

## All Names are Divine.

The lists of divine names current in different religions are only illustrative and not exhaustive. They, at the best, represent the childish attempts of man to measure the infinite glory of the Divine with finite vessels of names. Really speaking, for a believer to exclude any name from the all-inclusive name of God is a blasphemy. All names are His. This truth is beautifully illustrated in the following anecdote:—

“Verily in the beginning all this was *Brahma*. It created the gods; and having created the gods, It made them ascend the three worlds—Agni, this terrestrial world, Vāyu, the atmosphere, and Sūrya, the sky. And the deities that are above these It made ascend the worlds which are above these; and indeed just as these three worlds and these three deities are manifest, so those higher deities are manifest in those higher worlds which It made them ascend. Then the *Brahma* Itself went up to the sphere beyond. Having gone up to the sphere beyond, It reflected: ‘How can I descend again into these worlds?’ It then descended again by means of these two: Name and Form.” (*Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* XI. ii. 3)

Thus not only the great gods and the great worlds are divine in their nature, but all the names and forms derive their being from the Divine. Therefore, the realized soul does not hanker after obtaining the World Beyond but takes delight in feeling the presence of God in the so-called ordinary things of the world, viewing them as so many representatives of his Deity.

What is theologically experienced is also philosophically true. The pure *Brahma* free from all predicates is an indefinable reality. When It is revealed to the world of mind, it becomes the concrete bliss or *Ananda*.

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And this bliss, through the further process of evolution, realizes itself in all the objects of the world. What are these manifest objects but names and forms? To an illusionist these may be mere shadows, the false glory of the *Brahma*; but to a *bhakta* or devotee, who reveals the concrete bliss, they are the Ideal Realized. Every name and form fills his heart with the presence of the Supreme Being.

In the Upaniṣads the most sacred and the highest name of the Absolute is *Aum*—It is the highest because It is the all-comprehensive. According to them, the three Vedas, the three worlds, the three orders of society are created out of this word. This highest name of God is, really speaking, not an articulate word, like other words, indicating the different categories of objects in the universe. Had it been so, its very possession of certain meaning would have been the limitation. Being free from the bondage of separative articulation, It is the basis of all sounds and all words. The *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* says, “AUM is all this. Whatever is heard is AUM. The Sāmas sing AUM. All the scriptures praise AUM. The priests utter AUM. *Brahmā* introduces AUM.” Here we see that the name of God includes not only the learned speech of the erudite, nor only the articulate words of human beings, but also the chirping of insects, the humming of bees and the warbling of birds.

The holy name of God transcends the boundaries of language and race. As all beings in the creation of God breathe the same air and exhale the same sound, no word uttered by them can fall outside the source of sound, God. The phonetic and linguistic differences caused by geographical factors are there in the languages of

different peoples, but they express the same thoughts, the same feelings and the same will. For instance, 'Īśwara' of Sanskrit, 'God' of English, 'Allah' of Arabic, 'Khuda' of Persian, etc. convey the same concept to the hearers. The ignorance about the all-pervading name of God has been the cause of many religious strifes in the past and in the present, where people cling to their own nomenclature of God and decry those evolved by other people.

The logical sequence of what has been said above is that the most suitable name one would like to give his God is 'Name'. The other names are only fragments of this basic whole. The great Hindu poet-saint, Goswami Tulasidas, experienced this truth and maintained the superiority of 'Name' to its fragments: "*Brahma* has two aspects, the qualified and the unqualified. But in my opinion 'Name' is the greater than the two, as It has brought them both under Its control." Though he was a great devotee of Rāma, to be sincere to his religious experience, he recognized the excellence of 'Name' over the name of his favourite Deity.\*

When one departs from the basic name and comes into the world of manifestations, all names being the expressions of the same Divinity, are equally divine. The novice in the

\* We think when Goswami Tulasidas calls the 'Name' as superior to both the Qualified and Unqualified aspects of Divinity, he uses the word 'Name' ( नाम ) clearly in the sense of the word 'Rama', as is apparent from the chaupais beginning from 'बंदो नाम राम रघुवर को' ( I bow to the name 'Rama' of the Paragon of Raghus ). It is this name which Lord Siva is stated to whisper in to the ears of those who leave their mortal coil at the sacred Kasi ( काशी मुक्ति हेतु उपदेश ); it is this name which Valmiki ( formerly Ratnakara, the robber ) repeated in a reversed order ( as 'मरा' instead of 'राम' ) and was transformed into a saint thereby— 'भयउ सुद्ध करि उलय जापू'; and it is this name, again, which is declared to be equal in efficacy to a thousand other names ( सहस नाम सम सुनि सिववानी ). The poet further analyses the name 'Rama' into its component letters and declares them to be superior to all other letters—'एक छत्र एक मुकुटमनि सब बरननि पर जोउ'. The poet leaves no doubt in our mind as to the superiority of the word 'Rama' to all other names when he makes Narada elsewhere beg the following boon of the Lord:—"Although, my Lord, you possess various names, each one of which the Vedas declare as

love of God's name may object that all names cannot be sacred; we observe in this world antithesis between good and evil and the names have associations pertaining to the one or the other. But little does he realize that this antithesis is a creation of mind falling short of the ultimate reality.† The existence of evil is only in the world of duality. The moment the idea of unity dawns upon our minds the antithesis is dissolved and a complete harmony flows out from the reality. The world changes in correspondence to the inner change in the heart of man. When the ideas of sin and evil die out in him, the whole world becomes pure and blissful.

The mature love of the name of God gives an insight to His devotee, through which he sees and feels the presence and glory of God in every name. The chord of his being vibrates with the tune of every name, no matter from what lips it drops. To him all gods and prophets are divine, all men and animals represent God, all creatures hail as divinities, all things are holy and all names are divine. This doctrine of the indwelling of the Divine may provoke a moralist to condemn it as system of pantheism where, according to him, moral values are confused. But pantheism in the sense of immanence of God is an essential feature of all true religions.

superior to all others, let the name 'Rama' surpass all other names in destroying sins. Let this name shine as the full moon in the firmament of *Bhakti* while other names twinkle as so many stars." And the Lord grants it. —Editor.

† Although this is true from the Vedantic point of view where all names and forms are mere shadows, the *Bhakta* treasures the name of his Beloved Deity as more valuable than anything else. To him every sound is transformed into the name of his favourite deity and all forms take the form of his Beloved. Lord Siva goes on repeating the name 'Rama' eternally even though He is by His very essence above all distinctions. Moreover, the stage where all distinctions of good and bad disappear is not easy to attain. So long as this stage is not reached it is incumbent on all aspirants to take to any of the Divine names recognized in the Sastras and avoid all useless jargon. By doing so he will attain that stage which is said to be above all distinctions or will develop that insatiable thirst for the Divine Name which will not allow him to forsake It under any circumstance. —Editor.