

Vision of Freedom

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.

Happy Fourth of July! To the American, fourth of July carries with it lots of emotions, because on this day in 1776, America declared freedom. Since then, fourth of July has been a very sacred day, not merely to the Americans, but also to others who love freedom. Freedom is a great aspiration of human life. You could say, it begins with the baby in the womb of the mother. If you could read the baby's mind, the baby would say, "How miserable is this existence. I want freedom. I want freedom. I want freedom." And when the baby emerges and has a vision of the sky, has a vision of the mother, then the baby... the baby's feeling you could imagine. As the baby grows, this idea of freedom also grows. The baby, the child, the youth, the young man, the householder, whatever situation we reach, that sense of freedom, the ideal of freedom, goes with us. And when we come to spiritual life, the goal of spiritual life, Vedanta says, is freedom. [This is] not merely political freedom of physical freedom, like the baby, or intellectual freedom or any other kind of freedom, but the greatest freedom possible to man.

Wherever man goes, a man may be a very great intellectual, a big professor, with four Ph. D. degrees, but there is no joy in his home. There is no peace and harmony in his home, so he feels a prisoner. When he is in the college lecturing to his students, he is happy. But when he comes home, he feels, "I am in a prison." So the idea of freedom we can see for ourselves, is very natural. And so we cannot too much complain of modern young people who is [are] seeking freedom in every way, seeking freedom from the home, seeking freedom from the school, seeking freedom from the professors. You cannot say anything to a modern young person. Such valuable is the idea of freedom. So my subject this morning will deal with freedom in various phases: Visions of ... Visions of Freedom.

Swami Vivekananda, who brought Vedanta to this country, was a great admirer of freedom – not merely to freedom – but to the Independence Day, the Fourth of July. He wrote a big poem full of his visions, future visions of the fourth of July. The fourth of July to him was... a source... a kind of deity. It has life; it has consciousness; it has power. And it is this fourth of July to which Vivekananda appeals. That poem, beautiful poem, will be read after my lecture by mister... what is his name? Mr. Chuck Chatten, who is my companion in my travels. So he will read that poem. And after he reads this poem, some of our devotees will sing Swami Vivekananda's poem, "Free," which has been put [to] a sort of music.

Now to come to our subject: Visions of Freedom. In the spiritual life, the idea of bondage is on a different level, no doubt. We feel bondage in our worldly life because we suffer. We may suffer from our wife, from our husband, from our children, from the house that leaks [audience chuckles], and from nature, with its flood, with its... and from famine. In so many ways, we are... we feel ourselves bound. We are prisoners and we want to escape this state of misery. But in spiritual life also, there is a sense of bondage, a sense of limitedness.

A spiritual person prays or meditates, or sings, or does other sorts of disciplines for the sake of have [having] a vision of God. God, the concept of God in all religions is that God is above all free. The real freedom belongs to God. Any created being is bound by limitations. There may be a big tree. It may be big; it may be powerful, but it has also limitations. When a tornado comes, a big storm comes, the big tree is afraid. And it may be many of its branches are broken and it may be the whole tree is... falls down, is dead. See?

So in nature or in society we find these limitations. This thing a spiritual man considers. Deeply he considers his own life...his own life, as also the life of other people. He is not alone in this search. There are many spiritual people. Many people, men and women are searching in different ways, the realization of freedom – the true freedom, which is God, because God has no limitation. He can do anything He likes. Sometimes we do not like this nature of God. I said, “God, You must be always good. You must not bring disease. You must not bring famine. You must not bring illness to my family-- it may be to other families, but not to my family. [audience laughs] You must be good, in my own way.” But God is really powerful he has nothing to restrict, His... His great power. So in spiritual life a person who thinks of God, he wants to imitate God. He somehow he feels that within his heart there is something of God abiding. God’s throne is not in heaven, but it is really in our heart.

If we can find that throne, if we can find that throne, then we see the Eternal God is residing there, undiscovered by us because of our own ignorant distractions, our attachments, our greed, our lust, our miscellaneous ambitions. All these things keep us away from searching [for] God. A superficial search for God does not go far. The spiritual man, spiritual man or woman, wants to go deep. He wants to find from where God is ruling and he finds that it is in his heart. In the deep core of our heart, there is the throne, eternal spiritual throne of God. And the more we grow in the depth of our prayer and meditation and our spiritual interest, the more we begin to feel.

This body of ours is an external covering and inside this body there is the prana. Prana is the biological power that is... that is managing the inner organs, the inner functions within the body. It is the prana which is operating the heart, the lungs, even the brain. Our different organs are controlled and managed by prana. But prana is not God, prana is also a servant, like our body. Prana is also... has change. So the spiritual seeker thinks, analyzes his own nature: analyzes his body and feels that this body is not going to live long. Long means it may live one hundred years, but one day it will grow old. The hair will turn, now the hair which is black, it will day become gray and white. The muscles and the skin which are so beautiful today, will become slack and ugly. This is the

condition he finds for himself. Nobody has to tell him or her. He finds that his body is decaying. So he says, "What shall I do?" The answer is, "You have to find God, the Source of Freedom. And you really belong to God. Your nature is really divine nature and your nature, your true nature, your divine nature has no death, has no limitation, has no bondage. [It is] Ever Free. Your divine nature within this body is ever free."

There have been persons in history, in the spiritual history of mankind where you find many people in different religions have obtained this, have achieved this. With great determination they tried to find God. At first the person thought God is in heaven, a distant heaven. But more and more he finds, "No. God is somewhere hiding in the depth of my consciousness." So more and more as the person's spiritual growth deepens and becomes stronger, he begins to find the existence and the functioning of God within his own consciousness. Then he tries to connect himself with that God, that eternal God, that eternal free God within himself, within his own heart.

Some people, some seekers, approach with the devotion. Their sadhana, their practice is to pray – to pray not superficially, but deeply, "Oh God, relieve me of the impurities of my heart, the false ambitions of my heart so that the heart becomes transparent and in that transparent heart, I can see, I can feel, Your Presence." That is his prayer. He prays from day to day. He goes to a temple. He believes in a personal God. God is not a remote fiction, but God is real. God is our Father. God is our Mother. God is our Friend. God is our Brother. Even, God is our Lover. If we have to love, we have to love God, because His Love is unconditional.

We love a human being, but there is plenty of selfish motives in my love with a person. But with God's love there is no element of selfishness. So the more and more, the spiritual seeker finds that God and in his meditation, in the depth of his meditation, his mind goes to another plane so to say. Not on this earthly plane. His body is on the earthly plane. Maybe he's sitting in a temple, but his mind is in a different plane. He sees the effulgence, the radiance of God, a conscious God. He may be sitting before a picture. He may be sitting before an altar. But in his heart he feels that it is all consciousness. And that consciousness has its center in the depth of his heart.

In this way, his prayer and his worship becomes more and more meaningful. He never think[s] of death or any crisis of life. Any danger, any crisis that may come to our life, is no crisis to him, because he feels, "I have my God. I have my God to help me. He is a real God, and He is with me always. I am awake; my God is with me. I am asleep, my God is with me, and when I die, God will be with me. There cannot be any separation from my God." That is his feeling. That is his experience. And the time comes, Vedanta declares, that in the highest experience of the spiritual seeker, the person feels that he or she is one with God. He or she does not mean his ego. His ego is just like [the] body – changing, ever changing, like the mind. The mind is ever changing. Thoughts and thoughts and thoughts and thoughts crowd the mind so when we go to bed we cannot sleep. All worries combine together to disturb my sleep. I take one sleeping pill; it does not work. I take two sleeping pills; does not work. I am

afraid to take more than three [he laughs] because there may be eternal sleep!
[audience laughs]

But the person who is a lover of God, he goes to bed with the name of God. He believes in the holy name of God and he repeats the holy name of God and he goes to sleep and in one minute he falls asleep. And when he is asleep, he sometimes he has wonderful dreams. He has spiritual dreams, you see that he has been in a temple, a living temple where there are many devotees and worship is going on. See? He has spiritual dreams. So this is spiritual vision [Hesitating, he changes this. It sounded like he intended the second phrase.]... spiritual freedom. When he comes back there may be hundreds of calamities but he has his formula: "Thy Will be done" because he knows this universe, this vast universe of space and time is operated by God. And, God is not an idea-- He is a living God. He is all-pervading. He is outside me; He is inside me. He is all-pervading, He is everywhere.

So when he is in the waking state, he feels that God is with him. Every work he does – he is not an idle man – he is not a person who says, "Oh to work is very difficult. Let me pray." That is a mistake. A truly spiritual man becomes intensely active. His activities are for helping others. Swami Vivekananda gave a formula, quoting from Sanskrit, "Atmano mokshartham jagaddhitaya cha"¹ The pattern of your spiritual life should be to free yourself from the bondage of ignorance, a basic ignorance of life which in Vedanta we call maya." From where this ignorance comes, we do not know, but it is there, and it will last from life to life, so long as there are subconscious desires, subconscious ambitions. So we have to be reborn, but if we... if we can purify our heart, get rid of these desires, then there is no rebirth. So that person, his formula is "Thy will be done." What is happening in this world: I may be losing a son, I may be losing some money, but it is happening with Your signal. Happiness or suffering both are... both happen by God's sign, by God's signal.

So this person is always quiet. He is never idle. When he meditates, when he worships, some time of course has to be given to that, but at other times he is a very active person. He does not work for himself or herself, he seeks to work for others, to serve others. He hears that somebody is suffering from some disease. He at once goes to help that person. That is his nature. We see that if we read the Holy Mother, Sarada Devi's life, we see what intense activity she had. Sri Ramakrishna when he died, he told, before... before dying, he told Holy Mother, Sarada Devi that "I am going, but you have to live many years more, more than thirty years you have to live. But don't live idly. Live to give solace and comfort to others. You shall be my representative."

And Holy Mother acted to the letters this advice of Sri Ramakrishna. Sri Ramakrishna made her conscious that Sri Ramakrishna has not... his physical body is gone, but in spirit he is existing. This was a firm belief with Holy Mother, Sarada Devi. And this was also a firm belief with Vivekananda and other disciples, and other devotees, that there may be suffering, there may be crisis in many ways, but I have my God. When I repeat God's holy name, all my suffering vanishes. All my pain, even physical pain, even a strong arthritic pain may be dissolved by repeating the holy mantra, the holy name of God.

So this search for freedom In the spiritual level is a very interesting thing. You can say that I am seeking God, I want to love God, but the most expressive idea is that I am seeking the freedom of God. Just as God is always free, and I am God's child, I am seeking that freedom – freedom from the body, freedom from the mind, freedom from the ego, freedom from the vanities of life, freedom from ambitions of life. They are changing, constantly changing. So with this perspective he lives his spiritual life and that person is always happy and cheerful and contented, because he has found that real freedom. He has found that throne of God within his heart and in contemplation he goes there. He sits at the feet of God, his beloved God, and all his miseries, even earthly miseries disappear at that moment. So we as seekers of spiritual life we read scriptures. We should read scriptures, we should read the words of Buddha. We should ... all the times he is feeling the experience of freedom, the spiritual freedom.

Vivekananda chose... Two of the great presidents of the United States died on the fourth of July: the second president, John Adams, and one of the architects of American freedom, Jefferson, he also died on the fourth of July. When John Adams was dying, he said, "Jefferson lives." [laughs] For Jefferson was also going. He lived a few hours more than John Adams. See our Swami Prabhavananda, who was the head of Vedanta Society of Southern California, he had developed a great love for this, this day, this fourth of July. Just as we do different kinds of spiritual functions on different days, so fourth of July, living in America for almost sixty, seventy years, he developed that great love for this American day of freedom, because the American day of freedom was not a day of political, idea of political freedom, as you shall see when Mr. Chuck Chatten reads Vivekananda's poem on the Fourth of July.

So Swami Prabhavananda, even on fourth of July in the morning, he took his morning walk around the temple and he laid down on the bed. In the evening, days went by, he did not reveal that he wanted to die on the fourth of July. Evening coming. He was writing [waiting?], and he was a man of great meditation. His mind was always in God. He's lying [there] and night was approaching, then he asked, "What is the time?" "Now it is eleven forty-five." "Oh there is still time." [audience laughs and he laughs] In this time it was approaching, and it is twelve o'clock and it might not have been exactly twelve o'clock, but he died just one or two minutes, either this side or that side, on the fourth of July.

So it is... spiritually speaking it is a great day to us. We should remember this idea of freedom. The idea of freedom is a great idea, because freedom... the really free is God. God is the really free Being, who is ever free. Who can say, "I have no limitations. I have no limitation of time or space. At will I can go anywhere. At will I can bring centuries with me." See? So God is over time, space and causality. That is why He is eternally free.

So I now request, Mr. Chuck Chatten to read that poem, Swami Vivekananda's poem, "To the Fourth of July."

Behold, the dark clouds melt away,
That gathered thick at night, and hung

So like a gloomy pall above the earth!
 Before thy magic touch, the world
 Awakes. The birds in chorus sing.
 The flowers raise their star-like crowns —
 Dew-set, and wave thee welcome fair.
 The lakes are opening wide in love
 Their hundred thousand lotus-eyes
 To welcome thee, with all their depth.
 All hail to thee, thou Lord of Light!
 A welcome new to thee, today,
 O Sun! Today thou sheddest *Liberty!*

Bethink thee how the world did wait,
 And search for thee, through time and clime.
 Some gave up home and love of friends,
 And went in quest of thee, self-banished,
 Through dreary oceans, through primeval forests,
 Each step a struggle for their life or death;
 Then came the day when the work bore fruit,
 And worship, love, and sacrifice,
 Fulfilled, accepted, and complete.
 Then thou, propitious, rose to shed
 The light of *Freedom* on humankind.

Move on, O Lord, in thy resistless path!
 Till thy high noon o'erspreads the world.
 Till every land reflects thy light,
 Till men and women, with uplifted head,
 Behold their shackles broken, and
 Know, in springing joy, their life renewed! ²

Vivekananda had the vision that America will be the land where many tortured people, suffering people will find their home. America will be a country which will give refuge to many distressed people of the world, of many countries, of many religions. That kind of vision he had. And that vision we see in our own days, is slowly coming true. America, at one time, it was just for... hmm... the white Americans, the white people and only who came in those. They are... But later on we see, so many people come from Europe, from South America, from all different countries they come and they feel that here, there is a sense of freedom, which we lacked in our country.

After this we shall have a song, sung by some of our devotees, who have tried hard to learn this song. [He chuckles.] And the words are very beautiful. Mr. Chuck Chatton, will you read the poem first, "The Free." [The Song of the Free – reading of poem is not included on tape, but the song is. Some verses are repeated at the end.]

The wounded snake its hood unfurls,
 The flame stirred up doth blaze,
 The desert air resounds the calls
 Of heart-struck lion's rage.

The cloud puts forth its deluge strength
 When lightning cleaves its breast,

When the soul is stirred to its in most depth
Great ones unfold their best.

Let eyes grow dim and heart grow faint,
Friendship fail and love betray,
Let Fate its hundred horrors send,
And clotted darkness block the way.

All nature wears one angry frown,
To crush you out - still know, my soul,
You are Divine. March on and on,
Nor right nor left but to the goal.

Nor angel I, nor man, nor brute,
Nor body, mind, nor he nor she,
The books do stop in wonder mute
To tell my nature; I am He.

Before the sun, the moon, the earth,
Before the stars or comets free,
Before e'en time has had its birth,
I was, I am, and I will be.

The beauteous earth, the glorious sun,
The calm sweet moon, the spangled sky,
Causation's law do make them run;
They live in bonds, in bonds they die.

And mind its mantle dreamy net
Cast o'er them all and holds them fast.
In warp and woof of thought are set,
Earth, heavens hells, and worst and best.

Know these are but the outer crust -
All space and time, effect and cause.
I am beyond all sense, all thoughts,
The witness of the universe.

Not two nor many, 'tis but one,
And thus in me all one's I have;
I cannot hate, I cannot shun
Myself from me, I can but love.

From dreams awake, from bonds be free,
Be not afraid. This mystery,
My shadow, cannot frighten me,
Know once for all that I am He.

The wounded snake its hood unfurls,
The flame stirred up doth blaze,
The desert air resounds the calls
Of heart-struck lion's rage.

From dreams awake, from bonds be free,
Be not afraid. This mystery,
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Know once for all that I am He.³

Next Sunday, July 11th, Swami Prapannananda will speak on Destiny, according to Vedanta. And, on July 7th our... the Wednesday class will also be conducted by Swami Prapannananda about the Uddhava Gita, July 7th, Wednesday. Saturday evening discourses, July 10th this will be also conducted by Swami Prapannananda, but there is a special announcement and news I shall read to you. Potluck lunch. The Vedanta Society will be holding a potluck for devotees and friends, July 18th at 12:30 after the Sunday lecture. Sign up for a dish by calling the bookstore at 489-2116. Bring your dish to the assembly room before or during the lecture, where the potluck will be arranged. All are welcome. July 18th will be my lecture, Jnana and Karma.

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 madhu. ⁴

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. ³

1. Ramakrishna Mission, Vidyapith, Deoghar. Motto.
<http://www.rkmvdeoghar.org/Motto.htm> accessed 11/18/12.
2. To the Fourth of July [poem]
http://www.ramakrishnavivekananda.info/vivekananda/volume_5/writings_prose_and_poems/to_the_fourth_of_july.htm accessed December 31, 2012.
3. The Song of the Free [poem] <http://www.poemhunter.com/poem/the-song-of-the-free/> accessed December 31, 2012. [The version as sung has some very slight textual variations.]
4. [Transliteration of Rg Veda verse is taken from
http://satsangh.tripod.com/pujatexts/satya_baskegar.html] accessed June 26, 2012. The site says: "This page uses Unicode encoding for Devanagari. Please set the fonts and languages setting in your web browser to display the correct Unicode devanagari font such as Mangal.ttf from Microsoft or Raghu8.ttf from the BBC site." [Have not changed fonts, so transliteration may need some editing. --- See a somewhat simpler transliteration below, though still hoping for a more authoritative source.]

*Madhu vaataa ritaayate madhu ksharanti sindhavah | maadhveer-nassantva-oeshadeeh
Madhu naktam-utoshaci madhumat paarthiva(ga)m rajah | madhu dyaur-astu nah pitaa
Madhumaannoeh vanspatir madhumaa(ga)m astu sooryah | Maadhveer gaavoe bhavantu nah*
http://nrsrini.blogspot.com/2012/02/some-vedic-mantras-used-in-hindu_20.html
accessed 1/3/13.