

In Search of Friendship

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 lecture this morning is: In search of Friendship. Friendship is a very important, if not the most important, factor in our life. This idea of friendship is projected through members of our family, beginning from our mother and other human beings, whether near or far. To animals. To different objects of nature. But man is most miserable when he finds that he is friendless; he is rejected by his parents or other people, his companions. This companionship, somebody who would sympathize with my problems, my pain or my pleasure, somebody on whom I can rely, somebody who will be faithful unto me as time passes on. This is friendship. This is more than riches. More than anything else it is this friendship that sustains our life.

We may belong to a very rich family; we have our parents, our brothers, sisters. But we may not find friendship in them. It is an element of character that has the power to bring calmness, resignation and [as a] bonus, [?not sure it is bonus, but that is what it sounded like], forbearance in us. Without friendship we lose most of the necessary and praiseworthy aspects of our character. It is friendship that brings the golden touch. When everything is dark, it is friendship that brings us the light. So it is quite natural that man will be in search of friendship. Some people may be very fortunate never to miss friendship. If mother is not friendly; father is friendly. If both mother and father are unfriendly, then there is grandpa who is... who will compensate the rude behavior, or unfortunate dealings of the parents.

So when sometimes it happens to some people that he is disgusted with human friendship—his relations, his school or college friends, nobody seems to be truly a friend, so this man may then turn to animals, turn to cats. Cats [A cat] does not give much love; he wants love. (audience laughs) But [a] dog is different. A dog can be [a] friend unto the last. We have interesting stories, novels where a dog's character is shown, really more than the excellent human character. How faithfully the dog follows the master, in his hours of danger, his hours of crisis. Even at his hour of death.

There have been stories where a dog by losing the master, stays on at that place, refusing food and tears have been seen in the dog's eyes. These stories are really very touching stories. It shows that in God's plan of creation: friendship, which is an important power, an important influence, is never lacking altogether. If it is lacking in a human community, we can turn to animals. There have been stories of horses, historical stories, how a horse was attached to the master unto the last, historical stories about the horse. So, this animal friendship sometimes is

soothing. Soothing. There have people after [the] hard work of the day in the office or business is eager to return to home in order to see his pet. That is friendship. It is the power which cannot be really described in words. It is love; it is comfort; it is affection; it is assurance. All this together is friendship.

When animals fail us, and when we do not have friendship either with man or animal, we turn to nature. If we can't bear solitude, we turn to, we go to a riverside, the favorite site of the river and we have a sleeping bag and we are prepared to sleep by the side of the river. The river is no longer an inanimate object of nature; the river has been living. It is running, but with every murmur of the waves, this man hears the voice of the river, "Don't be afraid. I love you. If nobody loves you, I will go on loving you." He hears the voice of nature. This voice of nature can be heard not merely from the river, but also from the mountains, also from the oceans, also from a particular tree. You have loved the tree, and under the tree you will hear the voice of love, the voice of assurance, the voice of friendship. But the most important source of friendship cannot be found in this world, truly speaking. We have to seek friendship from the Divine – God. It is God's friendship that works through man. If I have, if my parents are friendly, if my brothers are friendly we should know this friendship, this love and compassion is coming from the Great Source. The Great Source is God the love, God who is Love.

Sometimes there are circumstances when we are... we cannot maintain our faith in God. Some crisis happens. We pray and pray and pray for the recovery of a dear friend, but no response comes. Then we lose our... faith in God. God who was all along my friend, God never failed me in the promotion of my job, in recovery of my illness. On many occasions of life I had response from God. We feel that there is a God, a friendly God. Of course a friendly God is not only my friend, but He has to be the friend of this all creation. He has to see there is no conflict between some segments of creation. So we cannot expect all that I wish from God. Sometimes God does not listen to my prayer. But that should not, if I am truly a man of faith, truly if I have accepted God as a friend, then we should have the courage, we should have the patience, we should have the assurance that this is momentary. This time God has not listened to me. But when the next crisis comes and I look to His help, certainly help will come.

A man of faith never loses that faith-- if he has practiced faith. Faith is something that does not come spontaneously to us and does not stay eternally with us. We have to feed our faith by remembering God. That is called prayer. That is called contemplation. We have to spend some time in contemplation or prayer in order for my faith will strengthened. And faith can bring miracles, things which we never can expect. By the grace of God, it becomes true. So faith needs practice. A man of little faith, a man of superficial faith cannot retain the friendship with God. God is not to blame. We are to blame, because we have not been careful enough to retain our faith and confidence in God's actions. Anyway a man of faith, a devotee of God, he never lacks friendship. The friendship that would come from nature, the friendship that could come from animals, from human beings, all these different types of friendship come from God. He sees if a certain person on the road be kind to me, unexpectedly, I as a man of faith know that it is God. It is God through that

person [who] is rendering me this help, is bringing to me this which I prayed for. So the friendship of God is, is a new unfoldment in our life.

Our life is generally confined to the various movements of life we see in human beings, in animals, in nature. There is no end to the diversities of events in life but if I have no friendship, then this whole world of activities seem to me, meaningless. On the other hand, a person who has developed through faith that spirit of friendship with God, for him, God is not distant. God is not beyond the clouds, beyond the heavens, but God is a tangible companion in life. God is in my home; when I am asleep, God is with me. When I am awake, God is with me. Friendship with God cannot be compared to other types of friendship we read about in books. It is, it is a change of personality that this divine friendship brings to us. It seems to us that we do not need anything else. God's friendship will do whatever is needed. Dependence on God, self-surrender on God is the natural consequence of this friendship with God. So this person becomes fearless. This person is not worried about anything. If he loses his money, he loses his wife, he loses his children-- he is compensated by the love of God. God has become so real to him that he feels the touch of God in all his activities, in all his thoughts and so he is really a happy person. A happy person is he who has realized the friendship of God.

Friendship of God is not a myth. It is out of friendship that God created this world. Why should he create it, create this world? Because He needed it. He hated to be alone. He needed whatever He created. His creation was very easy. Just by Will as we read in the books, we read in the Upanishads, we read in the Bible. God's will is so powerful. By simply willing, things appear. Let there be light and there is light. Let there be this and we read in the first chapter of the Bible as God is saying, "Let there be.... Let there be." And things are happening. So He creates this world and in the Bible we read.... We read the same idea in the Upanishads and the Bhagavad Gita also. God after creation, He becomes, He is always happy. In whatever He has created, He does not see any fault. He may have created a dark man. He does not frown; He says how beautiful is darkness, dark color. For Him everything is beautiful. He needs the company of all colors. He needs the company of all these seven colors.

He needs the sky; He needs the mountains; He needs the life of endless living beings, big beings and small beings, the insects, the birds. He needs all these created objects. Why? For company! He wants to... the company of this vast manifold nature. But you could say that He can not retain all his friends. The sky is His friend, the mountain His friend. Endless creatures are His friends, no doubt, but He cannot retain them. There is death, so God says death is also one of my friends. And we as God's friends we also have to develop that attitude. Not to be disturbed by anything. To be joyful at everything.

Whatever happens, since it is happening by God's sign, it is an object of joy. It is an occasion of joy. That is the attitude of the faithful, of the person who has realized the friendship of God. It is not that we are seeking the friendship of God in order to avert many of our troubles, but God has created us – every fiber of this created world for His company. He wants the company of everyone, company of human beings, company of all aspects of nature. That is why He is an ideal friend. He is an ideal, ideal playmate. You can play tennis with God. (Laughs.) These are

the different attitudes we develop when we seriously come to **love** God, to make God my friend and companion – my only friend and companion. Because in God there is everything, everything that we look forward for our joy is in God. God is the totality.

These ideas are not intellectual ideas. These ideas are experiences of people who are practicing friendship with God through faith, through meditation, through prayer. So friendship becomes a supreme object of value, when it is associated with God. We should know that God is the friend of everyone. He has... He has no barriers. Between Him and us there cannot be any barrier. He's always approachable. He cannot condemn anyone. These are the feelings that come when we feel God's friendship. God's friendship is not like ordinary friendship, which stays for two months or six months or two years and disappears. God's friendship never disappears. That is why this particular word is important: friendship.

Friendship can be with an evil person, can be with your virtuous person. But all these types of friendship has their flaws. If you have established friendship with the great river Mississippi, as Mark Twain did, you are not... You are happy of course. You are experiencing ecstasies of course, but there may be times the river may be hostile. There may be flood and with the other consequences of flood, and the river may fail you. But in God there is no such chance of failure. His company, His friendship is always with us. If apparently we seem to miss His friendship, we should close our eyes and go to a quiet place and try [to] listen to His voice of comfort and we shall hear that voice, the "I am." "I am," in the midst of your heart, in the depth of your heart. Sometimes it is your mistake that you are seeking Me in the heavens. But I am nearest to you, because I am your friend and you want to maintain this friendship. So I have chosen a nice place, a cozy warm place – your heart. You may not be conscious, but I shall be sitting there and supplying you with the things you need.

Man needs most, spiritual experience, because our experience in this world is passing away all the time. It is disappearing all the time. It is only by God's reality, when God becomes real in our life, then nothing can go. Everything we feel **is** in God. If a child dies, it dies from our everyday attitude, but really speaking that child does not die. It lives in God.

God is all at all times. God is far and near simultaneously. And so God wants our heart, our warm heart. He takes His residence in our warm heart, where we can always feel His presence, His company, in happiness, or in misery. Such a friend is God, Who never changes, Who is always willing to help you. And if apparently you feel that God has failed you, it is your mistake. God can never fail you. These experiences of friendship with God comes to a devotee who is practicing this communion with God, slowly every day. And that itself is a great joy: to practice companionship with God. That practice begins from the heart. We have to try to see the presence of God in our heart, in our breath. In our sense experience we see the world. It is by... It is possible because of the company of God. When God for some reason is absent, then this body dies. And if the body dies, however beautiful and powerful that body might be, it is a godless body. There is no spirit of consciousness in that body and that is a great catastrophe. We should have with us a living God

and a true devotee of God does not miss it. His physical death is not really his death. His physical death is a step to the experience of God. God experience has no limit.

In how many ways God experience can come to us? We cannot mention. We cannot understand, but a man of God, a devotee of God who is trying to practice this presence of God through worship, through prayer, for that person, this will never be a problem. He will not miss God. Even after death, he knows, "I will not miss God." Somehow God will be with me, because for such a person there is no here and there. It is the ignorant person who says here on this world and there in heaven. This [These] here and there concepts are concepts of maya. For a spiritual person, for a genuine spiritual person God is here as also there. God is everywhere. He does not think, this person, this person who is practicing, trying to practice the companionship of God... His mode of thinking is different. He does not depend much in time nor space. If you show him by pointing, "See how vast is space" he says, "Yes. If I touch my two fingers and hold, this little space is the same as that infinite space, because both spaces are God. It is God who becomes the space in the atomic world. And it is God who become... who is the endless space in the astronomical world.

If you try to refer to God with the scale of time you will be frustrated. Forget time! Just as you should forget space: God can be here; God can be there. God can be in both places. God is in the tiny space; God is in the vast space. Because all space is God's majesty and He is really enjoying that majesty of space. And we as God's lovers, we can also enjoy the majesty of space, and also the majesty of time. Time is flowing, flowing all the time: second by second. One, two, three, four, five, six. And God enjoys this flow of time because this time is God. And we who are the worshippers, who are the seekers of God's company, can find God in the flow of time. Just as in the vastness or littleness of space we can find God, so in the vastness or littleness of the flow of time for us, there is God.

We read in the Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna a story about a holy man who had ... who had renounced the world, his family and worldly friends and possessions and got a small cottage by the side of a waterfall. He would go into his cottage only in the night but all through the day he would sit by the side of the waterfall. That flow of the water, that sound of the waterfall was to him music, Divine Music. So he sat there and looked on and on, looked at the running water and thereby he had companionship with God. He did not go there just like a traveler, to see the flow of the rushing water of the waterfall, but to have companionship with God. He would from time to time, the story says, would fold his hands and say, "How wonderful. How sweet. How wonderful, You have made this." Now God made this waterfall but He did not run away. He is always present in the flow of the water. Whatever is joyful, whatever is strengthening-- it is God.

When we have reached God's... attained God's company then you are ushered really into God's world. The world in which we are living is not "God's world," really speaking. In order to understand and feel that it is God's world we have to feel the presence of God, presence of His company: in nature, in human beings, even in my body. According to the Upanishads that is the most interesting adventure, to find the company of God in this frail little body. Everyone of us knows that this body itself is not our eternal companion. It will go one day, but so long as it is alive we can try to find God's company in this world. The eyes see; the faithful devotee at

once finds God in his vision. Our ears hear; the faithful devotee hears the music of God. Whatever sound is coming through the ears, it is coming from the Divine. So the friendship with God has its degree according to our power of comprehension. And our power of comprehension grows with our practice. Our daily practice of contemplation, of prayer, or remembering Him-- not disturbing God with little prayers, but we should pray to God, "Be with me and let me be with You." The friendship with God has all that we seek in life. We seek in life, joy. We seek in life, security. We seek in life, love. All these things **are** in God. And if we can find that God, which is possible, through our daily contemplation and prayers and remembrances, then the whole of God is with us. We can never miss God's friendship.

When we read the stories of devotees, some stories are very wonderful. How the God revealed in their lives and how they received and maintained God's grace, knowing that he can never miss God. When the time to depart from the body comes, he is not, he is certain that this is not the end. This can never be the end because God has no end and I too, as the companion of God... I am always present even after the dissolution of this body. We do not analyze properly what treasures this body is holding for us. All the powers, biological powers or physical powers that we find in the body, are really coming from God. This we understand.

If it had been an object of believing, then that would be different. But it can be a matter of experience, everyday experience that... And no language is necessary. It becomes so natural to us that we may not express this feeling in words. We know that God is with me in the daytime when I am awake and in the night when I am asleep. God's company is never missing; He is with us. When this experience becomes strong, what problem can [there] be for that person? Because in God there is life, there is death. In God there is nature, and things that are beyond nature which we cannot comprehend with our ordinary mind. When our heart becomes pure as Lord Jesus says, "Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God." And when our heart becomes pure, that means we free our mind from desires, unnecessary desires, unnecessary distractions, unnecessary attachments, then our heart becomes pure. And in that heart, God's find [God finds] His permanent residence. If you tell God: "Please go away for one day. I want to go to a cinema." (audience laughs.) "If I go to an interesting cinema, I may be so much absorbed in that, that I will forget You. So give me leave for one day." God says, "No. I am not going to leave this cozy place, your heart. You see this cinema, but there in the cinema, you will suddenly realize that it is **I** who am enjoying the cinema. Through your eyes. Through your mind. Through your heart. Through your feelings. It is **I** who am enjoying this cinema."

So [there is] no escape from God. If God we have received, [and] we have established friendship with God, it is an unbreakable union. It is an unbreakable company. We cannot throw away God. When the physical body dies, our Upanishads describe many patterns of afterlife. We may be merged... we may be merged in the infinite or we may accept another body, another human body in order to serve God ... in man. Because when we have real company of God, our heart becomes very sympathetic. The heart becomes [longing] to serve God in the many. The heart wants to... For that person, this world is God's world and it is a joy to

serve this world. So that person becomes a world citizen. Wherever there is grief, wherever there is danger, that person rushes there because he or she is God's servant. So his life here becomes a life of joy. And the same story is repeated in every life. If there is reincarnation, if we believe in reincarnation then a devotee seeks that new birth, not for any selfish reason, but for... with a body it is possible to help others, to serve others. So for this person, when we have companionship and friendship with God, then the whole world becomes our friend; at least we can extend our friendship everywhere.

If my parents... if I had misunderstanding with our parents, both of them, father [and] mother, we have suffered that, but now after we have God's company, there is no suffering. Fearlessly we can approach our parents on Mothers' Day and Fathers' Day. They become grim when that fellow, that rebellious child has come— (he laughs) but I am not sorry. Full of love, I say, "Hi daddy. Hi mommy, I have brought these things for you." And they're surprised. This son or daughter we have mistreated him or her so many times and now he comes with so much warmth, with so much love. It's really wonderful. How is it possible? They ask him, "How is it possible that even though we do not care for you, you have come?" Then he says, "Because of my friendship with God. I know the same God who is living in my heart is also living in your heart." So this experience of friendship comes to the apex when we have truly realized God as a friend. In that friend there is mother; there is father; there is wife; there are children. Whatever persons I love, they are present in this great Friend, Who is God.

Thank you.

Madhu vAtA R^itAyate madhu xaranti sindhavaH.

mAdhvIrnaH santu auShadhIH..

madhu naktamutoShaso madhumat.h pArthivam.h rajaH.

madhu dyauH astu naH pitA..

madhumAnno vanaspatiH madhumAm.h astu sUryaH.

mAdhvIrgAvo 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 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 and Peace.

1 . [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.]