

The Mystery of Divine Name

Om. A-sa-to ma sad ga-ma-ya. Ta-ma-so-ma jyo-tir ga-ma-ya. Mri-tyor ma-a-mri-tam ga-ma-ya. Avir avir ma e-dhi. Rudra yat te dak-shi-nam mu-kham. Tena mam pahi nityam. Tena mam pahi nityam. Tena mam pahi nityam.

Lead us from the unreal to the Real. Lead us from darkness unto Light. Lead us from death to Immortality. Reveal to us Thy Resplendent Truth and ever more protect us O Lord by Thy Sweet and Compassionate Face.

The subject of my talk this morning is: The Mystery of Divine Name. Most religions believe in the power of God's Name and in their prayers and meditations they include this Holy Name of God. This part is universal, but when we come to the details, we find that even through this universal belief there are differences. There are many points of bitter quarrel, misunderstanding. And even oppression.

Now in the Old Testament of the Bible we read the glory of the Divine Name. [Also in the New Testament] in Christ's prayer, the Lord's Prayer, it begins, "Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be Thy Name." That is quite clear, but as Christianity developed and Jesus Christ appeared on the scene, Jesus Christ was looked upon as the Son of God. And even God, Himself as Christianity grew, the faith in Christ also grew. And along with that faith came a dangerous thing, which is called dogmatism.

So in the Christian tradition, the name of Christ, the Name of God is hallowed no doubt, but it must be the name of Christ. If you repeat the name of Rama, then you are doomed. [laughter from crowd] It must be Christ and Christ alone. And so too in Islam. There are many devout people, people of great faith, but the name of their God is Allah. You *must* repeat the name of Allah. To Christ they have given a little concession, because both are Semitic religions and many things have [in] common. So they acknowledge the name of Christ, not they would advise the adherents of Islam to repeat the name of Christ. No that must be Allah, but they have respect for Christ. But not for any other names. It must be Allah.

When you see the Muslims, hundreds of Muslims in clean white dress, and a cap, clean white cap leaning down and praying before the mosque to Allah, you are really impressed at their devotion, their faith. They have to... A Muslim has to pray five times a day and they are at liberty to take five [four] wives. But it must be the name of Allah. So they are not hesitant to slaughter people of other religions who do not accept Allah. There has been history, in history examples how the Muslims massacred the Hindus. And why? Because they did not accept the name of Allah. They might accept the Name of God, but God is Allah. Allah is the only God. A child can see the fallacy of this dogmatism, but wise men cannot. So in the name of religion there has been so much tyranny, so much oppression, so much quarrel that it is a bitter chapter of history.

God, if you accept a God as the Lord of Creation, Lord of Sustenance, eh.. as Ultimate Master and give all glories to God. If we read the Qur'an we see there are so many prayers, so many prayers describing the glories of God. And describing what is the duty of the faithful. The same thing you find in other religions also. If you read in the Hindu books there are prayers, the same types of prayers. In Christian books, the same type of prayers. God is all Love. God is all Compassion. Compassion... We are all

children of God. But the question is what God, what Name? There the trouble comes. And that trouble is continuing. A Christian who wants to have all people, all humanity to be Christians in the name of Christ. The Muslims wants all people to be Muslims, all... for the name of Allah. The Hindus, among themselves they have many Names of God, many forms of God because they accept that God can be formless and God can also [be] with form – which neither Christianity nor Islam will accept. And that is why they hate; they call them nonbelievers. If you do not believe in one God –who’s Allah, or Christ then you are doomed. But the Hindus are wiser, because in their ancient wisdom, revealed in the Vedas it has been made clear [chants sanskrit] “The truth of God is One, but that truth can be described in many ways.”

So it is quite natural that there should be many gods, I mean many manifestations of God, and many names. And moreover the Hindu religion as it developed – and all people have not of the same types. Some people can comprehend higher things, impersonal things. Others cannot. So in order to give opportunity for all people, they have... these simple lessons have developed in India. Not in Vedic times. In Vedic times there was only the ritual of sacrifice, offering to different Vedic deities which are personification of the natural forces, the wind god, the sun god. All the natural forces we see, their declaration was that these are manifestations of the One Supreme Lord, Brahman.

So some people would like to worship these manifestations: the sun, the moon, the air, the fire. Hm? There is no end to the manifestations of God in this world. And Hindus believed that at the back of all these diversities there is the One, the One Supreme God. And if some worshipper or some meditator has the strength, has the capacity to contemplate that Highest Truth, then it is fortunate, but others cannot. So others need forms, different forms – sometimes male [animal?] forms, sometimes human forms. So they have these different Names of Gods – hundred of names—corresponding to hundreds of forms. Some male forms. Some female forms. But for the Hindus there is no confusion in their mind. They said, “Just as I am a worshipper of Shiva and I like to sing Shiva’s name, there are others who like to mediate on God as Krishna and they would sing Krishna’s name.” Unfortunately as time goes, many difficulties come in religion. So in the Hindu religion also, some sort of dogmatism, sectarianism have come, have shown. But that is not the dominant feature of the Hindus, the dominant feature is: however different may be the forms, one form from another, one name from another, God is One.

Through worship through the image, the meditation and singing your favorite Name of God, -- it may be Shiva, it may be Rama, it may be Kali -- you will eventually progress in your spiritual life. That guarantee is given. And so the holy Name of God – it may be God as Mother. But even God as Mother in the ... in Hinduism, different forms have been, have become prevalent. Like the Mother as Durga, Mother as Kali, Mother as Jaggadhatri. And Mother has many other forms. In Sri Ramakrishna’s house there was an ancient deity of the Mother called Sitala. See? And in Holy Mothers’ village, Jayrambati, there is a temple of --- Singhabati. The name is Singhabati. And worship of Singhabati. But there is... there is no quarrel, no dissention. You like to worship that way you do, but no, the Vedic teachings [chants Sanskrit] “Truth is One, but Sages have described that One in many ways.”

Now the Upanishads describe that Om, the holy word Om, is a symbol of Brahman. The holy word comprises *everything*. So that is a very difficult philosophy to understand – that the name, the word and the corresponding object is really one. So God and His Name are not different. When you are repeating your favorite God’s Name, you know that this name is God. This cannot be experienced when our mind is in the normal plane of diversity. But those fortunate people who have really loved God and they are practicing the contemplation of God through a holy Name. So their mind by that practice, because they are sincere people. They have not... their religion is not just a formal affair. But we... if you have deep adventure in life, just as we have many adventures in life, many ideals in life. We have intellectual life, our family life, our professional life. We like to progress. Progress is the great ideal of man.

So when a person comes to religion, he also has a great ideal. And he tries to follow that ideal as best as he can. That ideal is what in the Bible, Lord Jesus Christ has described, “Love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, with all thy mind, with all thy soul.” Love. Love of God. So when one practices, one should know and as I said, ordinarily we come to churches, or we go to temples, we go to mosques. The Muslims for example, they have a time five times a day, if they have not opportunity of praying five times, at least one time they will go. On special occasions and festivals. Very impressive. They will repeat the name of Allah and pray to Allah. But they do not acknowledge this philosophy which we find in India, that the Name is the same as the object. There is no difference between God’s Name and God.

This philosophy can be understood by the sincere aspirant as he grows in his spiritual life. He starts with little faith. Faith is not... Faith is natural to man. Without faith we cannot live our life. We have to have faith in our father. Yes, this man is my father. How do you know? You do not know who is your father. [audience laughs] But by faith... if that faith is gone, if a child begins... a suspicion comes that this man cannot be my father, then his whole life becomes miserable. When we go to shop and we see nice mangos. Hm.. We ask the shopkeeper: “Are these mangos good?” “Excellent. Excellent. Excellent.” Yet when we buy stock and I buy, I spend and one dozen, one whole box of mangos. Coming home you open one and find it is worthless. Only outward show.

So we only have to have faith in our lives. When we wake up – the first thing we remember: Am I alive? Eh... I must have the faith that I am alive; then other things can come. So faith is such a wonderful power in our life. We apply that power of faith in our practical life in many fields. But when we come to religion, sometimes that faith seems to be absent. In place of faith, we have numberless doubts. Is there a God? We try to seek in books but books do not help. Books bring more confusions. But that person is safe who has... who has started with a little faith, a grain of faith in the language of Jesus Christ. “If you have a grain of faith, that faith will become a mountain.”

So a sincere spiritual aspirant starts with [a] little faith. He has chosen, or he has a spiritual teacher who has pointed out to him that this form of God is suitable for you and I am giving you this holy Name, this mantra and you have... you should develop great faith in this mantra and ... and you will see this mantra, this holy word, though it is so simple, but it will bring wonders and wonders and wonders to your life if you carry on this mantra with, with great sincerity and love. And that is a fact. In... in the history of

religions we have found... we find people who have through the practice of Name have experienced wonders in spiritual life. They have developed so much purity in our... in life. We are always troubled with our mind. We are always troubled with our selves. We begin to hate ourselves. We are... We remember our past misconduct. Many sins. We have created many sins, we have. And so the mind is very much depressed. But our teachers gave us this courage. If you have the holy Name, if you repeat, if you have faith in the holy Name, and your chosen Ideal, then don't be afraid. All the past errors and mistakes will be, will be... destroyed. Such is this Holy Name. [It] has such power, which you will feel more and more as you practice. You practice Holy Name and if the thought of some past mistake or misconduct comes, throw your Name, Holy Name to that misconduct. And that misconduct will go away; it will never come.

So by the practice of Holy Name we can create a new life for us. A life that was sinful, a life that full of wrong ideas, temptations, passions. All these can go by the practice of Holy Name. But as I said, these things happen not in the normal plane of life. Only when through some practice we have progressed – your mind has gone from this normal level, waking level to what you say, a mystic level. Man lives on many levels of life. We live in the waking state; we live in the dream state; we live in the sleep state; and there can be many other types of states in which we can live. So through the practice of repetition of name, Holy Name, which sounds so simple, and naturally doubts can come, but a faithful person remembers the words of his teacher. [The] teacher has said, the scriptures have said: the Holy Name is the same as God.

And who is God? In Vedanta, Vedantic books, in the Upanishads, God's Name is Brahman. Brahman means The Whole, the All-Inclusive, the Greatest. So in God there is everything. In our normal life we desire so many things. We have so many desires. But when we come to serious spiritual life and we repeat the Holy Name of God, then all those desires are fulfilled *in* God. Because in God there is no lack of anything. For us little human beings there are so many things to achieve. When we go to a big department store, our mind is attracted in so many ways. Oh how nice it would have been if we could have that thing, that thing, this thing, that thing. When we go to a university, we see the courses given and well how nice it would be if I could be a master of, not in one subject, but if we had four degrees. Like that there is no end to our desires. This world is attracting us in so many ways, in so many desires. But these desires become subdued in the spiritual level of life. When we go to our hour of contemplation, hour of communion and repeating the Holy Name, then really mysteries begin. Begin to happen. We find that, day by day, all those restlessness of the mind, running after so many desires, it is becoming less and less and less and less. [The] mind is becoming calm. And not merely calm. The mind is developed, developing many qualities which we could not dream before. We read in books about God-- God's splendor, God's holiness, God's love, God's compassion. Tidbits of those God's [qualities] are begin[ning] to show in my life also. I see where after meditation, when I come back to this normal world, we find this normal world has changed – is changing for me. So much love is coming from where I do not know. All human beings..formerly I used...I had so much hate for some persons and so much love for other persons. But now I find that a spirit of sameness has come. I am looking [at] all people, all human beings as living gods. God is present not only in myself, but in all human beings. The same God.

Now each [of the] religions speak of the brotherhood of man; we are all children of man, but there is a fallacy in that statement. Really they have not experienced what that cosmic, that universal brotherhood is. The Muslim can love another Muslim because he professes the same religion; he prays to the same Allah. But things have [been] changing. Muslims are also fighting among themselves. Even though they are Muslims, they are praying to the same Allah, but that is not working in the secular [world]. So there is war. In our days we have seen Muslims fighting Muslims, Christian fighting Christians. Religion does not help. Help can come only when you go to a deeper level, spiritual level. A person who has... through his days of contemplation, has repeated the Holy Name of God, he can find that unity. When he comes back, for him there is no difference between a Muslim and a Christian, or a Hindu. He feels that the same God. God for him is spirit. His Brahman means: the totality of existence, all love, all knowledge. So that God is present, not merely in me, but in all human beings.

Then real love comes. Then real compassion we can feel. We can feel compassion not merely for... if he is a Christian, not merely for the Christian or not merely for the Jews, not merely for the Muslims, but for all human beings we can find that oneness. And this feeling comes from the experience, the practice of the Holy Name. Day by day... day after day, we have to practice this and that practice will bring superior spiritual knowledge which we can apply in our practical life. A superior knowledge and love will grow, and then I myself become a center, a tool of God. Just as God's compassion, God's knowledge has no end, so I also feel that from where I do not know there is so much knowledge coming – spiritual knowledge. The spiritual knowledge--one spiritual knowledge is about myself, my own identity. Normally my identity is mixed up – mixed up with my body, with my mind, with my life principle, with my desires, with my ambitions. But a person of serious spiritual life which he has developed through the practice of Holy Name, he feels this identity in another way. He does not spontaneously feel that he is this body, or he is this prana, this living principle, or he is this mind, but he feels himself as a flame of God, as a light of God.

Jesus Christ said in one place, "I am the Light of the World." That is spiritual light. In another place he said, "Ye are the Light of the World" – meaning all human beings, all worshippers, all who have come to God, they are really lights, spiritual lights. So a person who has practiced the Holy Name, this great mystery is unveiled to him: the unity, the unity of the world. One God. In his contemplation he experiences One Reality, One God who is Love, who is Knowledge, who is Compassion and is pervading the whole world, living and nonliving. There is One God. And this to him is not just a theological statement, but it is an experience. And that experience is ... has transformed, it slowly transforms his life. He feels that I am, I belong to God. I am not this body. I am not this flesh. But within this flesh there is a conscious principle and that is me. I am the servant of God. I am the child of God.

In this way, by the practice of Holy Name, brings to us many wonders in life, spiritual wonders by which more and more you begin to feel unity. Unity in this universe ... external universe. The external universe, this material universe is so vast that we sometimes feel that we have no place here. The universe is so vast that I myself am insignificant. That is our normal experience, but not for a spiritual person who has practiced this Holy Name and slowly he has changed his feelings, his attitudes. He is bound to feel that unity. There is unity; the whole infinite sky is in my heart. All that we

see in the external world are really not so different. In God the Spirit who is in my heart, they have all unified. So this [divine?] person feels the whole universe in his heart and his mind. The distractions of his mind go away. The mind becomes calm, and when he comes back to this world he is a different person. He is a person who can... who has no enemy. God's love has through and through pervaded his own being, his body, all his senses. His eyes, his ears, his other organs in his body he feels that purity. That is described in the Upanishads the... how a man can change his own body. Can change his own mind and prana. He has another birth [which] is called devajumna(?). He has a divine... even though he is living in this body of flesh, he is, really he is divine. He has experienced divinity. He has experienced that God who is Brahman, who is All-Inclusive. That God is not far away. That God is in my heart, is shining as a flame. So this person who is practicing the Holy Name of God, more and more the spiritual mysteries unveil to him. He feels in his own body the presence of God. He looks... He looks... when he looks at the mirror at his own face, he sees "Oh, whatever beauty is there in me, in the face, is God's beauty." Godliness pervades his character.

So all these things can happen through this Holy Name. When one thinks, reads about spiritual life, he has to read so many things and he thinks it is hopeless. He has to practice this, he has to go there, he has to go there. But this is a very *simple* way. It is pointed out by the great teachers of many religions, that God is omniscient. He knows your heart. If you feel love for Him, He will fill your heart with divine love and your life will be blessed. When you come back and live your normal life, you won't have to give up your normal life but your normal life will be blessed with purity, with compassion, with love, with knowledge. And that is a blessed life.

And so saints and seers in all ages have praised this, this spiritual life, this spiritual life at its depth. It is a blessed life. We have not run away from the world. We have not forgotten your duties or responsibilities, but through the practice of this Holy Name of God, your mind has become pure. Your heart has become a... a center of peace. You feel that this whole world is in my heart. God has come down to your heart. God who normally we think, "He lives in a distant heaven" we begin to feel His presence in our heart. See? We feel that God is here. God is not merely here, more and more he begins to feel that God is everywhere. So through that Holy Name, through that Holy Name he can experience God in all situations of life. Even when death comes, he does not forget this Holy Name.

We have in our country, our great leader Mahatma Gandhi. He was assassinated, you know. Somebody disguised as a bhakta was going to take the dust of his feet. He was walking to a prayer meeting and this man shot him. Hm? And Mahatma Gandhi died, fell down with the Name of God, Rama. Hai Rama. That is the expression he used on the.. when he fell down. So a deeply spiritual person who is practicing this divine name, he knows that all is God. Even death is God. Even my suffering, if I have suffered through some catastrophe in life, that is also God. That is not... because God is responsible for this creation, but in this creation there are anomalies. There are contradictions. If you see it with your blind eyes, but if you have developed through this practice of Holy Name, divine eyes, then you can see that unity in all beings. For you there is no difference between a saint and a sinner, between a man and a woman, because you have reached, you have experienced what real unity means. It is God who has become all this. Why, if you ask why... the bhaktas, the devotees say, "We do not

know. We do not know, but it is God's play." It is God's play. God has given us precious life but he also is giving us the precious death. Life and death are the same play of God. Different play. All these are the possibilities we have in the practice of Holy Name, in the Name of... In order to have spirituality we need not do many strange things. We have to have faith in simple things, simple things which illumined teachers have told us. Repeat the Name of ... the Name of God, knowing that the Name of God is one with God. Whenever you are repeating the holy mantra, you feel that God, it is God who is living in your body, in your senses, in your mind.

So a simple practice of Holy Name, if done seriously, can really bring great spiritual changes in our mind. We seek joy. We seek the blessings of knowledge. Sri Ramakrishna used to say that when I speak, that people would come and listen for hours to his talk, what he was saying. But Sri Ramakrishna said, "It is not my saying. It is my Mother, my Divine Mother who is supplying me all this knowledge, all these words of wisdom." So these people, these types they have no ego. They feel the presence of God in their heart. So such are the possibilities of Holy Name, the Holy Name of God, whether it is Om, whether it is Siva, whether it is Christ, whether it is Allah, does not matter. Whether the [name of] God is impersonal, like the Muslims. The Muslims do not like any forms. Does not matter. But God... There *is* a God, a living God, a God who is, who is with me. This basic faith becomes stronger and stronger by the practice of Holy Name.

--announcements—

Om Madhu..... Sweet blow the winds and the very oceans give forth blessedness. May the herbs and plants bring us health and happiness. Sweet unto us be the nights and dawns. May every particle of mother earth be charged with blessing and may the heavens shower us with benediction. Sweet unto us be the noble forest trees. Sweet unto us be the shining sun. Sweet unto us be all living creation. Om. Sweetness, Harmony, Peace.