

GOSPEL OF SRI RĀMAKRISHNA - PART 15

SWĀMI DAYATMANANDA

ॐ जननीं सारदां देवीं रामकृष्णं जगद्गुरुम् ।
पादपद्मे तयोः श्रित्वा प्रणमामि मुहुर्मुहुः ॥

Jananim Saradam devim Ramakrishnam jagadgurum ।
Padapadme tayoh shritva pranamami muhurmujuh ॥

ॐ तव कथामृतं तप्तजीवनं
कविभिरीडितं कल्मषापहम् ।
श्रवणमङ्गलं श्रीमदाततं
भुवि गृणन्ति ते भूरिदा जनाः ॥

Om tava kathāmṛtaṁ tapta-jīvanam
kavibhir īḍitaṁ kalmaṣāpaham ।
śravaṇa-maṅgalaṁ śrīmad ātataṁ
bhuvi gṛṇanti te bhūri-dā janāḥ ॥

In our last class, we had been continuously discussing about Viveka. All of us have heard the most wonderful truth – there is absolutely no difference between animals and human beings with regard to everything excepting one thing. Human beings are privileged, they have a very special quality called Viveka. Viveka means the capacity to compare one with two or more things and find out which is better one. And it is this quality alone which is distinguishing human beings from all animals. That quality is there within each one of us. But the question is are we really using it? Or are we using only for very low purposes? Somehow to live, somehow to enjoy, accumulate many things, and enjoy. When it comes even to worldly prosperity or greatness of any kind, if we analyze the life of any great person in any field of life, including whether a person is the greatest thief or pickpocket in the world, we find that it is this quality, Viveka. A person who has this quality proportionately, he becomes the greatest person. What to speak of Spiritual field, one has to be extremely careful. So, we also discussed that if we want to progress in spiritual life, we have to have a definite goal and we must be constantly aware and above all, we must have a very strong will. When a person fulfills these conditions, then the equipment is ready but just like, when we want to have a

journey, we have everything there. I remember a funny thing – when I was in UK, when I was about to start to Germany (I was conducting a retreat there) and there was a devotee who will always follow me and that day also, the devotee happened to come. Everything she brought excepting the passport. And naturally, she had to return back because without passport, you cannot even enter inside. So, when everything is there, that is only the preparation. Then, we will have to move forward. But you know, life is full of suffering. This was the greatest discovery or re-discovery because in our ancient philosophical systems, there is written a beautiful statement that a man becomes a philosopher because he does not find any solution to the three types of sufferings every living creature has to go through. Perhaps, many of us know what are the three sources – Adyatmika, Adibhoutika, and Adidaivika. Internal problems, external problems and problems caused by unseen / unforeseen circumstances, it could be due to Gods, it could be due to some other factors we have created ourselves in our past life, that is called Daivika (by the will of the divine beings). So, if we have equipped ourselves as we discussed in our last class, and this wonderful instrument called Viveka is ready, now what do we want to do? How do we want to use it? Temptations, pitfalls, and sufferings in life are unavoidable. They are, in fact, our best friends in spiritual life. But for them, all of us would be saints. It is a very interesting fact how all the modern sciences, all the fields of knowledge, whether it is science, or governments or artists or economic pundits, all are trying only with one goal – How to improve the life of man? In short, what it means is, how to make a human being free from all suffering. But all of them are missing one important ingredient. Do you know what it is? That if there were no suffering, we would be all lumps of clay, mud. Only because of temptations, only because of sufferings in life, that is why God has created them. Only because of them, we feel whipped up. Here is a problem - think how to overcome it. Find out. And when we are equipped with this 'I can do' feeling, then we say, why should we aim for this very small amount of happiness? First, can we not remove every suffering permanently? That is the negative step. The positive step is, can I get that infinite joy, I do not want small amount of joy. As a child, it is absolutely fine to have lollipop and some dolls. But as a grown-up being, if we go on sticking to those things and Swami Vivekananda used to say that even when a person grows up, becomes young, and running after what we call, earthly pleasures - sex, money. These are the only two things, summarized in Sri Ramakrishna's beautiful mahamantras, "Kama" and "Kanchana". These are the only pitfalls. But they are also, as I said, the greatest inspirers for us to reach infinity if we understand them in the proper light. So, we are coming from God, who is the source of infinite joy (Ananda) infinite life, infinite knowledge. Sat-Chit-Ananda. Escaping from suffering is not the real goal of life but attaining infinite life, infinite joy, and infinite knowledge, that is why we that unequalled prayer in the whole world. I have not found an equivalent meaningful prayer

in the literature of the whole world. Indirectly yes, and directly, no. And we all know about them but do not give the value that they deserve.

ॐ असतो मा सद्गमय ।
तमसो मा ज्योतिर्गमय ।
मृत्योर्मा अमृतं गमय ।
ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ॥

Om Asatoma sadgamaya |
Tamasoma jyotirgamaya |
Mrityorma amritamgamaya |
Om Shanti Shanti Shantih ||

And these prayers are thousands and thousands of years old. They are universal prayers, that means they are applicable for all times, for all people, whatever be their religion, region, language, equipment, etc. So, what is the point I am trying to convey? Just now, if we are awakened to the fact of life, the first thing our Viveka tells us, how fortunate I am that this world is full of pitfalls, full of temptations, full of suffering. Sufferings give us the strength to overcome life, to control the mind. Temptations are there, for what? So that we can control our mind. Its purpose is not to make us fall down, its purpose is like gymnastics, exercise us. Temptation has come, I have fallen a million times, but then millionth plus one time, I will not fall for it. When we attain to that state, then the temptation turns to the greatest Vyakulatha. "O Lord! I have had these small joys for a long time. I am tired of them. Now I want nothing but you". When this state is reached by human beings, then we can say he has acquired Viveka. Until that time, we are only changing from one joy to another joy, trying to avoid its opposite and thinking we are very clever people. Animals also do that. If we also do, that does not do any credit to us. So, what is the point? These sufferings in life, they are in fact, our best friends in spiritual life. But for them all of us would be saints. What separates a saint from a worldly man? The suffering and temptation. If life is all joy and sweetness, we will be forever stuck in this mire of Samsara. Miseries and temptations give us an invaluable opportunity of proving our metal, for strengthening our will power. These are the very steps of the Spiritual ladder, leading to self-knowledge (Atma Samrajya, Atma Jnana). Now, one thing very important here – we have struggled a lot, we have gone through ups and downs, we have acquired at least some amount of Viveka and now, we have to climb the ladder. Many people are not able to understand – first, there are four steps and we have not even turned our attention to the very first step. What is the first step? Here also, there is something funny we have to understand. Many of us read books, "This world is unreal, God alone is real. So, everything has to be negated". This statement is so much misunderstood. This world is not unreal, this world is unreal only in the sense that you have not recognized it as a first step towards that Infinity. Finite

is the only step to reach the Infinity. So, there are four steps; only by climbing these four steps do we reach the top of the ladder and we find ourselves with God.

What are the four steps?

1. Sukha-Dhukha Viveka.
2. Karya-Akarya Viveka.
3. Nitya-Anitya Viveka.
4. Sat-Asat Viveka.

Sukha-Dhukha Viveka

What does it really mean? Let us discuss very briefly, you are all intelligent people, you will be able to understand very clearly. The very first step of the ladder to spiritual realization is Sukha-Dhukha Viveka. Discrimination between what is happiness and what is unhappiness. What is Sukha? Are we really suffering all the time? Don't we enjoy? At least every living creature has to go through a state called Deep sleep which would be several hours from human perspective. That means, at least six to eight hours, even the busiest person, he goes throughout this. When he goes beyond the so-called dualistic world, and very near to his own Self, and in that state, he experiences unalloyed bliss. That is why, that very state is called Anandamaya Kosha. That state, where there is only Ananda, pure bliss means there is no Sukha, there is no Dukha. But, as soon as we are awake and as soon as we also experience dream state, both waking state as well as dream state, we are victims of both happiness and unhappiness. So, if we have got very honed up, very properly equipped Viveka, let us sit down and say, what is it that I want? Do I want to get married? Or do I want to remain single? Do I want to have a very high post? Or am I completely satisfied with the low post? Do I want to live in India? Or do I want to migrate to America? Whatever be the goal, only one question you put – let us put ourselves, what is it I am really seeking? By obtaining these things after all, we know, a man cannot eat money. Money is an instrument for something else, we want to be happy, we want to have healthy life and we want to have that knowledge 'I am a very happy person'. So, what do I want? I want happiness. Of course, indirectly we all know, we also mouth these words but sit down like a philosopher and concentrate and say, 'What is real happiness and how much am I getting? Can I get more happiness, and can I get more happiness, most happiness with the least bit of payment? This is called Sukha-Dukha Viveka. And surprising things come out when we talk about it. Take the present situation – there is this terrible or whatever it is, disease called Covid. And many people have died, of course, I always say, not because of Covid but because of one's own purvajanma karma phala. But so many people's minds are agitated, they are fearful as if, if there were to be no Covid, there is no death at all. Now, everybody is frightened of death. No my dear Sir! This Covid only made you aware of how near death

is but the fact of death has been there hanging, surrounding all of us from the beginning of creation. So, how much happiness do I want? What type of mentality I must have? Here also, if I get more money, it will give a terrible amount of security. Does it? Are rich people immune from this Covid or death? Are people in the highest position immune to this? We know that several heads of many countries have themselves fallen victims to this Covid. Are they immune to death? In fact, they are more to fear death because a thousand guns are ready to topple them so that they themselves occupy that position. You and I, without any fear, can move in street happily walking here and there but these fellows, they can never move without terrible bodyguards surrounding all of them. So, we also see so much of suffering. Then stop and think – everybody wants happiness but these people instead of being happy, they are suffering. Why are they suffering? And you look at some other people, they are quite happy. Some people are unhappy, some people are very happy. What is the reason? Is it fate? Is it some whims and fancies of some creatures, Gods or even God or is there any uniformly applicable law behind them? And then we discover, “Yes Sir! Our scriptures categorically tell no one is responsible for our either happiness or unhappiness but we ourselves are responsible for our own happiness or unhappiness through the actions that we perform. So, then the discrimination comes. Certain types of activities bring us happiness, certain types of activities bring us unhappiness. In Vedantic terminology, when a person follows the scripture, scriptures gives us two commandments – **Vidhi and Nishedha**. Vidhi means do these activities. Nishedha means refrain from these activities. In other words, to summarize, do what is dharma, follow dharma and refrain from adharma. This is called the finding out the cause. Dharma produces punya. And adharma produces papa. Punya is the ability to squeeze happiness from any situation. Even the poorest man can be very very happy. I will give you a small example. There are two beggars lying in the street in a begging position. One person is highly miserable, and his neighbor is extremely happy person. The fate of both of them is more or less equal. Sometimes they get something; sometimes they get only very inadequately; sometimes they do not get at all; sometimes they are also abused or driven out by police or driven out by other circumstances; they are subject to the inclement weather... so many things. How could one man under the same circumstances be very happy while the other is unhappy? The explanation is one man is born as a beggar because of the misdeeds he had done in the past. The other man was a king, a prince. Voluntarily, he renounced and the more difficulties he goes through, the happier he seems to be. O Lord! You are righteous; you are the ultimate judge; you are giving me all these things because of what I have done. What is happening is all Thy Will and it is wonderful. It is full justice only, your will. This is the attitude; the attitude has been acquired through many lives of spiritual sadhana. What I am trying to tell you, if I want to be happy, determine I would like to be very happy. And here I have to tell you I am not only talking about spiritual happiness; I am even talking about worldly happiness. If you want to be worldly happy, if you wish

to have a strong, healthy body, if you wish to have a beautiful body, if you wish to have a very intelligent instrument, they are acquired only through hard dharmic activities. But do you really want them? Or do you just become jealous and say, some creature fellow called God, unnecessarily he is very partial, and some people he gives good things, some people he just throws into the dustbin. No, my dear Sir! Hinduism is definitely one of those religions which say that God is absolutely Dharma Raja. If we see so many differences because of our own past deeds which we have very conveniently forgotten in this world. So, the first thing is, are you determined? I want to be happy; I want to be healthy; I want to be wealthy; I want to be beautiful; I want to be talented. This Viveka (Sukha-Dukha Viveka) I do not want to be a Dukhi. I do not want to be miserable person. I want to be happy person. After discriminating, coming to a firm conclusion that I want to be happy, that is the very step of the ladder called Viveka.

Karya-Akarya Viveka

What is the second step? Yes, I want to be happy, wealthy, healthy, strong, beautiful, talented, live a long time and have the most congenial surroundings. How can I attain it? That is the second step – Karya-Akarya Viveka. If we are awakened to the first step, that very discrimination tells us we do not know about the past, we do not know about the future, but my Mother knows everything. Let me approach my Mother and ask her what my past was, and what would be my future. I would like to attain to these goals and that is called Dharma, Artha and Kama. We will talk about Moksha later on. Then, who is this Mother? Scripture is the Mother. Every Sastra like a loving Mother wishes all her children to be happy, healthy, wealthy, beautiful, talented, live a long time. Every mother wishes her children. So, this Mother called Sastra. Sastra means here, the Divine Mother. But the Divine Mother is available to us in the form of the scripture, in the form of the Guru's Upadesha. Let me share a small joke with you here – there was a couple. The husband had a Guru and one day, he returned from his Guru, his face beaming, and his wife as soon as he reached noticed it, asked "What makes you so happy? What did your Guru teach you today? And he said very joyfully, "My Guru today taught me the greatest lesson - We have to embrace our own mistakes. The moment the wife heard it, she rushed and embraced him. So, our Sastra is our greatest Guru. And it teaches us, "My Children! Those who follow what I ask you to do, they will be the happy persons, healthy persons, wealthy persons, and beautiful persons and strong persons and live a long time and everything will be very favorable to them. If you wish, listen to my advice". Do this and do not do this. In Mahabharata, Vyasa (Vyasa Deva is the greatest Brahma deva, mine of knowledge) with upraised arms I am proclaiming loudly, "O my children! People want to be happy but do not do any meritorious deeds and happily they go on doing adharmic activities. And those who wish to be always happy, they do not listen even though I am proclaiming loudly, as if they are totally deaf to my words". People wish to be happy but do not refrain from sinful activities. This is the greatest

tragedy, and this is what the scripture is telling. There is a way to make ourselves happy even in this world. And if we follow the scripture, we get a bonus. The greatest biggest bonus is not merely the worldly happiness. The biggest bonus is our heart, our mind becomes pure. When our mind becomes pure, then naturally, the spirit of discrimination becomes sharpened. Then we become Jignyasus. This is the fact in the Bhagavad Gita, we have discussed elaborately. All men can be classified into four types: Artha, Artharathi, Jignyasu and Jnani. This is the ladder, a four-stepped ladder to spiritual perfection. Everyone in the beginning is a man / a person in distress, Artha like Draupadi, like Gajendra, etc. But he soon learns his lesson and progresses towards the second step which is called Artharathi. Artharathi means the person is not in danger, he is not in distress but has so many, innumerable desires crowd. The moment one desire is fulfilled, a hundred more desires are vying with each other to enter into the chamber of his heart. These people are called Artharathi. And that is also God's will. Therefore, God will say to them, "My Children! I will give you whatever you want. You have hundred desires? I will fulfill them. You have a million desires? I will fulfill them. But follow the scripture. Follow my words". Scripture is nothing but the teachings of the Divine Lord. Hitopadesha – God is our Mother and Father

पिताहमस्य जगतो माता धाता पितामहः ।
pitaham asya jagato mata dhata pitamahah

गतिर्भर्ता प्रभुः साक्षी निवासः शरणं सुहृत् ।
gatir bhartā prabhuḥ sākṣhī nivāsaḥ śharaṇam suhṛit

He is Suhrut, he is Mata, he is Pita, he is Pitamaha, he is Gathi, he is bhartha, he is everything to us in this world whether we know it or not. So, he is telling I will fulfill all your desires but you come to me, then all your desires will be fulfilled, no need to ask. Come to me. Just stay with me near, stay in my lap then athimrityu methi, you will go beyond all mrityu. So, what are we talking about? The second step. First step is a firm determination, I want to be happy, healthy, wealthy, strong, beautiful, live a long time and enjoy this world. Taittreya Upanishad speaks beautifully of the condition of the first step we are talking about. So, the second step is that if I want that, then I will have to pay, I have to give an equal payment. What is it? Only become a Dharmic person. Karya is called Dharma, Akarya means refrain through thought, through speech, and through action. Kayena manasa vacha, avoid all sorts of adharmic activities, it is not wealth, it is not power, position which will give us happiness. It is only Dharma which gives us happiness. Dharma is the root of everything – Artha, Kama including Moksha (will come only to a dharmic person). This is Karya-Akarya Viveka. Fulfill all your desires until you become satiated and then after many janmas of such life, suddenly this Viveka which you have been making friendship with, with which you have become inseparable, one day it gently awakens you –

(Swami quotes from Katha Upanishad Verse 14)

उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत प्राप्य वरान्निबोधत।
क्षुरस्य धारा निशिता दुरत्यया दुर्गं पथस्तत्कवयो वदन्ति ॥

uttiṣṭhata jāgrata prāpya varānnibodhata |
kṣurasya dhārā niśitā duratyayā durgam pathastatkavayo vadanti ||

Katha Upanishad teaches us - Arise! Awake! And approach people who know God and sit at their feet humbly, serve them, do namaskara to them, pranipadha, do pranams to them and listen carefully with the greatest humility and faith. Do Shravana, do Mañana and you will also reach that state.

Nitya-Anitya Viveka

So, we are coming to the third step. First is Sukha-Dukha Viveka, second is Karya-Akarya Viveka. When we have climbed these two steps, discrimination becomes very sharp, it opens our Buddhi and then we look around, I have enjoyed this world for a long time like Yayati has enjoyed this world and he realized however much I enjoy, these are all ephemeral. Then only the real understanding comes. Everything in this universe, the bodies come and go, objects come and go, money comes and goes, happiness comes and goes, kings become beggars, beggars become kings. By the way, you study History a little, at least Nineteenth and our century, you will see how many wars – First World War, Second World War, incessant international or national wars are going on. How many billions of people have been put to indescribable torture, death? You just open your eyes and those who were in power become powerless. Those who at one time became powerless, become powerful. This Brahmachakra may take one up and whoever is above, brings them down. So, this is called Nitya-Anitya Viveka. This was what Sri Ramakrishna was telling. It is the most understandable fact because he is not telling something about after-life, he is not telling something about what experiences we may have after the death of this body. He is talking about what is happening every day in our life right in front of my eyes, from my birth until my death. What is it? Nitya. Anitya. Everything is impermanent. There is nothing in this world. The whole Jagat, jagat means Gathi, Samsara means Sru which flows. No man steps into the same river twice, it may look like the same water but the water which you touched one second back is already gone a long distance from you, it is new water. It is new body; it is new circumstance. Yesterday gone. Today gone until this time. Tomorrow has not arrived. Everything is flowing, Kala like a silent movement of a snake. So, when we face this truth of our life that we are very fast being carried to the death of this body, then naturally the question comes, is there anything permanent in this world? Of course, we do not see a single thing permanent in this world. But the scripture assures us, “Yes.

There is one called God and that God is none other than your own self”. That very God, that Satchidananda, that Satyam Jnanam Anantam Brahma, he is in you, he is in me, in everything living, non-living, in this Earth, in the mountains, in the rivers, in the Sun, in the moon, in the stars, in the galaxies, even in a dead body. Astitva - Sat is there, Chit is there, Ananda is there but we have to have faith now because that is not our experience. ‘Everything is changing’ is our experience. And what is non changing is not in our experience even though we are experiencing it every day in which form? In the form of ‘I was the same baby, I was the same adolescent, I was the same young person, I was the same middle person, now I have become old and I was the person who experienced happiness, unhappiness, experienced good and evil, happiness and unhappiness. Every experience, there is somebody who was experiencing but there is somebody else who is witnessing the experience without any attachment (Sakshi). It is there but we are rarely aware of it. But this fact is being brought into our eyes. There is God. He is witnessing everything, in fact, that God is none other than our own true self who is manifesting in every second with every thought. ‘I am happy’ is a thought. Oh! I know I am happy! ‘I am unhappy’ is a thought. Oh! I know this mind is thinking that I am unhappy – for that also, Sakshi is there. So, separate these two which is permanent. Only one is permanent, Kshetrajna alone is permanent, Sakshi alone is permanent. And everything that happens comes and goes, and the same thing comes and goes. I am happy yesterday, I was unhappy. Today also, I am happy. Today also, I am unhappy. That is all, nothing new comes – happy, unhappy. That is all, whatever be the circumstances. This has to be honed through the instrument called Viveka. This is called Nitya and Anitya. That is what Sri Ramakrishna is telling as the fourth commandment – Everything in this world is impermanent. And he used the words, “God alone is permanent”. Therefore, nobody wants to be impermanent, nobody wants anybody to tell “I Love You” only for a few seconds after that, I will love somebody. Nobody wants to hear if wealth comes and says, I will be with you for five minutes then, I will go to somebody else.

लक्ष्मीस्तोयतरंगभंगचपला विद्युच्चलं जीवितं

lakShmIH toya taranga bhanga chapala vidyucchalaM jIvitam

So, money (means Lakshmi) is moving from pocket to pocket. Today, it is in your pocket. Tomorrow, it goes to somebody else’s pocket. Lakshmi is permanent but her stay / residence is not permanent. So, this Nitya-Anitya Viveka. Awaken to this fact by exercising your power of discrimination. When you can do that, then you have progressed in spiritual life a lot. Tremendous amount of Sakshi Bhava will come. I have witnessed so many things. Everything comes and goes. Do not tell me anything.

Sat-Asat Viveka

Then only comes the last step – Sat vastu; Asat vastu. Sat-Asat Viveka. Then, everything is impermanent excepting God. That God alone is Sat and so if God is Sat then what is me? What is the relationship between God and me? What is the difference between the third step and fourth step? Third step is, awakening to the fact that everything in this life including body, mind is temporary, they are not unreal, but they are temporary. God alone is permanent. The fourth step is, Ok God is permanent. How do I benefit from it? Is there any relationship between me and that what you call permanent God? Yes! That permanent God is you. That is what the Guru finally teaches – Tattvamasi. If you are treading the path of Jnana then, Guru tells you **Tattvamasi**. Tat – that permanent God. Tvam – until now you are thinking you are subject, you are the body, you are the mind, you are subject to all these temporary things and you are temporary. No! What is temporary is the body, what is temporary is the mind, but you are not body, mind. You are in fact, then that. Tat and you – absolutely there is no difference. Vastu-Avastu Viveka. Sat-Asat Viveka. This is the last step. And this truth has to come from the mouth of a Guru because he himself has experienced this. With authenticity, with power, he can tell you and it will have tremendous impact upon us. This is the fourth Viveka. These are the four steps. When we have honed our power of discrimination, we have to climb this ladder of spirituality. What is that? Sukha-Dukha Viveka. You have to determine; I want to be happy and I do not wish to be unhappy. That is a great progress! Then, the second step is that what can I do? Ok, turn towards the scripture. It gives you definite directions, no ambiguous directions – Do this, do not do this. Follow the path of Dharma:

सत्यं वद, धर्मं चर, स्वाध्यायान्मा प्रमदः ।
आचार्याय प्रियं धनमाहृत्य प्रजातन्तुं मा व्यवच्छेत्सीः ॥

satyam vada , dharmam chara , svadhyayanma pramada: |
acharyaya priyam dhanamahritya prajatantum ma vyavachchhetsyih ||

मातृ देवो भव ।
पितृ देवो भव ।
आचार्य देवो भव ।
अतिथि देवो भव ॥

Maathru Devo Bhava |
Pithru Devo Bhava |
Aacharya Devo Bhava |
Athidhi Devo Bhava ||

सर्वम विष्णुमयम जगत |

Sarvam Vishnu Mayam Jagat |

So, that is the second step. Then, if we have practiced it, our mind acquires, a new eye opens and we see everything is temporary excepting God. Then the question comes, what is the relationship between me and God? Then, the Guru comes and tells, My dear Sir! There is no relationship. Relationship requires two things; you are that God. You are the only God. There is no other God. And that when a person practices spiritual disciplines and then he realizes that Guru's teaching, Yes! Then, he will say, "**Aham Brahmasmi**". So, this is how a person has to practice discrimination. This is the meaning that is implied in the fourth commandment of Sri Ramakrishna.

I will share with you a beautiful story; it is a Sufi story worth remembering. You know Sufis? In Islam, there is a mystical branch, they are called Sufis. In fact, people say the word 'Sufi' comes from the word 'Safa'. Safa means White. Safa means clean, pure. That pure teaching of Islam removing all the encrustations that have come, you have to turn your face towards Mecca, you have to kneel down, these are all helpful things, secondary things but the real crux is 'You are pure. You are that child of Allah. You are Allah himself'. This sect has not been very much encouraged. There are wonderful stories. Sri Ramakrishna also takes several such stories; I will just give you a hint so that you will understand. Four travelers were travelling, and they all felt hungry at noon. And they do not know each other's language. Then they started quarrelling – "I want this", "I want this". A passer-by said, "do not quarrel. I will get what all of you want". So, he took some money from them, went to the shop, brought dates and then, given that dates to them. All of them were happy because they are all wanting dates only but not knowing their language, they are mistaking the other person says, when I want dates, you want something else. I will not accept the proposition. So, you must remember Sri Ramakrishna also practised Sufism under a great Sufi saint called Govinda and he attained perfection. And in fact, he used to go to the nearby mosque. And one day when we went, he saw there was an old man and that old man looked at him, at that time remember Sri Ramakrishna was hardly in his twenties. And he looked at him and said, "Very soon. Allah will bless you with his vision". And Sri Ramakrishna was very happy. And for your information, that mosque is very near Dakshineswar. And even today, it exists I do not know, sometime back it was in a very dilapidated condition. I do not know the present condition. Somebody might have restructured it. But he practised for some time, Sufism and realized God through that path also. In fact, he wanted to eat food according to Muslim tradition – Biryani and all other things. He wanted to employ a Muslim cook; of course, in orthodox Hindu temples, Muslims are not allowed there much less, a cook. So, a brahmin cook was cooking according to the instructions of a Muslim cook who was standing outside and telling, "Now, you add

this. Add this. Make...” Sri Ramakrishna had to be satisfied with that. He dressed himself as a Muslim. At that time, the strange thing was he did not even feel like remembering Hindu Gods and Goddesses even a single time. Exactly as any orthodox Muslim behaves, prays, he wanted to be in their shoes and experiment, where does that path lead to? And then it led him, of course, to his own Divine Mother. He had a vision of a great bearded spiritual being. That is the story you can read for yourself, in the life of Sri Ramakrishna.

What I wanted to tell you here is that Sufis used to wander from place to place and they invented wonderful stories to transmit that invaluable wisdom, the wisdom of the desert. And one such story, it is a beautiful story, it appealed to me so I will share it with you. There was a caravan. While travelling in the deserts, so many people come together and on camels generally, they travel, merchants with a large number of people, etc. so that to escape bandits and also to help each other. And as you know, deserts they have to travel a long distance and only occasionally, there would be places called Oasis and that is where they halt at night because pure water is available, food they carry their dry food there and share with each other. The specialty of that place is if anyone invites, supposing there is a Fakir and if a Fakir invites a rich merchant, the tradition goes that he cannot refuse because they are all mortal feelings. By the way, when you are travelling in a vast desert looking at the brightest stars, unpolluted by any light and then you will see there must be really heaven above. It is only in such vast mountains, vast deserts, vast expanses of waters that true religion originates. In cities hovelled, which are like hovels, concrete jungles, such things do not happen. Now, here is the big caravan was moving and there were diamond merchants, many of them. And among them, there were two diamond merchants who were equally wealthy, the wealthiest in that whole group; not only in those cities they were travelling and towards the end, they reached Oasis at sunset and they wanted to take rest. Then, what happened? There was rivalry between these two diamond merchants, one merchant was too proud. And he was arrogant, and he wanted to show his superiority to the other merchant that “I am a bigger merchant than you”. The other merchant first got down, and when he was about to untie his camel, this man who was still on camel let slip a diamond as if by accident but by intention and the other merchant saw it, it was a big diamond so, he picked it up and said, “Sir! This is your diamond. Please take it”. The other man said, “Don’t worry! You keep it there. After all, it is one of the least of my diamonds” indicating indirectly that he has plenty of much more valuable diamonds than this diamond. It is nothing for me, it is less than a naya paisa. You keep it there. And there was a Fakir there. He noticed it, he smiled and immediately said, “Sir! Today I would like to share my food with you. Would you kindly accept?” Of course, tradition bound – they all accepted, and they were all eating. At that time Fakir said, “I would like to entertain you with a story of my own life”. Then, he started – Before I became Fakir in the name of God, I was the greatest diamond merchant in the whole world. I was so

proud; had beautiful wife and invaluable jewels of children and my life was going on so happily by the will of Allah, by the grace of Allah. And once I started with a huge caravan with the most valuable diamonds in the world. And we were travelling for days together. And in the meanwhile, a huge sandstorm had taken place. And it blew and blew for days and days together; we could not see each other; we do not know where we went. Finally, when the storm subsided, I found myself in a place where nobody was there. For hundreds of miles, there would be nobody. Then, I felt very hungry so, I got down the bags that were on my camel and I went on searching. To my great shock, I found that there was no food at all. And if there no food, no water, I would not be able to survive, I was praying to Allah. Again and again, I started searching, there might be somewhere, I might have hidden some small amount of food and water and after desperately searching, suddenly my hand found that one small packet was there which I could not find earlier. My hopes had risen, I thanked Allah and my life has come back. I thought there must be some food there, I remember having kept it and I eagerly opened. And what did I find? The biggest diamond I have so safely kept here in that bag. Then, my heart sank. Then, I knelt down and said, "Allah! If you save me from this situation, I will renounce the world and I will be your slave forever". I will become a monk. That is what he meant. And somehow next day, his companions found him. His life was saved and as promised to Allah, he became a Fakir. Ever since that time, he wanders from one mosque to another mosque, from one city to another city, and when he narrated this autobiography of his own life, the two merchants came to their senses, bowed down and they said, "Sir! You opened our eyes. We are so proud because of this wealth; these diamonds are the greatest wealth. Now, we understand that one second is enough to sniff away our life. It is all Allah's grace that we have met today. From today, we promise you that we will devote our life only to Allah and try to reach Him. This would be our goal of life from now onwards". So, this is called final step.

Everything is Anitya. Only God alone is Nitya. And nothing else. So, as we go on practicing these four steps: Sukha-Dukha Viveka, Karya-Akarya Viveka, Nitya-Anitya Viveka, Sat-Asat Viveka. We go on developing and growing in spiritual life and that will ultimately lead us. Thus, discrimination is practised. It dispels ignorance, brings right understanding, sets before us the right goal, strengthens our resolve, helps us discard what is harmful, helps us overcome all obstacles and gradually, leads us to God realization and blessedness. This is the thought that should come in our mind. When we come across the fourth commandment of Sri Ramakrishna, everything is impermanent, God alone is permanent. This is called Viveka. This is called Discrimination. And this is the fourth commandment. Practice discrimination. How much time? All the time.

Next class, we will talk about the last commandment – how to live in this world. That too, as an answer to M's question, Sri Ramakrishna tells, "Live in this world like a

maidservant in a rich man's house". We will discuss such wonderful commandment, that is the whole crust of Gita / Karma Yoga, whatever name you call it and we will discuss about it.

Om tava kathāmr̥taṁ tapta-jīvanar̥ṇ

kavibhir̥ iḍitaṁ kalmaṣāpaham |

śravaṇa-maṅgalaṁ śrīmad ātataṁ

bhuvi gṛṇanti te bhūri-dā janāḥ ||

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