

## **Madhuri: Sweetness of the Divine**

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 a Sanskrit word, madhuri, which means the sweetness of the Divine. The word sweetness we know very well. In different contexts of our everyday life we have to use the word, "sweet" and "sweetness," "sweeter," "less sweet." Like this. But here the context is spiritual. When we say: "The sugar is not sweet enough," "This mango is not sweet enough," we use the word sweet in a familiar, everyday sense. But madhuri, the word madhuri, cannot be applied [that way]. It is a reserved word. It cannot be applied to the sweetness of everyday life. It is used to denote the sweetness of God, the sweetness of the Divine, so it has a much wider connotation.

The sweetness of the Divine can be experienced only by people who are drawn to an inner spiritual life. Spiritual life may of many sorts. We attend churches on Sundays. We listen to the prayer and the sermon and that is a happy feeling. But some of the participants during that service may feel something unusual-- a great joy, a great peace, an inner peace, so much so for the time being he forgets his own body. He forgets where he is. His mind is lifted as it were to another plane. Such a person is really a blessed person because that short experience of divine sweetness does not die away. It leaves a mark in his character and he can recall it later. And when he does recall it, he wonders how it happened.

The first condition of his experience, of course, was his very sincere and intense longing for spiritual life. He does not attend church as a part of his social life. He comes to church in order to have an inner feeling, an inner love for the divine. So this madhuri, this word, is that special kind of joy. And this joy is... cannot be compared to any other kind of joy or happiness or pleasure in life. All of us are seeking joy – enjoyment. Sense enjoyment. Intellectual enjoyment. Enjoyment that we receive by... gambling. (Audience laughs.) So different kinds of enjoyment we have in life no doubt. But this enjoyment of the divine is different. There are persons who are very keen to have a direct experience of God. They are not satisfied by reading, or by visiting holy places. They want something as a personal experience and great spiritual teachers have told us that it is possible to have this experience if a person is really sincere, if the person is really earnest and brave, because he has to naturally face criticisms from his friends and family. This person is going to be mad! He sits there quietly and looks at the sky or looks at the ocean. Sometimes tears roll from his eyes. So they want him to send to the psychiatrist. The psychiatrist by seeing him, if the psychiatrist is not a very avaricious type, greedy type, if he is sincere to help people, then he says, "This is not

my case. Go to a very experienced, wise minister, to a religious man. This man has a religious fever. His illness is of a different type of illness.”

If you have read the life of Ramakrishna, you can find that Ramakrishna had this kind of illness. Very young he was engaged in the worship of God as Mother, the Divine Mother, Kali – a stone image. But he had... though young he was born with great faith. He believed this worship is not just a play: this image is real. If you can tune your mind to a higher spiritual level, then you can have... you will be able to see that through this image you experience something which is joy, which is wisdom, which is consciousness, which is power, which is something which cannot be described by words. You lose yourself in something which is beyond our description. That is why in Sanskrit we call it: avan-manasa-gochara <sup>1</sup>, beyond the reach of our words and our thoughts. All this is implied by this Sanskrit word, madhuri, all the attributes of God. We speak of the attributes of gods in many prayers, in many illuminating books, not by saying simply, “God is great.” We say God is immortal. God is love. God is compassion. God is justice. God is power. God is entire reality. There is nothing in this world that can escape God. God is holding everything to Himself. Everything is God.

Now this, the wise men say, is a great adventure. You have to prepare yourself for this experience as Ramakrishna did, as Buddha did, as Christ did – as many other saints and seers of different countries, of different periods have done. That means we have to build up your own spiritual life, without... not much expectation that I am going to a quiet place, maybe the forest and I will meditate there for twelve hours a day. That is wrong. Begin with one hour in the morning and one hour in the evening. And the rest of the time you read holy books, and if you are fortunate to meet a... meet some holy person, have his company.

Repeat the name of God. That is a wonderful way to experience that madhuri, that sweetness of the divine. Repetition of the holy name of God – any name which you like. In Islam there is only one name, Allah, no other name. In Christianity you have Jesus; you sometimes call him Christ. You call him Son of Man. But in Hinduism there has been a freedom on the part of the spiritual seeker. You can use hundreds of names, and not merely names, forms also. Some people shudder to think that God can be worshipped through some form. To them, God is formless. True. But not for all. One type of religion should not be thrust on everybody. Religion is a great adventure. And every adventure has its variations. So in Hinduism, in Vedanta, there are hundreds of names of God. Each name is significant. Each name tries to describe some attribute of God, because God has nameless attributes. In Sanskrit we call God, Braham. Brahman means the greatest, all-inclusive. And if He is Brahman, if He is all-inclusive, it is natural that He will have innumerable attributes and qualities.

For a particular person, for a particular human being in our everyday life we can describe him with some words with some expressions which are very limited. We can say, “He’s a strong man. He is two hundred thirty pounds now, but he’s trying to cut down his weight. And he’s a good man; he’s an honest man. And he is a good worker. And he is a charitable man. Whatever he has he shares with others.” In this way we can describe a man, his good parts and bad parts. Bad parts: unfortunately he is a gambler. Unfortunately he is not very sweet to his wife. He

loves his wife dearly and he says since I love my wife dearly, I have some basic rights, and one of the rights is to forget their wedding anniversary. The wife is waiting with expectation for the husband to return from his work in the evening with several packages in his hands but when the husband returns --no packages in his hands. [He's] empty-handed. And he says, "Honey, honey, good evening." "Well. That is true. Good evening. But why are your hands are empty? Have you forgotten this is our wedding anniversary?" "Oh dear. Ah dear, I was so much busy in my office and over and above that, my boss began to say many nasty things on me. And so I was depressed and so I forgot about our wedding anniversary. But we shall make it up."

Like that, in our common life, we meet a person, we have a relation, he has many bright parts and he has some undesirable parts also. But we cannot continue describing him. After describing his good parts and bad parts, our language becomes finished. So in this world you cannot [continue]; nothing is really great in the utmost. Things have bright side, dark side. And the story is complete. With those you can write a novel of five hundred pages, that but not more. If you want, if you don't mind reading and hearing irrelevant things then you can read a novel of two thousand pages. But it is boring. It is cruel on the part of the author to oppress his readers. [Audience laughs.] So, so far as beings and things in this world, everything is limited. Nothing can compare to God. God you can describe in as many ways as possible, and this we see in thousands of hymns and prayers and songs how God has been, God has been described in so many ways. And when we read those hymns and prayers and songs and writings we become inspired. The writer, who must have been a great devotee, a man of faith, the writer's faith and the writer's intensity of love is passed to us. That is why it is very good to read those literature, because those words have a power. And that power enters into our heart and we are also inspired.

But apart from reading we have other ways to grow our, to build up our spiritual life. So that spiritual life will be an all-inclusive life. It is a mistake to think that spiritual life is idle life: spiritual life is a life of boredom. Day after day to meditate or to repeat the name of God, this is boring. Of course it may be boring in the beginning. In the beginning it may be boring, but one should... Many things are boring in the beginning. So one should remember, spiritual life is an adventure and it has high aim. It is an universal aim and that aim comprises wisdom that cannot be had by reading books – an inner wisdom, an inner light, an inner joy. These things are not available by common means, though we want-- every one of us wants to enjoy.

Our life itself is great enjoyment. Who wants to quit life? Of course nowadays in the newspapers and in the periodicals you find many articles about suicide. So people are finding new interest in suicide. That is a bluff. Why should you have suicide? This life, which we have been given by God, should be used in the right way. Then this life is not-- is not painful. The life always is sweet. And that shows basically every person loves life, even when a person has been ill. A person [who] has been the victim of a dreadful disease-- then that person is miserable, but [not] a spiritual person, a person who has loved God dearly and is practicing the name of God, the meditation of the divine, with courage and persistent and the love.

That person is not so much affected by the calamities of the body, the calamities of life. You may one day lose a lot of money by a bank failure, or by burglary, or by any other means, (don't speak of gambling). But this man, a spiritually minded man thinks that these things are inevitable in life. This life is not eternal life. We are born, but we are bound to die. Life and death go together. Today I am living, but tomorrow I am short of one day of the total span of my life. So when we send a greeting card for [a] birthday, we should add a footnote that this a greeting for your birthday but this is a condolence for your losing one day of your precious life. (Audience laughs.)

So sweetness of God: this special word, Sanskrit word, madhuri, it includes the totality of God-experience. God is real. God is not an object of academic discussion and philosophical arguments. God is as real, just as when we eat our food. We don't philosophize. You are hungry; it is time for food and my good wife has prepared a nice hot meal for me. So I come from work and I eat that meal, and I am satisfied. So an earnest spiritual seeker, by the practice of prayer, contemplation, meditation, repetition of the holy name – by all these spiritual methods, he frees his mind from the many hidden evils, many undesirable desires. We do not know how much evil we carry in our heart. We pose as a saint, to my friends, to my wife, but inside my heart there are undesirable things.

With Jesus Christ, we read in the Bible, once he was taking [a] meal with his disciples and the disciples were – they were not very particular about the external rituals of religious books. The Jewish religion has -- is very strict with regard to external observances. You must go this way. You must eat this thing. You must cook this way. Too many restrictions! And so these disciples and Jesus himself, they sat to eat and his critics were watching. And they saw that these people began to eat without washing their hands, without observing the cleanliness that is described in the scriptures. So they criticized. They called him, called Jesus – he was a very young man then, “Well how is it that your disciples are not respecting the rules of our scriptures? They are eating with dirty hands.”

Then Jesus said, “The [real] dirt is not outside. It is within your heart. You look and see how much dirt is there, you have accumulated. You have accumulated greed, lust, and so many other things, evil things you have accumulated. Those are the real dirt. You have to clean your heart from this dirt. Your heart will be clean and in that clean heart the reflection of God, the reflection of the divine you will see and your life will be blessed. Religion is not... you have made your church... [Voice trails off and a word is lacking here – possibly “dirty”?]...

Jesus was just a young man. At the age of twelve he disappeared from home and traveled – where he traveled, God knows. There are many biographies, many books – the unknown life of Jesus. Anyway, when he returned, he was a very wise man. People could not resist his words. Really he became a teacher. Now he... there was in those days, we read in the Bible, a Jewish teacher who was widely respected. He used to baptize people and give them [the] holy name of God. And Jesus went to him and then this man – he was John the Baptist. He said this young man who has come here, I am nothing compared to his greatness. I am not even competent to tie his shoelace. I am just a little man. I have come just to help his mission. And he was away from home for many years. Now he has returned and from his mouth is

emerging words of wisdom. You all – let us all adore him, respect him. Some people listened, but some not. Those churchmen they thought, this man, this young man has come, he will criticize us. And indeed Jesus said, scolded the priests, “Ye have made a marketplace of your church, of your temple. Selling this thing, that thing. Where is God? God has disappeared from your temple. You don’t care for God. You care for your business.” So Jesus scolded them severely and so they became enemies. And as a result of that Jesus had to suffer terribly. From their hands they made a plot. Jerusalem was under the Roman rule, a slave country, not an independent country.

So Jesus had many enemies, but he had many friends also. And people gathered around him and he would talk about God – God’s great power, God’s great forgiveness, God’s love, God’s beauty. These things we read in the Sermon on the Mount. Sermon the Mount... we find Christ’s words, spiritual counsels to the people who cared to listen to him, and they are great words. They are as great even today. If you read the Sermon on the Mount, you will feel that you are reading any other holy book of any other religion. You are reading the Gita.

So it is possible, by self-submission. We have to submit ourself to God. We have to pray from the depth of our heart, “Oh God, I want to have Your vision, but my heart is not yet sufficiently clean. So give me the power to make my heart clean so that my prayer will be sweet and effective.” In this way one should self-surrender. One should surrender oneself to God. That is the scheme of spiritual life. That is not an idle life. When by the grace of God, which is bound to come one day, if not in this one life, in another life... then our human life becomes blessed. We then know why we are born.

We are not born to seek sense pleasures, and name and fame and scholarship. But we are born in order to love God, in order to know God. And then we know that we are really – we belong to God for all times. We are not subject to death. Death belongs to the body, but inside the body, the real me is there, the real I, who is a child of God, what in Vedanta we called our true self, the true man.

The true man is not a body. The true man is not even a mind. The true man is a soul, and that soul has no death. That soul is eternal. By God’s grace, this wisdom comes to a person and a person’s life is blessed. He experiences God – God’s joy, God’s knowledge, God’s power. And his life is blessed. [There is] nothing else to seek, because everything is in God. By experiencing God, he gets everything that he desires. Such are the wise counsels we read in the words of great spiritual giants, like Buddha, like Christ, like Saint Francis, like Ramakrishna, like Vivekananda. We read these great experiences. So by God’s great grace, let our mind be drawn to this Madhuri, this sweetness of God, which comprises many things, including immortality. [For] a man... a person who has experienced the divine, his body may go, but he does not go. He remains united with God. We read this in the Upanishads. Such is the sweetness. Such is the Sweetness of the Divine.

Thank you.

1. as cited on <http://www.tirumala.org/prasadam.html> 8/9/12 and other Internet sites with variant spellings. As spoken by Swami Shraddhananda it sounded like “Avan-manaso-gocharam.”

*Next Sunday, December 6<sup>th</sup>, I shall be speaking on the broken and the whole. And December 2<sup>nd</sup> I shall be conducting the Upanishad class in the evening, Wednesday. And December 5<sup>th</sup>, Saturday class that will also... [be] my privilege. So this whole week is my privilege because Swami Prapannananda has gone on a tour for three weeks. So till he returns I shall go on enjoying this privilege. [Audience laughs.] Now as I go down to greet our devotees, you please play your guitar. That will take at least five minutes. You can continue. He is a very efficient guitar player. He has been our guest, he and his wife. His wife is an efficient piano player. But we have no piano, so... but he can play the guitar till, take some time I go down and I shake hands with people. You go on playing. You begin. When you begin the rest will get done. [Audience laughs.]*

*Guitarist sings, "Mother here are Thy good deeds, here are Thy bad. Take them both and give me pure love for Thee. Om Mother, here is Thy knowledge. Here is Thy [lack?] Take them both and give me pure love for Thee. Thou art the driver and I am the carriage. Thou makest me move as I move. I am the dwelling and Thou art the dweller. Thou makest me do as I do. Mother, here is there is Thy virtue. Here is Thy vice. Take them both and give me pure love for Thee. Om Mother, here is Thy truth.... Om Mother... Om...."*

*Swami Shraddhananda: "Don't stop. Go on...."*

*"Dear Lord, I do pray, and all through my days, I work just as hard as I can to serve You this way. May I turn to Thee, as I walk along. Dear Lord, I do pray, in my moments of rest, may You make life more strong. Dear Lord, I do pray-- in the fray-- stand by my side, I pray here abide. Oh Lord slay my greed and my pride and may they subside. Moments sublime, when my work is dying, may I realize You and I --are One. Dear Lord I do pray...."*

*[Sounds of people leaving the temple overlay the end of the second song... and there is no further closing prayer. Some earlier words didn't come through the microphone clearly either. Hopefully the song lyrics are close to accurate!]*