

Never Estranged from God

The subject of my talk this morning is: Never Estranged from God.

When we say the tree is, the bird is, the man is, the flower is, or any other object--when we see or hear or touch or smell this existence, that is one kind of existence. All the time through our senses, the experience of the existence of many things, many objects, many phenomena are pouring into our mind. But when we say that God is, there is a different kind of existence. The normal existence of things, of objects and phenomena is transitory existence, transient existence.

The tree is there; I'm seeing this tree. I'm touching the tree but I know this tree is not going to be there for all time. In my lifetime I can see the tree, but my great-great grandchild will not see that tree. By that tree...By that time the tree will disappear. So transience or temporary existence is the characteristic of all objects, all phenomena. Kingdoms come and last for maybe two centuries. Then that kingdom vanishes. Another kingdom comes. One social order lasts for maybe two centuries. Then that is overthrown. That social order goes and another social order comes. So this is the general characteristic of objects and phenomena in this world of ours.

But when we say, "God is," when we think of the existence of God we cannot associate with Him this characteristic feature of transience. We say, "God is eternal." God is not bound by space or time. Any other object is bound by space and time. A tree may be here in Sacramento in one plot but the tree cannot be ... cannot exist in another plot. It is stationary. It has to stay there. Some persons live in Sacramento. Maybe after two years they move to San Francisco. Maybe after three years they move to Greece. But that person cannot be everywhere at all times. But God can. God is not limited by space or time. God exists here. God exists there. God exists on our planet. God exists in the moon, in the sun, in the stars, in the galaxies!

So space is not [a] problem with God. With us, it is. All the time we are bound by space-- bound by space, and bound by time. Our span of life may be ninety-five years or one hundred years. After that we have no right to encroach. Though the next period of time we have to go, and this is true of everything. We are limited, miserably limited by space and time. But not God. God is everywhere and God is at all times. But God is eternal and God is pervading everything, penetrating everything. That is why He is God. That is the difference between God and us. We are limited by space and time and also by another thing: mortality. It is called the law of causation. Our movements, our actions our thoughts, everything has to obey the law of causation. Everything is linked with some other thing. We are chained by the law of causation. But not God. He is... No laws can restrict His actions. So God's existence is different from our existence or the existence of any other thing or any other event. God is not bound by space or time.

Now, man... great seers of truth tell us that man... since God is all-pervading, all-penetrating it is quite possible that God is also within us, around us. If God is all-pervading, if God is present at all times, there cannot be logically any estrangement from God, but unfortunately there is an estrangement. Though God is present everywhere, God is present at all times, yet we do not find God normally. Even when we are in great crisis we cry and cry for God, "Oh God, please help me." But we do not find any response from God. Sometimes we do, but sometimes not. If we tell God, "Oh God why

are not responding to me? I am crying. I am praying. “ Then God’s answer is: (laughs lightly) “I am not bound by any law. I am not bound by any rule of yours. So keep quiet.”

So our great teachers say that since God is present everywhere and all times it is quite logical that God is also, is around us and inside us. The estrangement, the alienation is due to a basic ignorance of life. In the Christian theology this can be compared to the idea of the fall of man. Call it [corrupt?] man, the Christian theology says at one time [man was] with God, in the presence of God, happy, no problems, no worries. But somehow an error came. A misbehavior came, and he had to be estranged from God and that is continuing. In theological terms it is called the fall of man. And, of course man can return again to God if he obeys the rules of conduct.

Well we cannot deny that for **most** people there is a basic estrangement. Man does not feel the presence of God. He cannot find God either within him or outside him. This nature, this vast world becomes a mass of material movement, the movement of nature, guided, controlled by the laws of nature: the laws of physics, chemistry, biology. [A] vast machine. The vast, wonderful, frightening world. The vast space and vast stretch of time. It is working, working, working and I am a part of it. I do not know what is my goal. It is a perplexing situation, when we think of this situation calmly and deeply. So we do not normally find God. Normally we live in a world, we live a life, completely estranged from God. This is in the Vedantic language called Maya, darkness, ignorance. Though God is there, His “is-ness”, his existence, [is] so different from our existence. We can run away; we can fly; we can hide ourselves. But God cannot. He is everywhere. He is at all times. Where will he run away? It is not possible. But still this situation is there for us that we do not find God. This is called the darkness of maya, the darkness of ignorance.

Vedantic scriptures tell us that man at all times is an heir of the immortal truth of God. God’s light, God’s eternal existence, God’s wisdom, God’s love, God’s sweetness, God’s peace – all these things man can have. Man has a right to these truths of God. Man can find... but find God. Man can come to an experience where there can never be any estrangement – eternal presence of God, eternal companionship with God. This is possible. This is called God-consciousness. And these great spiritual teachers, saints and seers tell us: “Don’t be frightened or depressed by this state of maya, the state of darkness. Don’t go to explain, ‘Why, why maya?’ Don’t cry... don’t ask these questions. Instead, work out your salvation. Remove this maya. Remove this darkness.”

Now, Sri Ramakrishna’s favorite parable was: a man was somehow in a place where there was no light--maybe a dark room. And he was naturally miserable, confused. Dark. Dark. Dark. Now as Sri Ramakrishna says, “If the man goes on crying, crying ‘oh it is dark, oh it is dark, oh it is dark’ then darkness does not go.” But that foolish man had a matchbox in his pocket. He forgot that. He forgot that. So if that foolish man strikes the match, at once there is light. So the darkness of ignorance, our estrangement from God can be removed. If we are sincere, if we are earnest, this ignorance can go. And God is always ready to help us.

In certain scriptures the same thing can be described in many ways: the idea of maya, darkness, estrangement of God. It can be presented in many ways. One way is that it is all a game. Just as a person who has two or three dogs. That person likes to play with the dogs. Sometimes the dogs are put into difficult situations, even cruel situations,

but it just a play. In the same way this perspective is that we– the time is bound to come when we shall regain our knowledge of God, that we are really eternally linked to God, connected with God. This is a fact. A great fact! But temporarily there is this estrangement, and this estrangement is the play of God. So when we discover this estrangement, when we discover that, God is far away, God who is the Source of all strength, all peace, immortality, in other words all that we are seeking in life. We are seeking happiness, peace, unending life, power, joy, all these things that we are seeking here and constantly we are being battled. If we can find God, all these will be naturally available to us. Not in minute quantities, but in an infinite way.

That is what the seers of God, men and women who have experienced God, they tell us, with great courage they tell us, “Don’t think that this is a fable, this is a poem, this is a fiction. It is true. We also,” they tell us, “we also were estranged from God. We were also miserable. We also led a life where there was no place for God, a dark life. But by God’s grace, that maya, that darkness has been removed for us. Now we are living in God. Now we feel that we can never be estranged from God. We can never run away from God. Neither can God run away from us.” That is the divine heritage of man. And, they tell us that a man, if he is earnest, can remove this ignorance, this darkness-- by prayer, by meditation, by contemplation. If he is really... if has really found out the fallacies of this darkness, if he has not fallen in love with this darkness then the response from God is bound to come. Man can discover himself.

Man’s present state is very limited. He has a body which is frail. He has a mind which is restless. He has a heart filled with all kind of passions and distractions. But this state can disappear. By the light of God, by the truth of God [it can disappear]. This is called spiritual life. Spiritual life is the effort, is the discipline by which we can remove this estrangement from God. We can come to God. We can feel that really God is with us all the time: inside and outside. So when this awakening, spiritual awakening comes, when man feels that he has to do something, he should not remain satisfied with this ignorant state of life where there is constant confusion, doubt, fear, unhappiness, restless. This is not the very ideal state of life. There should be peace. There should be tranquility. There should be fearlessness. There should be joy. So when he understands the necessity of God-consciousness, his spiritual life, his serious spiritual life begins.

First of all we have to know that there **is** a God, Who is different from anything we see. In the start [this is the way it is]. When we realize God, when we experience God, slowly we see that really speaking all that we see, this manifold universe is also God, is also God’s Light, God-consciousness. It is God Who is appearing, in the language of Vedanta. The One God, the One Infinite Consciousness, the Spirit – He is appearing in different garbs. It is just a play. He is appearing as space, as time, as the matter, as energy, as mind – endless varieties, endless manifold experiences. Really speaking it is all God. This knowledge comes later. In the beginning of our spiritual life we have to distinguish between God and that which is not God. And, we have to know that in all these things, which are to us, not-God, really speaking are controlled by God. God somehow is present in all things, in all objects, living or nonliving. That faith we should try to strengthen. Though I cannot find God with my ignorant eyes, with my ignorant mind, but God **is** everywhere at all times. This faith is very strengthening. With this faith we can, we should continue our search. Here we cannot really depend on our own ignorant mind. Our ignorant mind wants... has a thought of egotism. Ignorant mind

says, thinks, “I can bake a [loaf of] bread. I can also find out God.” You see that is man’s vanity. Spiritual knowledge has its own approach, has its own techniques so we have to depend on the experiences of those who had completed the journey. We call them men and women of God – saints, seers, illumined persons. So we have to depend on their experiences. We have to listen to them with humility. If we can do that, then this struggle, this adventure becomes easy. If we depend on our ignorant self... I can write a book on philosophy. I can write a thesis on the existence of God. [That] does not go far. It can get me a Ph. D. degree. It can bring me honors, but it won’t bring me that illumination I was seeking. We have to be humble. We have to depend on the experience of these great sages and saints: the Christ, the Buddhas, the Krishnas, the Ramakrishnas. These personalities are spiritual messengers. They... from them we have to seek the wisdom, how to go, how to remove this estrangement.

So the faith in the words of the great teachers in the message of the scriptures is important. With that faith we should begin our adventure – seeking God. Now the scriptures tell us, though really speaking: ultimately God is everything, but in the beginning we have to make a difference between God and matter and mind and energy. See. The two broad categories. The one is God, Who is Spirit, Who is the Fundamental Basis of Existence and Knowledge. It is called in simple language: Spirit of Consciousness. He is the most fundamental reality. And other things have later on come from Him – namely space, time, matter, energy, life, personality, individualities, millions of millions of species, of living things. But God is the Fundamental Reality – God as Spirit. God as Consciousness. And if you study Vedantic scriptures (the Upanishads, the Bhagavad Gita) you get a clue of the thinking in which we should lead our mind when we try to contemplate on God. You see in the Upanishads we have this kinds of statements: “That Infinite Being, that Timeless Being, Who has, Which has no beginning.”

Everything has its beginning. Everything has its end. But God is without beginning and without an end. Anadi that Infinite Being. For the sake of simplicity, call Him, “Spirit.” And from that Spirit – that Spirit projected everything. “And projecting everything, He entered into everything.” Sometime we think of God as extra-cosmic. He’s far away in some heaven and with all this creation below Him. But there is another way of thinking, which is called, God is not transcendental, but He is also immanent. That idea is expressed in many teachings of the Upanishad [that] state that after creating, that after projecting this vast universe He has entered into everything. He has entered into the stars. He has entered into the mountains. He has entered into living beings. He has entered into the atoms. God’s presence. In other words – Spirit, that fundamental core of existence is everywhere. Now we... Then the Upanishads says – if this be true then try to find that immanent God within you. So in the Upanishads we have such sayings that “You know in the core of your personality that Spirit is there. God as Spirit has entered into your very being. “ The eyes are seeing. Through the eyes we have visual experience. Through the ears we have experience of all sound. Through other organs, our sense organs we have other perceptions, but the Upanishads tell us, “No” -- that at the back of all these experiences there is God, that Divine Essence – that Spirit within you and He is within you as your soul.

Soul is your fundamental core of existence. Your core of existence is not your body; neither your mind; neither your prana or vitality. But the core of your existence is

your soul. And what is the soul? Soul is: ... we can use many expressions. But the soul is God. To be simple, God within you is your soul. God within you is your soul, that light of all lights, that shining spirit and that soul is giving your experience of your very existence. Every moment you are feeling, "I am, I am, I am." This experience is coming from that core, from that center which is your soul. Your enjoyment, your gladness, your joy – any kind of joy. You are experiencing different kinds of pleasure and joy and happiness. So all this joy is also coming from that core – your soul. All your knowledge is also coming from that core. So with great faith, try to direct your mind to that core, to the... to that center. So in the Upanishads we read such expressions: the soul, the divine in us, the God in us, is the life of our life, is the eye of our eyes, is the most precious treasure. When we read these things and side by side we study the lives of saints and seers, our faith becomes more and more strengthened and we develop love for that God, love for that object of our search. He's so wonderful. He's so wonderful. He is giving us the light of knowledge, our immortality, our joy, all these things. So I should, I should come face to face with Him. I must experience Him. In this way, we grow in our spiritual life, starting from that initial faith we begin to develop a love for that great object of our search, namely God.

And instead of trying to find Him in heaven, we should try to find Him within us, knowing that He is that great light within us, the light that is making possible all our experiences--even our experience of our very existence. So this is called contemplation. By contemplation, slowly this veil of ignorance is removed. More ??on goth mode??

___ God becomes living to us. In the beginning it may be, He may be just something hazy, but by contemplation – and another important thing is prayer—with great humility we have to pray to the immortal light within us. Oh God, the Light of all Lights, the Greatest Treasure of my life, the great objective of my life, show me Your Face. Let me not remain estranged from You. To remain estranged and alienated from You is great misery. So by Your Grace, show me Your Face. In the scriptures, in the Bible, in the Bhagavad Gita, in the Upanishads, in our scriptures, you find wonderful prayers, prayers which are coming from the core of the heart, a sincere desire from the heart. The devotee, the spiritual aspirant is praying to God because so long as there is maya, so long as there is ignorance, we are very limited. We are very limited even in our practical life, not to speak of spiritual life. So prayer is a very important spiritual practice.

In the Isha Upanishad we have that wonderful prayer. "Remove this world so dazzling, so distracting, everything is attracting me, 'come to me, come to me' and my mind is broken into thousands of pieces. [I] do not know where to go." This is called this life, and this is compared to in that verse of the Isha Upanishad just as in the morning we see the sun has just a bright disk of light, just a very pleasant to look, early morning sun. It is not bright. It is not... you see just a red disk. That is compared to this world experience of ignorance. It looks like a bright disk – fascinating. We can write poems on it, but that disk at that stage, at that early morning, it is really no sun. Sun's light and rays have not yet come. Like that, this world experience when so long as we are ignorant is fascinating, is charming, is distracting, but what is at the back of that disk we do not know. In other words, we do not see the Great Sun, namely God. So this verse of the Upanishad says, "O Great Sun," addressing God as the sun which is an analogy, "You remove this golden disk. Enough of that golden disk. You appear with all your light and all your heat. You be the sun." We need the sun. Our life depends upon the light and the

heat of the sun, so show us your True Face. In other words, the prayer is directed to God. This enchanting veil of maya – You show Your Face from the back of this veil. See. That is the prayer – for God’s Grace. If God’s Grace is there, we can at once discover God within us. We can really feel that at the back of all my experiences, there is that Light of All Lights, that Consciousness, that Soul.

So in this way we go on in our spiritual life. Prayer is one way. Contemplation is one way. Meditation is one way. In this way we are trying to more and more discover that light within us, that God within us. The more we do so, this veil of ignorance disappears. This estrangement goes and we more and more see that really God all the time is in me—in waking state he is with me. All my duties, actions, responsibilities, my ?jumpings? God can never be estranged. So the devotee begins to feel more and more the presence of God. [If] he is alone, he feels God is with him. Alone quietly he is looking at a beautiful landscape, maybe looking quietly at the snows. His heart is becoming peaceful. He knows this peace that is coming from the silence is God’s peace. “He is at the back of the snows. He is at the back of all beautiful landscapes.” He feels the presence of God. That is the difference between an ordinary man and a man of God. An ordinary man enjoys nature, but he does not bring God into the picture. But a spiritual man enjoys nature as God’s Glory. He enjoys his own body as God’s Glory. What a wonder this body is. He sees it is God. He is the great operator, within our living body, at the back of our mind. What a wonder our mind is! Mind is going here, there. It’s memory. It’s reflection. It’s reason. All these wonders of the mind, a man of God feels, “It is God’s Glory. It is God’s Light.”

So he begins to feel the presence of God in nature and inside himself. He feels more and more that God can never be estranged from him. And he can never be estranged from God. When the mind is thinking, he feels that back of this thinking there is God. When he is eating and enjoying the meal he feels it is God there. At the back of my enjoyment. In this way God becomes more and more living, in him. That is, the more and more this God-consciousness comes to his life. He becomes blessed. More and more his all kinds of fear goes from him. Maybe a crisis of life has come. Maybe a bereavement. Maybe a difficult situation. But this man, this man of God ?with? more and more feels the presence of God within **him**. He is not depressed. He is not confused. He goes on. He ?felt he? Everything is happening by God’s will. Of course he has a right to pray. “Oh God, this disaster has come.” See he does not dictate to God, you must do this, just as Lord Jesus Christ at the last moment, he added an “if.” Lord Jesus Christ in his prayer, “If it is possible, remove this... remove this pain, remove this crisis.” So we should follow his example. We can sincerely pray to God in moments of crisis and bereavement and difficulty but we should not dictate to God, “You have to do this.” “Thy will be done.” This trouble has come. This suffering has come. If possible, remove this suffering. If you think, “No” that I should have more suffering. All right. That should be the attitude of the devotee.

He should never lose his faith in God. He should never loses his faith in the goodness and justice of God. And this comes to him naturally. A true devotee of God never complains. See. He lives his life and not that because he is meditating on God he will not have any bereavement in his family. That is irrational. This world, this life goes on its own way. It is a mixture of opposites. There is life; there has to be death. If there is hope, there has to be frustration. If there is health, there has to be sickness. Because

this world is not the eternal world, it is just a passing stage. And in this passing stage these dual experiences are all the time coming to us. When we experience God more and more, more and more, then true from every corner of this world of maya, God will raise His Head. Then these dualities, these self –contradictions will disappear. We will be able more and more to feel, “It is all God.” Life is God. Death is also God. Beauty is God. Ugliness is also God. That is of course more and more profound experience of God.

So a spiritual aspirant, a person who is seeking to remove this veil of maya, that is his way. More and more he feels that God can never... at no time really God left him, even when he was sunk in ignorance, there was God with him. This faith becomes more, becomes stronger and stronger with him. And just as this faith grows, his doubts also vanish. He cannot have any doubt about God’s justice, God’s compassion, God’s truth. He lives in peace. That is spiritual peace. When you feel that I am eternally united with God, through joys, through sorrow, through suffering. In all stages here or after here, in this life, or after life, he does not care to calculate all these things. Where will I go? What will happen to me? On the other hand, in his consciousness, in his thinking, in his emotions, there is God all the time. There is God all the time. So more and more this veil of maya, this basic ignorance of life begins to disappear and for all time he feels that God is with him and he **is** in God. And then his heart is filled with love for God. He sings song after song, song after song, love songs he sings to God. That we find evidence in the writings of these saints and seers. They are feelings. Sometimes the devotee says, “You are my Father, beloved Father.” Sometimes he is called God, Mother. Sometimes he calls God his Friend and Companion.

You see, when there is love, then there is no end to the expressions of love. A man and woman are in love with each other. Pure love. See. Now in their love, in how many ways their love tries to express itself. They feel that there is no end to this loving. So many words they want to direct. See the man wants to say so many sweet words. All the sweet words available in English dictionary, he uses. Then he goes to French dictionary. Then to German dictionary. And he feels, “They are not adequate.” This love wants expression through words, through actions. That is the rule of love. The same thing happens in the lover of God. He becomes mad. So here enjoyment is called the enjoyment of God. He sees and feels the experience, the presence of God inside him in every fiber of his body, in every movement of his mind, in his feelings, in his emotions, in the outside world, in the starry heavens, in the snows, in the oceans, in the animals and the birds. It is all God. What a majestic play! In this way his heart is filled with emotion, love for God. But at the same time, he is quiet, because he knows that this companionship with God, it is something eternal. So he has no worldly calculation. In his waking state, in his dream state, in his state of meditation, always all the time there is his beloved who is his Father, who is his Friend, who is his Eternal Companion, who is appearing and manifesting in all his loves. He is loving his child: he sees that it is God’s love. It is God who is taking my love through the child. In other words, God’s infinite truth, all pervading, all penetrating Truth becomes vivid to him.

When we read the life patterns of these devotees of God, we are convinced of their experience. Not a single breath they have without the remembrance of God. See. He feels that in every breath, there is God. So these are the possibilities of God-consciousness. So there are times in our life when we are miserable, when we feel,

“Where is God? He is not responding to me.” Even that feeling of estrangement can come to a spiritual seeker. A person who is meditating who is leading a spiritual life, sometimes these dark moments come. In Christian theology it has been called the dark night of the soul. The person is meditating, some days his mind is quiet, his heart is filled with love. Then a period of dullness comes and he feels the world is dark. “Where is God?” And sometimes doubt may come. See now if these saints and seers have mentioned this and they have advised the spiritual seeker never to be depressed. These temporary experiences of estrangement may come, but a devotee of God should not succumb to that. Carry on the torch. Carry on that light of faith, that there is a God, a loving God, a responding God Who is inside me and outside me. And for some time there can be a veil, but that veil can never be permanent. In this way, when these baffling situations of estrangement come, we should not be discouraged, we should not be depressed. We should carry on our life, because God is the ultimate goal of our life. All that we do in life, it’s ultimate purpose is to be united with God, to remain united with God, to feel that we are in God and God is in us.