

# GOSPEL OF SRI RĀMAKRISHNA - PART 16

SWĀMI DAYATMANANDA

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

Jananim Saradam devam 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 ॥

Class begins with Swami answering questions received from devotees.

**Q: One of our members had a vivid dream on the day after Nag Panchami of many snakes around her. It is really very real. So, is it a good dream or a bad dream?**

According to me, it is a very good dream because it is Nag Panchami (means snake). First, you are thinking deeply of God in the form of the snake. I will narrate to you a small incident too. So, it is very good. Secondly, in Hindu Mythology, a snake is a representative of progress in Yoga. Shiva is called Yogishwara and Yogeshwara. He has two epithets and they are absolutely spot on. Yogeshwara and Yogishwara. Yoga + Ishwara is the Master Yogi. Who is the master yogi? He who control himself; he who know who he is; he is a master yogi. Then, he is also Yogishwara. He is the lord of all Yogis. By his grace, he can also make anyone a great Yogi. Now, the snake in Hindu mythology, if you recollect – where is Lord Vishnu sleeping? On Anantashayana. Snake represents time. Snake represents silence. Snake represents Yoga. So, Lord Vishnu is

also Yogishwara and Yogeshwara. So, that is the meaning why he is depicted as lying on a thousand hooded Sahasradala padma. That is where a Yogi lives. Each of the hoods represent his complete mastery and he can bestow it to anybody. Shiva is called Nagabushana because he wears snakes as ornaments. From whichever point, it is a most beautiful thing. So, it is absolutely fine.

**Q: what is the most effective way to inculcate discipline in a householder's life with regard to spiritual duties, Japa, meditation, etc. So many times, Samsara, our life in this world makes demand on time, and energy and everything that we have. We are left with very little of time or energy to give us a push towards Spiritual Sadhana.**

That is precisely the topic which we are going to discuss how to live in this world so that would be the answer.

**Q: For Moksha, does one have to drop all worldly attachments? Will this happen when we are ready? And the soul will make the right choice of birth in the right circumstances? Or do we have to push it in any way?**

Very interesting question because what is the meaning of pushing? Self-effort. We have to do self-effort. From the side of God and Guru, he gives us inspiration, he shows us the right way, he blesses with all his goodwill, this is called Grace. But the Grace has to be transformed through self-effort. When both these come together, then only life becomes a great success. And this has been told in the very ending of the Bhagavad Gita, after eighteen chapters.

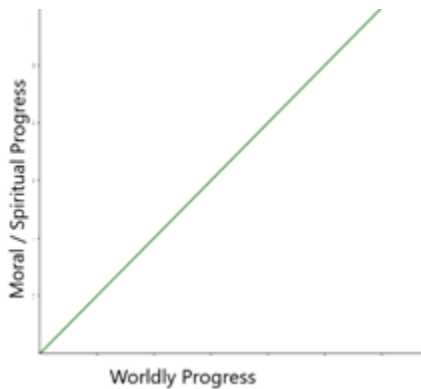
यत्र योगेश्वरः कृष्णो यत्र पार्थो धनुर्धरः ।  
तत्र श्रीर्विजयो भूतिध्रुवा नीतिर्मतिर्मम ॥18.78॥

yatra yogeshvaraḥ kṛiṣṇo yatra pārtho dhanur-dharaḥ |  
tatra śhrīr vijayo bhūtir dhruvā nītir matir mama ||

Where these two are present: Yogeswara Kirshna, that means God (Ishwara) and dhanur dharah, Arjuna with his bows and arrows ready. Here, Arjuna represents a spiritual aspirant and 'bow and arrows' represent his earnest practice of spiritual disciplines, by discharging his duties plus keeping his mind on God himself. Where there is self-effort, where there is God's grace, tatra – definitely, without the least bit of doubt, there will be vijayah - victory, Shri – wealth, nīti – morality and everything that is pleasant to make the journey not a strenuous journey but a most happy and pleasant journey where these two are present. So, that is the answer to your question. There must be self-effort. Without that, God's grace is always there but self-effort is not always there. I would also put it in a slightly different way – God's grace is always there; Self-effort is also there always but then it is not always towards our true

destination, but it is also God's Lila. Our mind is distracted, and it wants to make horizontal progress. Any progress we make in this world, I call it horizontal progress. Spiritual progress, both moral and spiritual progress is what I call vertical progress. So, progress should be on both fronts which would be like an angle, you must have seen in charts, from the bottom it slowly goes forward both horizontally as well as vertically.

### Sarva-Dharma Sarva-Yoga Samanvaya



That is called Sarva Dharma Sarva Yoga Samanvaya (Harmonious unity of all the Yogas as well as all the efforts that we can make – intelligence, buddhi and in fact if you look at Ramakrishna Mission's emblem, that is what is represented by that). So, we have to take a definite stand and say, this is what I want to achieve (Goal). Definite Goal. Earlier I mentioned this, to be successful in any life, three qualities are necessary: a definite goal (first quality) otherwise, we do not know where we are, we do not know where we want to go. And secondly, we also require tremendous amount of focus (concentration). Thirdly, that automatically requires Self-discipline. Definite goal, concentration plus self-discipline. Where these three are present, success or greatness or progress is bound to happen. And that applies to spiritual life too. So, that is the answer to your question.

**Q: Please elaborate on the nature of this relationship of Shiva and Shakti that is described in the Gospel and everywhere. If Purusha is inactive like corpse, how is Prakriti able to perform many activities.**

You look at a plant, it has a cause. You look at an animal, and it has a cause. You look at ourselves, we have our parents, our parents have their parents. So, we are the products and we have a cause. And our parents are the cause, we are the products. In our turn, we become the cause and our children become the products. Now, if you look at anything, any object in this world, any object – living or non-living, we find that it is an object. An object means it is an effect. That means it is a product and every product must have at least three causes. This subject has been beautifully explored in our Vedanta system,

to inculcate into us a most wonderful truth and that truth can be put in a psychological language in this way. The effect must possess all the qualities of the cause. Any product must in toto hundred percent, contain all the characteristics of the cause. For example, there is a table made up of wood, then it will have all the qualities of the wood. Second, if there is a steel almirah, the almirah shape is different, prayojana (utility) is different, name is different because there maybe a billion products made out of this steel but all are products of steel and all will have exactly the same nature of the steel. These are some of the examples. Of course, we also give the example of golden ornaments, wood and furniture, clay and all the products like pot, etc., iron and all its products, what is the idea? Whatever is the cause and the effects will have the exact same characteristics. So, if we take this world as a single object, not every object in this world but the whole world as one object. It was created. That means, before it was created it was not there. If it was not there, since it is a product, there must be a cause. What is the cause of the entire world? We say it is God. So, God is the cause. This world is the product. Now, recall what I just said – The product must have the same characteristics of the cause. If God is the cause, and so what is his nature? Sat-Chit-Ananda. He is indestructible, that is why he is called Akshaya, Avyaya, so many Sanskrit words are there. We use the word 'Akshara' for the alphabet. Kshara means that which is destructible. Akshara means indestructible. That is the meaning of Sat. All the products of wood maybe destroyed but wood cannot be destroyed, as an example. So, all the ornaments maybe changed any number of times, but Gold remains permanent. So, God as pure existence (Existence without any shape or name or utility is called Sat). And God is of the nature of Chit. Chit means pure knowledge. God is of the nature of Ananda. If God is pure Existence, pure Knowledge and pure Bliss, and this world including 'I', 'You', everything inert, with life, without life, everything has come out of God. So, it cannot be inert, it cannot have destruction because from 'Sat', only 'Sat' can come, not 'Asat'. Existence can never become Non-existence whether we understand it or not. 'Sat' will always remain as 'Sat' in some form or the other, and even if you burn something it will be in a very subtle form instead of gross form, and if you do something to that burnt something, say for example, ashes, even that will attain to the subtlest form which modern scientists call 'particles'. Similarly, every living creature has Prana, has Consciousness. Both these are the characteristics of a living being. So, that is the representation of Bhagavan's Chit. What about the inert things like lifeless things? A lump of clay, a piece of stone, a piece of dead wood. We say God has got three characteristics – Sat, Chit, and Ananda, they are not three separate characteristics; they are three ways of looking at God; three ways of understanding God. So, where there is Sat, there will be Chit; there will be Ananda. Where there is Chit, there will be Sat and Ananda. Where there is Ananda, there will be Sat as well as Chit. Just to give you a small example, you cannot be a dead person and also be a knowledgeable person and a happy person. It cannot be. You must be a living vibrant being to experience. If you are happy, then you know you are happy. Your whole

being is suffused with happiness and manifests in your smile, in your talk, in your look, in everything. So, you have to be there, that is Sat. And you have the knowledge “I am a very happy person” that is called Chit and that Ananda is manifesting through you. So, this is an illustration to show that even inert things like a lump of clay, piece of dead wood, a mountain, a river, etc. etc. they are not dead things. They are absolutely manifestations of God. That is why in their universal form, this Earth which is a universal form of lump of clay out of which all the food comes out, it is called Bhu Mata. The water we drink is called Jala Devata (Varuna). The fire that warms us or that cooks food for us, that digests food for us, this is called Agni Devata. Vayu Devata – God is supplying us with life (Prana vayu) in the form of oxygen. Every minute, sixteen times we are breathing and then we are able to move about freely, is made possible by Akasha Devata. Probably you have heard that there are five temples of Shiva and there is a place called Chidambaram and that is called Akasha Linga. There is a place called Sri Kalahasti. That is called Vayu lingam. So, they are living Devatas because they are looking after us. Without them, life is impossible. So, what are we talking in this big talk I am giving you right now for this second question? That there is nothing called inert. We are all manifestations of Sat, Chit, Ananda but in varying degrees. A baby is manifesting pure Sat and very little of Chit but Ananda is there, sometimes little bit less also when the baby cries. So, the cause and effect cannot be different. This long prelude is an introduction to the answer to this second question. When we look at any object in this world, we have to find out three causes. If there is a chair for example. There must be a person who has intelligence, who thought “I must take this piece of wood and shape it into a chair, a table, a door, etc.” That intelligent person is called Nimittha Karana or Intelligent cause in English language (very inadequate word but I will use anyway). Intelligent cause. Then there must be a material for making the chair, etc. The material here (wood in the case of a wooden chair or table), is called Upadana Karana. Then, the carpenter sometimes requires some instruments for example, carpentry requires a planar, a saw, a hammer, and sandpaper, nail, etc. So, these are called instruments. So, there must be some instruments, that is called Upakarana Karana. Upakarana means instruments. Just remember, an intelligent cause, material cause as well as an instrumental cause. Anything that we see in this world is consisting of these three causes. Where there are these three causes absent, the effect cannot be there.

Now, we come to the question. This whole world is created by whom? By God. How many Gods are there? Only one God. Is there anything separate from God? No. Because He is infinite. Therefore, logical conclusion has to be drawn here, God is the intelligent cause and God is the material cause and God is also the instrumental cause. So, now the question is, if you look at the Kali image, you see that the Goddess is naked, and she has got four hands and where is she standing? On her husband and that is Siva, or we will call it here, Mahakala. Now, the word ‘Kali’ has come from the word ‘Kala’. For doing anything, creation means it requires time, and it requires space. So, here Kali represents

time and Siva represents timelessness (Mahakala). When we look at timelessness through the instrumentality of the mind, that mind gives us a small chunk of that timelessness which we call Time. So, Kali is deification of time and Mahakala is timelessness. Time is the understanding idea in our minds of timelessness. Why not think about timelessness? You cannot think of timelessness because timelessness is an abstract idea and to make any abstract idea, we have to think through some concrete instrument, in this case, it is our mind. So, we want to think about God and the Kali represents the creator, creation, creativity aspect of God. We cannot think of the impersonal God, Nirakara (Formless), Nirguna (Quality-less), Nirvisesha (Indistinguishable) God, mind cannot think. Whatever mind can think is only a very personal, a very limited and we think 'I am a creation in this world. And this world has come, must have come from somewhere and that must have come from Creator'. That creator is called Iswara. And Iswara is always a combination of purity (pure consciousness) plus energy. So, Kali represents kala, kala means movement, movement means change, change means activity, activity means energy. That is why that energy in Sanskrit is called Shakti. But energy, take small example – Electricity is pure energy but to make it to flow, and make it useful as light, as heat, as movement, as attraction, we require some instruments. So, a light bulb, a heater, a fan, a magnet – these are the four known manifestations of energy to us. All these require instruments. So, pure energy does not know how it has to manifest. Therefore, there must be a combination of energy, plus an intelligence called Chaitanya. Shiva represents timelessness plus pure consciousness (Chaitanyatva). So, Chaitanya (Consciousness) plus energy in the form of Maya or Shakti, when these two combine together then, Creation is possible. This is the interpretation, where there is Shakti, there will be Shiva. Where there is Shiva, there will be Shakti. That is how we have to understand. But Vedanta tells us both Shiva and Shakti are divided things; they are inseparable, separable intellectually but inseparable in any other way. But this idea of duality that there is pure consciousness and there is an energy, Shiva and Shakti is thinkable only by the mind. But this division violates the principle that Lord Parabrahma is Akhanda (indivisible). Therefore, Vedanta tells us, this is as far as a human being, a thinking being with a mind can go. This is the highest concept of God as the creator, Creator always means Brahma and Saraswati, Vishnu and Lakshmi, Siva and Kali. So, that is the idea Shakti, the energy and that which directs the energy, how it should manifest, these two we find at least in every living creature. You take your own example, each one of you, each one of us. I am a combination of Consciousness plus something inert. That inert thing is called the Body-Mind complex. And that Chaitanya is called Jivatma, Chidabasa. So, wherever you see life (Prana), this Chaitanya divides or manifests itself as two: one is the Consciousness, another is Prana. But there must be something which is opposite to it, material cause. That material is what we call Shakti. That material is manifest in the form of body and mind. So, this is the answer. I do not know how much I have been able

to clarify your question. Where there is a product, it is a product of both Consciousness as well as Energy (Shiva and Shakti). Our problem is not there when we look at a living creature (Prani) because I am consciousness and I have a body and mind which are inert. This is very plain to all of us. How do you know? Because body-mind can be completely unconscious. Consciousness does not disappear there, but it is not manifest. It is just as when you switch off a light bulb. The bulb does not give us the light, not because it cannot, not because it is spoilt, not because electricity is absent, electricity is there but the medium to manifest that electricity is not there. So, when we look at a dead body, many people think that it does not have consciousness. According to Vedanta, that is a completely wrong idea. Wherever there is some existence, whether with life, without life, there would be consciousness, but they are hidden. Both Chit and Ananda part of Bhagavan are what is called, potentially there, hidden there but they are not manifest because the medium is not a right medium. So, when you look at Kali, we see that she represents this entire manifested Universe and wherever there is material cause, there would be, there should be the pure consciousness. Where there is Shakti, Shakti cannot be living or existing without Shiva, but Shiva can exist without energy in his beyond-the-mind form, beyond-the-mind concept. That is why I said it is an abstract idea, it cannot be experienced.

So, Kali – look at her, and she is the most wonderful manifestation symbol in this whole world. She is naked because nature is naked. And she has got four hands – right side, two hands; left side, two hands. She has a garland and her hair is flowing. She is naked. Why naked? Because we are all born naked, we learn to keep our bodies covered because of our peculiar disease called civilization. Look at a baby, a baby is never born with any piece of cloth but look at the baby's body, it is the most attractive delicate body we can ever see at any time. So lovely, it brings great joy to us. Even now, there are many tribes; they will go naked. Only when the weather becomes inclement, then they try to protect themselves. So, dress is invented not for any other purpose but for the purpose of only to protect our body from inclement weather. But this dress has become now, a symbol of sex unfortunately. That is why the division, "I am a man" and "I am a woman" I have to be attractive otherwise, I will fail in my purpose, etc. So, entire nature is always naked unless artificially covered up with dress, etc. One important point I want to bring, it is part of our deeper understanding. In a society which does not wear any dress, male or female, there the sex attraction is very less. People become absolutely immune to that idea but people who are accustomed to hide everything, when they go to such societies, they go on gawking at the sight. But local people, a man does not look at a woman; a woman also does not look at a naked man with any other intention. Of course, there also nature plays its part but not as we are trained, we are conditioned in a most horrible way. And spending so much of our energy, time – how much time we spend in our bathrooms to bruce ourselves up, God alone knows!

So, Mother Kali on the right side, has got two hands – what are they? One is uplifted and palm turned downwards, that represents “abhaya”. Abhaya means no fear – I am going to save you. That represents birth, that represents security, that represents protectiveness. Abhaya. Once we are sure of life, then our mind becomes restless, how can I make myself happy? Because that is our nature. Therefore, we have so many desires and to fulfill the desires in the right way, the Mother’s lower hand, it will be palm turned upwards and that is called “varada”. ‘Da’ means one who gives. ‘Vara’ means boons. What boons? If we are living a right life, Mother will be pleased and whatever we desire, Mother is ready to give. And Vedanta divides all the desirable things in this world into four categories. We all know it. They are called Purusharthas means four desirable highest goals of every deep-thinking human being. What are they? Dharma, Artha, Kama and the highest of these is Moksha called Paramapurushartha or Nishreyasa. But happiness in this world is represented by the lower three. Ordinary person like a baby, he wants only chocolates, he wants only toys because that is not his fault, that is his highest understanding. We all have to go through that before we pride ourselves that we have grown up. Actually, Swamiji used to call us mustached babies. Babies but with mustaches grown – that is all. That means our Buddhi has not increased much. A baby wants small toys, we want living toys, we want bigger houses, and we want everything enjoyable like that. So, this right two hands of Mother Kali represent, “Oh my Child! I am your Mother. I am going to protect you provided you understand that I am your Mother and you turn to me like a child and then you look at me longingly, Ma I am a child, please take care of me”. Of course, she will take care of you even if you do not use that language. But we have to be like children, ‘children’ means innocent, pure, not contaminated by self-deceit, hypocrisy and all those things. That is why modern psychologists call it authentic life. When a baby is really happy, it laughs. When it is hurt, it cries. There is no show there. There is no hypocrisy there. Most of the time, what we do, when we do not feel like crying, then we show that we cry, that we are very sorry that such and such a thing happened, not feeling the least. And when we have to be very happy, we do not feel like being happy, but we smile and say, Congratulations. This is such a hypocritical life we are leading so much time. Only when we are all alone with ourselves, with our dream world, then perhaps sometimes we become authentic. OK – so, two hands – Vara and Abhaya. Safety, security, and fulfillment of desires. But as I said, only when we remember and lead a righteous life. Turning to the left side, we see the Mother having two hands again – One hand (upper hand) uplifted hand is carrying a sword. That means, right side represents Srishti and Sthiti (Creation and Sustenance). Left hand side represents that completion of circle which is called Laya. Right side represents Brahma and Vishnu. Left side represents Rudra (Shiva) who takes us back from where we have come. That is called Dissolution. That is called Laya. So, there sword represents ever-anticipated death even though we ignore to think about death. As we can see, how many lakhs of people died because of this Covid? It is just as



an example. But nobody was expecting it five-six months before. Suddenly, this death has come, and it is still hanging, the Sword of Damocles is still hanging over our heads. How long it will continue, God alone knows! Then, the lower hand of the Divine Mother, it is representing what is called a Skull. A Skull represents the fact of life - where there is life, there will be death. Where there is birth, there will be death. It is inevitable and we are all growing up - we were small fetuses, then babies, then adolescents, youth, middle aged, old age and now, we have to expect only one thing - do not expect you will go back to your childhood or anything. Mentally, of course, we are children only. So, Mother is wearing a beautiful garland. This garland is consisting of fifty-two skulls. What are the fifty-two? Fifty-two letters of the Alphabet of our language, Sanskrit has got fifty-two letters of the alphabet. No other language probably has so many letters. Every nuance, every way we can pronounce, that is why Sanskrit is declared as the best language, perfect language, even for computer language also. Anyway, so this Skull represents that inevitable state called Laya. Srishti, Sthiti, Laya - Mother Kali represents. And what is her flowing hair? That shows the unstoppable flow of time. So, she is naked, and she represents flow of time. That is why her very name is Kali or Kala or Time deified. She has got four hands - Srishti, Sthiti, Laya is the representation of the four hands. She wears a garland. What is the garland? Of fifty-two letters - what does it mean? Life is nothing but manifestation of knowledge. However poor a person, still he will have that knowledge that I am a human being (that is the first knowledge), I am so many years old, I am male or female, I am weak or strong, I am knower or ignorant person, I have power or not power, all this depends purely on Chit i.e., Awareness that is Pure consciousness. And that pure consciousness is represented by this, what we call language expression. And human being has the unique ability, he has become the top of the created beings because of his ability not only to think better than any other species but the ability to convey his thoughts. And that is why today, human being rule for good, or bad every part of the world. Even if we discover some other planets, you will see this intelligence and we can call that person a human being. So, the fifty-two skulls represent the garland of knowledge because any word that I utter has inevitably some of these alphabets. And this is the expression of thought. Thought springs out of knowledge, Chit. Then, through this Srishti and Sthiti, that is to say, Sat and Chit, the experience that we have is called Ananda. And this Ananda sometimes is more, sometimes is less. If it more, we call it happiness. If it is less, we call it what is called unhappiness, sorrow, suffering. But it is not different. Even to sorrow, we have to be alive. Even to experience pain, that pain we have to feel with that consciousness, that awareness, that I am having less of Ananda, less of Santosha. That is called Dhukha. That is called Suffering. In fact, we will not know what is called Ananda, what is called Suffering excepting this understanding in our mind, "I am happy or unhappy. I am very joyful. Or I am suffering". This is purely a manifestation of more or less, of Ananda in the form of consciousness, in the form of awareness. So, Mother Kali represents the

entire divinity limited by body and mind, a combination of Chaitanya or Consciousness plus the material called Inert something, called this Body and mind. This is the very brief answer to your question, where there is Shakti there would be somebody to direct that Shakti, an intelligent being, intelligence. That intelligence is called Chaitanya. That is represented by these words, Shiva and Kali, by Shiva and Shakti.

Mind you, when I say energy, do not think of a scientist's usage of the word energy. A car is moving, and it has got petrol. Petrol is converted into energy; that energy is lifeless. Car is totally useless unless there is a driver to direct it. So, that driver is Shiva and the vehicle he is driving is Shakti. So, exactly my consciousness is Jivatma, that is called Shiva and my body-mind is like car, remember in Katha upanishad, the body is compared to a chariot, and the one who drives is called the Charioteer. The driver is the mind, and the two or four wheels of the chariot are compared to the horses, and there must be pathways. These horses are our sense organs and the sense organs must have objects to contact with, they are called the pathways. Such a beautiful imagery in Katha Upanishad we get, this is what we are talking about. In this world, everything is a combination of Shiva and Shakti (Consciousness plus Energy). Where there is energy, there will be consciousness. And where there is consciousness, there will be energy so far as we are concerned. The last point is there is a state where Shiva and Shakti become completely one, indefinable, indescribable and that state is called Parabrahman (Supreme Reality) and there is no Jagat, there is no creator, there is no creation, both become one exactly and that ultimate state, that is called Parabrahman. And that is beyond the mind. The moment we think anything through the mind, we can only think at best, the highest manifestation of Parabrahman which is called Iswara and Maya, Shiva and Shakti, Brahma and Saraswathi, Vishnu and Lakshmi, Shiva and Kali. So, very brief explanation. There are so much of meaning, our ancient Rishis have discovered this most marvelous symbol for representing the entire Universe. Anyway, I have to stop here because this answer itself has taken nearly forty minutes of our time, but I think it is worth.

Now, let us proceed to the Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna. We are talking about the Fifth Commandment. So far, we have discussed four commandments – what is it? The goal of life is God Realization. To progress in Spiritual life, we have to do spiritual practice. Spiritual practice can be done through the help of four Yogas. So, the first commandment for this Sadhana is cultivate holy company. Second, you go now and then, into solitary place and intensify your spiritual practice by feeling the presence of God more deeply. Then third commandment is, always practice discrimination. Life is very uncertain. Everything in this world is temporary – body is temporary, mind is temporary, we are all changing all the time but there is something which cognizes the body/mind, it is called Jivatma and that is purely belonging to the Paramatma. So, excepting myself as pure consciousness, as a part of that pure consciousness, as

awareness called Jivatma, everything changes. Mind you, does not die. Mind you, it only changes from the unmanifested to manifestation and from the state of manifestation to the state of non-manifestation and that is called Life as well as Death / Birth as well as Death. But the point is that everything is changing, that means everything is temporary. And no one can be satisfied with temporary happiness, temporary love, temporary life. We all want something permanent, which never changes. Permanent existence, permanent understanding or knowledge, and permanent bliss called Ananda. That is our real nature. That is the meaning of “Each soul is potentially divine”. Now, the answer to how we should live, that answer is there, as I mentioned earlier.

Now, let us start the Fifth Commandment. M, asking Sri Ramakrishna humbly, “Sir, how ought we to live in this world? Master (Sri Ramakrishna), “Do all your duties but keep your mind on God. Live with all, with wife and children, father, and mother and serve them. Treat them as if they were very dear to you, but know it in your heart of hearts that they do not belong to you”. Then, Sri Ramakrishna gives an illustration, a beautiful illustration, and we experienced during the Covid time how much we depended on servants and maidservants and when they are absent, we are forced to do willy-nilly just to survive. So, here, a maidservant in the house of a rich man, performs all the household duties but do you know where her thoughts are fixed? They are fixed on her own home, in her native village. She brings up her master’s children as if they were her very own. She even speaks of them to the visitors as my Rama, my Hari but in her own mind she knows very well that they do not belong to her at all. Another illustration – A tortoise moves about in water but can you guess where her thoughts are? There on the bank where her eggs are lying. So, do all your duties in the world but keep your mind on God. If you enter the world without first cultivating love for God, Bhakti for God, you will be entangled more and more. You will be overwhelmed with its danger, with its grief, its sorrows. And the more you think of worldly things, the more you will be attached to them”. This is the fifth commandment of Sri Ramakrishna. So, let us briefly discuss in this class, only the salient points.

How to be spiritual? What does it mean? Sometimes I have mentioned, this world ‘Spirituality’ makes us very uneasy, drives us away. Instead of that, let us rephrase, as I said earlier, if you ask somebody, “Are you a believer in God?” Then, he is likely to say, Yes, No, or ‘I do not know’. Three answers. If you rephrase the same question, “Do you believe in enjoying greater and greater happiness?” There will be only one answer, Yes. Not only I believe, every breath I take is an effort just to make myself as happy as possible, even under the most trying circumstances. So, here also, we can say that we have come into this world only for one purpose – To become more and more happy. Then, what about our parents and all those? I tell you, life in the world is a scheme of God. Nobody is born a sannyasin. Everybody is born to a mother, with the help of a father, is brought up in a family, that individual may become a Sannyasi much later on.

But this, how do we develop terrible attachment most of the time, unless our experiences are very negative and excruciating. Most of us, we develop tremendous attachment and we give a fancy name to that, which we should never give, and the name is called Love. This is not love, this is pure attachment. We have to understand these two words – we have terrible attachment and we have very little love. And I will illustrate it in my next class, but the important point is that we are here, and our parents are there, maybe brothers and sisters, a big family, relatives, and surrounding houses, maybe some houses are inimical and we have quarrels, etc. but these are the best things God has equipped us with. What purpose? I will just illustrate in this class and then I will stop. Supposing there is a school; you have children and the first thing you seek is, which school is the best school and every loving parent wants to send their children to that best school. So, what is the concept of the best school? Where the child will be assisted developing his potential intelligence into great intelligence as much as possible. That is the first criteria. How is the school? Whether the teachers are very harsh, whether there is terrible discipline, all these things are secondary considerations, primary consideration is, if I send my child to this school, my child will develop his / her potentialities to the maximum. And in that light, God created this whole universe as the best school in the world. I mentioned earlier, Swami Vivekananda's definition of what is called Life. I said that, quoting him, "Life is a school. Life is a gymnasium. Life is a circus". And in that order. We go to school to learn, to develop our potentialities. We then enter into this world or householder's life to exercise what we have learnt and to develop them further like going to a gymnasium to harden our muscles, to make them iron clad so that we can withstand any untoward, unforeseen circumstance in this world. And when we both learn well, develop our potentialities as well as develop our muscles, both physical, intellectual, moral, aesthetic, and spiritual muscles, then life becomes so full of joy, brimming up to the brim with tremendous happiness. The world becomes a circus. That means we enjoy everything that happens. Mind you, in circus also, there will be good things, and there will be jokers, and there will be not-so-pleasant things also, difficult things will be there. I will talk about it because this is a very apt analogy. There is so much of misunderstanding of circus. Circus means only for our happiness, that is very true. But our happiness comes when we see a person swinging carelessly as if very easily, at fifty or sixty feet above our heads, swinging and leaving his hands from one swing to another, or walking on a small strip of bamboo pole, or a wooden plank, and then sometimes riding cycles and that is a great significance, that means the most difficult things for people to achieve and yet, here are people who are showing so happily, they sit there, they pretend that they are about to fall, and then they joke, and when they complete and then reach a safe spot, we all burst into an applause. What is my point? Even though these are happy giving feats that we see, but they are most difficult, even the smallest of them is extraordinarily difficult for us. But for them, it is as it were.

When we develop our potentialities and develop all our muscles, then we become like the people in the circus, not only the audience but the people who are easily swinging, and doing all those so-called impossible feats, and that is called truly enjoying life. A circus has so much of meaning inside it, which we will discuss. Our life in this world is compared to a circus when? Not now, when we have not yet entered into the second stage of Gymnasium. I think most of us have not even entered into the what-is-called developing our potentialities, but the world as a school (as the first stage) is the most wonderful situation – we will talk about it in our next class.

Om tava kathāmr̥taṁ tapta-jīvanam̐

kavibhir̐ iḍitaṁ kalmaṣāpaham̐ ।

śravaṇa-maṅgalaṁ śrīmad ātataṁ

bhuvi gṛṇanti te bhūri-dā janāḥ ॥

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