

Japa

One of the unique features of the Vedic way of life is the universality of the repetition of God's name. Not only is it a supplement to most of the other practices, but teachers like Pāpā Rāmdās say that the Name alone can lead us from bondage to liberation.

However, Pāpā Rāmdās also used to say that while any repetition of God's name will be beneficial, it should be done with understanding. To understand its benefits we have to recognize the truth of the scriptures that mind is the cause of both bondage and liberation in the human being. Therefore, it is because of its effect on the mind that repetition of God's name is of benefit to us.

The mind binds us because it thinks that we are the body and mind and the ego. Because it thinks that, it is totally absorbed in them as reality and wants them to last and prosper at all cost. Liberation is to be free of this illusion that we are something fickle and temporary—like the body, mind and ego—and are actually what is eternal, never changing, everlasting. To know that without a shred of doubt, nay, to become that is liberation.

But before the mind can be transformed from its fickle and erroneous nature to being firm in the knowledge that we are not the body and mind, the mind has to learn how to concentrate. Repetition of God's name helps to teach us how to concentrate the mind. It also has the effect of getting our mind off our body and directing it towards something that is eternal. Thus our mind becomes introduced to that which is everlasting and never-changing rather than being continuously focused on that which is ever changing.

Ultimately, as the mind becomes steady through repetition of God's name, it can reflect on what it is that knows the repetition of God's name. It will recognize that something within us is the witness of all the activities of the mind, including the repetition of God's name. It will then begin to understand that there is an ultimate mystery behind everything that is known and that that is our reality.

Even repetition of God's name can only introduce us to the mystery. The final goal, which is in God's hands, is that we become that mystery and

all differences disappear. But whether we take help from any other *sādhana* or not, Pāpā Rāmdās would say, and others have found it to be true, that repetition of God's name alone—done with understanding—can take us from the deepest bondage to the final liberation.