

### **Spiritual Wonder of Man**

*Om. A-sa-to ma sad ga-ma-ya. Ta-ma-so-ma jyo-tir ga-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 O 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: the spiritual wonder of man. In 1893, in this country in the city of Chicago, the Colombian Exposition was organized – an exposition to display the wonders of man’s scientific and technological achievement, particularly achievement in the West. And as an extension of this exposition, the organizers also had arranged a Parliament of Religions. A great son of India, a young monk of thirty years, came to attend this Parliament of Religions. He for several days visited and studied the Colombian Exposition of Science and Technology. And he was besieged with wonder, as every man should be, particularly a man coming from a country which was very backwards in modern science and technology. He was amazed to see what man has achieved through a period of just maybe... two centuries.

He was a man who could appreciate man’s powers, man’s possibilities. Then, on the 11<sup>th</sup> of September the Parliament of Religions began. It lasted through several weeks. And this young monk, whose name was Swami Vivekananda, spoke as a representative of Hinduism. While here, he presented another wonder of man: the spiritual wonder of man. And people who listened to him (seven thousand people) were also seized with wonder and admiration, to listen from his mouth the spiritual wonder of man, which is the essential message of India, of ancient India. Swami Vivekananda-- he spoke in that assembly for several times, and each time he was appreciated and applauded and praised wildly, if you could use that word.

They seemed to have never heard that man could have such a wonder within him. Man’s achievement, in his intellectual achievement, intellectual field, scientific-technological field does bespeak the glory of man, no doubt. Man has progressed through thousands of years from this primitive state to that state of science, technology and many other intellectual achievements – practical achievements in this world. But the same man could have another dimension, could display another wonder. It was something very fascinating and novel and new to the listeners.

Swami Vivekananda quoted one passage from one of the ancient scriptures of India, the Upanishads. He quoted the verse where an illumined person, an illumined sage who has discovered this great wonder of the human personality, in a mood of ecstasy he is addressing not merely human beings, but all possible beings in all spheres. “Hear, I have discovered a truth within me, a truth which is of the nature of Shining Light, the Light that dispels all possible ignorance in the human heart and leads man to the realization of his Infinite Glory, the glory that he is not little. He is not limited. He is not sinful. He is not mortal, but he is Ever Radiant Spirit. He is of the nature of Immortality. He has no death. He has no ignorance.” So this sage in this verse of the Upanishad proclaims that great truth which he has discovered, and emphasizes that this truth is the common heritage of man. It is a great possibility that each man can work out.

So the spiritual wonder of man is not a myth. It is also a fact. Look at the life of Jesus Christ. Look at the life of Buddha. Look at the life of Krishna, and hundreds of saints and seers and sages of all countries of all religions who display this wonder: a transformation of the human personality. Man who is naturally weak, afraid, ignorant, passionate, distracted, selfish, hateful – the same man becomes fearless, becomes full of wisdom, becomes full of universal love, develops a new outlook in this world. The world, which is full of difference[s], full of antagonisms, contradictions, the same world he views with a vision of unity. He can extend his love not merely to human beings [but] to all animals, to all nature. He feels that he is one with everything. He has no fear of death. His heart has been freed from all passions, guilt, hate, greed. Such a man we have seen. Not one. Not two. But hundreds, in all times. We call them sages, saints, seers, prophets, incarnations. But the same man with a physical body – a pair of eyes, a pair of ears. Externally he is the same man as others, but internally he has become different. He has developed a new personality as a result of the discovery of his spiritual glory, his spiritual wonder.

Kings and emperors and conquerors, politicians they come and go. People forget them. But who can forget a Christ? Who can forget a Buddha, a Krishna, a St. Francis? So spiritual wonder is not something unrelated to life, unessential to life. The spiritual glory of man sustains human civilization, gives real strength and stability to human – humanity. So it is worth studying this great wonder. When we study the wonder of man in his intellectual fields, in aesthetic things, in his technological-scientific fields, his political fields, in each of these fields man has developed his power, his ability. No doubt, in the field of politics, in the field of aesthetics, in the field... so many fields, there have been giants, great personalities and we appreciate them. We are thankful to them. But the spiritual wonder of man also should be understood, should be appreciated because in fact the spiritual wonder of man is the supreme wonder of man.

Now it is not easy, of course, to discover that wonder, to develop that glory, but some people can. Even in this country you had your own Lincoln. He was a great politician. He was a great statesman. He was a great humanitarian. But he was also a great spiritual man. If you study his character dispassionately, you wonder what is the source of his behavior. What is the source of his outlook and attitude to all human beings, even to his enemies? It is not just merely a moral development. There is a difference, a basic difference, between morality and spirituality. A person is honest. A person is truthful. A person is kind, charitable. These are moral virtues, and to develop morality you need effort; you need constant attention. And why [do] you seek to be moral? For the sake of the coherence, the solidarity-- of your society, of your family, of your nation. Unless there are some moral principles guiding human life, there will be chaos in society. There will be chaos in your family. So you take it as a necessary obligation to develop and abide by these moral rules, but it stops there.

But spirituality is different. The source of spirituality is not just the consideration of your family, your society or your nation. It is something very deep. It is something very fundamental in your own nature. And if you can develop spirituality, if you can develop this great wonder of the spirit within **you**, morality becomes naturally and spontaneously operative. You don't need to have a special attention to be truthful and honest and charitable. Moral virtues become your natural adornments of your character.

The great philosopher, Bergson, in France wrote a wonderful book, *Two Sources of Morality*. One source, he said is this: our consideration, our normal consideration – ethics. It is necessary for human happiness, for human solidarity, in other words for practical reasons. The basis of morality – some practical considerations. That is one source of morality. The other source is in the basic spiritual nature of man.

Why should I be truthful? Why should I be kind? Why should I be honest? Because [in] my basic innermost nature is something which is antagonistic to dishonesty, to falsehood, to selfishness. And... So that is my nature. My nature is truth. My nature is infinite. My nature is love. So more and more I am conscious of my nature. Morality... Automatically morality will come to my nature. That was a very wonderful analysis. So spirituality stands on its own ground. We need not be spiritual for practical considerations. If we be spiritual, then this too will happen: we shall be happy, our family will be happy, society will be harmonious and all our other many problems will be solved. That is a very superficial consideration of spirituality.

Spirituality stands on its own ground. Why should we be spiritual, if we intend to be? Because spirituality is in the core of human personality. Man is essentially a spirit. His body, his mind, his intellect, his emotions these are on the surface of the human personality. In the core of his personality is that shining light – that immortal light. In religions this is described symbolically, metaphorically in many ways. We say, “Man is a spark of the Divine. Man is an image of God.” All these things refer to the spiritual man – the man who is essentially not material, not even mental. It is spirit.

Now this subject was very extensively discussed and investigated in ancient India. There are sages. There are people with a very scientific bent of mind. But their field of study was directed to the discovery of the true man, the man who is functioning in this practical world with many desires, with many ambitions, with many emotions. They wanted to know: what is the source of these different developments in the human character. Man wants to know. Man wants to exhibit his power. Man does not want to die. Man wants to love. All these different urges which are never satisfied normally by the practical methods. However we proceed in the path of knowledge, in the path of love, in the path of power, there is something which remains unfulfilled. Then you formally die and when you die, you feel that: Many things I wanted to do, but they could not be done. So these enquirers, these investigators – we call them rishis, sages – they wanted to discover the inner core of man.

With the same tenacity, with the same perseverance, with the same love as our scientist investigates scientific problems. There have been people [with] that great desire for knowledge. They do not mind privation and austerities. They spend maybe in the Antarctic snows to investigate the scientific truth in the polar regions. Knowledge is such a wonderful thing. A real love of knowledge comes... you forget... you are able to sacrifice. You are prepared to sacrifice many of your comforts, many of your normal modes of life for the sake of science, for the sake of knowledge.

Now spiritual knowledge is also knowledge and there may be some people who are very much interested in this subject – in the discovery of spirit, the core of the human personality. So this happens, this urge for the study of man in his depth came to these people in ancient India. And they discovered. This subject was very well known. And through the ages, this tradition of the study of man at his depth, in an unbroken way, this

tradition has been carried on. And that young monk, Vivekananda, brought this message, this message of the spiritual man to this country and he was appreciated.

It is natural that anything pertaining to man should be appreciated. We may not be... all of us may not be interested in what is happening in Venus or Jupiter or even in the moon. Some people are. But when you hear something that pertains to you... Here is a new pill, which is... gives the permanent prevention against cancer. If we hear of this discovery, everybody will rush. Everybody will rush. Something that pertains to man is surely interesting. That is why we are interested in the study of man, in the physiology, in the psychology, in medicine, in anatomy, in travel, in art, in music. Art... music lifts our minds to a level of joy, and calmness and harmony. So we are interested. We are interested in music. In the same way, many of us, it is natural that [we] should be interested in the study of the core of the human personality.

Every man is not interested in everything, but some men are. So this science, this knowledge, this study is not dead. Rather on the other hand, a new interest is growing for this study of the human consciousness. Man's real identity is always shifting. Sometimes man's identity is in the body, is in the mind, is in his emotions. And man sometimes is tired of this fluctuating situation about himself. He wants to find his true identity. That is the beginning of this enquiry – the beginning of the discovery of this wonder.

So this interest is growing as we speak, but it should grow and it should be directed in proper direction. It is not something very superficial. It is not like taking a course of piano lessons in a college for six months, or some other lesson for two years. We have to have patience. Some basic preparations are necessary. Sometimes we forget that. We think that this discovery of understanding our consciousness, the expansion of consciousness, understanding our true identity, is something which can be done very quickly. That is a mistake. But if there is a genuine interest and if there is patience, if there is perseverance, then it is possible. And more and more [human beings] explore this great wonder which is within us – our field.

In ancient India, there is a record of these experiences: a class of books, a class of writings, which are called the Upanishads, the Vedanta. Here you find the means, the techniques by which we can carry out this research. These... Those great seers tell us that the greatest wonder of human personality is his consciousness, this consciousness which is so familiar to us. Every moment we need consciousness; we are always conscious. Unless we are conscious we cannot function. Even to stand we need consciousness. To think, to feel, to see, to hear, to touch-- any experience needs consciousness. And from where this consciousness is coming? That is a riddle to us. But this study tells us, directs us to the discovery of consciousness. In the beginning they tell us a very stunning, unbelievable proposition. They tell us that the highest truth of man is consciousness, which is immortal, which is timeless. It is the same consciousness which you are experiencing every moment – the consciousness that you experience if you see something. You are conscious of something that you have seen. If you hear something you are conscious of that sound. The thought comes. You are conscious of that thought.

This manifestation of consciousness that is happening to us in a broken way, in a piecemeal way, is really that unbroken, infinite consciousness which is the spirit in us, which is man's true nature. So the study of consciousness, this discovery of the spirit

starts with our normal experience. We have taken for granted the consciousness, which we are using every moment, but we have to understand: what is this consciousness? That is the problem. So these great teachers in the very beginning dispel from our mind a kind of confusion that we are... by studying and discovering consciousness we have to be totally... we have to be cut off from life. Just the opposite! We have to be thoroughly plunged into life. But we have to understand. We have to question. We have to ask ourselves these deeper questions. The knowledge that is coming to our eyes, just in the simple matter of seeing, psychology, physiology explains to [a] certain extent, but it does not go to the last. [It] cannot explain consciousness. Now these seers did explain. Their assertion is that consciousness is a fundamental reality. It is at the back of our body, our mind, our emotions, our thoughts. And all the moment[s] we know that. We know that unconsciously, see. We know consciousness, unconsciously. That is the tragedy of human life.

We have to... so this study as we can see is not an external study. It is a study which we have to carry on **in** ourselves. We have to direct our mind to our selves. [A] simple question: “Who am I? From where this knowledge is coming? From where all my desires are coming? From where all my satisfactions, my joy are coming?” This is the great question. In other words, we have to direct our study inside ourselves. The Bhagavad Gita in the sixth chapter says, “Man normally is ignorant. Man normally is drowned in ignorance.” He understands certain things about his environment, about himself. By his outside practical studies, he has understood his body. He has understood the functioning of his different organs. He’s slowly, through the science of psychology, trying to understand the workings of the mind.

But the wall of ignorance is all the time surrounding him. He really does not know, so he has to direct his attention inside himself. This is called yoga. Yoga means directing your understanding, your mind inwards, towards yourself. So in those books, these details, techniques are given: how we could do that. We could do that in many ways. We could do that through concentration. This mind, restless mind, it is always going outwards. By an effort of me, this mind can be drawn inside. It could be directed to one point. That is called the yoga of concentration.

When the mind becomes by this process, the mind becomes disciplined, it is able to develop inner insight, inner understanding. Then the mind can be directed deeper and deeper, to our own consciousness. And the mind can see there is a steady flame, a light – not physical light, but light of consciousness. In common language we call it our soul, our spirit. So in this way, that is one way of understanding and touching that core of our personality.

There is another way, which is called the method, the technique of rational inquiry. Inquire into the process of knowledge—how knowledge is coming. In our normal experience there is a mixing up of two things. One is the knower, the subject of knowledge and the other is knowledge – the object of knowledge. So there is the knower, the perceiver, and the thing known, and the knowledge of that thing. Now this method, this technique tries to separate the subject from the object. Anything... anytime you know any... anything there must be a subject. Now, who is this subject? That is the investigation. The subject is not just our body/mind because sometimes we can watch the mind. We can feel that there is mind; now who is this that is watching? In this line of investigation we are trying to find out – separate the subject from the object. And when

we successfully do that we are able to find that the subject, the knower in us is not the mind. It is not even the ego. It is something deeper than that, and it is that self of ours, the spirit. The spirit, the self, the “atman,” the Sanskrit word, is never an object of knowledge. It is the perceiver. It is eternal perceiver. Just as the great sun is shining on all objects on earth – everything is lighted by the light of knowledge. Like that, these discoverers, these seers tell us that **in** man there is that perceiver. That perceiver is perceiving his body, his mind, his thoughts, his happiness, his misery, his life, his death, as [he] also is perceiving this vast universe.

So there are, as it were two lines, two parallel lines. On one line: the perceiver, that eternal consciousness in us that is not changing. The consciousness we experience through our mind is constantly changing. This moment we are conscious of something we see. Next moment, something we hear. Next moment-- a thought, emotion. In this way, our objective consciousness is fragmented, is broken. It is coming and disappearing, but inside us, when we carry [on] this investigation – the separation of the subject from the object – if we can successfully do that, we are able to see that in us there is a perceiver. That is not outside me, that is the real me! Man is that eternal witness. He is witnessing his own body. He pushes his body, his mind, his thoughts, his emotions, all his experiences on the other line, the line of the object. And he stands on, alone on the first line, the line of the perceiver, the line of the witness. He carries on this investigation and he finds that he is really timeless. Anything that is happening in time is happening on that second line. Phenomena. Events. Happenings. Changes. But he, himself is not subject to time. He has no birth. He has no... because time is on the second line. And he is timeless. So in this, through this technique also, man can discover himself as that spirit, infinite spirit, the basic reality. It is... we cannot say when that spirit was born, or where it will go. It does not come from anywhere and it does not go anywhere. It is eternally existent.

Now the next question comes. Then has each man a spirit, a different spirit? Now that problem has also been very successfully answered. The answer is “No.” There are not many spirits, there are not many staves[?] There is only one consciousness, one infinite consciousness that is in you, that is in me. When you speak of your perceiver, it is the same consciousness that is perceiving through millions of bodies, that is perceiving through... that was the perceiver in the past, in the present, and future. It is timeless. So unity of consciousness is another thing which has been discovered. First, consciousness, spirit, is different from all objects, from matter, from time, from space, from mind, from energy. First step. Second step, that perceiver is one, infinite consciousness. The whole universe however great and infinite it may be, it is something on the line of time, space and causal laws. But the spirit of man, the spirit of every man – men who have died – men who are going to come and men who are living in the present—the sinner, the saint, the rich, the poor. All men are standing on that same consciousness. Not merely men – all living beings. And then, you see this knowledge was extended farther and farther and farther. It began with the study of the perceiver in one individual, one human body/mind complex. Then it was found: it is the same in all human beings. Then it was found, it is the same in all living beings. The next step, it was found: it is the same in everything! The mountains, the rivers, the oceans. The spirit is eternal, timeless observer of the whole living and nonliving – of the whole universe. That is the great glory, spiritual wonder of man.

Man is not little. If man can unfold himself – slowly, not in three days, not in four days. There are many fortunate people. There is record also, [that] some persons listened to these great truths – [and] at once discovered that truth. They were very fortunate, no doubt, but normally it needs great patience. It also needs sacrifice. If the mind is too distracted, if the mind is too passionate, too selfish, too much attached, then that mind cannot go deep. It will try, but the attachments, the passions, the distractions will pull them back. He has to wait. The sages of the Upanishads assure us that the great destiny of man is someday to discover himself. If not in one life, through many lives man is really progressing towards that freedom. Anything short of that is bondage, is limitation. What we call perfection, man has a dream of perfection. Many thinkers, including your great Emerson, a philosopher of this country, he dreamed of this thing: perfection. He had access to this ancient wisdom of India, just as many other European thinkers, like Schopenhauer, like Max Muller. They thought this is a great discovery and that pertains to man. It is important for man, because all the time man is faced with so many problems – the problems of his mind, the problems of his knowledge, of his happiness, of his desires. These are important problems, which are torturing man all the time. Books do not help him. Science does not help him. Technology does not help him. So another knowledge is necessary. That is the knowledge of this spirit. It is the knowledge of this spirit that will bring man to his equilibrium, to his real harmony and freedom and peace.

So, many great thinkers have seen that man has to find himself – through inner communion. And if necessary, he has to sacrifice: his distraction, his attachments, his likes and dislikes, his selfishness. Basic... Some basic requirements are necessary for this investigation, for this discovery. But as man goes on through these techniques of yoga, either through concentration or through this rational analysis or through what is called love of God, these are different methods by which man can slowly unfold himself. Man can step out his little personality – his body and mind, his ego. And he can become more and more cosmic. He should not stop. He should stop only when... he naturally stops only when he finds that it is all one.

The manifoldness of our experience is true on the practical level, but on the spiritual level there is no manifold, there is only one. And that one consciousness, that one consciousness, everybody is sharing that consciousness – the mountain, the cow, the goat, the mosquito, man, woman, black man, the white man, the sinner, the saint, everything, every person living or nonliving is standing on that infinite consciousness. That is the great discovery. That is the great glory, and the assurance is given. This is nothing... this is not poetry, this is not theology, but this is science. If you are ready to follow the techniques and try to touch and understand the spirit, you can do that. It may not be in three days or three months, but someday, that is your goal. That is called perfection. That is called freedom. Real freedom is freedom from all limitations: limitations of knowledge, limitations of pleasure, limitations of matter, limitations of mind. That is called perfection. When you are really free, when you are really one. When you are really one in your experience, then you have no problem, you do not... you know that I am satisfied, eternally satisfied. Then also you have no fear. Because you know that you are not the body. You are not the mind. Then further, this knowledge comes to the culmination of unity when you know matter or energy or money or life these are really also the same consciousness. So there is no difference. There is... It is not

necessary at this stage to say, “I am different from [the] body. I am different from [the] mind.” You become quiet. You do not speak. You do not open your mouth. You become eternally satisfied with your knowledge, with your experience. There is no necessity of speaking. You do not say, “Oh, I am the soul. I am the spirit and this is matter.” At that stage, when we have reached that apex of knowledge then your words have stopped. Your thinking has stopped. If you want to say something, you say that much, “It is all one. It is all one.” Life, death, ignorance, knowledge. “It is all one.”

And do you become, at that stage, a stone? No. Even with that knowledge you can function in life. You can cook; you can work at the office; you can drive a tractor. You can do anything! But your environment has changed. Your outlook of life has been changed. Even, there is no manifold. All... even the... anything you are doing, anything you are thinking, is really all one. You find unity among the most discordant things. You find unity between the sinner and the saint, between time and space, between mind and matter. Normally we are constantly living in a world of difference, but when difference has disappeared by this wisdom, by this knowledge, you function in life with that wisdom, that wisdom does not go. That... what it brings to you, you cannot express, but others can see: here is a man. What has happened to him? He sees, he acts, he moves in a different way. It seems that his whole heart has been filled with peace. From his mind all blemishes have gone. There is no more any hate, any selfishness, any egotism, and aggressiveness, any violence. These others can know.

So this, the knower of Self, the knower of the spiritual truth is really a treasure to human civilization. Jesus Christ. Buddha. Krishna. Ramakrishna. St. Francis. Many others. Each one of them is a lamp, is a light, is a spiritual light to guide us, because normally we are living in ignorance, in selfishness, in aggression. These spiritual personalities, people who have discovered this great wonder of the spirit they radiate peace, love, kindness, compassion, unselfishness, strength, fearlessness. Really they are precious treasures to us. So a spiritual man is not a misfit in society. He’s a great benefactor of society, because our mind always works in terms of dollars and cents. We cannot appreciate anything which does not give us some... some kind of utility. So we normally ask this question. “Well this spiritual man has done this, done this. What has he done to us? What has he done to society?” [The] answer is: they have done great unperceived things to society. They have given cosmic harmony and peace and strength to society. Without them, human civilization would collapse, but they do not proclaim themselves. They work silently.

So spiritual life is not an useless life. The discovery of man’s different powers, [man’s] different wonders, is great no doubt. But his greatest wonder, his greatest fulfillment, his greatest manifestation of himself is his spiritual nature, is his true Self. If you want to give that truth some sweet names, we can give [that]. We can call [that] the divine in him, that God in him. If you are impatient with these words, “God,” “divine,” don’t use any word! No word is necessary, but the truth is there. Man is not little. Man is not limited. Man has that great possibility to unfold himself, to manifest himself – more and more, and more and more, until he finds that he is that infinite, that one. And in that one there is... there cannot be any misery. There cannot be any sadness. There cannot be any ignorance. It is all light.

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.