

The subject of my lecture this morning is In Tune with Sri Ramakrishna.

Sri Ramakrishna has been described as the prophet of harmony. He practiced many religions and said that all religions lead to the same Ultimate Goal, namely God. So it is needless to quarrel. Let each man follow his own religion. That will give the highest fulfillment of his spiritual life. It was for him, not a matter of opinion but a deep experience. Though born a Hindu, he practiced Christianity. He practiced Islam. He had deep understanding of other faiths in this country. That is why it is appropriate to term him as the prophet of harmony.

But this is just one aspect of his life. There are other very important and touching and impressive aspects of this modern saint. When we study his life deeply we find that indeed he was needed for the modern times. He understood the problems of the modern man and he gave a solution to those problems. Modern man, necessarily not the men of India, but men all over the world because he had gone to the depth of the truth of man.

When we discuss this aspect of his life, his diagnosis of man we are inclined to call him not merely a prophet of harmony, but primarily he was a prophet of man -- prophet for man. For him, man -- the true man, the real man, was not a male or a female, not an oriental or occidental, not a Christian or a Buddhist or a Hindu. These are for him the outward coverings of man, the true man. The true man is a spiritual reality and that spiritual reality is in man, in woman, in Christian, in Hindu, in Buddhist.

When we speak of the unity of mankind, this unity can never come, can never be practical if we rely on the outward coverings of man. If we fail to understand the deepest truth of man we cannot establish friendship, true friendship, true understanding, true unity among mankind. And unity among mankind is the most pressing problem of our times. Every one of us knows how strifes and conflicts are everywhere. The solution must be a spiritual solution and that spiritual solution cannot be a religious solution.

Many people are inclined to think if all people could be drawn into one religion -- say Christianity-- then there would be unity. All would feel that we are all Christians. Let us not quarrel. But is it a fact? Are not Christian nations fighting one another? The real bond of unity cannot be [based] on any social aspect or educational aspect or even religious aspect. The real unity can come when man understands himself, when man knows that in the core of all mankind -- why mankind-- all living beings-- there is that true identity, the true self of man, the spiritual man, the spiritual reality which is man.

Now you could say, "that is an assumption. That is a theological dogma." And here was a prophet, a modern prophet, who proved that it is not a dogma. It is real, really real! All man's experiences are really centered in his spiritual truth. Only we do not care to know that, to understand that. That is why, though we are born as men we really miss many of the possibilities, rather the greater, the more significant possibilities of man. We live our physical life. We live our mental

life, intellectual life, family life, social life, even religious life. But we miss the most important fulfillment of our life: the discovery of our true nature.

When man understands his true nature he becomes in tune with the whole world. He becomes... he is in tune with all religions, with all people, with all aspects of life. He really becomes a cosmic man, an universal man. An universal man can never have any hatred or conflict or jealousy or arrogance. That will be [the] spiritual solution of the deeper problems of modern life: how all men can find a bond of unity. That bond of unity can never be in a political ideology, or religious faith, or any kind of intellectual persuasion. It must be in the truth of man, a truth which all man can share. This Sri Ramakrishna proved in his life. This was not Sri Ramakrishna's original discovery. It is the discovery of ancient India. The spiritual message of India is the message of man, as from time to time in India there have come seers and saints and sages who have demonstrated in their life this ancient truth: the spiritual nature of man-- as also the spiritual nature of this world around [us]. This world is not a material world; really speaking it is a spiritual world.

So Sri Ramakrishna demonstrated this ancient truth of India which was first declared by the sages of the Vedas, in the Vedanta, in the Upanishads. So Sri Ramakrishna's great disciple, Vivekananda called him Veda murti, the personification of the Vedic wisdom. The culmination of Vedic wisdom is demonstrating the truth of man.

Man is externally a very little, insignificant mass of matter. There was a philosopher, Alton, (he was also a Nobel laureate) and he said that man is a meeting point of many realities. Externally he is a body. Inside this body he is not a dead body -- a living body. Inside this body there are these vital processes going on, the biological processes. And at the back of that there is the mind. There is ego. There is the intellect. There are so many urges in man. And all these are converging into some center. What is that center? That center will be [the] spiritual center of man.

The great French philosopher and writer, Pascal, he was a deeply religious man, but he was also a free thinker, a scientist. Now he has not prepared to accept the religious declarations just on faith. He wanted to investigate. So he began from the study of his own external personality, his body-mind combination. And when he looked into that and he looked into this vast universe, he said that I'm just a unit of body and mind. I am really insignificant. I am really just a grain in the background of this vast material universe. I can be crushed any moment by the mass of matter around me, so I am afraid. So who am I? If I am just this mass of matter from the food we draw from mother earth... Every day we are eating; we are converting the food into blood and flesh and bones. If I am a material mass, then I am nothing; I have no place in this universe. I am at the mercy of everything. Then this thinking proceeded. And then he was led to this conviction. Externally I may be a little mass of matter -- a bone and flesh, but inside me there is

something. There is something that can share the life of the infinite. That is the spiritual discovery.

If man thinks himself just a body-mind, a physical unit, a psychological unit, a biological unit, he is really nothing. In this vast complex, there is this material universe. There is not merely matter but energy -- all kinds of forces and radiation. In that context, man is tiny, very little. Really he has no place, but if he can dive into himself, if he can study himself, he can find that within this there is the real man, the spiritual man.

So Sri Ramakrishna devoted his life... the first part of his life. He lived for fifty years. And for more than twelve years he carried on this investigation. And he said, "Man is really a spiritual unit and the purpose, the great purpose of his life is to discover his spiritual nature." In simple language... He spoke in simple language like many other great prophets, like Buddha, like Jesus Christ. He was not a scholar, he had very little of school education. He could barely read and write. But the wisdom he gathered were all in his mind. He used to say later on that though I could not read all these great scriptures but I have heard about their truths from different sources: from holy men, from scholars. And I have, I have taken the essence of all those scriptures and made a garland, a necklace, and I am wearing that garland all the time. I don't need any books.

So his first assertion about man: that man you are not that superficial entity. In the deepest core of your personality you are really great. You are really a child of God. You are really a spark of the Infinite. And the great purpose, the supreme purpose of your life is, in simple language, to see God just as Lord Jesus Christ said, "A man can see God." This word, the word "see" is important. Seeing is not just thinking or believing or reading. Seeing means direct experience. So Jesus Christ says, "Blessed are the pure in heart for they will, they shall see God." And Sri Ramakrishna said, "The supreme purpose of human life is to see God." He said, "God can be seen."

His great disciple, Vivekananda, when he was just a college boy -- this boy was very much inclined to finding out the truth of religion. Not a creed or dogma but religion speaks of "God," religion speaks of "soul," religion speaks of "other world." Are these just beliefs, just articles of faith, or are they true? That was his great passion of life, even at that -- when he was a boy of sixteen. He came to Sri Ramakrishna when he was barely seventeen and he had asked this question to many people, many pundits, many scholars. "Sir, have you seen God?" And many hesitated, hopefully to say, "Yes, I have seen God." But when he asked the same question to Sri Ramakrishna, he laughed and he said, "Yes my boy, I have seen God. I see God all the time-- more clearly than I see you, than I see the walls." That is the voice of experience.

Sri Ramakrishna said, "Don't underrate human life, human personality, human possibility. Man is born here not just to eat and drink and to attain name and fame and wealth and disappear. No. Man is here for a great opportunity. That opportunity is possible not for a dog or an elephant or a cat. But for man.

On the scale of evolution, man has an advantage: his body, his mind, his brain. They are prepared, they can do many things, but they can do a great thing, the greatest thing: realization of God, realization of his own true nature. So Sri Ramakrishna said, declared that the ultimate purpose, the greatest purpose of human life is to see God-- and God can be seen. He said, "Just as in the daytime we do not see stars but that does not mean there are no stars. Wait for the night and you will see stars."

So even in the normal practical life we do not see God. We see this material universe. We see manifold things, conflicting with each other. We see hate, greed, arrogance, distraction, bloodshed, injustice. And we say, "This is a devilish world. We are depressed. We are frustrated." But that is true on one level. But Sri Ramakrishna said that if you can develop your mind, in the words of Jesus Christ, "If you can purify your mind you can see that God is with you, within you and outside you." God is smiling -- from everywhere: from the mountains, from the sun, from the moon, from the flowers, from the rivers, from all human beings. In each human face you will be able to distinguish the smile of God. And you will see the presence of God inside you. And you will be filled when you discover God within you, when you feel that it is God who is moving your, all your vital functions. It is God who is enabling your mind to think. Yes, it is God who is directing your senses.

When you see that God is the ultimate power within you, the ultimate intelligence is in you, the ultimate value within you. Then, your life will be different. Not that you will retire to Mt. Shasta. (laughter) No. You need not be a hermit. You need not flee away from your life. You will live in this world. You will live in your family. You will be surrounded by your children and grandchildren. No objection, but something more will come to you.

You will accommodate, you will have to have another room for that new friend you have discovered, God. And he does not need another separate external room. He can stay everywhere. He can be in your dining room. He can be in your kitchen. He can be in your heart. He can be in your wife's heart. He can be in the hearts of your grandchildren. That is this wonderful friend, God. When you discover him, your life will be sweeter. From your life all tensions, all anxieties and cares will vanish because your ego will be humbled. You won't say, "I, I, I." You will say, "It is God." In the language of Jesus Christ, "Thine is the power and glory thereof." You will see that God is a living presence. The reality, a spiritual reality is moving this body, moving this mind. But He is the spirit, He is the consciousness. Unbroken, Infinite Consciousness.

Normally we think that space is the ultimate background of everything. That is true when we are thinking of the material universe. All material objects have to be in space, have to function in space. But when we have made this discovery of this spirit, discovery of God, then we shall see that God-- as the Infinite Consciousness-- is more fundamental than space. First God as the core of existence, as the core of consciousness, as the core of joy, then other things come.

Then space comes. Time comes. Matter comes. Life comes. Mind comes. Every other thing comes. So that is God and it is not a dream; it is not a speculation. It is true.

If you are prepared to undertake this enquiry seriously for that you won't have to retire anywhere. You can do that along with your life, through what in Indian spiritual tradition is called yoga. Yoga means communion. Yoga is not theoretical, intellectual, academic study. Yoga is practice. One great philosophy, one great truth has to be put into practice. And that practice can be done in many ways: through love, through action, through philosophical inquiry, through concentration, these are called yogas. We need not be afraid by hearing the word, yoga. Just as in our daily life we have to do so many chores. In order to eat we have to take so much trouble. We have to... we can not just go and buy every day a TV dinner plate. We will be bored. We would like to cook and have some variation and all. And that is troublesome. That takes time, but do you resent that? Because you like eating and we do not mind spending some time and energy in cooking. Whatever chosen interest we have, we are ready to spend some time and energy on that. Now when we are interested in this most important jewel of our life, vision of life, discovery of God, discovery of our true nature then we should be ready to spend some time and energy for this study, for this purpose.

Lord Jesus Christ described this in simple language: "knocking." He said, "Seek, ask, and it will be... you will find it. Seek and it will be given to you. Knock and it will be opened unto you." Asking means just the beginning of our spiritual enquiry, asking. Is there a God? Can I attain it?" Like this. And seek means you yourself are seriously seeking that experience. And knocking means that you are earnestly, regularly with patience, with courage you are carrying on that practice that is called yoga. In each religion there is [a] call for yoga. Religion can be superficial and religion can be deep. When it is superficial, we just dwell on the surface but when we want to be serious we have to go to the level of yoga -- deep. Prayer or worship or meditation, contemplation these are all different ways. They are different ways of yoga.

To love in the Indian tradition we call bhakti yoga, communion through love, developing the emotion of love. And it is not a strange experience for us. Everybody knows what love is but everybody does not know what love of God is. So the same emotion of love has to be directed to God. And that love of God has to be brought back and directed to every other objects of love. This child I love, it is God in him. See like that -- this yoga, this is one way of yoga: trying to practice the contemplation of God by making use of the natural emotion of love.

A man who has a philosophical bent of mind, his way of yoga will be called jnana yoga the yoga of knowledge, the yoga of enquiry, yoga of analysis, self-analysis. That is another method of yoga. The person who is [of a] very active nature he can also be a yogi. He can also realize God but he cannot meditate. He does not like to worship. He does not want to kneel down. He does not want to bow down. But there is a way for him. All right, active man, you go and be active

but bring God into this picture. Try to feel the source of all activity is God. [?Jada praviti vu danam jayna sarvanidam katam. Sar karmana dam ajyatya siddinot nau ti manaovadit?] the Bhavagad Gita. The Bhagavad Gita says that all this great cosmic activity is really proceeding from the source of all power which is God. So a man of action is just a man of action. Even though he is tremendously active he can manage side by side with being active...he can smoke also. Great philosophers even the great Marx-- I saw on the TV the other day about Marx, he was a great thinker. He was thinking, he was writing but always his pipe was there. We can manage that, you see. We can manage. So a great active man, he need not say that I have no time. I am so active, I have no time for God. No it cannot be. God is like a, like a smoke for him. (laughter) Bring God and try to think all that I am doing, it is coming from Him. He is the source of all my activities. This cosmic soul, He is the master of ceremonies. What is the difficulty of bringing this thought a little faith, a little imagination? But its effect will be great. That practice will humble down your ego, that you are the doer. That is the root of all our trouble, our egoism, our arrogance. That is [a] mistake. That is ignorance. That is maya, in the language of the Indian spiritual thought. So let..you, you go to the back seat and let God drive. And don't dictate from the back seat. (laughter) Don't be a back seat driver. Let God... Let God drive the car of your life. Tremendously active. You may be active; you may be a feeler. You may be an active executive; you may be anything but if you bring God into this picture, your actions will be purified.

Sometimes we do all our activities and actions in an ignorant way. What is called in the Indian spiritual tradition: we expect every moment the results. We do something and much of our energy is directed [to]: what will happen? What will happen? Now karma yoga, the yoga of action says this is a wastage of energy. Your part is to do your duties. You do all your actions meticulously, intelligently, carefully. But the future is not in your hand. The success might come. Failure might come. But let it be in God's hands. That is called offering the fruits of your action to God. If you can do that, you will see even when you are tremendously active in the back of your mind, slowly, a great peace will emerge, a great silence, a great calmness. You won't be perturbed. That calmness is God. That calmness is spiritual experience and your actions then will not be in selfishness. You'll be able to do all your actions in a very spiritual way. So karma yoga, communion through action is another way.

So there are these different approaches to spiritual practice. And Sri Ramakrishna practiced all these. And according to him, many different types of people: men, women, young people, old people used to come, even people of different religions. Christians used to come. Sometimes Muslims. And he used to prescribe the necessary, the appropriate thing for all. But his most important common declaration was, "The purpose of your life is God." It does not matter whether you are an active man or emotional man or you are a Christian or a Buddhist or a Hindu. But remember that the great purpose of your life is to reach

God. Don't be too much attached to this life. This life is like a passing show. It comes. It goes. Constantly changing. Don't think that you are here to be eternally attached to this life. So practice a kind of detachment. Don't run away from your life but live your life in a spiritual way, knowing that the great spiritual purpose of your life is God and you have to realize God in this life. True. And that does not... that won't interfere with your family, with your life, with your chores. God can, God can be a partner in all your activities and struggles and ambitions and desires. So he said, "This is the great purpose of human life." And man has to fulfill that purpose through many ways. Man is not helpless.

Lord Jesus Christ said, "Thou shall love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy mind and with all thy soul." In Sri Ramakrishna's teachings we find a similar statement. He said, "Three well known attachments have to be combined together and directed to God. If one can do that, then the eyes open. One is able to see God." What are those three attachments? The attachment that a mother has for her child, a motherly affection. Mother's attachment for the child. The mother is ready to even suffer any kind of suffering for the sake of the child. Second attachment: the attachment of a true husband, a faithful husband to his wife or a faithful wife to her husband. That attachment. Really that is a great attachment, a great expression of love. And the third attachment is the attachment of a miserly person for his money. So these three attachments, three different types of attachment, can be spiritualized and can be directed to God. If one can do that, the intensity of that love will enable a person to see the Face of God, to see that God is really enshrined in my heart.

Sri Ramakrishna used to say, "But don't make... Your relation with God should not be a business relation; it should be an unselfish relation." That God... Of course, everyone of us seeks God at times of crisis when we are in need of something. Oh, we look to God. For money. For wealth. For health and for many other things. Now the scriptures do not discourage that. The Hindu scriptures do not discourage that. The Bhagavad Gita has not discouraged that. Lord Jesus Christ did not discourage that. But our scriptures tell us that this is not the highest form of love, of religious expression. We have to try to love God for God's sake, for the fulfillment of our spiritual life.

And so he used to tell a story. There was a Muslim mendicant during the reign of Akhbar the Great, one Moghul emperor of India of the sixteenth century. He was a very virtuous man and he used to make charities and he had also very... a spirit of tolerance. He's remembered as a great noble emperor, Moghul emperor in Indian history. Now this mendicant, religious mendicant, he in his own way used to make charities to poor people and all. He needed some money so he [went straight?] to the palace and all people had access to the emperor. The emperor was in his private shrine, mosque. He was praying and this mendicant was waiting outside, near the door. He was waiting for the emperor to finish his prayer. Then the mendicant, the Muslim mendicant heard the emperor. He's praying for, for his kingdom and for then ultimately for more wealth, more prosperity and all these

things. And hearing this the mendicant was going away. By that time the emperor had finished his prayer and he saw the mendicant is going away. So he signed him, "Come back." He came. "Now why did you come, holy man?" "Well I came, I came to beg some money from you, because I needed some money for poor people for distribution." "Why are you going away?" "I am going away because I was standing at the door and heard you praying to God for money, prosperity, this and that. So I thought, well the emperor also is begging money from God. (laughter) So if I have to beg, why should I beg of him? Let me beg of God. That is why I am going away. You are also a beggar." The emperor was ashamed.

So Sri Ramakrishna said, "Don't ask little things from God. Sometimes you may need little things but don't forget you can ask from God great things, spiritual things. You can ask from him devotion, spiritual knowledge, all these great spiritual treasures." And so, "establish an unselfish relation with God." Sri Ramakrishna said, he diagnosed the disease of the modern world. And he was true. He said the disease of the modern world is: lust and greed. Man is.. has more and more [been] giving excessive, unnecessary, imaginary values to sex. Sex has become the great god of worship -- in every way. Every way. He is making a philosophy of sex and this will be a danger; it will disrupt his family. It will disrupt his education. It will disrupt his civilization. See. And the other thing is greed. Money, money, money.... more, more, more. Man is crazy for money, for wealth. See, he said that this is an insult to man's dignity because man does not need this... so much of lust-- and man needs money, man needs sex all right but there is a limit. Dharma, righteousness, is more important.

In the way of dharma man has to live, fulfill his desires. Whatever desires are necessary for his practical, everyday life, let him fulfill, but in the path of dharma. Not through the path of arrogance and covetousness and violence. So he said this Kama/Kancana - his favorite... his expressions. Kama is lust and Kancana: gold. [It] means greed. This way then man, man who has understood his spiritual possibility, naturally he should, cannot be too much attached to this fleeting, changing world. Not that he runs away from life but he does everything with moderation, with self control, knowing all the time that these things will pass away. Man cannot retain all his wealth. When he will take leave of this life, he won't be able to even take with him one single penny. Everything will be left behind. See of all those things of which he's proud, he won't be able to take a single part of it. So why this inordinate desire and which has all the time creating so much tension in you and your family, among nations. Why nations are fighting the other nation? Just for these two things.

So he said, "man should be, should establish his life on spiritual values." Spiritual values. And this is open to man, to woman-- to everyone. The question of what religion you belong does not come. You may be of any religion, but first understand the true purpose of your life -- and the spiritual possibility of your life. He was... He discouraged... A man who is really eager for spiritual realization

should not waste much of his time in fruitless argumentation. Fruitless intellectual enquiry and cogitations. His favorite illustration was a man [who] had gone to a mango garden. There were ripe, delicious mangoes and he began... and he was given the permission to take as many mangoes as he chose. But instead of doing that, after going to that he began to enquire, "What is this? What is this true? What is that true? What is this?" "Enquiry," he said. "Counting mango leaves." He said, "We are here. If you are interested in God, do not waste your time in idle and fruitless theology." "What is the nature of God? Is God with form or without form? Is there a heaven?" These are not important for you. What is important for you: to have an experience of God. So he used to say... Some person once asked him, "Sir, you have practiced many forms of, many forms of religious disciplines. You began your life by worshipping a stone image of Kali. And then you also practiced the highest Vedantic sadhana, this practice of monism. Now tell me, is God... has God really a form, or is He without form?" Then Sri Ramakrishna says, "Why ask this question? Instead if you sincerely pray to God, 'Oh God, help me to understand You. Bless me with Your Vision.' If you can do that, God Himself will show you what you are fit. If your mind is ready for the impersonal experience, God will grant you that impersonal experience. And if your mind wants, will be more benefited by experiencing Him through forms, God will appear to you in forms. So why don't you have some faith in God? Is God an idiot? Does he not understand your mind? Instead of wasting your time and energy into these questions, at once come directly to this practice, practice of prayer, practice of His Holy Name, practice of meditation. These are more important for your religious life.

So when we speak about "In tune with Sri Ramakrishna" it means that this great prophet, who was not really a person, just as his great disciple Vivekananda said, "He is the personification of great spiritual truths." So "in tune with Sri Ramakrishna" means to be in tune with these great spiritual discoveries --which have been done earlier-- but which have been again... In his life we see all those experience[s] and experiments have been done once again with great force and emphasis. First the nature of man. Man is not just a material and psychological unit. Man is a spiritual entity and that spiritual entity cannot be left in cold storage. That has to be brought out. And if we can bring out that reality of man, it does [a] miracle. It does.. it does... it does great wonders. It changes the pattern of our life. The hateful man, the fearful man, the ignorant man becomes a man of compassion and love and understanding. Of humility. Of sympathy. Of compassion. See. If such men are abundant in a society or a country, that country will assume a different status.

See. This country, it produced one Abraham Lincoln and you are proud of that. This America has produced one Abraham Lincoln. So the country which produces great men and great spiritual personalities, is really glorious, really a glorious country. So Sri Ramakrishna... when we are in tune with Sri Ramakrishna that means we are in tune with these great necessary spiritual

principles which are needed in our personal life, as also in our social life and in our national life, also in our international life. There has to be a spiritual perspective in all directions and that spiritual perspective is centered in man's spiritual nature. If man becomes spiritual, his spirituality touches every corner of his life. His spirituality does not lie shut up in the cave of his heart. His spirituality comes out. It touches his family. It touches his society. It touches his country. It touches other countries, other men. So spiritual man is a great power, is a great force of peace and wellbeing for man.

So Sri Ramakrishna's emphasis was for the development of this spiritual, spiritual man. And that is a great need for modern times. That is why it is, it is appropriate to call him, besides calling him a prophet of harmony-- a great yogi, a great jnani, a great monk, a great householder. He had combined both battles of life. Those of you who have read his life will remember, he married a wonderful lady. She became his spiritual partner all through his life. He never, even when he became a monk, he never said, "You go out.. to Miami." (laughter) No..he did not say that. "You come and you live with me. Share my life. Share my ideal." See, so he was an ideal husband, also he was an ideal yogi, an ideal monk of renunciation.

So "in tune with Sri Ramakrishna" is not merely a theoretical proposition. If we are deeply interested in ourselves and we are interested in our country and in the world as a whole, we should learn and understand the necessity of spiritual evolution of man. The spiritual discovery of man. That will.. that will do great good to ourselves, as also to others with which we come in contact.