

The Great Mother

I'll chant one stanza of the famous hymn to the Great Mother. The title of my talk as announced is: The Great Mother.

Oh Great Mother of the Entire Universe,
Who takes away the sufferings of devotees,
Be propitious. Protect this world.
You are the Supreme Ruler of all the worlds,
All that moves and all that move not.
Let Your compassion,
Divine, all-pervading, all-penetrating compassion
Ever be on us.

Devi prapannarti hare prasida
Prasida matar jagato-khilasya

Prasida visvesvari pahi visvam
Twamisvari devi caracarasya
Twamisvari devi caracarasya
Twamisvari devi caracarasya
Prasida Prasida Prasida

Devi prapannarti hare prasida
Prasida matar jagato-khilasya
Prasida Prasida Prasida
Prasida Prasida Prasida¹

The second Sunday in May in this country is dedicated to our mother. It is the Mothers' Day. The experience, the feeling, the emotion, that the word "mother" brings to us is great. It is very pure; it is very powerful because it is the mother who brings us to this world. It is the mother that nourishes us, that protects us, that helps us, that loves us as we grow. We can never forget the mother. As we grow there will be dissensions. There will be tensions. There may be quarrels, even with the mother. But in the depth of the heart there is a sweet experience, unforgettable experience of the mother, the protecting power, the nourishing power, the loving power, the compassionate power that we need every moment.

So it is proper and rational that we should set apart a day for the adoration of the mother – our earthly mother, no doubt. If we are away from home, if we are grown up, at least this day we remember her – send her a gift. (He chuckles.) And the mother also remembers her children, so it is, though not a religious day, but it is a sacred day for the children, and those who have no longer the mother in the world, still for them the remembrance of the mother is a wonderful experience. But this Mothers' Day, this mother concept, this mother experience can be extended. Even without going to the spiritual plane we can enlarge our

heart, we can have a richer experience if this Mothers' Day is used to have a wider experience of different mothers. Just as we have a Miss Universe Day (audience laughs) we should have a Mothers' Day, a place where different mothers with their children on their lap like the Madonna, assemble and everybody could pass through that and see the mothers, see the mothers, see mothers if possible of different races, of different races the mother. One hundred. Two hundred. Three hundred. Four hundred mothers in a big hall. (Audience laughs again.) And each person carries a flower and offers [this] to each mother because the great power of protection, of love, of compassion is working in all of you ladies, in all of you mothers. You are all one with the Great Mother. The Great Mother in every one of you. If that is not physically possible we can at least remember. We can remember.

In fact some persons are fortunate to have some neighbors and some other ladies. And that person says, "Oh she is just like my mother." The mother experience has been extended to other women. If we try this, we shall see. We shall develop a real reverence and respect for women. The woman is the greatest when she's the mother. A wife is a mother to the husband. It is the mother feeling of love, unselfish[ness] and protection that operates in the wife. The wife may be mother to her children, the wife [is] also mother to her husband. See? That is.. It is a real power working in this universe-- a real power, working in the universe, the power that creates, that protects, that nourishes, that loves, that helps to grow – that power. And when we come to the spiritual life, then we say it is God as the Mother. That hand of the mother, that touch of the mother, that face of the mother is everywhere.

Look at a tree, say a peach tree or a cherry tree. When the tree is... first the blooms, then the little fruits coming, then the fruits come and the fruits ripen. And look at that tree. If you can think that the tree has a soul, and what is that soul of that tree, with all the fruits adorning her whole– the tree's whole body in all the branches? The red cherries. What is the feeling of that tree? Don't say, don't be a materialist. Be a person who believes that the world is basically spiritual. It is not a godless world. It is a world filled with God and here it's a world filled with God, the Mother, the Great Mother. And in that tree we can feel, just as the mother, our earthly mother, who has three children or ten children, what affection she has to develop for all the children – their dresses, their food, their this and their that.

The mother takes care of all her children and when all the children sit at dinner, she looks from child to child, child to child, girl to boy, boy to girl and imagine that feeling, how proud she is. And if that mother happens to be a greater mother, at the same time she thinks of the children of other families, other families and her heart becomes very wide, very expansive. She feels the breath of the Great Mother. "I am the mother of all children, many children, not my own ten children, but many, many, many, many children. I am the mother. Let well being come to all these children. Let all these children grow. Let all these children prosper." Like this, the feeling of the Great Mother comes to some persons, because that feeling, that experience is there – is there.

So, [again] look at that tree and feel... go to the core of that tree, how that tree may be... there may be thousands of the fruits, cherries, and the mother heart feels when one cherry drops. She is sad. One cherry has dropped. But she is happy, for the fulfillment of the cherry's life: It will go to a mouth, a young man's mouth. [Audience chuckles.] Fruits are born to be eaten. See? But we can imagine the feeling.

We can imagine the feeling in the tree. Say, look at a rose bush. Spring comes and after the dreary winter, the roses come. How happy, how happy is that rose bush with all the flowers! And if that rose bush is a religious minded rose bush [audience laughs] she is happy. Oh. That worshipper is coming with a bucket and she is picking the roses and these roses will be offered to the altar and will be decoration in God's altar. Oh blessed I am. I produce so many roses for the worship of God. She is happy.

But we can feel. We can try this mother experience to feel this mother experience. And this mother experience can be extended to all nature. That is what has been done in the ancient Indian spiritual scriptures – God as the Great Mother. The clouds come, the clouds from where a rain will come, so the clouds have been looked upon as the mother, the mother who is bringing rain to this world. Rain is needed for our crops, for our plants. So in a moment of intuition and contemplation, the clouds are looked upon as the mother. The heavens are looked upon as the father and this earth is looked upon as the mother. In the Rig Veda [we find] this concept, dyaus [or possibly deva?] prithivi.² The heaven is the father and the earth, mother earth is the mother.

The earth is indeed our mother because we have no time. We tread on this earth. We are nourished by the produce of the earth; we are nourished by plants and vegetations, but we do not respect our mother earth. We think the mother earth is just for our exploitation. No! The wide veneration, the feeling of respect should come to mother earth.

In a moment of contemplation, think of the mother earth with all the mountains and oceans and rivers and forests and trees and all the animals, not merely human beings – all plants. Think in one moment of this great mother earth. In Indian spiritual tradition there are many wonderful words for this mother earth. So meditation on mother earth is prescribed. You are a part of this mother earth. You come as a... as a... as a... As the Bible says, "Dust you are. [To] dust you return." Like that. Really we come from this mother earth and we go to the mother earth. And when we are on this mother earth, we should respect it.

As soon as we... as soon as we wake up, we should welcome the light of the sun, we should breathe the breeze of the air and we tread on this earth. And a few minutes we should contemplate, "Oh... salutation. Good morning mother earth. Good morning, morning!" Morning is looked upon in the Vedas as mother, Usha, and there are beautiful Rig Vedic hymns to the damsel, Usha, morning. So when we wake up, we should not wake up as a little man, but we should wake up as a child of the mother, the Great Mother who is looking to us through the sunlight, who is looking to us, who is touching us with the air and as we tread on the mother earth, we touch-- we touch her. We tread on the grass. We look

around, look at the trees, look at the flowers. Let at that moment our heart be great, and from time to time let the heart repeat, "Salutations to thee oh, mother-- the Great Mother who has no limits, who art in heaven, who art in the east, who art in the west, who is the north and who is the south. Be. Be with me. Be with me. Be with me. Protect me. Protect me. Guide me." In this way the mother experience becomes spiritualized: God, the Mother.

And that God is not a distant god, is not an alien god. We touch that God every moment. We feel that God every moment. With every breath, it is the mother we are breathing. We take the food; it is the Mother that is nourishing us with food. It is the Mother that is giving us the power of the eyes, the power of the ears, the power of all our senses, the power to walk, the power to speak, the power to think. So extensive is the Great Mother, and that we read-- and that we read in the ancient books of India. Whatever is, whatever power we need it at every step of life, but we think it is material power. No! From where this material power is coming? From where this power of our brain is coming, the power of our eyes are coming, the power of digestion is coming, the power of assimilation is coming? There is only one great power. That is a spiritual power; that is the Mother, God the Mother. And feel that Mother. When our mind is in its disturbed way then we cannot feel the Mother. We are just common. But if we have come to spiritual life, we should seek the spiritual power, the spiritual love, and the spiritual knowledge. And that is around us, is around us.

We can make a beginning with our own earthly mother. In a moment of contemplation, you could try to feel what this earthly mother is to me, what she has done to me and what she is still doing to me. See? Let us begin with our earthly mother, [and] then extend this experience till we find that really in the earthly mother a manifestation of a great power and love is coming. And that great power of compassion, of protection is God as Mother. We can think about God in many ways: God the Formless, Infinite. Any way! But God the Mother is a very sweet and enlivening and powerful concept. God the Mother! And we can feel the touch of the Mother in our earthly mother, in any other woman. See, a woman manifests beauty. A woman manifests sweetness. A woman manifests gentleness. All these qualities are the manifestation of the Great Mother. The Great Mother. So let us respect women as being Mother.

If you are charmed by anything in the woman, tell your heart it is the Mother. It the Great Mother. It is the Great Mother that is manifesting through women. And every woman should be proud of herself, not proud of her hairdo, not proud of her protruding nails... [audience laughs], but proud of the divine in her, proud of the divine, the motherhood in us. [Of] that every woman should be proud and if such women walk around us, men will be divine. Otherwise men are brutes. Men are brutes. It is for the women to guide men, guide men, proud of the great potentiality they have within us, within themselves.

So Mother's Day, gives us plenty of opportunity for these spiritual perspectives, for this spiritual thinking. So God the Mother means when we are thinking of God's... this universal power of love and protection-- which all the time we need... all the time of need the Mother. We pray to God and we should know that God is not a dead God. God is a living God. But the question comes,

“Where is She?” God does not, the Mother does not always listen to us. Why there is evil in this world? Why there is death in this world? Why not God keeps all beings alive all the time? That cannot happen in the plan of nature. [In] the plan of nature if all the fruits on the fruit tree want to be on the tree, never to drop, then what will happen to us? We won’t get any fruits. We try to pluck a fruit, a peach, the peach says, “No, I won’t go.” [Audience chuckles.]

The plan of nature is three-fold: creation, protection, and dissolution. So that the game will be... a new game will come. This universe. This world is a game. And if the same players [are] there, [are] on all the time, then there is no joy in the game. People. This... all the people in this world at this time, should quit the scene, sometime. [Audience laughs.] After five years. After ten years. After eight years. After one hundred and twenty-five years! Not a single of us living in this world now still will be alive after one hundred and fifty years. All will go, but others will come. Others will enjoy. Now this is not a fiction. This is not a myth. This is true. But we refuse to see this truth. We refuse to-- we refuse to die! We refuse to grow old till [we are] one hundred and one years old and no organ functions. Still we want to live. That is ignorance. That is ignorance. You see?

We should, when we come to spiritual life, our vision is extended. We see the reality of this world, the reality of the happenings of this world. There is coming; there is staying; there is also going. This is the play and we are a part of the play. We should participate in this play. And who is the conductor of this game? The Mother. The Great Mother. So, working according to the Shankara philosophy, or Vedanta philosophy, working on the three gunas, three elemental units of creation. Sattva, Raja and Tamas. So from the same Mother, the same Divine Mother, the Svetasvatara Upanishad says, three gunas. With the three gunas, this threefold game.

Birth, this creation is nice. Sustenance is also nice. But dissolution is also nice. In the Mother’s outlook, in the Mother’s eyes it is nice. One game goes, another game goes, new players come, new children come, but She is the Eternal Mother. She is the Eternal Mother, playing this game. It is our identification with the little individuality that prevents us to see the true face of the Mother. When we grow spiritually, then what we call evil, becomes different. We see it is all the play of the Mother; it is all the play of God. So we do not resent, we do not resent dissolution. But our sages and seers tell us, “If you want to go out of this game, there is a way. See the deepest truth of the Mother. Have the highest spiritual knowledge. Then you will be able to see that there is no death; there is no evil. There is only ONE, the Mother as the changeless Reality, Sat-Chit-Anandamayi-Ma... Mother.”

In the Mother’s highest truth there is no change, no appearance, no disappearance. The One. And man in his deepest core, man in his deepest core shares that truth of the Mother. The Great Mother, a particle of the Great Mother is in every one of us and we can reach that core through spiritual evolution. Even in this life through spiritual evolution we can reach that core of our being, of our existence. Then there is the ultimate solution of life. Then this whole universe, at that moment will appear as a shadow and the Mother in Her true

nature will pervade everything. The Mother will be seen inside our body, inside our mind, at the back of our ego, in the movement of our limbs. The Mother, the Mother, the Mother! And we will be thrilled to see the presence of the Mother everywhere. When we are in the deepest experience, what is called in yoga, in Vedanta, “samadhi,” then there is unity, just as in sleep. When you go to sleep the world dissolves, your body dissolves, your ego dissolves, your mind dissolves. But is it emptiness? No, because sleep brings us a restoration. You did not disappear in sleep. Your body was lying, but you, the real you, the conscious being was almost one with the Mother.

So in samadhi, the world disappears, but the knowledge in samadhi it comes back in this world—the knowledge of samadhi. Then we see the presence of the Mother, the presence of Sat-Chit-Ananda in everything. We feel that this room is really the Mother. The roof, the walls of this room is protecting us, is giving us shelter. And at once [you have] the experience, and you shout, “Oh Mother! Oh Mother! This hall, it is the Mother who has become this hall and [is] protecting us and giving us shade.”

We'll look at your body, your own body and you see this body is giving you shelter. The body is holding you. It is a temple-- it is a house and I am living in this house. Then you embrace your own body; you develop a real love for your body, because the body-- so long as you are alive, the body is giving you shelter. This body is your shelter.

At night you go to your bed. Normally you go to an inert bed. But if we have spiritual vision, we can see the voice of the Mother from the bed. The bed says, “Come my child. You had a hard day. You had a hard day. Come on me. Rest on me. Rest on me.” The bed where you are lying, [where] you are going to sleep is your mother, is your mother. If you can have that kind of feeling before falling asleep, you won't need any sleeping pills. [Audience chuckles.] Psychologically you will be just as a child who after playing comes to the mother and the mother holds that child. The mother is... knows that this is my security, my mother is my security. The child has no care. She falls asleep in the mother's lap. Like that we can fall asleep on the bed with the feeling that I am coming to my mother.

In this way this mother experience is a powerful, sweet experience, if you have developed that spiritual vision, [you] will be able to hear the voice of the Mother, the Great Mother, “My child, my child, I am with you. In life or in death, in happiness or in suffering, I am with you. I am with you. I am with you.” See that is called, “feeling the presence of God.” And the Mother concept helps us, because the memory of the mother is very sweet. The reliance on the mother, the communication with the mother is more powerful, more comprehensive than the communication with the father or with any other. So, this Great Mother experience can descend on us gradually if we try to develop our intuition and feeling that this world is not a material world, it is a world filled with the compassion of God, with the power of God, with the intelligence of God, with the beauty of God, with the music of God. If we can feel that, then slowly our heart's expansion will be wonderful, we will not feel lonely and powerless, we shall feel, yes-- the Mother in us.

In this external physical world, the mother resides[?] in nature, but when you go to contemplation, in contemplation we try to feel the presence of God in our heart, the response comes from within. But we should remember that if we become selfish, if we become too individualistic, then these experiences will not come. This little ego has to go. More and more this little ego will have to be replaced by a spiritual ego: I am the child of Mother, the Great Mother. The life's playing, life: there will be success. There will be failure. There will be health. There will be illness. But the Great Mother is with me. Even when this body goes, the Great Mother will not leave me. The Great Mother is eternal and the soul of man is eternal. When we say, "I am the Mother's Child," it is not merely the body and mind but it is also the deepest core of our personality, the soul in us. So the soul is eternal. A soul is ever with the Mother. The Mother is ever with the soul. These experiences come gradually to us in the evolution of our spiritual life.

So the Mother's Day is an opportunity for the spiritual seekers. In this world, in our everyday life there are many opportunities through which we can reach God, we can feel the presence of God. We should not miss any opportunity that comes. So the Mother's Day is a wonderful opportunity, not merely to see our mother once in six months, but through her to feel the presence of a Great Mother. A little a ray of that Great Mother is operating through a little human mother, but the human mother is a door to the experience of the Great Mother. So, salutation to Mother. Salutations to all mothers everywhere. Salutations to the human mother. Salutations to the cat mother. Watch a cat with her kitten. The same love, the same protection, the same power you will see in a cat mother. Watch a goose with the goslings around. The same feeling of motherhood we will find in the goose with her goslings.

So salutation to the Great Mother: the Great Mother in trees, in plants, in animals, in mothers. Everywhere! Salutations to the Great Mother! That is the opportunity. That is the spiritual reflection on the Mother's Day.

*Om. 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.³*

Sweet blow the winds and the very oceans give forth blessedness. May the herbs and plants bring us health and happiness. Sweet unto us be the nights and dawns. May every particle of mother earth be charged with blessing. 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, peace.

1. Devi Prapannarti Hare Mantra– Verse 3 from Chapter 11 of the Chaṇḍī Pāṭhaḥ, from Devi Mandir Website <http://www.shreemaa.org/ways-to-worship/chandi-devi-prapannarti-hare-mantr/> accessed 5/5/13
2. Dyaus-Pita. Wikipedia. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dyaus_Pita accessed 5/15/13.
3. *[Transliteration of Rg Veda verse is taken from* http://satsangh.tripod.com/pujatexts/satya_baskegar.html *accessed June 26, 2012. The site says: “This page uses Unicode encoding for Devanagari. Please set the fonts and languages setting in your web browser to display the correct Unicode devanagari font such as Mangal.ttf from Microsoft or Raghu8.ttf from the BBC site.” [Have not done that, so transliteration may need some editing.] (Rg Veda : I.90.6-8) per* <http://www.ramanuja.org/sv/bhakti/archives/jul2001/0029.html> *accessed 7/23/12.*