

On God's Side

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 talk this morning is: On God's Side. This expression is taken from a saying of Abraham Lincoln. During the Civil War days a delegation of religious ministers visited the president. And one of the ministers remarked that, "We hope the Lord is on our side." These ministers belonged to the North, so he said, "We hope the Lord is on our side" and Abraham Lincoln replied, "I am not at all concerned about that. It is my constant anxiety and prayer that I and this nation should be on the Lord's side." [A] wonderful difference with great spiritual significance. Whether we are asking the Lord to be on our side, or we are determined to be on the Lord's side. The first attitude lays emphasis on me – my selfish interest, my ambition, my desire. Whether they are right or wrong, I don't know, but what is important to me is "I and my interest" and I want the Lord to be on my side, to help me. That is the attitude, first attitude. The other attitude is the attitude of a true devotee of God. There is no I here. If there is an I, that I is that "I am the servant of God; I am the child of God." So my concern should be always on God's side.

In simple language, in the language of Lord Jesus Christ, it comes to that: "Thy will be done," the attitude of self-surrender. Because if I have faith in God and if I know that God is omniscient, God is ever compassionate, God is ever just, God is truth. If I know that, if I have faith in that, in the nature of God, then it is audacious of me to dictate to God. Does not God know what is good for me? Does not God know how things should be, how things should go. That may disturb my self interest, but what of that? God is not God of just me. God is the God of millions of human beings. God is the God of this whole universe, so God knows best how a particular thing should go. That is faith. That is self-surrender. And Abraham Lincoln had that attitude. He did not pray to God, "Oh God you must come to our side, the North's side." He did not say that. He had that faith in God. "So I shall be on God's side. Whatever God does, I shall submit to His Judgment." That is the attitude of a true spiritual seeker. He does not pray for his own little selfish interest. He depends on God. He surrenders on God. "Thy Will be done." That is his attitude. And in our spiritual life if we really want peace and spiritual progress, we have to develop this attitude.

It is our little selfishness that is the great block and hindrance to our spiritual progress. If we submit ourselves to God and then see what God does, and I submit to what happens, that is the attitude of self-surrender – self-surrender to God. "To be on God's side!" A simple expression, but with deep spiritual significance. What is

it to be on God's side? God is not remote. He is not aloof. This show of this world is going on. Whatever is going on, if we believe on the statement of the scriptures, if we believe on the experience of saints and seers, then we have to believe that God is everywhere. God is the ruler of my life. God is the ruler of the life of a bird, life of a plant, life of any other animal, life of the angels. He is the Supreme Ruler, that Supreme Intelligence and Supreme Power that is everywhere, that is working everywhere. So when I am working for a certain end, is not God watching? So when I work, I have to remember Him. Let me be able to do this work in the right way – in God's way. Not in my selfish way, but in God's way.

So, God's way touches every phase of our life. It touches our thoughts, our desires, our actions, our ambitions. Everything has a "God's way." Our actions can have "my way" – my selfish, ignorant way-- or it can have "God's way." My emotions can go in "my way" – my ignorant, selfish way or it can... they can go in God's way. Every part of my life can go in two directions: my ignorant self... selfish way, or the divine way, God's way. So God's way touches our life-- touches everything. And we have to remember that. The more we remember this, the more God comes to our life. He envelops our life. He sits in our heart all the time. But if we reject Him, He lets me go my own way. Your ways are not always (I mean) welcome. God says, "All right. Go your own way." God doesn't mind if we go our own way. But a serious spiritual seeker has always to remember: What is God's way?

To be on God's way is to thoroughly transform our life in the spiritual way. The scriptures tell us: God's messengers, the avatars, the incarnations, the prophets, the sages, they tell us – what is God's way, what is the Divine Way and how to mold our life in the Divine Way. Molding our life in the Divine Way does not mean to reject life, to reject this world, to reject our duties and responsibilities, but to change the attitude. Lord Jesus Christ said, "I am the Light of the world." On one occasion he said, "I am the Light of the world. And he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." That is his declaration – that I am the supreme light where there is no darkness, no shadow. The light of God is that constant light where there is no blemish, but that which is pure. That is God's light. And Jesus Christ, he was the Son of God. In him, God's Light shone in a perfect way. And he said, "I am the Light of the world and he that follows me shall not walk in darkness." In another place he said, "Ye are the light of the world" – addressing his devotees, addressing his followers. Don't think you are wretched, little, miserable beings, but ye are the light of... just as I am the light of the world, so ye are also the light of the world. That is the great potentiality, the great possibility of man. Man is really Divine, but he does not know that. He does not want to know that.

These great teachers tell us and remind us of our heritage, of our divine heritage. In the depth of our consciousness, there is that Flame of God, that pure Flame of God. In Vedanta we call it the atman of man, man's atman, man's soul. And that soul has to come out. And when that soul, that Flame of God comes out, and touches our life, touches our thoughts, touches our emotions, touches our actions then we are really walking on God's way. So Jesus Christ said, "Ye are the light of the world," reminding us of our divine heritage. So a devotee of God, a spiritual seeker should always remember this, even though I do not see that light, but I must have faith in myself, that I am not a miserable [being]... really I am the ever ... just as

God is ever free, so I am also the ever-free spirit that is my soul. Elsewhere Jesus Christ said, "What will a man profit if he shall gain the whole world, but lose his own soul?" What can a man give in exchange for his, for his soul? That is: the soul, our spiritual nature, our spiritual potentiality is the highest treasure that we have. Our highest treasure is not our muscles, not our beauty, not our power, not our wealth, not our intelligence, but our soul. Because when the soul wakes up, then everything becomes right and just and beautiful and immortal. Everything becomes peaceful and joyful. Awakening of the soul! So this awakening of the soul should be the primary concern of a spiritual seeker that is walking on God's way. Walking on God's way means first and foremost: I have to be conscious of my divine nature, of my spiritual possibility, spiritual potentiality. And I have to wake up that soul-- slowly, not all of a sudden-- through my actions, through my attitude, through my thoughts, through my prayers. They should be so directed that the soul wakes up. That is the first duty and goal of a spiritual seeker. He has to walk in God's way. He has to know that just as God is spirit, so I am also spirit. In the depth of my consciousness, I have that spiritual center. Normally I do not know that, but that is the truth. My spiritual life means awakening of my soul, awakening of my God-consciousness, awakening of my divine nature.

God is eternally free. He has no bondage. He has no limitation. He is perfect. So elsewhere Lord Jesus Christ said, "Ye shall be perfect even as your Father in heaven is perfect." Perfection: that should be the dream of our spiritual life. That is also treading in God's way. Why should I be perfect? Because God is perfect. I am the child of God. I am the servant of God. I should not be kept bound by all kinds of fetters. I should be free. The vision of freedom, that should be another important spiritual aspiration. Why I have come to spiritual life? Why I am praying? Why I am trying to meditate? Because I want that freedom. Normally I am bound. I am bound by my body, bound by my mind, bound by my life – the prana, bound by my knowledge, bound by my love. Whatever I want comes to me in a very meager quantity. See? What freedom [do] I have? I have the freedom to walk from my house or go walk in the street. That much. Or if I have money, to have a plane ride to some place. But the dream of freedom with man is different: no limit. Sometimes we feel that. Sometimes when we watch a bird flying in the sky we sometimes think, "Oh if we had wings we could have our flown, see."

We think; we read in the books about heaven. Oh heaven is a place-- it's full of wonderful food and drink and there is no air pollution there. The air is free. We dream of a place where there is no limitations that we are facing all the time. So sometimes we dream of heaven. So that inherent urge for freedom – complete freedom is in man. It is lying in us. Why? Because the soul is free. That freedom is already in us. We do not know. If we could have discovered our soul then we would have known on the level of the soul we are eternally free. So much so, that we have no debt. So much so, there is no lack of peace. There is no lack of power; there is no lack of knowledge -- on the level of the soul. So if we could reach that level, we would really enjoy freedom. Our dream for freedom could be fully satisfied if we could go to that level of our soul. That is the dream of freedom, because God is ever-free.

In Vedanta we describe God as Shantam Shivam Advaitam. He is Shantam, eternally quiet. Nothing can disturb Him. We are being disturbed every moment. Our life is more a life of disturbance than peace. Peace comes between two disturbances. Just for a short time. (Laughs.) If we keep an account: one column how much peace, in one column how much disturbance, we'll see. The column of disturbance is enormous and the column of peace is just five inches. But God, God is Shantam, ever-peaceful. That is God's nature. So when we want to walk in God's way, we have to remember this and find out that we have to have that peace. We cannot afford to be surrounded by this constant disturbance. So what to do? Go to that level of your soul. Go to your spiritual nature. There you can find that peace. That peace is not in this body.

This body is peaceful only periodically. In the morning the body is hungry, disturbed, "Coffee, coffee, coffee, coffee, coffee." Coffee cups comes some cup of coffee. "Toast, toast, toast, toast, toast." Toast comes. Still there is hunger. "Boiled egg, boiled egg, boiled egg." (laughter) You see. Then breakfast is over, peaceful. Then twelve o'clock or one o'clock we have to have some more. Again we have to have a snack, again you have to have some dinner. So [the] body is not peaceful. [The] body gives us momentary peace. So also our mind. [The] mind is not peaceful. Always that disturbance. Little peaceful. Sometimes. After the hard days work, come home, have a cigarette or a drink of beer, (laughs) then go watch the tv – an interesting program. The mind is at peace. Relaxation is there. Relaxation is there. But my relaxation is disturbed. My little boy comes and jumps to me, "Daddy, daddy you must take me to that show." What will poor daddy do? His relaxation is over. He has to carry that boy and all that.

So really speaking there is not that peace we seek. That divine peace, undisturbed peace cannot be here, cannot be in the body, cannot be in the mind. We have to go to the level of God, and the level of God is not in some mystical heaven. The level of God is inside us: our soul, our spiritual nature. If we can go to that level then we are at that **real** peace. After going to that level, if we can contact that peace and come back, then this world becomes peaceful. Minor disturbances, even major disturbances, they cannot shake us. We stand on God's peace. So this Shanti, this peace, that is our great spiritual objective. And that spiritual objective can be accomplished by touching God, touching God inside our heart. If we touch our soul, that flame of God inside our heart in our contemplation, in our meditation, then we are on that level of peace. God is joy, Vedanta says. One name of God is Anandam, joy. Taittiriya Upanishad says that everything has come from that infinite joy which is God. And that infinite joy of God has not gone away. It has entered into every fragment of this universe. [?Ananda Deva Kuliman I Pudama Jayanti] It is indeed from Ananda, from that infinite joy of God that all beings are created. [?Ananda dena jatani jivanti] And those things, those beings which are created are withheld and supported and maintained by Ananda. [?Anandam predam todisam... se shanti] And in the end all beings, everything returns to that joy, to that infinite joy.

So a spiritual seeker should remember this: that God is joy, and that joy is never absent from anywhere. Why it is absent to me? I find joy only in very limited things. I don't find joy in seeing many people surrounding me. I feel joy only when I

look at my wife or my husband, or at my children. That means my selfish individuality has limited my life, has limited my world, is depriving me. To experience the joy of God, the joy of God is everywhere in all human beings, in all children but I cannot experience that because of my ignorance, my selfishness. So if I want to walk on God's way, this ignorance has to go—I have to more and more be convinced of this, that the joy of God, the Anand of God is everywhere. It is in my friend; it is in my enemy. It is my children; it also in neighbor's children. It is in this palatial building; it is also in that miserable hut: joy of God. This vision has to come. This vision, how can this vision come? Again by the same method: to be spiritually conscious of our true nature, of our spiritual nature. The more we are conscious of our spiritual nature, [the more] we can find that joy of God.

Elsewhere in the Upanishads, the Taittiriya Upanishad says, “?Rasul vesa.” “God is sweetness; God is juice.” Juice means the joy and that juice is everywhere. In everything there is this juice of God, the sweetness of God, the joy of God. In the liquid objects, in the solid objects, in living objects, in non-living objects, there is that Rasul, that joy of God – never absent. We have to know this. How can I know this? Again by the same method. We have to be God-conscious. We have to be conscious of our spiritual nature, our soul. If we can do that, we can find [this] really. Then as soon as we open our eyes, these experiences are mentioned in hundreds of mystical poems and expressions. See?

Mystics have experienced the joy of God in nature—in himself. It is not impossible to touch that joy, that basic joy which is pervading and penetrating every fiber of existence. Think again of this Christian saint and mystic, Saint Francis. He meditates in his hut. He communes with his God. Then he comes out and the effect of that communion is not gone with his meditation. He comes out and he looks at this world, the same world [at] which we also look. For us it is a material world. It is a solid world. But for Saint Francis, this world is a world of God. It is God [Who] is peeping everywhere.

God is... God's face is in the sunlight. God's face is in the flowing stream. God's face is in the singing birds, in all human beings. So he listens to the birds' songs and he feels that the birds are praising God. He looks at the sun and feels that the sun is a brother; the sun is a representative of God. The light and the heat that the sun is giving us, it is from...by the sign of God. So he, for him this whole nature is filled with God. He feels his own body and he feels God within. He feels that it is God Who is at the back of the throbbing of my heart. It is God who is at the back of my brain, moving my mind. He feels the presence of God. It is possible. And we have to do that. That is what is called walking on God's way.

Walking on God's way means bringing God in our life. God's truth, God's consciousness, God's light, God's joy has to manifest in us – in our body, in our mind, in our thoughts, in our actions. And it is possible -- if we are keen, if we are interested. It is possible to touch God. So we have to touch God. That should be our aim. And we are so blessed that God is within us. God is not in a distant heaven, or God does not say, “You have to wait till you die.” Right here and now we can touch God, touch our soul, touch our spiritual nature within us. The more we can do that, we shall be able to walk on God's way. God is holy. The idea of holy, the idea of purity is also inherent in man. See? It begins from the food; it begins from the air.

We want pure air. We want pure food. We want a pure place. The idea of purity is inherent in us. We always discriminate; we judge whether a thing is pure and unadulterated or not. Now God is holy. That means we cannot imagine any tinge of blemish in God. Ever tran [? Transcriber note: sounds like starting a word and then didn't complete it – probably could just delete “tran”]... ever white. So in the Indian spiritual literature God is imagined as all white – no blemish, no tinge anywhere in God.

If we are to walk in God's way, we have to imitate God; we have to become holy. More and more – as much as possible, we have to reject all that is dirty in us, all that is dirty in our personality, in our mind, in our emotions, in our feelings, in our actions. Our thoughts should be pure. Our emotions should be pure. Our actions should be pure. That is called cultivation of holiness. We read in the Bible: Jehovah says to Moses, “I your God am holy, and you have to be holy.” That is walking on God's way. We have to be holy. We have to detect, we have to [have] self examination, constant self-examination. My thoughts, my emotions, my desires, my attitudes-- these have to be holy. Why? Because I have to walk on God's way. That is the ideal of my life.

In this effort, in this endeavor to be holy, we have to suffer also because we are attached to so many unholy things, unholy attitudes. We have fallen in love with dirt, just as the hog or a pig. If you bring a hog or a pig and put him in an air-conditioned pure apartment, that fellow will be miserable. He wants dirt! He wants to mix his food with dirt and clay, and he relishes that. So we have become hogs and pigs in a metaphorical sense, see? [He chuckles and audience laughs.] We have to examine our selves. We have to be pure, pure, pure – holy, holy, holy, because we have to stand before God one day. Just as when we go to some particular place, when there is inauguration of the president, everybody was well dressed; [it is] because we are welcoming the new president. See? If we go to a special dinner, we dress properly. So when God will come... God will come and we have to stand before God, face to face. I have to have that costume, nice costume. My body, my mind, my ego, my emotions should be holy. Then I can bravely stand before God and God will be pleased. Just as you like my company, I also like your company because you are clean. Bad smell is not coming from your mouth-- nor from your mind, nor from your ego, nor from your emotions. You are holy. You are pure. You are my child, real child. So holiness is another goal of our spiritual life: to purify our senses, our emotions, our thoughts, our ego, our desires. Then we become holy. Then we are really walking in the... on the path of God – God's way.

God is eternally active. Walking in the God's way does not mean walking leisurely, nothing to do. Not that! God wants that in the Bhavagad Gita. We read in the third chapter of the Bhavagad Gita, Sri Krishna who was an incarnation of God, God's messenger, see, he says to his dear disciple and friend Arjuna... He identifies himself with God and says “I.” When Sri Krishna in the Gita says, “I” it means God. [?Nomine par tarsti....] “The God has nothing to attain, nothing to achieve. He has not to build a house. He has not to fix his faucet. He has not to mow his lawn. Nothing to do. Everything is His, but still “I am constantly active,” He says. God even though He has no need, He has no want, He is ever perfect; all thing [everything] already belongs to Him. All the flowers in all of the gardens of the world are already

offered in His cosmic altar. But still he says, even though I have nothing to attain, nothing to achieve, yet I am constantly active. To show an example: because if I lie quiet then everybody will follow me. Everybody will... the sun will say, "Well, Lord, you are quiet, I want a little holiday. I don't want to shine." The moon will say the same thing. The energy will say this, and the whole thing will collapse. So Sri Krishna says: God -- even though everything is attained by him, everything belongs to him, he is not enjoying a vacation. He's constantly active. And so you, man, you who want to walk in my way, should follow my example. You should be intensely active, whatever duties and responsibilities have come. You have to do without, without any kind of murmur. You have to be constantly active.

Why do we have to be active? "In My way." Elsewhere in the Gita [it] says that God is active always. But He has no attachment to anything. He does not want the fruits of actions. Detached action. Completely selfless action. And we who are claiming to be God's devotees, we who want to walk on God's way should follow His example.

We should be intensely active, but our minds should not be perturbed. [The] mind should be calm. Swami Vivekananda in his book, *Karma Yoga* describes this attitude, "eternal activity in the background of eternal calmness." That is what God does. God is Shantam Shivam Advaitam. At the same time He is eternally active. We should follow God's example. We should not run away from our work and responsibilities and duties. What has come according to my dharma, my station, we have to be... we have to do that. But we have to do that in God's way. God's way is doing all work without attachment. If we can do that, then we shall see, even when we are terribly busy, our mind is calm. Our mind is not agitated. Our mind is not affected. That is doing work in God's way.

So every part of our life has to be adjusted in God's way. Knowledge. God is, in Vedanta scriptures, Satyam Jnanam Anandam Brahma. Brahma or God is eternal knowledge. The totality of all knowledge is God: whatever knowledge already has been has come and whatever knowledge is still waiting, God is that eternal knowledge. He is the light of knowledge. We have to remember this when we are pursuing our... in different ways we are trying to gather and earn knowledge. We have to remember God. Otherwise we shall be proud; we shall be vain. See? A real man of knowledge, the first sign is his humility. He should know, what I have attained by reading these two hundred books attains some knowledge of course, but what is this compared to God's infinite knowledge? Whatever I am discovering through my research, through my studies is only discovering God's mind, God's infinite knowledge. If we know this, then our knowledge becomes really harmonious. We do not become proud. [We remain humble] like the great Newton. The great scientist in his days discovered the fundamental laws, many fundamental laws including gravitation. And people naturally praised him. And he was so humble. He said, "Why do you praise me? What I have done? Knowledge is like a vast ocean, endless ocean and what I have done, I have collected a few pebbles on the shore. I am not even able to touch that water." Sincerely he said that, because he was humble and he had that consciousness. Infinite knowledge of God.

We can really...whatever we are attaining through our study, through our research is very little. If we remember this, then our knowledge does not become a

hindrance to our spiritual progress. Otherwise we become too proud of ourselves. We read a few books of philosophy and we think we know more than what the scriptures say. We begin to write a new concept of God, a new concept of consciousness. See we devise foolish new words, twenty-five syllable words. And we want to... we become a great teacher because we have forgotten God. We are writing on God, but all the time we have forgotten God. That is a self-contradiction. But if a person remembers God with humility, "Whatever I have read, whatever I have studied is really very little compared to the infinite knowledge of God – that Light that is everywhere."

A man of God is never proud. In our days Sri Ramakrishna, he never cared for books. But all knowledge was his: Vedas, Vedantas all things are coming from his mouth. And he would not claim any credit for that. He says, "It is Mother's knowledge." He called God, Mother. "It is Mother who is speaking through this. It is not book knowledge." So a spiritual seeker should remember this: that God is knowledge, infinite knowledge. That does not mean we have not to study. But when we study we should remember that this is all God's knowledge. Everything! All the laws that we discover where there are laws, a simple law – it may be in physics or chemistry and biology. We discover. We write a thesis, we get [a] Ph.D.; we even get [the] Nobel Prize. But we should not be proud-- because, all that I have discovered is already known to God.

Whatever is awaiting ~~for~~ my discovery, they are in God's mind, because God is omniscient. Past, present, future, all the time he knows. A man of God, a spiritual seeker should remember. Then his pursuit of knowledge will become harmonious, without distracting him, without creating a block in his spiritual life. Otherwise we always say, "Oh science. A scientist can never come to God; there is eternal conflict between science and religion." Why should it be so? It should be just the opposite, because a man of science, if he is humble, if he remembers that all knowledge is God's knowledge in the cosmic mind of God, then [when] he does a huge scientific study, it becomes a spiritual chore. He is happy. He is thrilled when he discovers a new law of science. He is thrilled. "Oh it was in God's mind. " You see. So there is really no conflict between scientific knowledge and spiritual knowledge.

All knowledge belongs to God. All knowledge is in God's mind, the past, present and future – everything. So when we know this, then our pursuit of knowledge becomes really a spiritual chore. By the pursuit of knowledge we walk in the path of God. So in this way, walking in the path of God means transforming our life pattern in different levels. In the pursuit of knowledge, in our enjoyment, in our action, in our thinking, in our desires we should always walk in the path of God. And the model, and the way, and the technique have been available to us from the scriptures and from these great spiritual teachers. We do not lack the technique how to do that. [The] only thing necessary is our will, is our own will – first to understand the glory of spiritual life.

Spiritual life is not a life cut off from the world, to retire to a cave – not that. Spiritual life has no conflict with this world. A spiritual man should be at peace with everything, because God is everywhere in every thing. So how can spiritual life be in conflict with anything? But one has to have that consciousness. One has to have that experience of God. The God consciousness must awake. When that is awake,

when we are conscious of our divine nature, that flame of God within us, then nothing can go against our peace and harmony. We rise above all doubts and confusions and fears also. That is the dream of spiritual life and in Abraham Lincoln's simple words, "I want to walk in God's side, on God's side. I don't want to invoke God on my side, but I want to be on God's side." These are all the wonderful implications of that simple statement of Abraham Lincoln. To be on God's Side.

[Announcements about classes and annual meeting.] The subject for next Sunday's lecture is: The Yoga of Concentration. We shall have our usual Upanishads class next Wednesday at 7:30, but we won't have any Saturday class because, as you know, as has been announced, that next Saturday, February 21st is our annual meeting here at 7:30. Though this meeting is for the members, but we invite everyone. We invite nonmembers and friends, whoever likes to come. It is a very rewarding experience to be present in the meeting, which will be attended by many. Devotees will come from San Francisco and several swamis will come from San Francisco and devotees and each one will speak. So we invite you, invite everyone who is welcome to come to that meeting Saturday, February 21st at 7:30.

Om saha na va-va-tu; saha nau bhū-nak-tu; saha vir-yam kara-va-va-hai. Teja svi na-va-dhi-ta-mastu; ma vi-dvi-sha-va -hai. Om. Shanti, shanti, shanti.

May Brahman, the Truth Eternal, protect and nourish us, both the speaker and the listener. May we have the requisite strength and vigor for the pursuit of self-knowledge. May our study of the Vedanta be fruitful in the realization of Truth, and may we cherish no ill feeling toward anyone. Om. Peace. Peace. Peace be unto us all.