ॥ 32॥**

*evam bahu-vidhā yajñā vitatā brahmaṇo mukhe  
karma-jān viddhi tān sarvān evaṁ jñātvā vimokṣhyase*

*Thus, innumerable sacrifices lie spread out before Brahman. Know them all as born of action, and thus knowing, you shall be liberated.*

The first point here is that there are innumerable ways of converting our lives into one of sacrifice. Every natural activity of the body and mind (like breathing in or out, closing or opening our eyelids, eating, talking etc.) can be converted into a sacrifice, provided it is done with the idea that every action is a sacrifice to the Divine Lord.

### A Parable of Sri Ramakrishna To Understand This Concept

There was a weaver who was a great devotee of Rama. His main spiritual practice was to consider that everything that took place was by the will of Rama (i.e., he was not the doer). He believed that he had been born by the will of Rama, become a weaver by the will of Rama, was eking out a meagre livelihood by the will of Rama. It was by the will of Rama that he had become His devotee; that he could repeat His name, and to talk and think of Him, all by the will of Rama. And everything else that anyone was doing, was by the will of Rama. Some people liked him, and others disliked or hated or even injured him, by the will of Rama. [This attitude is the greatest sacrifice, because the idea of "I" and "mine" do not exist in that attitude].

Once some robbers came into this village. One of them fell ill, so to substitute for him, the robbers caught hold of the weaver and forced him to carry their loot. However, the police came to know about this soon, and surrounded them. The other robbers, well-versed in the art of escaping, did so quickly, whereas the weaver was caught, put in a jail, and produced before a magistrate the next day. The villagers, who were well aware of his pious nature, pleaded on his behalf. Upon being requested by the magistrate, the weaver narrated the whole incident thus: *By the will of Rama, I had finished my dinner and was repeating the name of the Lord. By the will of Rama, robbers entered the village and robbed people. By the will of Rama, one of them took ill. By the will of Rama, one of them saw me, caught me, and forced me to carry the loot. By the will of Rama, the police came, and all of them ran away. By the will of Rama, I was caught and put in jail, and produced before your Majesty. The magistrate understood that this was a pious man, and free him immediately. The weaver responded by saying that by the will of Rama, he had been released.*

Even if, instead of being let go, the weaver had been imprisoned for many years (or even his whole lifetime), the weaver would have said: *By the will of Rama, I received this beautiful reward; in the prison, I am fed and clothed, and have all the time in the world to think of God.*

In a humorous way, we can expand this idea to say that if he had indeed been imprisoned, the police would have eventually understood his holiness, and employed him to stand guard while they themselves slept while on duty!

### Another Example from the Life of Nag Mahashaya

At midnight, Nag Mahashaya used to go to the banks of the Ganges, and be deeply absorbed in meditation. Usually, people went to the banks of the Ganges at midnight were intent on suicide, so the police would not allow them to remain. But the police were aware that Nag Mahashaya was a great devotee of God, and so never questioned or obstructed him. Lata Maharaj (later Swami Adbhutanandaji Maharaj) used to behave likewise, but again, the police, aware of his great devotion, never obstructed him.

Every action of a person who has shed the idea of "I" and "mine" from his mind, and believes that everything belongs to the Lord, and remembers only God continuously, becomes a yajna.

Indeed spiritual life consists of removing "I" and "mine from one's mind, and when one succeeds in that, one remembers only God. In truth, remembering the "I" can't really be stopped. But instead of remembering "I" and the body/mind, a true spiritual aspirant is constantly trying to remember that he is God. Whether he is a jnani (illuminated person) or a bhakta (devotee), this is how one progresses in spiritual life.

In this manner, the Lord says, many, many (thousands upon thousands) varieties of yajnas or sacrifices have been enumerated in the Vedas. The entire first part of the Vedas, called the Karma Kanda, is full of these yajnas.

### How to Do the Sacrifices?

All the special sacrifices – rituals – can be done in two ways:

- The worldly way, and
- The spiritual way

The performance of the actions in both cases is outwardly the same. But it is the outlook, the motive, the goal, that differentiates a worldly person from a spiritual one.

The worldly person wants to get the result of the sacrifice, whereas the spiritual person doesn't want any worldly result, but desires God Himself.

Where do we get this? In the face of the Brahman. And exactly what does Brahman mean here? Three meanings could be attributed to the word:

- *The source of all knowledge*
- *The guru, and*
- *The Vedas or Brahma*

Whether it is a teacher guru, or it is from the sacred books, whether it comes as a commandment to a sincere aspirant's heart, they are all different types of sacrifices. All activities done with a spiritual motive will make a person completely free.

How do we know that this comes directly from the Divine Mother's mouth? Sri Ramakrishna's life amply illustrates this. As we are aware, the first part of Sri Ramakrishna's spiritual practice was done without the help of any guru, scripture, or outside help. His only guide was a complete, inward, one-pointed prayer: *O Mother, I am a fool. I know nothing. Please guide me.* The Mother did guide him from within.

We see this in certain activities that we see in Sri Ramakrishna's life at that time. Something told him: *You might feel that you are a brahmana, and therefore superior to other castes. Go and clean the lavatories of Rashik's house at midnight.* It had to be done at night, because as a brahmana, other brahmanas wouldn't allow him to do it during the daytime (as they feared that they would get the sin). Sri Ramakrishna used to pray, *O Mother, let the feeling that I am of a superior caste never arise in my mind, because everyone is your own children,* and go on to clean Rashik's lavatory (which was quite dirty). And he never went about it in a hurry. If we are asked to voluntary work, we tend to finish it as quickly as possible. But Sri Ramakrishna

would do it thoroughly (as if he was cleaning the Divine Mother's toilet, or his guru's toilet, or his parents' toilet). He had long hair, and he used it to wipe the lavatory.

As a result of this practice, Sri Ramakrishna never felt that he had succeeded, that it was his glory, his greatness (unlike his guru Tota Puri, who felt that he had worked hard himself, and thus attained Brahma-jnana. In the end, the Divine Mother revealed that everything he had – his body, mind, sadhana, everything – was really Hers). But Sri Ramakrishna always had the attitude that he knew nothing, and therefore She (the Divine Mother) could get everything she felt done by him. So the idea came to him to give up the sacred thread, his clothes, it was unprecedented, and at that time, he had not taken sannyasa (initiation into monkhood), and was only a devotee. He was inspired by the Divine Mother, acting through the medium of his own pure, intuitive mind, to do so.

Another experiment of his was when he took a rupee coin and a few clods of earth and exclaimed: *Money is earth, and earth is money*, i.e., neither is worth anything. Now where did that idea – which led to his having no interest in money all his life come from? It came from within. Through intuition alone, he completed his *sadhana*, attained *Nirvikalpa Samadhi*.

He himself remarked once: *All the Gurus came later on, and whatever they taught me, the Divine Mother had made me go through all of them, and I experienced the highest Samadhi, long before the gurus came.*

Why did Sri Ramakrishna do it? To set an example to other people. We are not intuitive. We tend to think: *When Sri Ramakrishna did it without the help of a guru, I can also do it.* That idea has ruined several people who can't be named here, but they became almost deranged later on.

#### What Are the Requirements For a Sacrifice To be Really Effective?

In essence, the Lord is saying that there are so many sacrifices, to suit different mentalities, and the requirements are:

- The goal should be that I must attain God,
- The aspirant should have *shraddha*, or total faith that this practice is going to take him to God realization,
- He must have Bhakthi (tremendous devotion)
- He must do it with *ekagratha* (one-pointed concentration), not in a desultory manner
- He must be totally self-disciplined, so that he can conserve time, and do his spiritual practice
- Lastly (as Swami Yatiswaranandaji Maharaj used to say: *Constantly keep an eye on your sadhana, so that when you unconsciously deviate, you can be pulled back up by your own mind should you go astray*)

All the above qualities must be there – and will be there – in every sincere spiritual aspirant, and will ultimately lead him to liberation.

However, the Lord is making an important distinction here – all the sacrifices are not of the same value:

- Lowest of all are the material sacrifices
- Above them lie tapo-yagna (austerity sacrifices)
- There are yoga sacrifices
- Swadhyaya sacrifices – the study of the scriptures, and also the study of one's own mind
- Above all lie the sacrifices of gnana-yajna, i.e., the idea that *I am one with the Divine Lord (aham brahmasmi)*. That is the highest sacrifice, because the "I" has been totally sacrificed, and becomes one with the Divine Lord.

We will discuss this point in detail in our 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.*