

The Repetition of God's Name

One of the new possibilities that those coming into contact with the Vedic way of life discover is the repetition of God's Name. Normally, the first inclination to have a Mantra, to repeat the Name, is because some contact has aroused within us a recognition of something higher, of something so precious that we do not want to lose the connection. Perhaps it is a teacher, or an *āśram*, or a particular deity. We want a Mantra, we want to repeat the Name to maintain that connection.

How do we repeat the Name? It can be verbally, it can be with our lips but silently, or it can be entirely mental. It doesn't really matter, although the objective is to repeat it mentally so that ultimately it will start repeating itself in our mind either continuously or spontaneously. Sometimes when it spontaneously repeats itself it is giving us a message, sometimes it is giving us assurance regarding a worry. Perhaps it will repeat itself when we are in holy company. It has a life of its own.

The scriptures tell us that the Name and what is named are one. For example, if we say the word moon, immediately a picture of the moon comes to mind. If we say anger we know immediately what anger is. If we say compassion, immediately a feeling of compassion can enter our consciousness. So when we repeat God's Name the reality of God can be brought into our consciousness.

How does this work in practice? Our teachers assure us that God is both transcendental, beyond thought, unknowable, and also immanent in the world. If we're repeating God's Name in our mind, especially during meditation, then gradually we can see the repetition of the Name going on in our mind. We can recognize that we're not doing it; it is just appearing. Appearing from where? From an emptiness within. What could be that emptiness? We will recognize that it has to be the presence of God.

Still further, what is it that knows that emptiness, that knows that repetition? We haven't the slightest idea, but we have come across the true mystery, the true unknowable, that which is superior to all. And we can't deny that it is I who knows that emptiness, who knows the Mantra that is appearing. Therefore, I and that unknowable must be one.

But then, God is also all that is. He is immanent in everything. And as we practice the Name, in some mysterious way, it becomes identical with all that is known, whatever we can think, see, feel, hear, touch or smell. This becomes especially important to us if we're in some danger or supposing we're concerned about a loved one. Suddenly, spontaneously the Mantra will appear in our mind, and we will see God in the situation. We will know that whatever is happening, God is present, and we will normally feel at peace. When we hear disturbing news, such as the present tsunami tragedy, the Mantra can just appear in our mind, and we will know that in spite of all the horror, God is present in every speck of it. Either a certain peace will enter our heart, or we will still be certain of God's presence.

Thus there are great sages who say that repetition of God's Name can do everything for us. It is not different than God Himself. After all, what is it that we are seeking except to know our oneness with God and that we are seeing God everywhere? And that is the possibility presented to us through the repetition of God's Name.