

not only for the welfare of those nations, but also for India herself. The very process of giving activates the creative powers of a person. A person who is always at the receiving end, and has nothing to give to others, finds life meaningless; he becomes uncreative and a burden upon others. This is true of nations too. Said Swamiji:

Give and take is the law; and if India wants to raise herself once more, it is absolutely necessary that she brings out her treasures and throws them broadcast among the nations of the earth, and in return be ready to receive what others have to give her. Expansion is life, contraction is death.<sup>17</sup>

What this statement implies is this: rejuvenation of India is primarily a process of spiritual rejuvenation, and this is possible only by giving spirituality to other nations which are in need of it. When the

<sup>17</sup>. *Complete Works*, 4: 365

cultural channels are cleared and spirituality flows freely through them, the nation will regain its creative vigour and material prosperity.

To maintain the transmission of spiritual knowledge to other nations, India must replenish and build up a vast store of spiritual power. Several of the ancient *paramparās* (lines of teachers) and *sampradāyas* (traditions) have already become extinct. Whatever has survived has to be preserved and developed further. For this we need competent persons. Spirituality is not an intellectual or emotional exercise. It is the unveiling and focussing of the light of the inner Spirit. It can be attained only by those who are endowed with renunciation, purity, selflessness, devotion, courage and grit. It is by producing such persons that India can rejuvenate herself and fulfil her historical purpose.

## THE MESSAGE OF RAMAKRISHNA-VIVEKANANDA: THE PANACEA FOR ALL THE ILLS OF TODAY\*

SWAMI BHUTESHANANDA

The subject of today's lecture is, how we can remedy the evils of the present-day world by following the ideal of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda. It is very difficult to establish a proposition that the ideal of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda will set right all these evils. Ills are of various kinds: we feel some of them directly, while others affect us indirectly. These may be divided into two groups: those which affect us

individually and those which affect us in our collective life. The problems which affect us individually are inadequate food, clothing, shelter, literacy and finance. We also need a source of cultural development. Then we need the satisfaction of the emotional and spiritual aspects of our personality. Every human being tries to overcome these shortcomings through individual struggle in his own way with his limited resources. Collective ill is those which affect our life as members of the society. They include a wide range of problems involving the laws of the land, the people of the land, the people around

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us, the countries that are just beyond our borders and so on.

To be successful in life, a man must make a perfect adjustment within and without, by bringing about some changes within himself as well as outside. The question is how these changes are to be brought about. Man needs not only the primary requirements of food, clothing and shelter, but also security. He expects his neighbours to be sympathetic to him, to help him in times of need. Otherwise he will suffer. We shall see how the ideal of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda can help us in this regard. We shall view the problem very dispassionately.

Sri Ramakrishna taught in a language intelligible to all people. Even an absolutely illiterate man could understand his teachings. But the deeper meanings of his teachings generally elude us. Swami Vivekananda interpreted these plain teachings in a way meant to draw out all those deeper meanings. With Swamiji's interpretation, we get a different picture of Sri Ramakrishna altogether. Once Swamiji mentioned that the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna were very pithy and pregnant with meaning and that many books of philosophy could be written on a single piece of his teaching. To illustrate this point, Swamiji took one teaching of Sri Ramakrishna and explained the idea to a brother-monk for seven days continually. The brother-monk then realized how profound and significant the Master's teachings were.

So a teaching may be simple in the surface but it requires a genius to understand its deeper implications. Hence the ideal that Sri Ramakrishna represents does not correspond fully with what we mean by it because we can think of that ideal only according to our capacity and level of understanding. But when we see how his teachings were interpreted by Swamiji, we wonder why we never thought there was

so much meaning in every one of them. Swami Vivekananda once remarked that whatever he had spoken came from Sri Ramakrishna and, if he had mentioned anything that proved harmful to any one, then the responsibility was his own, since he had failed to interpret the teaching of Sri Ramakrishna properly. So guardedly did even Swami Vivekananda, the great genius, speak of Sri Ramakrishna. The teachings of Sri Ramakrishna may look simple on the surface and escape our understanding when we hear them casually, but they are very profound and full of meaning which we fail to grasp. Only great concentration and pondering over its significance will reveal its true meaning. We need Swami Vivekananda's help in interpreting Sri Ramakrishna. That is why we bracket Ramakrishna and Vivekananda together when we try to understand their teachings. It is often found that later generations dilute a saint's teachings and read different meanings into it so much so that their interpretations may sometimes even run contradictory to the saint's teachings. To guard against any such misunderstanding that may creep in the near future into Sri Ramakrishna's teachings, we should always treat the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda as an integral one.

Now, coming back to the original topic, some ills are universal: they encompass every country and every individual. Previously we were concerned only with our own State and Country, but now we have to consider the whole world: so small has the world become owing to technological advancement. In the present context, let us see what the ideal of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda can do for the betterment of the world.

Each individual is a unit of life and the society is composed of such units. So the evils affect everyone else as much as it

does myself. What is the main trouble that we are suffering from? What is the root cause of all our problems? To speak very briefly, it is our selfishness. Each man thinks only of himself and is indifferent to the sufferings of others. If the individual is all right, the whole world will be all right. We need not worry about the other evils that are spread everywhere because their ultimate source is our own self. It is our egoism, our own limited vision that sees the world with all its good and evil. If our vision is absolutely pure, then there will be no discord, no difference, no evil or ugliness anywhere. That is what all the great saints of the world have taught. We see with evil eyes, so evil comes before us more and more. How is this to be changed? Jesus says in the Bible, 'You see only the speck of dirt in your brother's eyes, but ignore the beam in your own eyes. Remove the beam from your eyes first and then you will have clear vision and you will be able to help others.'<sup>1</sup> We do not try to free ourselves from the evil perspective projected by our deluded eyes. So we are incompetent to help others. The main thrust of Sri Ramakrishna's teachings is: improve yourself first. How is this to be done? Swamiji explains: 'Free yourselves from selfishness. Selfishness is the root of all evils, individual as well collective'. If we free ourselves from this defect, the world will be set right immediately. But we fail to understand this, and hasten to help others without improving ourselves.

What is our true Self that the scriptures speak of? Our true Self is not the body. We generally identify ourselves with the body and therefore become subject to all the ills that go with the body. The *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* says: 'If one knows one's own self not as it appears but as it really is, then, out of what desire, for

what reason will one suffer with the suffering of the body?'<sup>2</sup> The body cannot be free from the inherent defects that go with it. It has inevitably to pass through the stages of birth, existence, growth, transformation, decay and death.<sup>3</sup> We think we are the body and identify ourselves with all the changes that take place with it. And this identification with the body is the cause of our selfishness and the source of all evils. We have to understand this clearly.

You may say this is very philosophical and not practical. In India it would appear as if boys and girls were born with philosophical ideas. The story goes that in Navadvip, the famous seat of logic, even birds talk logic. India is a land of philosophy. But when it comes to the application of philosophy in practical life, we miserably fail. The teachings of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda will not have any value unless we have applied them in our practical life. We talk of the One all-encompassing Reality, but in our behaviour see difference between man and man. This is because of the selfishness that we have inherited. Selfishness means to look upon oneself as a unit to the neglect of the other units of life that are around us. The great saints always remind us of the oneness of the whole universe. If we practise their teachings, the whole world will automatically change for us. India's glorious heritage has been these teachings and they should not simply remain in books.

Swami Vivekananda says that we are

2. आत्मानं चेद्विजानीयाद्यमस्मीति पुरुषः ।  
किमिच्छन् कस्य कामाय शरीरमनुसंज्वरेत् ॥

*Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 4.4.12

3. जायते, अस्ति, वर्धते, विपरिणमते, अपक्षीयते,  
विनश्यति

1. cf Matthew 7:3

all the descendants of ṛṣis. But we are not even a little liberal, even a little free from selfishness. We are not able to look at our neighbour with sympathy, but we talk of the One Spirit pervading everything, *eko devaḥ sarva bhūteṣu gūḍhaḥ*.<sup>4</sup> We suppress other people and rise at their cost. We want to have more privilege than the others. We want better opportunity to enjoy name and fame. Now, this selfishness is at the root of all the evils we find in the world. It is better to understand these evils philosophically than to remain confused by their outer forms. If we try to rectify them at their source, it will be easier to challenge them and ultimately gain supremacy over them. So what is necessary now is the conquest of the mind and, through that, conquest of the whole world. Free yourselves from base selfishness and you will become a saint. The Indian ideal is that. But we Indians only talk of higher things but never practise them in life.

Sri Ramakrishna always lived in the highest spiritual plane, yet when he came down to ordinary human level, he used to pray to the Divine Mother, 'O Mother, do not make me indifferent to the sufferings of the world. I do not want Samadhi. I want to be of service to the whole world.' Sri Ramakrishna knew nothing but God and boasted no education, but his mere knowledge of God was enough to make him sympathize with and love the whole world. He did not distinguish between man and man. Vivekananda made a great mark in the world, not because he was a lecturer of a high order, not because he was a brilliant speaker or a scholar well versed in the scriptures, but because of his love for humanity. This love for mankind was taught to him by Sri Ramakrishna. Once

when Sri Ramakrishna asked Swamiji about the aim of his life, Swamiji replied, 'I want to remain immersed in Samadhi, coming down from that plane occasionally only to take a morsel of food and then again merge in that state.' At this Sri Ramakrishna chided him saying, 'I thought you were a much bigger personality. I thought you would be like a great banyan tree which spreads its branches all around under which many weary souls would come and take rest. Instead of that, you are eager for your own happiness.' Even if it be spiritual happiness, Sri Ramakrishna did not want Swamiji to enjoy it all by himself. He wanted Swamiji to live for others. A great and skilled artist that he was, he moulded Swamiji after his own great ideal. And Swamiji acknowledged his debt to Sri Ramakrishna. He said, 'I am what my Guru has made me.'

Unselfishness is the ideal that Ramakrishna-Vivekananda hold before us as the only means to free the world from the evils of today. All the evils of humanity arise from selfishness. We want to rise above others and be a superior person. We want to have more power over others. We want to enjoy the world more than others. We want to retain our individuality as a single unit. The Upaniṣad declares: 'Man is but a fraction of a hundredth part of a hundredth part of the tip of a hair. But he has also the potential to become infinite.'<sup>5</sup> The small bit is capable of becoming infinite. Our smallness is due to identification with the limited body. Once we understand our true essence, we become boundless, infinite. This is the core of the teaching of Sri Ramakrishna. We shall see how this teaching can be applied in the practical every-day life.

<sup>4</sup> एको देवः सर्वभूतेषु गूढः ।

*Śvetāsvatara Upaniṣad 6.11*

<sup>5</sup> बालाग्रशतभागस्य शतधा कल्पितस्य च ।

भागो जीवः स विज्ञेयः स चानन्त्याय कल्पते ॥

*Śvetāsvatara Upaniṣad 5.9*

We have shrunk ourselves into a small shell. The shell has to be burst, or it has to be dissolved. The bubble has to be merged with the ocean. As the *Kāthopaniṣad* puts it: 'Just as a drop of water falling into an ocean of pure water becomes one with the ocean losing its individuality, so also the human soul, after getting rid of limitations caused by body consciousness etc., becomes one with the infinite self.'<sup>6</sup>

This teaching has to be practised in our life. We have tried other methods and have not succeeded. Let us now try this method of forgetting the notion of our individual limitation by identifying ourselves with the whole world. This, in a nutshell, is the panacea for all evils. Wherever you find evil, know it for certain that it is caused by one single factor—selfishness. And selfishness is caused by identification—identification with either one's own body or with a group, a particular caste, community or nation. All these limitations deny the One Reality. They negate the highest Truth. Our scriptures teach us to get rid of this smallness. Let us be identified with the whole universe.

People say they are backward, they are undeveloped, they are developed, they are small, they are powerful, they are weak etc. All these notions stem from the idea that they are the bodies. If they can get rid of this idea, the whole universe will be transfigured. All the evils will then cease to appear.

You may say it is not practical in the sense that we cannot attain to it immediately. But we have to proceed step by step toward the ideal. If we gradually change our outlook taking the highest ideal as our goal, it will be possible to get rid of all limitations and differences in a methodical

manner. Without this ideal, there is no hope for a better world.

If we spread this ideal of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda, people will slowly understand the beauty of it, its efficacy and potency, and will get gradually transformed in course of time. This is a slow but sure process of emancipating the world. Sri Ramakrishna ingrained this teaching in Swamiji who preached it to the whole world. Gradually we will have to purify our vision and see God residing in all souls. The whole world will be transfigured. Not that there will then be no differences, or that every thing will vanish, but these differences will not confuse us. They will not make us limited or forgetful of the needs of others. We will feel oneness with all, and spontaneously help others. As we try to remove evil from us, so we will help to remove evil from others too. We will be happy with ourselves as well as with others.

Says Śrī Kṛṣṇa: 'He is the supreme yogi who sees the joys and sorrows of others as he does with regard to himself.'<sup>7</sup> He will forgo his own happiness to make others happy and share the unhappiness of others in difficult situations. We should cultivate wide sympathy, and follow the ideal of live and let live. Not only that; we should be prepared to die so that others may live. We must sacrifice ourselves for the sake of others. Sri Ramakrishna sacrificed his beloved disciple for the sake of the world, and we see how much benefit the world has gained in a short span of forty years through the untiring service of Swamiji. Swamiji did not believe in piecemeal reforms. He desired a root-and-branch transformation of the whole world, the spiritual conquest of the whole

<sup>6</sup>. यथोदकं शुद्धे शुद्धमासिक्तं तादृगेव भवति ।

एवं मुनेर्विजानत आत्मा भवति गौतम ॥

*Katha Upaniṣad* 2.1.15

<sup>7</sup>. आत्मौपम्येन सर्वत्र समं पश्यति योऽर्जुन ।

*Bhagavad-Gītā* 6.32

world. Conquest does not mean anything in the material sense but it means the conquest of our own narrowness. You will find that this is the quintessence of the whole of Swamiji's teachings, all other teachings being merely elaboration of this one idea—to make every man realize his true Self, that he is the eternal Atman, the immortal soul free from all limitations.

Sri Ramakrishna has said that a hungry man cannot think of God. It is ridiculous to preach spiritual ideas to a hungry man; you must give him food first. Similarly an ignorant man needs education. Every one should be helped, according to his need, to manifest his own real Self by getting rid of all limitations. But all these forms of help should have the ultimate aim of God-realization in view. Swamiji said, 'When a man is hungry, know that God is waiting in that form to be served with food. When a man is ignorant, God is waiting there to be served with knowledge. When a man is devoid of education, God is waiting

to be worshipped with education. Whatever is lacking in any man, God is waiting in that form to be worshipped with that proper requirement.'

We are trying to remove the differences between nations through organizations like the U.N. But they don't serve the purpose fully because we do not approach the problems in a spirit of dedication and helpfulness which is necessary to solve them. Any piecemeal solution will only shift the problem to another plane. It is like the legendary Mahiṣāsura who took different forms when his forms were being destroyed one by one. In a similar way, evil also takes different forms. This evil will be eliminated only if all of us together get rid of our selfishness. Let us hope that through the grace of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda we will all be gradually enlightened and will be able to adopt this ideal in our lives. May we all realize our oneness with the whole universe. May that blessed day soon come to all of us !

## THE PLACING OF MANTRA

SWAMI SHRADDHANANDA

Mantra-Nyāsa or placing of a Mantra is an important part of ritualistic worship in Hinduism. Special short formulas or 'seed' words (Bīja-Mantras) are repeated and 'placed' at different areas of the body by a movement of the fingers or palm. This is Nyāsa. The idea behind it is that the particular places by this touch become mystically enlivened. 'Worship of the Divine is to be performed by first becoming divine' is a well known maxim.<sup>1</sup> As a first

step in this divinization process, the worshipper tries to purify his body and infuse spiritual power into his limbs at the beginning of Pūjā through *kara-nyāsa* (Nyāsa on the fingers), *aṅga-nyāsa* (Nyāsa on the body) and *vyāpaka-nyāsa* (extensive Nyāsa). The general practices followed for this are comparatively easy. But in Tantrika worship complicated Nyāsas are prescribed. This placing of Bīja-Mantras varies in procedure according to the particular deity worshipped. One has to learn these mantras and methods from Pūjā books. In the practice of Nyāsa, much imagination and concentration are called for.

1. The original statement of this principle in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (4.1.2-7) is:

देवो भूत्वा देवानप्येति

It appears in modified forms in the Tantras.

Apart from ritualistic worship, some