

God's Response to Man

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 subject of my talk this morning is: God's response to man. If we believe in God, we seek response from Him to our prayer. We need God, if not always, in some moments of crisis and we pray. Sometimes God listens to our prayer, responds to our prayer, and sometimes not. If our faith is very feeble, then from that time, we take leave from God. In this moment of crisis, I prayed to You and You did not listen, so I have no use for You. [Audience laughs.] But there are persons whose faith is very strong and unshakeable. So even [if] their prayer is not heard, even [if] God does not listen to their prayer, their faith is not shaken. They don't blame God. They say, "There must be some reason, why God did not respond to me."

In Hindu religion and philosophy and also in Buddhist religion and philosophy there is the idea of karma. Now this karma explains the situation to a great extent. In short, karma says your happiness or suffering is coming from your own past deeds. Whether you do right or wrong, there will be reward or punishment. There is no escape from this law, and God has made this law in order to run this great universe. This universe is run by the law of karma, by the law of cause and effect. So those who believe in the law of karma, they think that this refusal on God's part to listen to my prayer, must be due to some of my past karma. I really was not ready for that, God's gift. So somehow, with the help of the karma, they comfort themselves; they do not blame God. So they go on with their normal duties and sometimes suffering comes; sometimes happiness comes. If happiness comes they express their gratitude to God. And if suffering comes, then they blame themselves, that this is my own doing, my own past doing, my own past karma. This is the general way in which our practical life goes on.

In our practical life, there are endless situations where we may be facing something or we have to desire something from God. We feel alone and helpless. So, the need for seeking God's help is a real need, but those who have the faith in God, they know that God is All-Powerful. He is all Love. We are God's children. Just as in our earthly life our parents, our mother and father listened to our demand. Our demand may be unreasonable, but... father may say, "No. Not at this time." But then we go to the mother. Mother is more compassionate than father. [Audience chuckles.] So mother somehow manages to fulfill our desire. And we are happy. So devotees of God know that God is like our Father. He is our cosmic father. He is All-Powerful. He is All-Mercy. If He

wants, He can at once grant our prayer, save us from our crisis or help us in having the promotion in our job.

So we maintain our faith in God. And that faith itself is a comfort. But sometimes in our life, when we come to a religious life, when we are not seeking God for removing some crisis or saving us from some difficulty or granting us some prayer, some position or money or home or car or wife or husband. In numerous cases man's ends to desires have no limitation. One desire is fulfilled; another desire comes. Another... that desire is fulfilled, the third desire is not fulfilled. But that does not mean, if we have faith in God, that does not mean we give up God. That is our daily practical life. But when we come to our deeper, a religious life, deeper spiritual life, the situation is different. Here we pray not for earthly things. Just as Lord Jesus Christ said, "What does a man profiteth if he shall gain the whole world but lose his own soul. What can a man give in exchange for his soul?" So there is such a thing in man, which is called the soul. Great spiritual teachers have mentioned this.

In the Vedantic scriptures, the discussions on self or on soul is very elaborate. And each religion does believe in the soul of man – a part of man that is permanent, more permanent than his earthly life. His earthly life has a limitation of sixty years, or seventy years, or eighty-three years. In these days it goes to ninety-three, ninety-five, even one hundred five. And then they receive a congratulation from the President of the United States. [Audience laughs and he joins them.] The centenary! You have finished your one hundred years of life.

So when a person is deeply spiritual he does not... he is somehow, he is... he is conscious of the duality of existence. He is conscious that this world is not our permanent home. And all that we seek must have an end. And everything comes to us in a dual form. If we seek health, there is sickness standing at the back. And what kind of sickness? There is no end to diseases and the more science advances the more the number of diseases. [Audience laughs.] You have never heard such diseases, but the doctor said, "Yes it is that." See? So our situation so far as our present life is concerned is very complicated. We call it the dualities of life. In Vedantic language we call it "maya." There must be two. If there is life, there must be death. If there is health, there must be sickness. If there is happiness, there must be grief. If there is honor, there must be dishonor. So things here are in pairs.

In our moments of enthusiasm we do not see the dark side of life, the dangers of life, the dualities of life. We are naturally very optimistic. And we don't see death. We never think of death. We visit a hospital and we see people are lying there to die, but we don't believe that... They may die, but I will never die. [Audience laughs.] We see in a neighbor's house is there, somebody has died and they are making arrangements to take the body to... to the place of funeral, place of burial. We see that, but we do not think that. We tell ourselves, "That does not relate to me. I am safe. I am safe because I have a nice house; I have a nice family; I have a nice bank account. Everything is running, running nicely." But the same man may die suddenly with a heart stroke after five days. These things are happening every day, but we are blind. We are blind to the true

picture of life. We throw an optimistic picture that is... that leads to bondage. In the language of Vedanta, we call it “maya.”

We depend too much on this life, which is really fleeting, which is not permanent. So these people either by the study of religious books or having company of wise persons or by seeing, examining the ways of life or getting some shocks of life, sometimes, just as a doctor in order to cure a pain gives electric shocks, like that often we get shocks of life. My only child dies. It is a great shock to me. Or I lose ten thousand dollars somehow – either by gambling or by bank failure or by some other reason. These are shocks of life and our life is full of shocks. Our life is full of pleasures no doubt, but our life also is filled with shocks.

So there are people who are not blind to what is happening around us. They observe the things of life and then they feel that the solution is to... is to experience this... that which is eternal, who is God. [In] common language we call Him, God. God does not die. God has no limitation. God has no disease. God does not need any psychiatric counsel, because God is perfect. That is why Jesus Christ said, “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect.” So perfection means perfection in all directions: perfect in love, perfect in power, perfect in knowledge, perfect in wisdom. That is perfection. And Jesus Christ says it is possible for man to seek that perfection of God even in this life. That is when, that is when we are soul conscious. We are not conscious merely of our body, or of our mind, or of our life, of our ego -- but something tells us that in the depth of our consciousness there is a deathless entity. We can call that entity our soul, our spirit.

So they try, they seek the wisdom, past wisdom of sages. And the sages say, “Yes. There is a soul.” The personality we call, “you” or “I” this is a complex thing. There is the body and inside the body there is a living principle we call prana. At the back of prana there is mind, “mana” which thinks, which brings us reflection; it brings us desires. And that is mind. And at the back of mind there is another principle called, “buddhi” our ego sense, our sense of determination. Mind is like an open chamber. Mind is like a... is a big shopping center [audience laughs] where you see the people running, running, running, running from here to there, there to here. People are running for things, running for things. It becomes confounded you see. And so our mind is like that. It is receiving impressions, impressions from outside. But in that shopping center you see that even though people are running, running, for some people are seated nicely in one [place]... seeking a shoe or a coat or a pant or something. That means they are... they have come to a determination. They have come to some positive idea that I have to buy this.

So in our... that function of our mind which determines, which has a sense of individuality, “I am this.” I am a man or I am a woman. I am a student. I am an American or I am a... somebody. This thing is done by one part of mind which is called “buddhi” in vedantic language – determinative function. And behind that there [is] the function of pleasure. Man is always seeking pleasure, “ananda.” So these together form our personality. When I say, “I” I do not mean only my body. My body, my mind, my ego, my desires, my success, my failure,

my hope, my frustration -- all this together is "I." Now Vedanta says that this is, this complexity is maya, is not true. It is bondage. You can be free from this complexity by spiritual practice. You seek the advice, the wisdom of the scriptures. You seek the advice of wise men and you think deeply. We practice a little calmness and meditation. You try to go within.

You are all the time seeking outside, but there is such a thing as inside and you have to go inside. You have to look, examine your mind. Don't be afraid of your mind. Sometimes if we close our eyes we are very much afraid. We think, "Oh, how terrible. How terrible desires and passions are there." So they cannot [be still]. If you tell them, "You close your mind and try to think of God," they'll be disturbed. But that... But we have to face that situation if we are seriously seeking to go within. It is possible by practice to calm the mind by what is called yoga.

Yoga means the techniques of communion: communion with God, either by love just as Saint Francis of Assisi said, "My God; my all." He would close his eyes and would repeat, "My God, my all." His mind seeing the ways of life had become detached from the various temptations, the various desires and they're in a mood to seek God, because they know, if I can find God within me, then in God there is everything.

There is not a single thing, which is outside God. That is why the one familiar name of God in Vedanta is called, is... "Brahman." Brahman means the Greatest, the Greatest in Beauty, the Greatest in Love, the Greatest in Power, the Greatest in Wisdom. Whatever you seek in our practical life is present in God. By seeking God you do not lose anything. On the other hand, if by meditation, if by prayer, if by repeating the holy name of God you can go within slowly but surely, you can find the real glory of God. The real glory of God is not this vast universe of wonders, but there is a universe within our heart. You can... you can have an access to that region of your heart and you can see, you can feel God's presence, God's reality. Then you can slowly, there is no... just as in the external world our scientists are progressing in unthinkable manner, so in the same way in an inner journey, in our search for God, in our search for the eternal, we can find more and more deeper truths about ourselves.

We can find that we are not this body or mind or ego. Our "I-sense," our sense of individuality is coming from an infinite source – God. God is within us. God is not showing us [that] all the time, but it is possible to see God, to experience God. Just as again Christ says, "Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God." So it is possible to go within and more and more—it may not be in three days or four days—but it is, the search for God is a life long process. If we believe in the theory of reincarnation as Hindus and Buddhists believe then you are never sorry. Because if I cannot experience God in this life, I can... I shall experience it in another life. So time for you becomes eternal. Time for you is not limited.

So... your spiritual practice for which of course you have to spare some time. You have to spare... if it is important to you, you must find some time say fifteen minutes at least. Fifteen minutes at least or better half an hour. Still better one hour, and like that, that is called the search for God and the search for

God is called yoga. Yoga means practice, practice through love or practice through concentration, or practice through reasoning, rational [thinking]. So these are called in Vedanta, “yoga” – karma yoga, bhakti yoga, jnana yoga, raja yoga. You can take one of these yogas, according to your inclination, or you can combine. You can... in jnana yoga we try to think [of] God as infinite like the sky or like the ocean. Just as [in] the ocean there are waves, so in God, who is not material, but who is the ocean of consciousness, in that vast ocean everything that we experience are like waves.

Waves come and waves go. So in this vast ocean of God – consciousness—these things are appearing and disappearing. Or we can think of God as space – vast space, but not material space. It is the... it is the conscious space within. It has to be found within. So this method of practice is called jnana yoga, the trying to seek communion of God with knowledge, extending the mind to infinite... wonders of God. There is no question of your personality, your loving God, you are only meditating on the infinite. But a better [way] than that, and easier than that, is to practice what is called bhakti yoga, the yoga of bhakti. Bhakti means love. You try to **love** God.

God is impersonal, but He is also personal, as Sri Ramakrishna would say. [There is] no harm in trying to think of God with the infinite transcendental, but it is also possible to think of God as your beloved, object of love. He may be looked upon as father, as your mother, as your... as your master, as your friend, as your... even as your beloved companion. Human... Here the human element, the human concept comes and it is necessary in the practice of bhakti yoga. In the practice of bhakti yoga, God must be more tangible to you.

Our mind wants to love something, which is tangible. That is why the Hindus through the ages have, with the help of their creative mind, they have build up various forms of God. Meditate on God with the help of a form. That form may be a male form like Siva or Rama or Krishna. Or it may be female form like the Divine Mother, Durga or Kali. So these are helps, just as the Christians take help of the cross—just two pieces of wood, a cross that becomes a symbol of God. So an image, an image of Divine Mother, or image of Krishna becomes a symbol. You can... you can direct your mind and direct all your thoughts and emotions of love towards Him.

As we read in religious books there are so many prayers written by saints and sages. So we repeat, we chant those prayers and repeat and all prayers, all words finally condense to the holy name of God. In the beginning we need many words, but many words more and more become condensed into a single... simpler words. And ultimately it is the holy name of God. If you love Jesus Christ, the name of Jesus is enough for you. If you are a Hindu, you can... that name may be Siva. That name may be Krishna. That name may be Vishnu. Or that name may simply be Om. The symbol you see, a word symbol at the top of our altar; that is pronounced as “Om.” And that is believed to be the... the seed, the root of all words. All sounds are coming from that sound, Om, [that] initial sound. That sound is the primary sound, so the Chandogya Upanishad begins by saying, “Om is all this. All this you see or feel or experience, this vast world can be condensed into a word and that word is Om.” [1:1-3] So you can practice

this in meditation. You repeat, “Om... Om.” And you feel that with this Om the whole universe is coming to you. When you repeat, “Om” in your heart, you feel that in your heart all humanity, all loving beings, all your past ancestors, all your friends all over this world, all are there with this sound, “Om” because Om is Brahman. Brahman is the Greatest, is all-comprehensive. Brahman is the totality. So that totality is remembered by repeating this holy name of Om. Or, if you like – any other name of God -- that is equally effective, but Om is simplest. So this is called japa, the repetition of the holy name of God, and it has... it has **splendid** effects. Gradually this, this sound... this sound draws to itself all ideas. All ideas become sound to you.

This vast sky becomes a word and the word finally goes to Om. All movements of life become sounds and all sounds in your... of course your mind must be in a state of calmness. You cannot practice this in a shopping area. You must find some place in the corner of your home or... and your mind should rise. It is possible for the mind to rise! We think our mind is definite and it is... that is not true. The mind can be changed. The mind can be given new color. The mind can be given a new quality. So when the mind-- when your meditation becomes deeper and deeper and deeper-- then it is possible that the whole totality of existence converges into that simple sound, Om, and that “Om” becomes silence, because when all distractions are absent, naturally you become silent and quiet. And in that quietness, you experience your own identity. Your identity is not in your body, not in your family. Your identity is that you are eternal; you are timeless. That “Om” will lead you to that inner self, which in Sanskrit we called, “atman.”

So this whole... if you practice for half an hour, so that half an hour you will be, the whole world will become small, small, small. And later on it will be a point. It will be a point consciousness and in that point consciousness you have the whole universe, you see? This is the practice, actually the practice by which you can find your true nature and you can find your freedom from this bondage of life. Life is sweet. Life is great, no doubt, but life is also a bondage, because life has many limitations. The number one limitation is death and there is disease. There is dishonor. There are so many unwelcome things in life, so when you have examined this life and you have decided that you want the eternal, you want the touch of God, an experience of God, then you experience a holy name. Repetition of holy name is one such method of communion.

There are other methods of communion like devotional songs, singing [a] devotional song – devotional song, just as we sing, we sing to nature, we sing to some beloved person. So, it is possible to sing to God and there are hundreds of hymns, songs written by devotional people who we call bhaktas, who we call sages. So if we practice singing also, that is also a yoga – bhakti yoga, a part of bhakti yoga. Then there is karma yoga, that is very important for us, we who are... who have no time, who have to be busy for our living, for our family, for our house. We have not much time for God, but the scriptures say, “Yes, there is time.” Even if there is no time, in your actions you change the attitude to your actions. All your actions you do are selfish actions; you do... whatever you do, you do for yourself. Instead, you try to think of the advice of the Gita that all

activities, all actions are proceeding from God. It is God the all-powerful who is responsible for any kind of activity that is going on. All the activities that are going on in your body, [it] is because of the presence of God in your body. God is present in your body the Upanishad says, "as the Eye of these eyes, as the Mind of the mind, as the Ear of the ear." [It] means God's consciousness is pervading my whole body, and your whole body. God's consciousness in Sanskrit we call Sat-Chit-Ananda, Existence, Knowledge and the Joy. That Existence, Knowledge and Joy is pervading everything! So in contemplation we try to think of these things and what is thinking today becomes realization tomorrow. So in this way, we can build up our spiritual life.

Spiritual life is an adventure, like we go to college to have degrees, so in spiritual life, in quiet meditation, quiet practice... either through one of the yogas or all of the yogas together, we try to go within. We try to face spiritual reality. Reality as it comes to us through our senses, sense-reality is just a shadow of reality. Reality is God, is Brahman. So, if we are... if we have come to that stage of serious spiritual seeking, then we cannot but... we cannot but come to God. Hmm? Then God says, "You will never be frustrated. I will respond to you at every moment. The moment you repeat my holy name, I shall respond to you."

So God's response, true response is really found in our spiritual life. And there are millions of men -- and if not millions, thousands; thousands of men and women through the ages, have sought God. And they have found God, and their life has been blessed. They may not have been very... very rich, or very scholarly, but they know that we have -- the purpose of our life is fulfilled. As Sri Ramakrishna would say, "The purpose of life is to see God," the same saying as Jesus Christ said, "Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God." This seeing God, experiencing God is the great purpose of life. Otherwise life is something limited. It is coming and going. Millions of people are being born every day and millions of people are dying every day. See? So those who have really found the real purpose of life, they seriously spend some time in spiritual practice which is called yoga.

Thank you.

[Announcements not transcribed.]

Madhu vAtA R^itAyate madhu xaranti sindhavaH.
 mAdhvlrnaH santu auShadhIH..
 madhu naktamutoShaso madhumat.h pArthivam.h rajaH.
 madhu dyauH astu naH pitA..
 madhumAnno vanaspatiH madhumAm.h astu sUryaH.
 mAdhvlrgAvo bhavantu naH..
 Om madhu madhu madhu. ¹

Sweet blow the winds and the very oceans give forth blessedness. May the nights and dawns bring us health and happiness. May every particle of mother earth be charged with blessings and may the heavens shower us with benediction. Sweet unto us be the noble forest trees. Sweet unto us be the

shining sun. Sweet unto us be all living creation. Om. Sweetness, Harmony, and Peace.

1. [Transliteration of Rg Veda verse is taken from http://satsangh.tripod.com/pujatexts/satya_baskegar.html] accessed June 26, 2012.