

### Freedom of the Soul

Om. A-sa-to ma sad gam-ma-ya. Ta-ma-so-ma jyo-tir gam-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 evermore protect us, Oh Lord, by Thy Sweet and Compassionate Face, by Thy Sweet and Compassionate Face, by Thy Sweet and Compassionate Face.

The Freedom of the Soul. That is the title of this morning's lecture: The freedom of the soul. What is our soul? The soul is the most essential element of our personality. The soul is the source of our very existence. The soul is the source of all our knowledge, and also the source of all our joy. The soul is so important to us, but unfortunately we do not know this. We behave as if we have no soul. That is very unfortunate. That is not unfortunate for our practical life, of course, because our practical life can go splendidly even without knowing the soul. The soul does not mind. The soul does not expect gratitude coming. The soul says, "I am constantly giving you your reality, your very existence."

Nothing can exist without the soul, and there are not many souls according to Vedanta. There is only one soul, one undivided, infinite, timeless reality that is holding everything: great things, the small things, the tiny things. Everything is resting on the soul. The soul is reality itself, existence itself. We are experiencing existence all the time – broken pieces of existence. Everything that we realize **has** existence and this existence is changing. It is broken. It is limited. But this existence, which is coming from the soul, is not limited. It is... it has no limit. It is timeless. It is never born. It never changes. It never dies. That is the picture of the soul, seers of truth tell us in Vedantic scriptures, and they say that this experience, the realization of the soul, direct knowledge of the soul is possible for us. If we care... if we want to, we can experience our soul. We can discover our true nature.

But this is not necessary for our practical life. For our physical life, for our emotional life, for our intellectual life it is not necessary to have Self-knowledge. Self-knowledge comes into the question when we are seeking the meaning of life, our true destiny. We are not satisfied with this changing pattern of life, with all these experiences of duality. Our hopes, side by side with our hopes there are frustrations. We want certain things; they do not come. They come a little. We want happiness. It does not come. It comes a little, but it is clouded, surrounded by misery. We want health. It comes for a certain time but there is always the fear of illness and finally death. We want to be here eternally. Who wants to die? Everybody wants to enjoy life... as many years as possible. But that is not possible. Death is always frowning to us.

So this life as we live is not really very clear and very transparent. It has its problems. It has its contradictions. And when man thinks of this, man cannot even satisfy [it] with what is coming to our experience every day. Our normal desires and fulfillments, the mind craves for something deeper. There is a

craving in each man. That craving may be sleeping, but sometimes it will come. That is called: spiritual search of man. And man is not satisfied with what is going on on the surface: in my body, in my mind, in my family, in my surroundings, in this whole world – I am not satisfied. I see some... I want something deeper. I want to solve this mystery. Why there... is this contradictions? Why not eternal life? Why not endless happiness? Why not endless health – no disease? There is a craving for this, for this eternal, unchanging state of things.

In my body, in my mind, in my health, in my family, in my happiness there is the craving for man for the changeless, for the eternal. But the point is, if we seek the eternal here it does not come. So the mind sees and when the mind sees this, he is on the level of spiritual inquiry. He is seeking something deeper, something unchanging, something that will solve his doubts and confusions and his fears. That is called the spiritual search of man. And fortunately for man, the answer is there. There have been seers. There have been sages, men and women who had asked this question and found the answer in the discovery of that true reality. That true reality is not in some distant heaven. It is closer... is close, close, close to us. It is our soul. That is the simple answer, if somehow we can touch ourselves. We touch our head; we touch our ear; we touch our body. We can think of our mind but we have to go deeper, deeper, deeper. And we can touch our soul.

We can know our soul and knowing our soul means being the soul. We are... we have identity no doubt. Our identity is constantly changing. Our identity is like this: I am a man, I am a woman, I am an American, I am white, I am black, I am fifteen years old, I am thirty years old. I am learned, I am this, I am that. Endless series of changing identities is coming to us. This moment I can say I am happy. And after one hour I am miserable. You see? So our identity is constantly changing. Identity as the body is not constant. This body makes you healthy today; it will make you sick tomorrow. This... this... this moment you have all your teeth and after two years you may lose three of your teeth.

So the identity with the body cannot be a changeless identity, an identity on which we can rely: I am this! We cannot also identify with our mind. The mind is constantly changing. This moment it is bright; the next moment it is dull. This moment it is happy; next moment miserable. So, the true identity comes when we know ourselves as we are eternally. Fortunately for us that it is not a daydream. It is the truth of all truths: man's true nature. Man is... is his soul. The soul is not matter; the soul is not body; the soul is not mind; the soul is not ego; the soul is not an emotion. The soul is not a vacuum or void or emptiness. The soul is full, full! So full that everything is included in it. These are the declarations of the seers who have seen the soul, who are conscious of their soul. And they say, "By the knowledge of our soul, we have solved the mystery of life, the riddle of existence. We have become free from all doubts and all fear." That is the promise and they say don't think it is a poetical fancy. It is very real. But then quiet has to come. The desire has to come.

Normally when we are too much satisfied, with our occupations, then the soul, it stays. The soul, has to be there. Without the soul we cannot function. We cannot exist without our soul. I am saying that even when we say, "I am the body; I am the mind" the sense of existence, the feeling of existence is coming from that only one source, namely our soul. We are having knowledge all the time, knowledge of this, knowledge of that. We are conscious of this consciousness.

Without consciousness we cannot function a single moment. But this consciousness is coming from the soul. So the first thing is the desire to know the soul. And when that desire is there, it is possible for us to discover our soul, because the soul is not distant. The soul is functioning all the time. The soul [is there] even in our knowledge of things we see through the eyes. The soul is there when we hear the sounds. The soul has to be there when we are awake, when we are dreaming, when we are asleep.

At no period and at no single moment we can be away from our soul, just as we cannot be away from the space. Wherever we go there is space. Wherever we go there is time. Can we run away from time; can we run away from space? In the same manner – in a deeper manner—we cannot run away from our soul, because soul is more fundamental than space or time. Space and time are projections of the soul.

So when that blessed moment has come that we are, we have been eager to discover our true nature, our soul, then we go at it slowly. There is no magical way to discover the soul overnight. We have to satisfy the conditions. We have to satisfy the disciplines that are necessary, and we have to have courage. We have to throw away many of our prejudices and preconceptions. Then we are ready. Our mind must be free, because it is a scientific inquiry, which is not theology. Just as when we are going to study a particular science if we have some bias in the mind, if we have some preconceptions, which are against the truth which we are seeking, then we cannot attain the knowledge. The mind has to be a free mind.

So if we have some theological bias, if we say "Oh self knowledge this way, the Bible does not speak of this" all right, be satisfied with your Bible. Your mind has to, when you go to study science, do you carry your Bible there? You don't, because you are studying science, which has nothing to do with what is written in the Bible. In the same manner, we have to be free from all conceptions. If we have too much bias about God, about heaven, then we have to wait. We should remember, it is just as we are studying our brain. We have a brain and the scientists have studied the brain. We have the heart; the scientists have studied the heart. If the operations of the heart go against your religious faith, then you cannot study that scientific truth.

So the soul is a part of my very existence. Just as I study my hand, my muscles, my bones, my mind in psychology, my brain, in the same manner we have to study our soul, the deepest truth of our nature. And what is the benefit? The benefit is endless, inconsiderable benefit, because it goes to the root of life. It frees you from all your ignorance. And it gives you what you are seeking – peace, real peace, the peace that cannot be disturbed by anything. We are

seeking life; we are seeking immortality. That immortality is in the soul. If we can discover our soul, if we know that we are at a certain level, we have to pretend that we are the body; we are the mind. But really speaking we are the soul. When we have the knowledge of soul, the body does not disappear, the mind does not disappear, but they are, they stay in their proper place. They cannot rule us anymore. Right now the body is ruling us. The mind is ruling us. Our ego is ruling us. We are slaves to the body, to the mind, to our emotions, to our passion, to our desires. We are really slaves. But when we have known that we are the soul, the body may be there, the nature may be there, the world may be there, but we have not [been] slaves any more. We have become free, free from all bondage, free from space, free from time. Is it not a very profitable goal? It is. When we are conscious of our spiritual life...when we are conscious of our spiritual life, we came to touch our heavenly nature, our inmost nature. That is our soul.

What are the methods? We have to start from where we are standing with the desire to inquire. We have to question. We have to connect all possible data. Normally we do not. If some data is inconvenient, we avoid that data. It is a study of science; in science you cannot do that. In science we have to be true to facts. If some facts are inconvenient, you cannot ignore them. In the same manner we have to stand where we are and try to see where is the soul. Where is that freedom of the soul? Now the Upanishads, the Vedanta teach us, give us how to proceed. How to proceed!

There are many levels of this inquiry. The first level is developing your interest. There must be love for that knowledge. This knowledge denies first your common, practical knowledge. Your common practical knowledge all the time tells you: you are the body; you are the ego; you are the mind, and this world is the be-all. The all, all around goal of life is this world-- worldly happiness, worldly pleasures, name, fame. Now the seers of truth tell us, "You can carry on with your worldly occupation, but know that there is something higher. If you can have that knowledge, then all you that are seeking here will be rooted in that knowledge. So we have to grow a love for that knowledge. We have to grow it -- start with the faith, the faith, that it is not a myth; it is not a poetical fancy. Even though I cannot see it, but I am living with it.

In the core of my personality, there is the real me, my real self, which is all the time giving me the notion of my existence. It is making all my knowledge possible. It is making all my pleasure and happiness possible. It makes me have faith in myself. I have faith in things which are completely faithless! I have faith in my... the body and the body, it betrays me all the time. I have put faith in my mind and the mind can betray me at any time. I have faith in this earth and this earth one day quakes. I cannot really have faith in any changing thing. Let me have faith in myself, my true self, my soul, which can never betray me. If I can discover my soul, then I can be really at peace. I can be really immortal. I can be really omniscient, all knowledge in the mind. Living will be great fun then. Now living is merely life in a prison. There are bonds and limitations and wars on all sides. Really it is not a life worth living, in the true sense of the term. Real

living will come when this knowledge will come, when I shall know what is this world? What is space? What is time? What is this body? What is this mind?

When I have known my soul, then I have the true answers. So we have to have shraddha, faith, faith in myself. It is not calling that faith in God, some God in distant heaven, because I do not know. But me, me... it is me! It is not distant; it is closest to me. Even my sense of myself, my ego is coming, is grounded in my true self. So we must have a faith in this knowledge, in this wonderful truth, in this knowledge which will solve me, which will free me from my prejudices, my fears, my fear of hell, my hope for heaven, even my God. When I have discovered my self, then I will know the God whom I was worshipping all the days was my soul. My soul is the highest truth of God. There, unless I have... there are gradations in the truth of God sometimes. We worship God, in the form of a... an image, a symbol, a picture, an idea. So many ideas of God. Each may be necessary; each may be helpful. But they are changing. I cannot free myself from doubts about God. Even a God to whom I pray and sometimes He grants my prayers – sometimes He does not! Sometimes great doubts come about God.

Is there a God? I was faithfully worshipping Him and sometimes He heard my prayers. And now what has happened? My dear wife has died. I prayed to Him for one, continuously for one month without sleeping, but He has not listened to me. My dear wife has been snatched away from me. What kind of God is He? So these doubts do come to us. But, so if we have knowledge of our true nature, then we are in a position to know what God is. Then we shall know the real God, the highest God is my soul, is that infinite soul which is projecting everything, which is holding everything, which is dissolving everything. Then finally we know that the soul is not doing anything. And the highest knowledge of self comes when we know there is nothing else but the Self, the ultimate Unity, where life and death have been combined, where space and time have disappeared. All duality has disappeared: One. Even that [is] indescribable, even we cannot say "One." What that ultimate truth is, the Upanishads tell us cannot be described by words. Our mind cannot reach there.

So when we have self-knowledge, really we are wise, we are omniscient. We know what is what. We know what life is, what matter is, what time is, what space is, God is, heaven is, hell is. We are not afraid of anything. We have become really omniscient. We have gone above all the questions of life. Such is the possibility. So we must have a faith in ourselves. People may call me a sinner. People may call me a weakling. People may call me a fool. All these designations related to me, may be there, but I should have the faith that there is a nature in me, there is a truth of me which is above all these designations. On that level, I am neither a man nor a woman, an American nor an African, a mortal, a god or a devil. I am the soul. I am the self, the ultimate reality. Such faith should be there.

Such faith comes. We have to study this, this knowledge from... from the words of illumined seers. The Upanishads tell us, the seers of the Upanishads tell us: we have discovered the soul! And, you also are an heir to this wonderful knowledge, this wonderful truth. There is one verse in one of the Upanishads,

the Svetasvatara Upanishad which Swami Vivekananda when he came to this country and addressed the Chicago Parliament of Religions he quoted that: “Srnvantu visve amrtasya putra a ye dhamani divanyi tasthuh” [2:5]<sup>1</sup> “Oh children of immortal bliss” calling all humans, human beings, gods, angels. This seer, when he has realized his own true nature, he, out of the joy, out of the fulfillment of the fulfillment of his knowledge, he is addressing all beings, here or there. Hear o ye children of immortal bliss, I have discovered that Infinite Truth within me, that Infinite Being by knowing whom one becomes immortal, one becomes free from all fear or any doubts. So the call means, you are also [that].

Great spiritual teachers who have realized God, who have realized knowledge, they cannot remain quiet. They want to share their wonderful treasure with others. Lord Jesus Christ did that. Lord Buddha did that. Sri Krishna did that. Ramakrishna did that. See? So this sage is telling us that there is a truth, there is a treasure, which each human being is carrying, and I have discovered that treasure. And you too can discover that treasure.

So when we read these things, the study of these great teachings, these are part of Vedanta discipline. It is called satkaya [?]. First is shraddha, faith – faith in my destiny, my true nature. Even though I cannot see it, it is there. I must reach it some day. That faith. And in order to strengthen that faith, we have to have company of people who are... who have discovered that truth. See? And their teachings, their assertions, their declarations, when we read these, think of these, then our faith grows. And that faith eventually becomes experience.

Now the first besides this shraddha or faith and wisdom, this hearing, is contemplating about these wonderful truths which you find in the scriptures, in the Upanishads, in Gita, in the sayings of great saints and sages who have realized this truth we have to spend some time in contemplation. The first thing necessary is to feel the transience of things. Not that I am running away from life, but I have to throw away my deception, my self-deception, my delusion. I am thinking that this body is eternal. I am thinking that I am going to live here all the time. These are delusions, self-deceptions. So one has to think about his own body. This body is wonderful and living in this body, but this body is something constantly changing.

It is called, this discipline is called watching. I have to watch my body and I must not ignore any data about this body. This body may tell you, “I am your friend; I am healthy; I am happy.” The body is lying to me! The body is not... is suppressing that truth that this body can also be sick. The body can have endless troubles in all its parts: in the bones, in the cells, in the nervous system, in the circulatory system, in the digestion. But the body does not tell you that.

The body only tells you bright things. You see how wonderful it is to eat, how wonderful it is to look, how wonderful it is to touch. But at the back of all these things there are dangers, hidden dangers. But the body does not tell you that. So in this contemplation, we have to take all possible data about this body, meditation starts with this body. Think of this body. This body is great. It is my friend no doubt, but it is... it can change. It does change; every day, it is changing. Finally, it will be extinct one day. One day it will die. So this is the

body: a phenomenon which is composed of constant change. I have to watch. Who is this "I"? For the time being, let this "I" be your mind, one part of our mind, because it is the mind that will help us to rise above all these deceptions. The mind is our friend. The mind that helps us in our inquiry is our friend. The same mind may sometimes turn antagonistic to me. But this mind, tells us that "I" for the time being, I am watching this body. And very soon this idea will come to me. If I am watching this body, who am I?

The watcher and the watched cannot be the same thing. I am watching. As you see this watching is not something very casual. It is a spiritual practice. So one has to sit quiet and think of this body, this changing body. If one can do that quietly, very soon he will discover two things. He will discover that this body, as if this body is in one line before him and I – whoever I am, I do not know right now—but I am watching. And I am not changing. I am watching all the changes in this body. I can remember my body when I was young, when I had not grown long hair if I am woman, when I had grown a moustache if I am a man. I can mentally I can picture myself as a child. This body was a child's body. Now that body has changed, but that change has been continuous.

This contemplation is called watching and if this watching continues, this spiritual seeker will very soon be conscious of the watcher – vaguely, not clearly. But vaguely he will see that I-- the watcher, whoever I may be-- I am watching my body. I can push myself back, thirty years back and watch my child body. And if I am not afraid – that is why the mind has to be free from all prejudices – the mind has to be very brave and this braveness comes at this point. The mind has to watch his old age. Now he may be young, thirty years old, but let him contemplate what will... what this body will be when it is seventy-five years old. His hair has turned gray, and many of the teeth are gone. The muscles have been slack. The backbone has been curved. The digestion has become dull. This... these are facts. Who can deny this? It has happened to that man; it has happened to that woman. It must happen to me if I live to seventy-five years. If I go before that, I can escape. [Audience chuckles.]

So one has to... mentally one has to picture his old age. This beautiful, wonderful, young body has become old. We should have a mental photograph of my body, my old body without any fear. People are sometimes very much afraid of death. They don't want to think of death. See? But here a person has to collect all data, should not be afraid of any data. Whatever happens here is important for me, so at this stage he should watch his future body, and ultimately his dead body. He should visualize. This body in which was... which has lived all these seventy years with so much joy and all, so many children and grandchildren, the drama is over. This body is lying and I who used to lie on a soft bed have been put into the limited space of a coffin. And then, where they are carrying me? They are carrying me somewhere. They are carrying me into a fire, into a furnace. They are burning that beautiful body. They are putting me inside the hole in the earth. There is no air-- suffocation. All these things should come into our meditation. See? This body ... it will happen to this body.

You see, Abraham Lincoln, our great Lincoln, it is recorded in his biographies that once he had a dream. During the war years, he dreamt that he

was walking in the corridors of the White House. He had no sleep. In fact he could not sleep much in those days of the Civil War. So he dreamt that one night he was walking and then suddenly he heard that from somewhere people are crying. So he began to walk in that direction, and he found in one corner some men and women are sitting around a coffin. They're crying. So Abraham Lincoln, in the dream, he is asking those people, "Who is dead? Who has died?" And they said, "the President." That means he... he saw in his dream that he had died and his body was put into a coffin and surrounding that coffin people are mourning and crying.

Now this dream made a deep impression in Abraham Lincoln's mind. He began to think: what is this? What is immortality? Does man survive death? This question came to him and he began to ask people. Some minister, Christian minister comes --he asks him, "Reverend, do you believe in immortality?" And General Grant comes. He asks him, "General, do you believe in immortality?" He began to ask, you see. And it is said this simple experience changed the philosophy of his life, and in one book I have read about Lincoln that this dream led him to the conviction that in the deepest core of his personality, there is an immortal truth, a real Abraham Lincoln-- the real Abraham Lincoln in the depth of his apparent personality of Lincoln.

So, this seeker has to watch, watching the body and watching also the outside things of this body. This world is beautiful, but is a changing world. This watching should be extended to this whole world, and this watching should be directed also to the mind. One part of the mind is watching and another part is watched. These thoughts are coming; emotions are coming; desires are coming. I am watching. Now if this practice is continued, it will bring a great result. Slowly this man will become more and more convinced that I the watcher am different from what I ... what I am watching, namely this body, this mind, this ego, this time. This time is rolling. I am watching this time. This vast space is extended. I am watching this space.

If he continues this watching, patiently, with courage, slowly he will begin to feel that I am... I the watcher am not mixed up what I am watching. I am really different from this body. I am different from this mind. I am different from what I am watching in this external universe. If he continues... and now is the time again to read and study those great declarations. They say the sages say, "Yes. You, the watcher are that Self, the nature of Reality, the nature of unchanging consciousness. The body goes. The mind changes. The world changes. But you the watcher, are of the nature of existence itself, consciousness itself. In this way more and more conviction comes about myself as the watcher. Then the next practice is: when I have been satisfied that whatever I am experiencing outside or inside belongs to the world of change, to the level of change, but I, the watcher, I am different from that. And side by side with consulting the assertions, the declarations which these illumined souls have told us— then is the time [for] a little directly meditation on the self: I am that Infinite Self, pure consciousness.

Of course, as you can easily see, this meditation cannot really catch [?] the self, itself, because the self can never be an object of knowledge. But still it



is necessary, an approximate meditation; it is helpful. After watching, the body, the mind, and all, then is the time to spend some time directing my mind to think myself as ... as light. Light of consciousness. And when other things come, the body idea coming, thought idea coming at once we have to say, "Go... Go... Not now. Go in the waiting room, living room." We have to push them away. See? It is called the process of negation. These two things have to go together. Whatever ideas are coming, objective idea and of the mind, of the thought of this world, we have to push them away. "Not now. Not now." And [on the] positive side we have to think [of] our self, as the light of consciousness. Now this is not difficult, because all the time we are conscious of consciousness.

All the time we do not know what consciousness is, but we know that I am conscious of this. I am conscious of this. Now Vedanta says, "Hold that experience of consciousness. If you can hold it, then you will see that consciousness that you are experiencing through your sense experience, through your thoughts and emotions is really great, is really infinite. There is no difference in consciousness, the quality. When I say I am conscious of this body that consciousness is the same as infinite consciousness, if you can pursue it. So at this stage one has to bring this contemplation, the consciousness that I am feeling within me, in my muscles, in my mind, in my brain, that consciousness is not merely something limited. It is my free soul—infinite, timeless soul!

We have to-- borrowing this meditation, we have to borrow the words of the seers, in which way they realize and experience and carried out their meditation. So with the help of those words and ideas, one has to carry on this contemplation about the self – my true being – residing in this body at the back of my mind, at the back of my ego – my real self. It is eternally pure. It is timeless. See? It is not subject to anything. It has no death. It has no birth. In this way we have to carry on the contemplation on my true self. And this contemplation has to be enriched as more and more experience comes.

In the beginning we should think that this immortal light of consciousness is within me somewhere, that so the Upanishads prescribe: meditate in your heart. Try to think in your heart, that is the seat of your soul. These are preliminary contemplations, but when we carry on, then we shall... our knowledge, our concept of the self will grow. Then we shall feel really speaking I am not merely in this body. There is no limit to me. Space cannot bind me. Time cannot bind me. I was in the infinite past and I shall be in the future. I am here as also I am in the sun and the moon. You see in this way our contemplation of the self will be enriched by itself. And the study of the scriptures by borrowing the words of experience of the sages is helpful. In this way, our contemplation grows and grows. We really begin to feel that we are of the nature of consciousness. We are not this body. We are not this mind. We are not any desires, any doubts, any fears. All these things belong to my limited surface personality: my doubts, my fears, my confusions. See? All these belong to my surface personality, my empirical personality, my practical personality. But at the back is the real me, real self – ever pure, ever free. In this way through these contemplations and meditations, slowly experience begins to come.

So self-knowledge, self-knowledge has its different levels. First we begin to feel that I am a conscious being, inside this body. So the Upanishads says, Kena Upanidshad says that he who is enabling the knowledge we are receiving through the eyes, the truth that is enabling our mind to move, our prana, life energy to function, it is that innermost truth that is the self [1:2]. So we have to meditate on the self in the beginning, inside this body, as if at the back of my eyes, at the back of my vital vitality, the back of my ego, at the back of the mind. And slowly we have to extend this meditation. We have to think that the self is not space and time. The self is greater than space in the sense that it is consciousness. It is not space; it is not time. So the meditation is extended and enriched when the meditator tries to think that I am really holding everything, just as in a wheel, the circumference of the wheel every point of the wheel is connected to the center by a spoke. In the same manner the vast universe of space, time, operated by the laws of nature, it is connected in the center. And that center is me, the true self.

In this way the comprehension of self grows. We should not be impatient. It grows naturally. We have not to force ourselves. If we have the faith, if you have the courage, if you have the patience, and if we have freed our mind from unnecessary distractions, then self-knowledge, the discovery of the self will slowly come. There is absolutely no doubt. So self, from the body it becomes, it covers the whole universe and eventually the more and more we discover the nature of consciousness, then we begin to feel that this vast material universe is really not material. Eventually it is projection of the self. At the back of matter there is mind. At the back of mind there is consciousness. So this is called integration, the stage of integration.

The meditator begins to feel that the vast universe is really consciousness. And that consciousness is the self. The self is everything. Nothing can be without the self. The self is this vast space, the vast time-space-time-matter, trees, animals, mountains. These are outside costumes of that infinite reality which is you, it is the true self. In this way, step by step, step by step, self-knowledge grows and eventually that highest knowledge comes that the self is the sole reality. It is... we have no words to describe the self. Mind cannot go there, need not go there. So this series of knowledge can come to us, step by step, step by step. So really speaking the self is that ultimate... you ... if you want, use the word, God. You can say the highest truth of God. God who is so close to me at this stage that He has become me, He is no longer separate from me, because he is free. God is not bound any more.

God is really bound. When a person is an executive, is he free? He has to go to his desk every day. He has to control so many subordinates, so many typists, so many secretaries. He may enjoy his position as the top executive drawing say eight thousand dollars a month, but he is not free. He is not free. So when he retires, really free. He's happy. Now I am free. I have nothing to do, only sit there and watch tv and play golf. See? [laughs] He is really free then. Now God, in the role of God, in the role of God is not free. He has to create. He has to listen to the petitions of millions and millions of people, men, women, cats, dogs. [audience laughs]. Everyone is looking to God for protection, see and God

has a terrible time all the time. He has to create. He has to preserve. He has to destroy. If he does not destroy, then there will be an explosion. [laughs and audience laughs] All this population has to be taken away. That is called dissolution. That is also God's function. Sristhi, sthiti, and laya – creation, sustaining and dissolution.<sup>2</sup> So God, so long as He is God, so long as He is the topmost executive of the vast company which is this world, He is not free! But, there is possibility of His freedom. When He throws away all His role as God, He become Nameless, Colorless.

Upanishads calls Him, Nirguna Brahman, Brahman or God without any responsibility, without any specific shell, without any name. He has not to create. He has not to destroy. He has not to preserve. He is as He is –His Highest Truth. Now that highest truth of God is the same as man's highest truth. So God has really come closest to man. Man has thrown away his responsibilities in man, woman, this or that. He has been freed from all his limitations as man, and God has also become free from all His limitations as God. So there is ... God and man have become one. This is described in the Upanishads by the sentences, "Tat Tvam Asi." Thou are that. "Aham Brahmasi." I am Brahman. So God and man becomes one when God ceases to be God and man ceases to be god. Both become nameless. That is – Vedanta says, that is the highest truth of God and that is the highest truth of man. That is the infinite freedom, freedom from all limitations. So that is our soul, our soul which is there even when we are suffering, even when we are ignorant, the soul is there. But if we try, if we are eager, if we grow the faith and if we are eager to find out our soul, we can find Him. And this is the great possibility: our soul is no longer bound, is no longer suffering, is no longer ignorant, is no longer afraid. He has become free from all limitations.

*The subject for next Sunday's lecture is: Sights and sounds transformed. We shall have our usual Wednesday class on the Upanishads next Wednesday, 7:30 as also the Saturday class on the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda, 7:30. Sunday after next, that is July 20<sup>th</sup>, we shall have a guest speaker, who is the head of our Hollywood center, Swami Swahananada. He will speak here on "Self-Surrender." That is July 20<sup>th</sup>, the Sunday after the next.*

Om saha na va vatu; saha nau bhunaktu; saha viryam kara vavahai. Teja svi nav adhi tamastu ma vidvi shava hai. Om. Shanti, shanti, shanti.

May Brahman, the Truth Eternal, protect and nourish us, both the speaker and the listener. May we have the requisite strength and vigor for the pursuit of self-knowledge. May our study of the Vedanta be fruitful in the realization of Truth, and may we cherish no ill feeling toward anyone. Om. Peace. Peace. Peace be unto us all.

1. Svetasvatara Upanisad in: The Principal Upanisads, ed. by S. Radhakrishnan. New York: Harper & Brothers, c. 1953. p. 719.

2. Spelling of Sanskrit words taken from Glossary of Sanskrit Terms --  
<http://www.selfdiscoveryportal.com/cmSanskrit.htm> accessed 10/21/12.