

Renunciation, Outside and Inside

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: Renunciation, outside and inside.

We all know what the word renunciation means. Renunciation means: giving up something evil or something selfish, or something that harms others for something that is good, something that is greater, something that will be conducive to the wellbeing of others. So the word, renunciation, sometimes it is frightening. The renunciation means giving up the whole... whole family, duties, work, everything that life means – for God – or something super-mundane, or something useless.

So the renunciation, the word, renunciation sometimes is not a very pleasant word. By hearing the word, renunciation, we are sometimes afraid. We are sometimes disgusted. We are sometimes annoyed. But, when we read the words of scriptures and wise persons, saints and sages, we see the true meaning of renunciation.

Renunciation, if it means, giving up your duties, your world, your... then really it is utter selfishness. You are not caring for others. You are not loving others. You only seek your own self-will. And all the great spiritual teachers tell us that selfishness is the most terrible danger in our life. Our life cannot be grounded in selfishness. If it does, then life leads to disaster. On the other hand, the more our life is based in unselfishness, the more life becomes elevated. Life becomes happy and conducive to the well-being of others.

In one of the ancient Vedic sayings we read, “Na dhanena na prajaya [chit dhyeya?] tyagenaike amrtatvam anasuh.”¹ “It is not by wealth, it is not by doing ritualistic observances, that we attain greatness, but it is by renunciation, ‘tyaga’.” The word ‘tyaga’ means renunciation. “It is by tyaga that we are led to immortal life.” In the teachings of great teachers, we find the word renunciation emphasized, but we have to understand the true import of the word, “renunciation.” As a generalization we can say that renunciation means giving up selfishness, giving up our egotism, giving up our sense of our own individual pleasure or whims.

But the great teachers imply that we have two lives: one our little life, which is very limited by our lifespan. This little life may be based on selfishness, self-seeking: my happiness, my family’s happiness, and the happiness of some friends and all. And, the great teachers say, this littleness, this limitedness of our personality, this has to be given up. If we are in the world, we have to give up

our self-seeking, our selfishness. If we renounce this world, if we become a hermit, if we become a monk, then too, the true renunciation means renunciation of this ego. When we are in this world, we may not care for God, but renunciation is important.

The mother has to give up so many of her selfish interests for the sake of her child, for the sake of her family. The mother has to take care of everyone else in the family first. And then, whatever energy and time is left, she pays to herself. Sometimes she goes fasting because there is not food enough – the children, the husband, guests, and all. They have to be taken care of first. Now see, this is renunciation – in a very high sense! The mother, who practices that – she has to practice that. There are of course, mothers who are selfish, who leaves the children to some other people, to childcare, and goes to – not necessarily for her job, but for... but goes to some amusement or some own whim, personal whims. That is not a good mother. We don't care for her in Mother's Day. [chuckles with listeners.]

Similarly there will be good fathers. There will be fathers who are so self-sacrificing. There may be fathers... the mother is gone, mother is dead, mother of the child, children. The father takes care of these. The father plays the dual role of mother and father. We respect that father! And the Father's Day is for such fathers. [laughs again].

So the point is: that even in our practical world, renunciation, that means giving up our selfish interest for the sake of the good of others, this spirit of renunciation, giving up is the foundation of our society, is the foundation of our civilization! Civilization grew up and advanced on the basis of this self-sacrifice. Even science! Science cannot progress without a spirit of renunciation on the parts of some, who are prepared to undergo tremendous self-sacrifice, tremendous renunciation of pleasure and self-seeking, for the purpose of science. For the purpose of science, people have to go to places where there is no comfort. Life, practical, our life is very miserable. And yet for the sake of science, for the sake of the advancement of knowledge, they undergo such sacrifice. So all these, you could say – outside renunciation, renunciation outside.

In the family there are four brothers. And it is not a rich family and the elder brother is a sweet and responsible [person]. That elder brother, always tries to see to the comfort and the pleasure of the younger ones. He may have a very good coat and he gives away that coat to his younger brother. Even in little things, in our practical world, we see the greatness of the spirit of giving up – giving up your own selfishness for the sake of others. This is, you could say, this is a spiritual, a spiritual movement and is designed by God. God has designed this creation on this giving up. When you give up, then something great, something noble springs up there instead, takes its place. But when you cling to your own selfishness or the selfishness of your family or children, just that much, then you remain small and the society does not grow. So these are called outside renunciation.

So when we read in the books, that it is only by renunciation that people can be.. attain immortality, that immortality means this, this society, human

society is, a growing phenomena. In the past there have been so many injustices, so many cruelties, so many falsehoods, so much selfishness. And at that period, society seemed to be doomed. But there is a God overhead. It is God from whom every movement is coming. He does... it is in a movement of satva, or it may be a movement of rajas, or it may be a movement of tamas. All these... it is a play of God. So in the period of history we see sometimes darkness, selfishness, aggrandizement, torture, torment. And from a greater perspective you can, if you can become an observer, then you see, we have to bear with this, but this will go on. This will pass on, it cannot be... it cannot be perpetrated for all the time. So, there are again periods where we see people emerging, great men, who exemplify self-sacrifice, exemplify renunciation.

So renunciation is a comprehensive term. These things will [be] what we practically see in our social life, in our individual life. A family cannot, cannot be progressive, cannot be harmonious, cannot be happy, if in the family there are people who are utterly selfish. If on the other hand, in the family the parents, the father and the mother are always ready, not to seek their own selfish interest, but to seek the interest of the children, the growing children, you see... So we see this working in our family, in our society, in our country, in the world as a whole.

For progress, for real genuine progress, there must be the spirit of self-sacrifice. This is renunciation. And what is the result of this renunciation? The well-being of many, for the benefit of many. Some people die in battles. And when they go to battle, they go with an idealism. They go, we are going to battle for our own country. We may die, but thousands of our countrymen will be relieved. So when a soldier dies, he dies really on the cross, if he has that spirit.

So, outside renunciation means all this, that this world movement that is going on, if it is to be a movement for the well-being and happiness of many, then there must be people who are ready and willing to... sacrifice their own personal interest for the sake of many. This is seen in schools; this is seen in educational institutions, in other institutions in every branch of society. You see, wherever there is this renunciation, spirit of self-sacrifice is working, then things are going smoothly. Everybody is happy.

Now, to come to inner renunciation... Inner renunciation also is giving up – giving up your own selfishness, your own desires, for God! This inner renunciation is for an intense spiritual, intensely spiritual person. There are people, wise people, who are very scrutinizing. They have an analytic mind and with that analytic mind they study this world movement, and they find this world cannot be our ultimate goal. There is something in man, which is seeking, not this world, not this comfort of the family, or the society, or the state, the satisfaction of the senses, but something more! There is something more in us, that is beckoning to us... “Come to Me.” In the words of Lord Jesus Christ, when he said, “Come to me, ye that are suffering and I will give you rest.” Now, here, he is addressing a class of people who have examined this world and found there is something which is more than this world, which is God.

In this world we are seeking limited things. We are seeking pleasure. We are seeking knowledge. We are seeking fame. But there... there is God, Who is above pleasure, above the worldly fulfillments. That is why we call Him, Infinite.

And these people, who we call, “spiritual seekers” or “devotees” or “monks,” these people have found inner renunciation. For the sake of God, they are ready to sacrifice their own petty interests, even this so called outward life. Jesus Christ said, “He that loveth his life, shall lose it and he that hateth his life, in this world, shall keep it unto life eternal.” Now when we read this, we are terrified – that he is denying everything which life means. But when we really study the life of Christ, and study his work, and study his work, study his movement after his death, then we see: he wanted a life, he wanted his followers to cherish a hate for life. Here “hate for life” means the hate for sense values.

Everyone likes sense enjoyment. Everyone likes honor, fame, possessions. Now Christ says, there must be some people who have to renounce these, who have to be very brave. And why they should be so brave and why they should aspire towards this unusual ideal? For the sake of... for the sake of others, for the sake of humanity as a whole.

The whole humanity is a family. And, just as it is by God’s will and God’s power that we are supporting and maintaining our little family, so the whole world is God’s world. And for the benefit of this world, for that humanity as a whole, there must be some people who have to completely forget themselves. That kind of renunciation is inner renunciation. And in the history of religion and the history of spiritual life, we find there are examples of such people, who do not care for personal comfort, who do not care for any worldly values. The only value for them is God. They know that this movement of this world is coming from God.

We, in ignorance, claim that we are the doers; we are the masters. But [as] we examine the world we find that we are not the masters. Some superior force, some superior power is the master, and that superior power is God. So, they become very humble, and they say, just as Christ taught, “Thy will be done.” They don’t even care for their own food or shelter. They say, “God... we shall surrender ourselves to God’s will and if God wants us to live, He will bring us food.” This spirit is called the inner renunciation. And in every country there have been people who have followed this ideal of inner renunciation. They don’t care for sense enjoyment. They don’t care for married life, or life with children, or life in a house, or possessions which they can call, “my house.” My... me and mine are there. There is a great joy in “me” and “mine.”

When you live in a poor apartment, you always dream... “Will there be a time when we will have, I’ll have some more money, and I will be able to buy a house?” And that, with effort and perseverance, he carries on. He rises from steps to step and one day he has money to buy a small house. Small house! One livingroom... not even livingroom. One big room. A part of that big room is his bed, and a part of that is his livingroom, and one corner, there is a kitchen. But he is happy. He says, “This is my house!” The sense of “my” has a joy of its own. It is not a great joy. It is not a spiritual joy. But, for our living, for the continuation of our earthly life, this “me” and “mine,” this “I” has a function too— [a] role. Without the sense of me and mine, if from the beginning everybody says,

“I will renounce the whole family; I won’t marry,” then, this creation will stop. We won’t have any civilization.

But, the exception is for persons who boldly declare that, “I don’t care for me and mine; I don’t care for a house; I don’t care for even a big house of twelve bedrooms,” you see, because they have, somehow, they have examined the nature of this world very thoroughly and found out this world is a limited show, is a show. It is a mixture of pain and joy. It is a mixture of health and sickness. It is... it is a mixture of honor and dishonor. It is a mixture of dualities. It is not a plain and simple thing. Now, this insight cannot come in one day. This insight comes after close and thorough and persistent analysis of this world around you and in your own body and mind. [You do] analysis of your body and you feel: “This body, I cannot depend on this body. This body can bring me some temporary happiness and pleasure, but a time will come when this body will be my enemy. Every part of this body will malfunction.” In this way they analyze, not merely their own body, they analyze their own mind.

When they look into their mind they feel, what is this mind – storehouse of desires and storehouse of passions, storehouse of enmities, storehouse of hate. “This is not desirable. I don’t... I want to run away from this mind! I want to run away from this body!” This spirit comes, by close examination -- and, by the study of the experiences of wise persons, men and women. We call those writings scriptures-- holy scriptures, which point out to the possibility of man’s rising to a higher level of life, the life of renunciation.

That renunciation is denying, denying the transient for the eternal, denying for the superficial for the profound. And you cannot, when you study the lives of these people, you bow down your head in reverence, for these are wonderful people. They have found the eternal at the back of the transient and they were brave and they were bold, to give up the selfish motives for the sake of God, because these persons declare, like Jesus Christ, like Buddha, like many great spiritual giants of all countries, their voice is the same. They renounce. “But don’t be disappointed. What you renounce will come to you with compound interest.”

You seek pleasure, but when you come to God, there will be endless joy, endless enjoyment, which cannot be compared to anything that you experience in your normal life. You seek knowledge – little knowledge -- through different books, but that knowledge is very limited compared to the knowledge of God. When you come to God, then you will see the knowledge is coming to you from all sides. God’s knowledge! Every knowledge is really God’s knowledge, but when we are ego centered, we do not understand that. We exert our own ego and we say that it is “me.” If I am able to write a poem and that poem is appreciated, we aim the whole glory to “myself.” Though I did that, six nights I did not sleep, with three dictionaries on my side, I wrote that poem. So all the glory, all the merit is mine. But a man of God, he never thinks that way. If there is something meritorious, if there is something great, he at once gives the glory to God. “It is Thy Power! It is Thy Glory that works through me. I am Thy servant. I have nothing to claim for myself.”

That is inner renunciation and this inner renunciation is very much necessary, if one wants to come to the fulfillment of spiritual life. Spiritual life is a

great journey. When you do not want to go very far – just a little, then we go to church, we read some holy books and we sit for meditation a little. But that is not enough! See? So the great sages and saints say “You must not stop.” There is a verse in the Upanishads, Katha Upanishad. “Uttisthata jagrata prapya varan nibodhata.”²[1:3:14] “Arise awake and stop not until the goal is reached.” The goal is God.

So we have to arise from our little life. Our little life is this life of this world. It may be a great life from the worldly point of view. We may be a great scholar. We may be a great millionaire. We may possess six houses, possessions. But still then it is a limited life. We have to die one day! We have to leave everything here. If we have ten children, we have to leave all the ten children here. If we say, “No, no. Let me take at least one [of the] children, one child.” [He chuckles with audience.] The God of Death will say, “No! You cannot even take a hair of your one child with you. Everything must stay here.” That is our destiny and we do not normally find this destiny, because we are so much involved in our own selfishness. We do not see what is beyond selfishness. And so we have to come to serious religion and serious spiritual life.

When we come to serious spiritual life, then we say to ourselves, “Well we have enough of worldly life. We have enough of me and mine. Now let us renounce.” Just as Christ says: “Follow me.” Jesus Christ said to these fishermen, “You follow me.” And they were surprised. “If we follow him, then what shall... what shall happen to our fishing boats? What shall happen to our family and children?” Jesus Christ says, “Don’t think of that. You follow me and you’ll see.” And those who followed him found that they were immensely compensated in their poverty, in their sacrifice.

Some of them died with Christ. But that death led them to immortality. That is why, that is what he says, “He that loveth his life shall lose it.” Loveth his life means loveth his little life of selfishness. We lose it! That won’t stay. That will go after fifty years, or sixty years, or eighty years. That will not be eternal. “And he that hateth his life...” He had the courage to renounce this life after examination. Without examination, this spirit of inner renunciation cannot come. You must be thoroughly convinced by your own experiments, by your own experience that this life is a life of duality. There is good and pleasant, but there are dangers and pitfalls, so, I don’t want this life. That is what Christ means by “that hateth his life” in the world “shall keep it into life eternal.” So when that inner renunciation comes –and it cannot as we see, it cannot come to everyone. But to those, to those to whom it comes, we adore them. We follow their life pattern and we say, even though they were... they had not wealth in the worldly sense, they had not learning in the worldly sense, but they had attained God. And God is the totality of all treasures.

When we experience God, we spontaneously feel that we are not missing anything! We are not missing our family, our children. The whole world is my family. We are not missing any house. The whole world is my house. Their personality becomes expanded from a little limited personality, they identify themselves with all humanity, with everything! That is inner, inner renunciation. And, the purpose of this inner renunciation is to realize God in life, to know that

He is our True Master. He is residing in the outside world, as also inside me. Inside my heart, inside my senses, it is He – His power, His glory that is working. This is his standing attitude of life and with this attitude of life, he lives his life and when he goes, he is not sad. He has conquered death, because he has known that by experiencing God, I have become immortal-- nothing to defend, nothing to regret.

This is inner renunciation, and it is not a very strange and uncommon thing. There have been, through history, human history, there have been people who have been attracted to it, who have been attracted to God seriously. By being attracted to God seriously does not mean that he has ignored this world. No. Christ says, "Hate the world," but that is the world of ignorance.

When one has attained God, experienced God, then the world cannot be hated. The world is ... God's world. He sees God in all human beings, in all creations. He lives in a greater world, in God's world. But in the beginning it is... seems to be very stern, seems to be cut off from the all accustomed pleasures of life and to leap into the unknown. In the beginning it seems terrible. That is why we need holy company. We need to read holy books and then we are encouraged. Then, we feel, "No, this is not a blind and unknown movement. This has been well experimented."

There have been men and women who have renounced this little world and the selfish scheme of life for the Great, for God. And when they attain God, when they attain the experience of God, they are compensated. They feel that we have not lost anything. We have not lost a single sister, a single brother. The whole world is mine. It is God's world, so it is also... I have claim to my Father's property. Each day is a Father's Day. Every day is a Father's Day with God, as it was to Lord Jesus Christ. He often said, "My Father." "My Father in Heaven." And to Christ, what was that heaven and what was that Father? The whole world was that heaven, for him. See? That is why he had no hate for anyone. He was... everyone and everything was his friend. That is the heaven... heaven on earth.

So, this idea of renunciation is a very comprehensive idea. We should respect this idea. When we hear the word "renunciation" we should not say, "oh... renunciation." No. Renunciation. We have faith in renunciation in our everyday life in one way, in one manner. But a time may come when we shall be able to more and more abandon our sense of ego, our sense of... that I am the master, I am the lord. Then God will be installed in our heart and we will see this body of mine is God's temple. It is God's temple, and whatever I see, it belongs to God.

That is living with God, living in the company of God. This does not, and may not come in one day. But a serious spiritual seeker, his goal is that kind of renunciation, where he may be able to renounce maya, renounce what is ignorant and deluding, and embracing what is eternal and what is total, because in God there is everything. There is in God, there is not lack of anything. For a spiritual seeker, an earnest spiritual seeker, tries to practice this inner renunciation, bit by bit, from wherever he stands. He may be a family person, but in his inner heart he tries to remember the words of the Upanishad, "Arise,

awake and stop not till the goal is reached” or he wants, he remembers the words of Christ, “but it is those who love life, they will lose it.”

Real life is spiritual life, the life in God. And this has to be practiced day to day, day after day. Day after day, little by little, if there is five minutes we should close our eyes and say, “Thy will be done.” “Not I, but Thou.” In this way, little by little we learn the lessons of renunciation. And, it has its reward. The reward also will come from day to day, because it is our ego sense that is obstructing the joy of God. The joy of God is everywhere! The music of God is everywhere, but we do not, cannot listen to that music because [of] our own egotism, our own false sense of mastership. We say, “We are the masters.” Really we are not the masters. It is God.

So when we praise God in our heart and day to day try to abandon ourselves to Him, then our spiritual life begins to... Just as in a flower garden first there are the buds and the buds slowly open and the blooms come. So this, our life should be a spiritual garden. And here, through daily practice of this surrender to God, surrender my own ego, surrender my own ownership to God. Everything belongs to God. I belong to God. These little practices, this little contemplation, if we practice, then our life will be fruitful. Our life will, one day, attain that -- that immortality, that changeless reality which has no beginning, which has no end, which is all the time with us, outside and inside.

“Outside,” [are] these vast heavens. We are not living in a material world. It is a spiritual world. It is a God’s world. So outside and inside there will be God and outside/inside will be the God’s worshipper. That is me – me who is humble, who does not claim anything for himself, gives everything to God. That is a great lesson of renunciation. It is not something frightful. It is something that is supporting our society, supporting our family, supporting our life. And [the] more and more we understand its meaning, we go to spiritual life. We then, more and more understand the glory of God. God is a reality. God is not an empty dream. God is not an imagination. God is real!

So through renunciation, we find that real God. That real God is life. Even if we are in a family, we can find that real God, because we have surrendered ourselves. We have not claimed anything for ourselves. If there is a family, that is not my family. That is God’s family. If there is something praiseworthy in me, it is... it is God’s greatness. That is the pattern of life a man of renunciation lives.

[Announcements about next lecture, Wednesday class, Saturday class, guest speaker, summer recess and summer celebrations not included.]

Om. Madhu vAtA R^itAyate madhu xaranti sindhavaH.
 mAdhvlrnaH santu auShadhIH..
 madhu naktamutoShaso madhumat.h pArthivam.h rajaH.
 madhu dyauH astu naH pitA..
 madhumAnno vanaspatiH madhumAm.h astu sUryaH.
 mAdhvlrgAvo bhavantu naH..
 Om madhu madhu madhu³ [Rg Veda 1:90, 6-7]

Sweet blow the winds and the very oceans give forth blessedness. May the herbs and plants bring us health and happiness. Sweet unto us be the nights and dawns and may the heavens shower us with benediction. Sweet unto us be the noble forest trees. Sweet unto us be the shining sun. Sweet unto us be all living creation. Om. Sweetness, Harmony, Peace.

1. Kaivalya Upanisad in The Principal Upanisads, ed. by S. Radhakrishnan. New York: Harper & Brothers, c. 1953, p. 927.

[Quote also may be from the Maha Narayana Upanishad 12:14 or verse 6 of the Avadhuta Gita. The word for ritual observation in the Kaivalya Upanisad is karmana, which does not occur in the quote from the lecture. The Sanskrit word(s) used in the lecture actually sounded more like “chit dhyeya”, than “prajaya” – or progeny – though it may indeed be “prajaya.”

I wonder if the other scriptural texts used a different word for ‘ritual observance’... Unfortunately so far I have been unable to find them in Sanskrit transliteration.

??? English version of verse 6 of Avaduhta Upanishad of the Krishna Yajur Veda. translated by A. A. Ramanathan

http://www.celextel.org/upanishads/krishna_yajur_veda/avadhuta.html Accessed January 10, 2016, says -- “6. Not by rituals, not by begetting children, not by wealth, but by renunciation [tyaga] alone a few attained immortality.”]

2. Katha Upanisad in: The Principal Upanisads, ed. by S. Radhakrishnan. New York: Harper & Brothers, c. 1953, p. 628.

3. [Transliteration of Rg Veda verse is taken from http://satsangh.tripod.com/pujatexts/satya_baskegar.html] accessed June 26, 2012.

Alternate version of prayer with somewhat simpler spelling

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/hin/rvsan/rv01090.htm>

madhu vātā ṛtāyate madhu kṣaranti sindhavaḥ |
mādhvīrnaḥ santvoṣadhīḥ ||