

To Rise Above Sadness

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 mukham. 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 ever more 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 today's lecture is "To Rise Above Sadness." A person can be sad for numerous reasons. Sadness can be light or severe or deep. The type of sadness can be of various character. Simple sadness can be overcome by some simple procedure. But if the sadness is deep, then it is difficult to get rid of that sadness. But it is true: when we come to spiritual life that we can overcome any kind of sadness, because sadness belongs to this world of Maya. And there is a reality, there is a world – that world is not far off—that world we are living in that world-- that is the world of joy. The Basic Reality is not merely Infinite Existence, but also Infinite Joy.

Let us take an example of a simple sadness. A person has been very much insulted in his work, in his office by his superior and is terribly sad. Nothing he can do. He's a servant. He's under somebody else's control. So he comes outside and smokes one cigarette though he is prohibited. He has some heart trouble. But what to do? This is almost killing him. So much insult! So one cigarette did not work, so.. second cigarette, third cigarette.

Then he came home. He thought well, "There is my home where [my wife] is waiting with so much expectation and when I see her face, then this sadness will go." Came home. And he found the wife is so gloomy looking. A lot of days, he said... "Ah... all loving words," she says--greet her husband. But today she is exceptionally gloomy. Very gloomy.

Then the husband said, "Oh my Lord." Eh... There is no relief. Then he said, "Honey, what has happened? Why are you so gloomy today?" Then she began to cry. Then this husband said, "Why are you crying?" "Oh that beautiful teapot ... a coffee pot ... which was bought for you and I thought of serving you coffee in that pot today. That broke down. " She began to cry. "That broke down,, That broke down."

Now this affair took away his sadness. He forgot his own sadness. This is a simple example. In our everyday [life] there are occasions when we become for the time being sorry, sad, anguished. And they'll go away. But there are deeper cases of sadness: bereavement. We have a lost a dear relation – your own son. Maybe your only son, also.. Or that friend. Deep love all your life, and suddenly that beloved died. And what a hurt it is! What a shock. And you are sad. That sadness cannot go by any other means.

You suffer a loss of money, a loss of fortune in the bank. That sadness also is very deep. It does not go. So there are degrees of sadness – different types of sadness, and durations of sadness. To rise above all sadness is a very hopeful and promising proposition, but is it possible? Is it possible to rise above all sadness? Yes, it is possible. For the spiritual man, for a spiritual man, a person who has great faith in God, knows that everything is happening by the Will of God. The whole cosmic movement of life is taking place by the Will of God. We cannot escape the Will of God, however egotistic we may be, however loud we proclaim our own power, our own ability. We soon find there is Superior Power-- and the wise man -- a spiritually inclined man, a person who has faith in God, he relies on That Power. He says, "If this thing has happened, this shock has come to me, it is God's Will. God sometimes makes us happy, sometimes miserable. So is best for me to rely on God, to surrender in God and say as we read in the Lord's Prayer, 'Thy Will be Done.'"

There are cases, examples where there have been persons who have not been moved by great bereavement. They have kept quiet, knowing that after all this is a changing world. This world will not last forever. These little smiles and tears are for – not eternity. They are coming and they are going. Now this is a spiritual person.

He has examined life more critically and found this life is a life of contradictions. He really cannot... he had many things to look forward. He had so many hopes, so many ambitions, so many desires. But all cannot be fulfilled and you cannot complain, because God made the plan of creation on Truth. And what is Truth? Where there is no contradiction. Something appears today and vanishes tomorrow: that is not Truth. Truth is that which is eternal, which is abiding.

So at the basis, this spiritual inquirer, this spiritual person who has – who is trying to investigate into experiences which are above our normal experiences. In our everyday experiences we have this sadness. We have this mind. We have this fear. We have this quarrel. We have so many things: a mixed form of experience that is our life.

In philosophical language, in Vedantic language this life is a mixture of contradictions. You cannot hope for everything. You have to cultivate patience. We have to cultivate faith. We have to cultivate self-surrender to God. God is not a name. God is real. There **is** a God. So this is the way of spiritual life. In spiritual life we cultivate faith and faith grows. Faith becomes stronger and stronger. And when faith is strong then this – what is happening in life, you can take with calmness.

If there is great bereavement, you can also take it. If there is great happiness you'll not jump. You say, "By God's will this happiness has come. By God's will I have got a promotion in my job." Hm... And another day he hears that he has been laid off. Now will he cry? If he is a spiritual person he will not cry. He will say, "God has given me initiative. God has given me courage and if I pray to Him, He will give me more courage. He will give me more endurance and more self-surrender."

So these are the spiritual ways by which we can rise above all kinds of sadness. But there are exceptions. See: Lord Jesus Christ himself. He did not smile much, because he came as a messenger of God to relieve man out of his, out of his sins – which takes... And so he had to suffer for them, he had to suffer for man. When he thought of man's corruptions, man's hypocrisies in the name of religion, then he became sad. And though God has said to me, but I have little power. If He wills, then some good will happen to some people, but to deliver man of all sins, of all improprieties is beyond my power. And so he felt... His sadness was a sadness not for any personal reason, but his sadness was seeing the plight of man. How to...
Plight of man.

So day and night he used to pray to God. And when we read the Sermon on the Mount in the Bible, we see how deeply he felt for man. Twelve years he disappeared. When he came and began his ministration that was about three years and a half. [A] short ministration. And within this he wandered from place to place and preached what is Truth – how they should live their life. How should they have an honest God-fearing liberty, God-fearing life. And when they go to the temple, the temple is not a man -- place of joke. The place is not a (per ___?) The temple, the church, is not a place of business.

And he was not afraid of his opponents. His opponents wanted to get rid of him, because he was going against their selfish interests. And eventually they caught him and they brought many false judgments. And the country – Israel was under Roman rule – so they brought the matter to the governors. And they said, "He is your people. You decide what to do with him." And they decided in a court, falsely that he's... he's insulting our

religion, insulting our social life. In this way, for false reasons, they condemned him and they put him to [the] cross. ~~That~~ Christ was sad for them, that they are doing this, but what he should do? So he said, “Thy Will be done.” It was God’s Will. And in the last moment on the cross he addressed some words to the Heavenly Father, His God-- as he used to call God the Heavenly Father. “My Father. My Father Who has sent me here.” And he prayed to Him – prays for those people who are doing injustice to him, who [are] putting him to death.

Such persons, exceptional persons, see, they cannot rise above sadness. Always they are sad for others. Not for themselves. But for others. They are spiritual persons, spiritual giants, because in spirit – spirit is not matter. Spirit is not matter-mind. Spirit is God. Spirit is the Divine. Spirit is the Light of God. As Christ used to say. “I am the Light of the world.” That means: You see this physical body of mine. This is not me. Inside this: the truth that I am. Hm? He is the Light... I am the Light of the world, because I have brought from God the message of Truth, the message of Love, the message of Justice, the message of Joy. Because God is of the Nature of God – Nature of Joy.

Another person we can remember: one of the presidents of this country. Abraham Lincoln. People used to say he never laughed. He had a sad face. Always [a] sad face. Some say that is not true, but the majority of people say he was a sad man. And why he was sad? He was the president, he had the power and he was conducting the war. This sadness also was for man, for persons who were suffering. He felt for the country. He felt for the Black people. He felt for the injustice of man. He felt for their meanness, their lives, and that made him sad because he was a man of God.

In God there is Light. And as Abraham Lincoln said, he refused to be a formal Christian, though he was a great lover of Lord Jesus Christ and he was a great lover of the Bible. In his writings you see numerous quotations from the Bible. He was a true Christian in spirit. But he did not care for formalities. He did not go to a... to become a church member. He said, “I will become a member of a church when I find that church is following the... the teaching of Christ, which was ‘love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy mind and with all thy soul.’ When I see a church is practicing this, then I shall become a member of that church.” And he was a sad man, and his sadness can be ascribed to this feeling of the foolishness of man. He is giving his life and thousands of others are giving this life. Still man is going his own way.

So if Abraham Lincoln is to be called a sad man, this sadness you could call a Divine Sadness –a sadness for humanity, a sadness not for his

personal [level?]. He had personal grief also, personal sadness. He lost his son when he was in the White House and he had lost another son before he came to, came to White House. These were personal matters of sadness but he did not care for that. He cared for the people, the countrymen at large. So what was his remedy? His remedy was: spiritual remedy. He would always say, "If it is the Will of Providence." He would not often use the word, God, but he would use the word, Providence. "If it is the Will of Providence, it will happen."

So some wise men for the sake of others, for the sake of humanity, they suffer and that suffering cannot be overcome usually. But they are men of spiritual understanding. They're spiritual men. As Sri Krishna in the Bhavagad Gita says, [Sanskrit] "A man should not depress himself, he should recover himself. If he has fallen in some well or in some deep place, let him have the courage to raise himself up, to lift himself up – to rise above this calamity." That was His advice.

Man should have great faith in himself. If he relies on his body alone, on his hands and eyes and organs alone, he is mistaken. He should rely on the God in him. God Who is the God of this whole universe. And God Who is also the God of my heart. In my heart He is always showing the light of consciousness --as the light of reason and the light of understanding and the light of love and the light of goodwill. So a spiritually inclined person, he is not overwhelmed by sadness and grief and bereavement. Any form of sadness, any form of suffering may come but he has faith in God and day by day, by observing this world he becomes convinced that this world is not our goal. Our ultimate goal is God.

We have come here to play our part as God wills. God may keep us here for fifty years or sixty years or one hundred and twenty years but that is God's Will. My objective should not be to calculate how many years I should live here. But his calculation should be how many years I should live here an effective spiritual life, a life who remembers God all the time, who knows that I have nothing of my own. This body is not my own. This family is not my own. It is God's. This whole universe is not a material universe. It is God's universe and God is present from the high skies, from the high heavens to the mountains, to the rivers, to the meadows, to the trees, to the flowers, to human beings, to other animals, to insects. It is God. It is God! This experience comes. This is the aim of spiritual experience: the unity of everything.

This unity is not possible if our eyes are in this world always. We have to spend some time to go to the depth of our being. That is called contemplation. That is called meditation. That is called prayer. And this

prayer and meditation should not be superficial. It should be deep, from the depth of our heart we should-- when we go to the temple or when we are sitting in our house corner, we should try to feel the presence of God – a living God. He may not have a form – or He may have a form. If he prays to a God with form, like the Hindus do, we should not condemn them. There are many ways to God, many paths to God but he is praying to God, the Ultimate Foundation of life, the Foundation of our existence, the Foundation of our joy. This faith should be strengthened day by day through a little prayer, a little meditation, a little contemplation. Holy company. Repetition of the holy name of God. These are called sadhana. Sadhana means spiritual practice.

Through spiritual practice our faith is strengthened. Our courage is strengthened and we have firm faith that whatever is happening is happening through the Will of God. So such a person has risen above all sadness. Nothing can make him sad. Even if his son dies, he says... He has the courage to say, "It is God's Will." If he [is] made a king, he says it is God's Will. Let me be true to myself and let me be true to God.

When we read the life stories of saints and seers, men and women who had such faith and surrender to God, we find that they had some fundamental beliefs of faith. First: there is a God. We are not living in a godless world. We are not living in a material world. We are living in a world where we are being watched. Everything is watched and ruled and governed and directed by a Conscious Power. And we cannot escape that power. That Conscious Power is in every one of us. So one way of rising above sadness is to remember this great truth that God is ... the same God is living in the white man, in the black man, in man, in woman, in old men, in children, in human beings, in cats and dogs and insects and flowers. That God is All-Pervading-- All-Penetrating God. This very thought makes our minds sublime. For the time being we feel that there is no such thing as suffering. It is all joy. God's joy is pervading the sun, the rain, the darkness, the virtue, the sin. Whatever we experience is God. God is the totality. So this should be the aim of our spiritual life. We should-- day by day try to make it true, through simple... through simple practices we can do.

Now say we are sitting here say fifty or sixty people and I have at my home some, some occasion which made me very sad. And with that sadness, I thought if I go to church and look at the pictures or sit with others then this sadness might go. So I come to a temple, to a church and look at all the people. And then I think... We have read in the Upanishads, we have read in the Gita that God, the Light of all Lights is present in all hearts. So I

look at the people around me, left and right and then try to bring this thought. I was afflicted at home. I was sad at home, but now all these people with whom I am sitting – all of them are not sad. Some are very happy because they had the news that they had a grandchild, or some other news of happiness. So in this congregation not all are sad. So let me look to every face and try to think in every face there is God. It is God's light that is shining in every face. Some may be sad. Some may be happy but everyone is carrying God in the temple of his heart. So I try to practice unity with this little section of mankind-- this section of mankind who are... who come here to pray. The same God is in them. If you bring this thought, that thought itself will elevate me, will take away my suffering, my personal suffering.

In other words, from the personal we have to go to the impersonal. Each one of us is personal no doubt, when we have to go through all the duties of life. But at other times we have the power to be impersonal – when we go to prayer, when we go to a little contemplation we try to think [of] the whole. We try to think of the whole of humanity. Just as this moment as we are attending the church services, so millions of other people in thousands of places – they may not be all Christians but they are praying. They are thinking of God. If we bring this thought, this thought itself brings us the sense of expansion.

I am not merely a speck of light in this little body of mine, but just as Christ said, "I am the Light of the world and ye are the Light of the world." So I ... for five minutes I try to feel my identity with all those worshippers in different places in different religions. There are people who are seeking God, who are depending on God, who are ... in whom God's Light is shining. And so in my prayers I try to feel the unity of myself. Then I feel myself big – very big. I feel myself ONE with the totality of existence, the totality of joy. That is why St. Francis prayed to God, "O God make me an instrument of peace." And he mentioned some of the conflicts that come in our life. Lastly he said, "Where there is sadness, let me sow joy." There is sadness, no doubt, but there is joy also everywhere. The foundation of life is joy. The foundation of life is life or existence and also joy. So he is praying not for himself, but "Make me an instrument. Where there is sadness let me sow joy." If there is sadness, if I see sadness in a certain face, let me try to remove that sadness at least by saying, "Hello my friend, how are you?" Some sweet words: "God bless you." And these sweet words, these words of sympathy will have a powerful effect. In other words our spiritual aim is to feel as much as possible the unity with all, because God as Truth is in every heart. The more we remember this, we come closer to God. We come

closer to Truth and we come closer to that experience which is to rise above all sadness.

Thank you.

[Announcements about the programs for the Vivekananda centenary and the annual meeting.]

[Sanskrit] “Sweet blow the winds and the very oceans give forth blessedness. May the herbs and the plants bring us health and happiness. Sweet unto us be the nights and dawns. May every particle of Mother Earth be charged with blessing 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.”