

GOSPEL OF SRI RĀMAKRISHNA - PART 8

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 ॥

Q1) So the first question is, that why is it so difficult for us to realise God, or to progress in spiritual life?

A) So, it is difficult. It is the journey of many lives. But we have to start from where we are and slowly slowly progress. And it is guaranteed every one of us is going to realize God, because we are all children of God. **Each soul is potentially divine.** If God created this world, He created me.

And so, I'm also a child of God. If God is divine, I am also divine. Therefore, if I am divine, I can't be anything else other than divine. But at this moment, I'm not able to really understand I am divine. I am under the delusion that I am a human being, I am a man or a woman, young or old etc. And that is called *Ajnāna* or delusion.

And through spiritual practices we have to slowly first realize,

- 1) I am not the body, I am not the mind. But I have a body, I have a mind. That is the first step.
- 2) Second step is I am, I don't have even the body mind. I am a *Jīvātmā*. I am divine, a child of God.
- 3) Last step would be to claim that I'm truly divine at all times. I was never a human being.

So, spiritual practices are indicated. How we can transcend, evolve further? From the concept I am the body - to I have a body - to there is no body mind. Everything is divine. This is the answer to the first question.

Q2) Second question. Very beautiful question. Very thoughtful question. Very intricate question. So, is goodness relative, or is it absolute?

A) The answer is *Satyam Shivam Sundaram*. Truth, goodness and beauty - they are **absolutes**. Absolute means there is a universal truth. It doesn't depend upon...

Then what we call goodness is the manifestation of goodness and that is relative.

Like you know, electricity is the one that gives us light among other things. But if it is manifesting through a 5 watt bulb it gives dim light, bed light, bedroom light. If it is 200 watt bulb, it will give 200 watt light, much better. So accordingly, according to the limitation of the instrument, through which electricity is flowing, the light becomes less or more. This is called relative goodness.

What is the point in this? Point is we have to become absolutely good. Absolute truth, absolute good, absolute beauty! *Satyam Shivam Sundaram*!

So, spiritual journey is to become more good, more truthful, and more beautiful. **And these 3, *Satyam Shivam Sundaram*, are not and cannot be developed separately.** If we grow in one the other thing also grows automatically. So this is the right understanding we must develop. That truth, goodness, beauty are absolute not relative.

But when that absolute tries to manifest, within each one of us, according to our physical, intellectual, moral and spiritual development - We manifest it more and more.

So the essence of this answer is that we are all embodiments of *Satyam Shivam Sundaram*. That is called divine or it's called *Sat Chit* and *Ānanda* in different words. And we are all manifesting in different degrees. And we realize that we have to claim our true nature in hundred percent, and that is called spiritual development. And that

progresses only according to our spiritual practice. So there is nothing called 'My goodness', or 'your goodness'. It is only 'God's goodness' alone. And that is the answer for the second question.

(5:43 mins)

Q3) The third question is *Sri Rāmakrishna's* story – the man wanted to see a king, and he had to pass through seven doors.

A) This is an imagery, analogy for the well known 7 steps of spiritual progress according to *Jnānamarga* - 7 steps! So they are called सप्त ज्ञान भूमि (*Sapt Jnāna Bhūmi*)

Sapt means 7.

Jnāna means progress in the knowledge of God.

Bhūmi means A state of consciousness.

In other words 7 steps! And it always starts with the ground step and ultimately takes us to the 7th step. 7th step is called *Nirvikalp Samādhi*. 7th step is called God realisation. 7th step is also called आत्मज्ञान (*Ātmajñāna*), or अहं ब्रह्मास्मि (*Aham Brahmāsmi*), or सर्व खल्विदं ब्रह्म (*Sarvam Khalvidam Brahmā*).

So, what are the 7 steps?

- 1) The 1st step is शुभेच्छा (*Shubhecchā*) शुभ इच्छा - **A spiritual desire.** *Shubha* means good. *Ichchā* means desire. *Shubhecchā* means a good desire. Here good means only spiritual desire. Our spiritual journey starts with *Shubhecchā*.
- 2) Then it progresses into आत्माविचार (*Ātmāvichāra*) - Who am I? Wherefrom am I coming? Where am I going? And am I going in the right direction? If not, what is the right way? **To think deeply about these things, first having heard from a teacher, qualified teacher, and make that truth our own.** This is the 2nd step. In *Jnāna Yogā*, this is called श्रवण मनन निदिध्यासन (*Shravana Manana and Nidhidhyāsana*)
- 3) The 3rd step is called तनुमानसि (*Tanumānsi*), असंघ भावना, (*Asangh Bhāvna*) निसंघ (*Nisangh*). **Develop detachment towards the body and mind.** And body and mind represent the world. Therefore when we develop detachment towards the world, that means we are developing detachment towards the body and mind. That means, we slowly feel 'I am not the body, I am not the mind'. 'I have a body, I have a mind'. That is the 3rd stage.
- 4) 4th stage is to develop identity with *Ātman*, there are a lot of obstructions. These obstructions are called *Vāsanās*, or strong habitual desires acquired through *Chaurāsi lakh janmas*. These are called *Vāsanās*. **Slowly to develop, or make these desires, worldly desires, less and spiritual desires more that is the 4th step, it is called वासनाक्षय (*Vāsanākshaya*)**

- 5) Then we progress towards the 5th step where **the very thought of *Ātman*, *Bhagavān*, *Paramātmā* gives us tremendous joy.** Mind you we have not yet realised God, but even the very thought of realising God becomes very very joyful thought. This is called असंसक्ति (*Asamsakti*) or मुक्तिानन्द (*Mukti-ananda*)
 - 6) Then we progress towards the 6th step. In this step the attachment towards worldly desires, meaning attachment to the body mind, becomes much much less. And the attachment towards God or *Ātman*, *Brahman* becomes very strong. This is called पदार्थ भावना (*Padārtha-Bhāvanā*) *Bhāvanā* means deep thinking and identification with that thought. And what is that identification? Object - *Pada*. *Pada-Artha*. That means *Padārtha*. *Padārtha* means object. Object means God, *Brahman*, *Ātman*, *Ishtha Devtā*. This is called real *Padārtha*. Everything else is unreal *Padārtha*, *Asat Bhāvna*, *Māyā*. So this is the 6th stage, where **the thought of God becomes absolutely fixed.** This is also called *Dhyāna* and it is called *Padārtha-Bhāvna*.
 - 7) And if we still practice, then we reach a state, it is called तुर्यगा (*Turyagā*) *Turiya Avasthā!* That means **I identify myself only with God, with the *Ātmā*.**
- (10:55 mins)

So, these are the 7 doors, 7 steps, 7 stages of spiritual practice called *Sapt-Bhūmi*. *Sapt* means 7. *Bhūmi* means center of consciousness.

And you must have heard about *Chakrās*. Within each one of us, we have got 7 *Chakrās*. Starting from -

- मूलाधार (*Mulādhāra*)
- मणिपद्म (*Manipadma*)
- स्वाधिष्ठान (*Svādhīsthāna*)
- अनाहत (*Anāhata*)
- विशुद्ध (*Vishuddh*)
- आज्ञा (*Ājnā*)
- सहस्त्रार (*Sahasrārā*)

So these 7 steps of the *Jnāna Mārga* are identified as the 7 *Chakrās* of the *Tāntric* scriptures, *Tantra* scriptures. But the essence is exactly the same. It is 7 Stepped progress towards God.

Or in *Sri Rāmakrishna's* words 7 doors. 1st door, 2nd door etc, until we reach the 7th door wherein God Himself is beheld with all His glory. And the person need not ask, 'Are you God'? Until he sees God the doubt comes, 'Are you God, or are you not God'?

But when we are in the presence of light, presence of truth, presence of God, the question itself will disappear. Because the truth is, when we step into God there is no two - God and me. I become God, God becomes me.

So, this is the last step, and this is the answer to the 3rd question - what are the 7 doors? *Sapt Bhūmi*. If you Google *Sapt Jnāna Bhūmi* or *Sapt Bhūmi*, you will get the Sanskrit terms as well as their explanations.

Now, we go to *The Gospel of Sri Rāmakrishna*.

In our last class we have discussed - about whether God can be with form or without form? The answer is - **God can be with form, God can be without form, God can be beyond form, as well as formlessness.**

Next question is whether people should worship images, God in images? *Sri Rāmakrishna*'s answer is, 'God loves everybody, but He takes each one according to the capacity'. And there are billions of people, most of us, we require an image, either a clay image or a metal image or a golden image, whatever it is. And our idea of ourselves is also an image.

In this context, I remember a beautiful incident that happened in the life of *Ramana Māhārishi*. There was a great soul called *Ramana Māhārishi*, and He passed away in 1950. The place associated with him is *Thiruvannamalai*. Some of you must have heard, maybe all of you, I don't know.

So one day a devotee came and told Him, '*Bhagawān* people should be told that they should not worship images, idol worship'. *Bhagawān* smiled in a very sweet way and He said, 'Show me one man who is not worshipping any image'?

Then He gave a beautiful explanation. 'From early morning as soon as a person gets up, ritually he offers himself bed-tea, bed-coffee. After that he goes into the bathroom and *Snāna*, *abhisheka* with various powders and lotions and creams available. Then he comes out and dresses himself. Himself means herself also. And then elaborate breakfast ritual. And after that, he does so many things. Then noon - lunch; afternoon - tea; and night - dinner. Before going to bed another peg, whatever it is. From morning till evening what is the man doing? *Mūrti pūja*! He had become, himself the *Mūrti*, and he is worshipping himself.

(15:36 mins)

So, it is impossible to preach such people, who think they are having body and mind, not to worship God in image.

- Because if I think I am the image - God Will be the image.
- If I think I am with form – God can be thought only with the idea of form.
- When I am capable of thinking I'm not the body, but I am the mind, I am an idea - then God can be thought about as idea, as with formless.
- Then a time will come, I am not a form, I am not an idea, I am not the body mind - then only a person is able to think that I am no other than God.

So simply being in one state it is impossible to think of God in a higher state. Just like, you know, a 3rd class student cannot understand Einstein's theory of relativity. Unless the person goes through all these stages and comes to the level of Einstein, and only Einstein can understand the theory of relativity. And people who have that mentality of Einstein, only they can understand.

So the point is, *Sri Rāmakrishna* is explaining, God had made all these arrangements to suit various requirements. *Sri Rāmakrishna* illustrates this - a mother has 4 children. She prepares the same curry, but in different ways, to suit the digestible capacity of each child.

So, do not hate people, do not look down upon people who worship images, or who take God's name, or who think of God without form. All these are different stages. And as we grow and identify ourselves with a higher idea, our concept of God also grows. And our worship also accordingly grows.

Here, *Swāmi Vivekānanda* used to say something very important. He often used to say, “**God grows as man grows.**” So sometimes people may misunderstand this statement. What *Swāmi Vivekānanda* meant is as man's idea about himself becomes larger and better, his idea about God also becomes larger and better. Not that God grows, it means his concept of God grows.

Sri Rāmakrishna also gives a beautiful example. A man is sitting in a *Maidān*, means open space. But right in front of him, there is a huge screen. And in that screen there is a small hole. So, whenever he peeps out, he could see only as much as that hole allows him to see. As he goes on enlarging the hole, then he sees more and more of what is on the other side of the curtain. And one day will come when he could complete the tear-out, that curtain. Then he sees there is no difference between where I am standing and what was so far, so long, outside the curtain. That curtain seems to divide that place into two - this side and that side. And what divides it is the curtain.

What is the symbolism? That God is infinite. But this ego comes and puts a barrier and it divides, seemingly divides, not really. I am this person, and the other is God. But as

we reduce the, go on reducing our egotism, so our concept of God also grows, until, when our egotism completely is destroyed. Then there is no I, there is no God. Whatever remains is that indescribable infinite. That was what *Sri Rāmakrishna* told. (20:18 mins)

Then He told a very wonderful thing, that you don't need to have a headache trying to preach others - It is wrong to worship God in images. God is! God has created! And God knows what each child wants. And He knows exactly what is suitable. And He is the only teacher.

So, a very beautiful teaching - this one, that if I'm able to teach The Gospel better, it is not me, but through me. God is manifesting as much as I allow Him to manifest. If I become more pure, then I understand God better. And my teaching also becomes better. So, anybody teaching that is only - the real teacher is only God.

Sri Rāmakrishna used to give a beautiful example. There is a big palatial house. And in the roof, in all the 4 directions of the roof, there are certain openings. And whenever rain falls upon that roof, the rainwater flows through those openings. And many times, those openings are decorated like a lion's mouth, like a tiger's mouth, like a child's mouth, like a God's mouth etc. And small children thinking - See, that water is flowing through the lion's mouth, tiger's mouth, a child's mouth, a saint's mouth, a man's mouth. Not knowing that it is God who is coming in the form of the rain, and He is only flowing through the mouths of.... These mouths are only instruments. And what comes out is rainwater, and that rainwater sustains all of us, the whole world. And that rainwater is nothing but God. And different identifications - This is a lion's mouth, this is a tiger's mouth. These are only relative figures, but the essence is only God. So, God is the only teacher.

And then *Sri Rāmakrishna* asks, 'What about your wife'? And *M* answers, 'She's a good person, but I am afraid she is ignorant'. Meaning academically she did not get much education, degrees are not there.

Sri Rāmakrishna was a master of similes, like *Kālidāsa*. *Sri Rāmakrishna* was also not only a fun master, He was also a pun master. So He used to tell - a person who studied, read many books, and the name for book, in Sanskrit, is called *Grantha*. *Grantha* means a book. And often this person who reads becomes very egotistic, and that egotism becomes a bond. Although he had previously bondage, now that bondage becomes stronger, 'I am more learned than some people'. So He used to say *Grantha* or *Granthi*. Every *Grantha* becomes a *Granthi*

Similarly, when a person passes an examination, we call it he passed B.A or M.A. So He used that word pass, English word pass, 'Is it pass or *Pāsha*'? *Pāsha* means bondage. *Pāsha* means a rope which binds us. So with each higher degree our bondage increases. That means our egotism becomes longer. Sometimes you notice the visitors cards, the name occupies a small space, but the degrees go on and on and on in smaller, and still smaller letters.

So *M* understood that to be knowledgeable is to be, academically get more, better education, that means more degrees.

But what *Sri Rāmakrishna* meant? Only one thing! That, that is knowledge which frees us from all bondage. That means, which makes us more and more and more happy and healthy. Until we are eternally infinitely happy, which is called realisation of God, having the *Darshan of Bhagawān* or *Ātma-Jnāna* or *Brahma-Jnāna*.

(25:18 mins)

This lesson *M* had learned. By this time, *M* went to argue and *Sri Rāmakrishna* told that this argument is one of the greatest obstructions in spiritual life. Only an egoistic person goes on arguing about things of which he or she knows nothing. By this time *M* realized how true were *Sri Rāmakrishna*'s words.

Then He came with the real, the crux of the matter. The gospel is a *Vedā, Upanishad. Upanishads* only must, and will, and can teach us only three questions. I hope you recollect what I have spoken in our past classes? Any scripture must teach us 3 things.

- तत्त्व (*Tattva*)
- पुरुषार्थ (*Purushārtha*)
- हित (*Hita*)

Tattva means what is the truth? What is God? What is *Ātman*? What is *Brahman*? Does He exist? If He exists, then God realization can only be the only goal of life. So **Tattva means God exists.**

How do you know? Because *Sri Rāmakrishna* says, 'I have realized God, I have seen God'.

Then what should be the goal of life? Only God realisation! That means **You must realise, that I must realise, that You are God, I am God, Everything is God. Of course, this realization is possible only in a human life, not in any other birth.**

So that is the - **Purushārtha means the goal of life.**

Then the last is **Hita**. So, I know God exists. I want to see God. Or I want to manifest my own nature as divine. But **what is the way?** 4 *Yogās* are there.

- *Karma Yogā*
- *Bhakti Yogā*
- *Rāja Yogā* and
- *Jnāna Yogā*.

So, this is the crux of every scripture, and this is the essence of, including *The Gospel of Sri Rāmakrishna*, *Gospel of Holy Mother Sāradā Devī*, and the nine volumes of *The complete works of Swāmi Vivekānanda*. In fact every scripture.

So, *M* very humbly asks these things. ‘Sir, yes Sir. How Sir, many we fix our minds on God?’ This is a question, and *M* is only a representative of spiritual aspirants. I, you, everyone of us, must ask only this question to, whenever we meet, a *Sādhu* or a spiritual person, etc. ‘Sir, how may we fix our minds on God?’

Then *Sri Rāmakrishna* comes out, If you study the first chapter of the *Gospel of Sri Rāmakrishna*, you will get all these things in the first chapter. This is what I call the 5 commandments of *Sri Rāmakrishna*.

5 commandments of *Sri Rāmakrishna’s* are there. Let me first read a little bit of the introduction from the Gospel.

“On his second visit *M* received the above five commandments from *Sri Rāmakrishna*. *M* practiced these commandments to perfection all his life, and he taught them to the devotees who used to visit him, practically everyday. These five commandments are of supreme importance for those who wish to progress in spiritual life. All aspirants especially the devotees of *Sri Rāmakrishna* must remember and assess their spiritual progress in the light of these five commandments. If followed faithfully these commandments are sure to lead to the highest realisation. And to the extent the devotees are able to practice them, to that extent, they will be progressing towards God. Of all spiritual practices, taking the name of God is the easiest. *Sri Chaitanya* was a prophet who preached the glory of God’s name. *Sri Rāmakrishna*, *Holy Mother*, and the direct disciples of *Sri Rāmakrishna*, all have unequivocally emphasized the need for the repetition of the name of God.”

This is just by way of introduction.

(30:19 mins)

So now let me explain what are those 5 commandments?

Sri Rāmakrishna’s 5 commandments, which after today's class is over, I will send it to Anuja. And I hope she will direct it to all of you. And please go through them because I have written, several years back , a detailed explanation of these 5 commandments of

Sri Rāmakrishna. And do not mistake that they are the 5 commandments of only *Sri Rāmakrishna*. It is the 5 commandments of God.

So what are the 5 commandments?

- 1) First, *Sri Rāmakrishna* says, '**God realization is the only goal of life**'. For that you take the name of God. You sing the name of God. You read books about God. Take name of God etc. So, in other words, 1st commandment, only commandment, only goal of life is to realise God.

Now the question comes, how to realize God? How to progress spiritually and know God intimately as my own Self? So 4 Commandments representing 4 *Yogās*

- 2) So the 2nd commandment, Or 1st commandment as *Sādhana* is, '**Cultivate always holy company**'. This is the 1st commandment of spiritual practice.
- 3) 2nd Commandment, '**Now and then go into solitude and pray intensely to God, with a tremendous yearning**'. And your prayer will be answered, God himself will take charge of you and He will guide you. This is the 2nd commandment of *Sādhana*.
- 4) 3rd commandment is '**Always practice discrimination - *Vivekā*** !

What is *Vivekā*? What is eternal? What is temporary? What is good? What is wrong? What is spirituality? What is worldliness? And what is the way to get out all the problems of life? *Tāpatreya*! And ultimately, remain eternally infinitely happy. So this discrimination, What is this *Vivekā* I have put it in a beautiful way, that is what we are going to discuss in our future classes also.

But I will put it now in a simple way. Here is the 3rd commandment of *Sri Rāmakrishna* as a spiritual *Sādhana*, **Anything can happen to anybody, at any time, at any place, in any way!** I repeat, Anything can happen to anybody at any time, at any place in any way!

Simple example. So, every day people are dying, perhaps some people are dying of this Corona disease. Even few days before they never knew that they are going to die. They think that if I am careful I will be okay. But we get reports every day, thousands of people dying all over the world because of this. Nobody is ever convinced that I am not going to be here after a few days. This is called accepting the fact of death, and preparing for it because it can come at any time, at any place, to anybody, in any way.

Another example is, here is a person, very good person, and he is walking in the street. Suddenly a truck comes and hits him, and within few seconds he is gone. Or even better he is not dead, he is severely injured, he is terribly paralysed. He is not dying, but he is leading a vegetative life.

Here is another person, very wicked person, he is giving trouble to everybody. And a truck comes and hits him, within a second he is dead.

(35:01 mins)

If we are discerning people, discriminative people then we get this understanding. That is, what is this? This person is a good person and God put him in eternal pain, eternal suffering. Lifelong he has to suffer. And here is a wicked person. He should be suffering but he has gone. We do not know God's ways. We do not know what happens in future. We only judge things by our present experience.

The point is anything can happen to anybody, good or bad, at any time, at any place, in any way. It could be a very beautiful way, very ugly way, very painless way, very painful way, in a terrible way, or a most wonderful manner. When we study the passing away of many people we can find out all these variations.

Only let us not be foolish to seek whether it is justified or not. Only God knows why is it justified or not justified. In the eyes of God everything is justified. So this process anything can happen to anyone at any time at any place in any way is called the process of *Vivekā*, discrimination.

And the last, *Masks Sri Rāmakrishna*, 'Sir how should we live in this world'? Whether he was asking himself, 'How should I live in this world'? And we all know the answer. In *Sri Rāmakrishna's* beautiful way, He is telling -

- 5) **'Live like a maid servant in a rich man's house'**. Live like a nursemaid in somebody's house.

So what is the symbolism of that? And first of all let me come back.

- Cultivate *Satsanga* is practice of *Bhakti Yogā*.
- And then go into solitude and pray deeply, belongs to *Rāja Yogā*, *Dhyāna Yogā*.
- And always practise discrimination belongs to *Jnāna Yogā*
- And live like a maid servant. That means do all your duties, but you know in your heart of hearts, that this house doesn't belong to you, and you are only a work person in this house. You have your own home, and at the end of the day you have to return back to your own home. Means *Karma Yogā*.

Doing everything to the best of our ability with complete alertness, intelligence, efficiency and yet not being attached. Any second we must just forget the whole thing and then run back to our home. All of us are coming from our home. All of us have our parents or parent.

- And who is our parent? God!
- And where is our home? In God!

- And what is this world we are working in? It's like another person's home which doesn't belong to us. You have no relationship with this person or with this world.

So we have to slowly cultivate this idea. And this is not an idle, imaginative, philosophical idea. It is a fact of life. We are born. We grow up in a particular family. We separate ourselves, and our parents leave us and go away. And we leave our parents and go away. We leave our children and go away.

We don't know when each one of us is going to go away. And we don't know where from we have come. We don't know where we are going after death. And we do not seem to have the slightest memory of all the experiences we had in this life. This is a fact.

Only *Sri Rāmakrishna* is telling you, recognise this fact and live in such a way. Do everything, love everybody as if they are your very own. But at the same time, in your heart of hearts, you know that I come from God. I belong to God, and I have been strayed away from God. And my duty in life is to go to God.

These are the 5 essential commandments of *Sri Rāmakrishna* and these we have to practise to the best of our ability.

So what is the very 1st commandment? Keep holy company! God and his name are identical. *Sri Rāmakrishna*, many times He said in the Gospel, the 1st commandment is - cultivate holy company, *Satsanga*. Always *Satsanga!*
(40:15 mins)

So what is *Satsanga*? Where do we get it? How to practise it? In slight detail we will talk today, I'm going to talk today.

So *Sri Rāmakrishna* once said **God and his name are identical**. So we don't know what God is. We don't know where God is. Excepting hearing He might be in *Vaikuntha*, *Kailāsa* etc. But truly we have no idea. But here is a tremendous fact - that God and his name भगवान और उनका नाम (*Bhagawān aur unkā nām*) are identical.

So if we think of God, His name will come to our mind. If we think of His name, God will come to our mind. And if we can take the name, because we have not much knowledge about God, but we must have faith in God. And we have faith in God, we are repeating God's name. So this name, नाम and नामनी

(*Nāma and Nāmani*) The name and the named are exactly one and the same. You cannot separate them. So by repeating God's name we are only, really, taking hold of God.

Sri Rāmakrishna had given a beautiful example there. There is a man, In a village. And once he got hold of a big treasure, and he didn't want anybody else to know about it. He took this treasure, and went at midnight, went to the local pond. And he buried that treasure, keeping it in a box, deep in the pond. But then it is not a mere pond, it is a tank, big tank. So he might forget. So what does he do? He tied a rope to that box and slowly brought it to the shore, that rope. And he marked a particular place and buried the rope on the shore at a particular spot, which he remembered, like our master password.

And thereafter whenever he wants to catch hold of the treasure, what does he do? He goes to that place, holds on to the rope, and holding on to the rope – slowly the rope takes him to the treasure.

This is the analogy. The rope is compared to the name. And the treasure at the end of the rope is none other than God. It is for explaining, for ordinary people, the relationship between God and God's name.

Take God's name, like a staircase, like a bridge – it takes one to God.

But the truth is that, really speaking, there is no difference between God's name and God. The name of God is glorified in every scripture practically. And one who repeats that name, what does it do? The name of God destroys, washes away, all sins and impurities.

Indeed there are some devotees who claim, who maintain, that the name of God is even greater than God himself. There is a beautiful song in Kannada of course most of you may not know this - *Nīnyāko ninna hāngyāko ninna nāma vondiddrare sāko* - I don't want you, I don't want anything belonging to you. But if I have your name, I am more than happy with that. So he goes on telling that when *Draupadi* was in distress she did not think about God, she only cried out *Krishnā Krishnā*. And that *Krishnā* was like the person tied at the end of that name, that rope called *Krishnā*, and He had to come and save her.

Similarly *Prahalāda* called *Nārāyana* and He came. And *Dhruva* called *Vāsudeva* and He came. *Mirābāi* called *Gopāla* and He came. So, so many examples this *Purandaradāsa* gives that God's name is much much greater than God Himself. I don't want God. But of course it's an eulogy. It means that God and God's name are not merely different, not that. But for us it is easy to take God's name.

(45:06 mins)

Then I have to remind you in the life of *Sri Rāmakrishna* there was one great lady. She was called *Gopāla's* mother. She was later on called *Gopāler Mā*. She was a widow, uneducated and ugly looking also I have to tell. And she was leading the life of a child widow. But she had a great desire, naturally like any other good woman, 'I want to be called a mother'. So she took to a particular spiritual devotional *Bhāva* called *Vātsalya Bhāva*. *Vātsalya* means parental mood. It has got two varieties -

- 1) we can think of ourselves as children. I am a child of God. God is my mother and father.
- 2) Or I can consider God as my child. I am the mother. Like *Yashodā*, like *Kaushalyā*, like *Sri Rāmakrishna* playing with *Rāmlāla*

So this lady adopted that *Vātsalya Bhāva*, 'I am the mother, you are my child, I call you *Gopāla*'. And she did not know anything, excepting she was initiated into *Gopāla mantra*. For 33 years from morning till evening, most of her time was spent only in repeating God's name. And that is how after 33 years she had the vision of *Gopāla*.

And then she, by that time she was acquainted with *Sri Rāmakrishna*. And curiously the day she had the vision of *Gopāla* was early morning. And she was living 3 miles away from *Dakshineswar*. And her house was completely locked. Early morning she completed her *Japa*, and when she was about to offer the result of her *Japa* to her *Gopāla*, *Sri Rāmakrishna* suddenly appeared.

She was shocked, 'How did *Sri Ramakrishna* enter into this room? And why is He here at this time'? Then suddenly, He changed into her *Ishtha Devtā Gopāla*. She caught hold of him and she played with him until morning came.

This story is beautifully written in *The Great Master, Sri Rāmakrishna the great master* by *Swāmi Sāradānandā* in 2 parts. The story of *Gopāla's* mother 1st part and 2nd part. I'm only giving the bare details, to illustrate that one can attain God through purely *Japa*, of course done with *Nishthā* and *Bhakti* and *Shraddhā*.

So for 33 years she did, and she became perfect. And this is the belief of every devotee, if we take God's name, and such people are called *Bhaktās* or devotees, that is one sure way to realize God.

Then there are so many books written on the greatness of *Bhakti Yogā*, greatness of God's name. Very briefly, I'm going to tell about - there was one *Rūpa Goswāmī*, a disciple of *Chaitanya*, and he wrote many books, but one of the best books is called

Bhakti Rasāmrita Sindhu. And there he says there are 64 forms of devotion. I do not need to go into all those details, but of these 64 forms there are 5 main forms.

- 1) Keeping the company of devotees.
- 2) Singing the divine names.
- 3) Hearing the scriptures.
- 4) Staying in a holy place.
- 5) And serving the image, the deity with devotion.

So, according to *Vaishnava Sampradāya* tradition there are 3 tenets. And *Sri Rāmakrishna* had expounded them briefly on many occasions. These are called

- *Nāme ruchi*
- *Vaishnava sevā*
- And *Jīve dayā*

- 1) ***Nāme ruchi*** means a devotee must have tremendous joy in repeating the name of God - *Nāme ruchi*, just like a tasty food attracts us, So the name of God should attract us.
- 2) 2nd, whenever we see sincere devotees of God, come across devotees, *Sādhus*, saints etc. We must try our level best, to the possible extent, to serve them. That is called ***Vaishnava Sevā***. And by their blessings and when they are pleased, we will become, go nearer to God.
- 3) Then what about other people? There are so many people, they are not devotees, they are worldly people. We should not look down upon them, or hate them. But we should look upon them with compassion - ***Jīve dayā***. *Dayā* is the attitude with which we deal with those people, speak with those people, and do some action and reaction with those people.

(50:21 mins)

Once *Sri Rāmakrishna* while expounding these 3 tenets of *Vaishnavism*, He approved whole-heartedly of the 1st two - *Nāme ruchi*, *Vaishnava sevā*. Then He came to the 3rd one, simply He said, He entered into *Samādhi* state. After some time He came out, and He said, 'You are a wretched creature, You are a bound creature, you have no power. Who the hell are you to show compassion? No, no, no, not compassion! But ***Shiva Jnāne Jīva Sevā***'. Looking upon the other person as another manifestation of your *Ishtha Devtā*, you render service to that person as much as you can.

Swāmi Vivekānanda heard it and said, 'Today I heard the greatest spiritual truth, reconciling *Karma Yogā*, *Bhakti Yogā* and *Jnāna Yogā*. If an opportunity comes to me, I

am going to broadcast to the whole world'. And that's what He did when He went to the Parliament of Religions.

The point we're discussing is the 1st commandment in spiritual *Sādhana*, that is *Satsanga* - cultivate holy company! Of these taking the name of God is one of the most important things.

And when we are taking the name of God, then we should be very careful not to commit any sin, *Aprādha*. Though according to devotional scriptures there are 10 such sinful things we can commit. This is a most beautiful thing. In today's class I will just mention it, and slight brief explanation.

So, when we are taking God's name, we should not commit these 10 faults. What are these?

- 1) **Disparaging genuine devotees.** Never criticise any good devotee of God. If you do, your taking God's name will only take you to commit more sin. That means what? Revere every devotee of God. Whoever it is, a Hindu, Christian, Muslim or Jew or Buddhist - anybody.
- 2) **Regarding God as absolutely different from his names, forms and qualities.** Earlier we discussed - name of God and God; similarly the form of God and God; similarly qualities of God and God are not different. If you are taking the name that is God only. If you're thinking of form of God, It is God only. If you're thinking any quality of God, you are thinking God only. So if you think they are separate, then you are committing a sin.
- 3) **Showing disrespect for one's *Guru*.** Never show disrespect. Even if He scolds you, even if He slaps you, even if He mistreats you. Once you have accepted your *Guru*, He is *Brahmānanda*, He is *Paramānanda*, He is *Parmeshwara*, *Brahmā*, *Vishnu*, *Maheshwara*. In that light only you have to regard Him. Because it is you who have to progress in spiritual life.
- 4) **Speaking too lightly or contemptuously of the sacred scriptures.** That means never consider any Sacred Scripture as ordinary book. Much less never criticize a scripture. If you don't understand properly, ask somebody how to understand the statement in the Scripture, which appears to be puzzling you or appears to be wrong. But never criticize. Because every scripture is the expression of a saint's realisation.

- 5) **Considering the glory of the Divine Name mentioned in the scriptures as mere eulogy.** When we read in the Scriptures, many places it says, even if you take God's name once, कोटि कोटि जन्म का पाप नष्ट हो जाएगा (*koti koti janm ka pāp nasht ho jāygā*) Don't think it is a big praise, inducing you to take God's name. This is the absolute truth. Never take the name of God lightly.
- 6) Then **considering the Divine Name as imaginary.** Don't think that you are endowing God with a Divine Name. No! God is His Divine Name, and you're asked to think of that name as God Himself. And that is the truth. So don't think I am creating God. In fact, God has created us.
- 7) **Committing sins repeatedly, and intentionally, on the strength of the Divine name.** So, there are many people in the name of God, in God's name they do murder. And many religions do that. In the name of God they cheat others. In the name of God they spit on what they sell. In the name of God they do so many unimaginable things. If anybody commits, he is not a true devotee of God. And we have to conscientiously, consciously, we have to avoid committing this set of sins.
- 8) **Regarding the repetition of the Divine name as equal to other spiritual practices.** Never consider repeating God's name as equivalent to any other spiritual practice. Meaning repeating God's name with the highest and best form of spiritual practice. Its result is unimaginable and cannot be compared to any other spiritual practice.
- 9) **Imparting God's name to unworthy persons.** Never give God's name to persons who are worldly, who look upon it as merely a sound, a word, and do not respect God. When you come across such people, quietly withdraw, saluting them that God is inside them. But never give it to unworthy people, those who do not know God's name.
- 10) And lastly, **wanting taste for the chanting or hearing of the Divine Name, even after listening to its excellences.** What it means is that if we do not feel happy, joyous after listening to God's name, while we are repeating or listening to other people, then there is something seriously wrong with us. We have to pray earnestly to God, 'O Lord, I'm not able to take delight in your name. Out of Your boundless grace please bestow this joy'. Because once we get joy there is no other need for doing anything. But that joy itself will take us to God Himself.

These are called 10 *Aprādhās*, 10 faults. While taking God's name we should be aware of these 10 faults and take care not to commit them. And I can tell you, if we can take God's name in the right spirit, avoiding all these 10 sins that we are likely to commit, then God's name will fast take us towards God, and we will become blessed.

One important point I want to point out. Even while practicing spiritual discipline in the form of taking God's name, we can get so much joy that you forget about why I am not progressing. Simply go on depending upon God like a child, and take great delight in God's name, and go on doing *Japam*.

And *Holy Mother* assures us, *Holy Mother* means *Sāradā Devī*, that 'जपात् सिद्धिः' (*Japāt siddhi*) Through *Japa*, you don't need anything else, that itself will correct you and guide you. And see that your obstacles are removed. And it will take us to God in the quickest possible way. These are just a fraction of the merits of God's name. And some of these points, we will discuss in our future classes.

Om tava kathāmṛtaṁ tapta-jīvanam

kavibhir iḍitam kalmaṣāpaham ।

śravaṇa-maṅgalaṁ śrīmad ātataṁ

bhuvi gṛṇanti te bhūri-dā janāḥ ॥

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