

Wonder of Spiritual Life

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.

[Comment before talk] “Last night we had the celebration, the worship of the Divine Mother, Durga. You can see in the corner the altar where Mother Durga’s picture is decorated.”

The subject of my talk this morning is: The Wonders of Spiritual Life...not plural, singular, The Wonder of Spiritual Life. [He chuckles.]

We face different kinds of wonder in our life in different fields. And any kind of wonder gives us an excitement, makes us sometime happy, sometime frightful, sometimes depressed. The wonder is not something common. And wonder is not expected, either, normally. It comes suddenly and it leaves a reaction in our heart. You are a lover of flowers and one day, in a certain garden you see an unusual flower. You have never seen such a flower. That is a wonder to you, and you talk of that wonder to many other fellow lovers of flowers. You bring them in all together, stand around that flower plant and some of you [who] are more interested look in flower books, look in encyclopedias whether the picture of such a flower is available. And if it is not, then you go to other places and you are caught up with that wonder, if you are really a lover of flowers.

Your boy is a mediocre boy. He never gets [an] A in his tests in the school. But in the final test, somehow he got [an] A and you are surprised. How he could do that? Then a secret was found that is not mentionable. Anyway that was a wonder to you that your boy who was a mediocre, normal boy, somehow he got this, got this A.

You work in an office with a salary and one day in the office you found that you have been given an unexpected raise. You never expected such a raise. That was a wonder to you. That was a wonder.

These are just a few examples. In our life we... if there was no wonder, then our life would have been very, very boring. There must be from time to time some excitement, and wonder is such an excitement. And how, what form of wonder will come to us, we do not know, but everyone expects something unusual. This unusual is called wonder.

Those who have seen in the tv the high mountains, the climbing of the Everest you look with wonder. How they are doing that? In that straight mountain they are climbing with the death at any moment, and death does happen. Somebody slips and falls down with a cry, a falling down. This is an also a wonder, though it brings excitement; it brings pity; it brings compassion. It brings sorrow.

Now spiritual life can have its wonder too. Now what is spiritual life? Attending the church or reading a holy book or meeting some holy man is not spiritual life. Sometimes or often we can say, people say that they believe in God and they like to go to some church on Sundays. That is a part of their normal life. You hate to miss this. But this does not mean that you are a spiritual man. You might have made a practice of reading the Bible before going to bed or when the family sits for dinner. Quote, read a little Bible and attend the church -- these are good things, normal good habits, but that does not mean that there is a wonder in this life. It has become a part of your normal life. [In] a normal life, you read, you go to libraries, you go to movies, you sometimes go to restaurants -- these are common things. And in the same way, you come to church. And when the minister repeats the prayer, you listen, but you remain the same man, the same person. No change has come to you. Basically, your character [stays the same]. So you may be called a man of faith, but you cannot be called a really earnest spiritual man.

A spiritual man goes to church with an intensity of purpose, with a keen desire for God experience. When the minister is repeating some prayer, others are listening [to] it casually. But this man, has grown up an intensity for God. So when he is listening to the prayers of the minister, he is very keen. His mind has gone elsewhere, elsewhere in his personality.

This normal personality, as we know is our body, our life principle, our mind, our desires, our egoism and our search for pleasure. All these things are a part of our normal life. But what we call our normal life is most abnormal! If you examine it critically, then you will see. If you are a wise man you will see that what we call our normal life is really abnormal, because it is full of uncertainties, full of changes. You do not know when death will come. You do not know when your dear relation will fall seriously ill. You do not know when another dear friend or relation will meet his or her death. So normally, in spite of all these changes, in spite of all these uncertainties, we are drawn to our normal life very strongly, without any question.

But to some persons, some questions come from their very childhood, some questions come to their mind: "What is this world? Why we are so eager to run after this or that? What is the purpose of life? What is the meaning of life?" These questions [are] apparently very simple, but these questions come to these persons. Maybe from an early age they are earnest seekers of the wonderful spiritual life. Spiritual life means: a life which is based on the genuine faith in God, a genuine desire for God experience, a genuine desire to find his own truth -- "Who am I?" "Why I am running wildly like this and that?" "Why my mind is being drawn to these various passions?" These questions come to their mind. And seeing no other way, so when they come to church or a temple, or even at home they pray to God. "Oh, God, I do not know whether you are or not, but many people say, wise people say that You are. And if that be so, please help me. Please help me to have faith in You, and please help me to understand what is the purpose of my life -- why I am here." Though life is so uncertain, still I am running and running and running... either... either to have a degree or a job

or a wife or a husband, knowing full that this marriage may not last more than three years – [pauses] or four years. [Audience laughs with him.]

Still we cannot give up. Something is compelling us to this what we call, normal life, which is really abnormal. To this normal life... something has forced me into this normal life. So they pray to God, “Oh God this vast creation where we find so much power, so much beauty, so much meaning, that this cannot... There must be some great power at the back of things. Even in my body-- which is running smoothly, there must be some power, not material power like magnetic power or physical power or electric power, but a spiritual power, a conscious power. Even in my body-mind system there must be a conscious power. Like in our family we have father, we have mother, we have brothers and sisters... they are all real and they are conscious. We have established a relation of love with them. Like that. “Oh God, if You are true, and if You are the ruler of my destiny, and destiny of thousands of other people, then I come to Thee. I come to You. Help me in developing true faith and in developing inner vision, inner understanding.” Such a person is a real, a really spiritual person.

Spiritual life: that means a life centered in God-consciousness, and faith in God, and faith in His justice, faith in His power and love and compassion. This is called spiritual life. And that person, hundreds of his neighbors and friends may call him mad. “You are abnormal! At this age you should try to get a good job. You should try to get happily married. You should try this and that. You are not doing any of this. You are trying to do something which is really abnormal to us.”

Now this man says, “What about your case? You are speaking of the glory and the wonders of your normal life, but have you seen that this so-called normal life is surrounded by many abnormal abnormalities, many uncertainties? Disease. Death. Bereavement. These things you cannot deny, so how can you feel quite happy in such a life? On the other hand I am seeking God. I want to have a faith in God, a real God, like my father, like my mother-- [a] real God, with whom I can converse, whom we can see as a loving principle, as a principle of beauty, as a principle of harmony and peace in my heart!” Such a man is a wonderful man in his field. Just as there are wonders in many areas of life, in this particular area of life, this man is a wonder: his life, his spiritual life. And what is spiritual life, we have said, it is a life, which is searching [for] God, [a person] who is not satisfied with the so-called normal life. He wants to, just as we read in holy books, he reads in the Bible, in the Gita, in the Upanishads, and the sayings of saints and seers and sages, that there is a God and that God can be seen, can be experienced. And that God, if you pray to that God sincerely, He can fulfill your prayers.

A spiritual man does not pray to God for name or fame or wealth or prosperity. He prays to God for inner light. “Give me that light that will dispel the darkness, the ignorance of my life. My life at present is a life of restlessness, is a life of attachments to passions and prejudices. I don’t want... care for this life. I don’t want to run away from life, but I want my life to be more harmonious, more peaceful. All men and women, all people in this world, should be my brothers and sisters. I should have no enmity with anybody. I want to live in peace, a peace that surrounds not merely human beings, but a peace that surrounds all

living beings, all nature. The whole universe is full of the peace of God, and that peace I want to experience! They need not be just words in books, but I have to experience that peace.” “And what is the price I should pay for that peace?” he asks God. And God says, “Your first duty... you have to clean... cleanse your heart. You know how many passions, how many attachments, illegal attachments you have, you are cherishing from day to day – how much you are cheating others for the sake of money. See? These you should abandon. You should build a pure moral character, based on truth, based on honesty, based on kindness, compassion.” These are not impossible things. Many people in this world have done this. We admire them, but mere[ly] admiring others won’t do. You have to cleanse your own heart.

We read a story from the Bible [about Jesus] that the Sadducees were accusing him. He was sitting with his followers and eating food, but they are not following, his followers are not following the rules that are laid down in books that before eating you should do this. You should wash your hand; you should do this; you should do this. The Jewish religion is full of rules, laws. Just as the New Testament, it is Christ’s gospel [and] is full of love and compassion, and forgiveness and real love for God, the former religion, the older religion, the religion of the Jews they are full of formalities. Hmm? And so, one day Jesus was eating with his... going to eat with his followers. And the followers did not care to wash their hands or follow strictly the rules of the books. So these Pharisees and Sadducees they complained. They used to call him Rabbi, because he... he was not against his religion. He loved this temple, but in the temple he found a business shop. Religion had become a business. So even though he was merely a twelve years old boy he was very courageous. So he scolded them. “This place of God has become a marketplace.” So these Sadducees and Pharisees who were the guardians of the old religion of the Jews they were very much offended. And they tried to find flaws in the character of Jesus so that one day they could accuse him and bring him to the rulers. The rulers were the Romans; the Jewish country was not free then. It was under Roman rule.

And so these people said, “We have found a flaw in his character. He is allowing his followers to ignore the rules of conduct of how to eat – before eating how to make oneself clean.” So they complained. “How is it that your followers are not obeying the rules of cleanliness?” Then Jesus said, “Cleanliness is not outside! The real cleanliness is inside. Check your own heart and you will see there is so much dirt there. There are so many passions, which you cannot even... not name. They are so terrible that you hate to write them in paper because people will be ashamed. You will be ashamed. So seek your heart. The real dirt is there. Remove that dirt! So it does not matter whether these people are not eating after your formal cleanliness with water. But I teach them to be clean in heart. Let there not be any enmity or anger, any untruthfulness or passion. Let there be a real faith in God. Let there be a real love for God. If they can do that, their heart is clean.”

This is a wonderful teaching, universally applicable – to not merely Christians, but all persons. And any person that follows this is a really genuine

spiritual person. In a society where all people are following the common life, the common life of ambition and honor and greed and these persons quietly, they are preparing themselves to cleanse their heart, and by prayer that, "Oh God, help me in my spiritual ambition. I don't want to believe that you are... you are not existing. You **must** be existing. You must be existing in my heart and in outside nature. But I cannot find you, because of my inner attachments, inner distractions." In this way, this man silently builds up his spiritual life. Nobody knows, but he is very serious in his spiritual life. When he has come to the temple and listening to the Lord's Prayer, every word he listens with great interest. When it is said in this prayer, "Thy will be done" that becomes his mantra. That becomes his guiding power. This whole world has a ruler, who is ruling everything and he is present in me. He is present in all human beings. He is present in animals, in nature. Everywhere he is present!

In this way, he prays and tries to find God through inner concentration, through inner prayer. And, he finds that God is responding, though not immediately, but slowly a change is coming in his heart. There is no more those strong illegal passions and desires. Slowly they are disappearing. And, slowly, a strange calmness, a calm... a sense of equanimity [comes]. Opening this world he does not see the old world of hate and meanness and jealousy and greed, but he sees a world of God! God is ruling everywhere, so God is also ruling me. So he tries quietly to concentrate on that unknown God inside his heart. He finds some time for that. In our busy life we have rarely the time for prayer or contemplation, but this man somehow finds the time to spend ten minutes or half an hour, one hour the morning and evening to be with his true friend, with his true father or mother or master. That is God.

And God does respond. God does respond. And this person develops such a strong faith that he feels that God is always with him. God's holy name is his great helper. See? At first it is necessary to pray in many words, one page of prayers, "Oh God, do this... do this... do this. I am this... I am a sinner." But slowly as he grows in his spiritual life, words become few. Just then comes the holy name, the holy name of God.

The Gita says, the Bhagavad Gita, one important Vedantic scripture says, "The Om, the sound Om is an universal name of God. It is the root of all sounds."¹ So if you cannot find out any other name of God, then repeat "Om." And if, if you are a Muslim you say, "Allah." If you are a Christian, you think of Jesus, you believe in Jesus as [an] incarnation of God, so repeat the name of "Jesus." If you are a Hindu, then you have an advantage. [Audience laughs with him.] You are free to create many forms, many names. That freedom, initial freedom was given in the Vedas. The man creates God. Man creates God's name. So you can worship God as the Divine Mother, or you can worship God as Krishna, or you can worship God as Rama, the fighter, or you can worship God as a little girl or a little boy. A little boy we see in the Madonna, in the lap of the Madonna is very Hindu in its characteristic. The Hindus have the child Krishna, whom they call Gopala. They have the Shiva, the God of meditation. Like this, there are many names, many forms and there is no quarrel among these different paths. The Vedas say, "As many names, so many paths."²

So if a person is meditating or contemplating in his own way, that is all right. We need not fight. We must develop toleration, acceptance. And these things do come to an earnest spiritual seeker as he tries to... to feel the presence of God in his heart, automatically he feels this God must be present in all hearts. So all people are my own kindred beings. So he does not cherish any enmity to anyone. All people, men, women.... All people are... belong to God. And I am one with them. God is the supreme unity. All human beings, we call them brothers and sisters. But they are really brothers and sisters when you go to an earnest spiritual life, not by talking or not by listening can you establish that unity among mankind. The unity among mankind can be established only by spiritual experience of God.

When you find in your heart that in the depth of my heart there is the shining light of God; the shining light is not the candlelight or electric light, but the light of consciousness. And that light of consciousness is... is also the light of love. The more and more this spiritual seeker finds these things, he goes into deeper and deeper and deeper depths within his own heart, and he finds wonderful things. He finds wonderful things. He sees the true face of God. He is no longer afraid of the frailties and uncertainties of this world. He feels that everything may be uncertain, everything may be passing away, but my God won't pass away. He is my eternal companion, just like Saint Francis of Assisi that the whole night would sit on his bed and he would repeat, "My God, my all. My God, my all. My God, my all."

Such is the quality of character of a genuine spiritual person. So surely he is a wonder, because he does not spend all his time in contemplation and prayer but he comes to this world, faces the world. He is not afraid of work, but his work is different. His work is not tinged with selfishness. He does work and offers all his work to God, just as people who do worship – they offer flowers and leaves and fruit to God so he, after the end of the day, he says to God, "I have spent the day... partly in meditation, but I have had to do many duties because I am a householder. I had my duties to my wife, to my children, to my cousins, and I have done that as unselfishly as possible. And those works were my offerings. I could not spend eight hours in meditation, but I could spend ten hours in work, hard work. And please accept that work of mine as the worship... my worship. I had great love when I was doing all these activities. You were in the depth of my mind. I felt that You are a fellow worker with me. So he, more and more he feels the presence of God in this life, until he eventually experiences the great unity of the world.

The vast world, vast universe, the vast space and the vast running time, all these things become one. He sees it is God who has become the great space, the great... the stars and moons and galactic systems and countless heavenly bodies. But they are material objects. At the back of all this material objects there is a conscious reality, the one reality who is God. And that reality is in me, is in you, is in all neighbors. In that God there is no difference: the white man or the black man or the blue man or the green man, if there is a green man anywhere! [He chuckles with audience.] All are one! All is God's play. God can create if he likes, he can create wonderful things, as we find more and more.

We explore the scientific research; we find more and more wonders in the laboratory. Like that we find that this world is really [a] wonderful world, because it is God's world -- because God is present in every corner: in the dust and in the mountains, here and there, today and tomorrow.

Things pass away no doubt, but God does not pass away. He is eternal. Death comes to the body, the physical body, but within the physical body there is our soul, which is a part of God. Just as God is immortal, so our soul, which is different from our body and mind and our life principle – that soul is eternal. In this way spiritual life really becomes a wonder to him. A person, seriously and earnestly seeking God, finds there is no life which can compare to this spiritual life. All the outside wonders we see in this world is nothing but God's wonder. Nothing can run away from God. Your name and fame, your wealth and your education, your family or your property, all these things **are** in God! It is by God's will that they have come to you. Enjoy them, but don't be attached. Don't say they are mine!

Me and mine is a great obstacle in our spiritual life. Say, "It is God's." If I have wealth, it is God's. God is the master; God is the master of this world and God is the master of my life. Such is the perspective of a deeply spiritual man, and such a life is really a wonderful life. There is no life so wonderful as a genuine spiritual man's life. He radiates peace and truth and honesty. He radiates compassion. He radiates equality. To be in his company is to feel the peace of God. So we should think, we should think of the great wonder that we can see within ourselves.

Nobody can force us to be religious, but some people are born – or by the company of holy persons – or by some shocks of life, a serious bereavement has come or a serious catastrophe has come in his life. That sometimes, those things turn people to God. Well I cannot rely on anything in this world, so let me rely on God. In this way it is possible for us to grow in spiritual experience and then our life really becomes a wonder. That wonder does not harm anybody but helps everyone. If this person comes in the company of such a... such a man or woman, then that man or woman is blessed. He cannot describe in words but he feels a peace, a courage, a strength. He is no longer afraid of death! Just as God has no death, God is immortal, so man also is immortal. Man when he discovers himself as spirit, as undying consciousness, he becomes immortal. So such a spiritual life is surely, we can call a wonder, a very desirable wonder though all people cannot have that wonder. Everything has its time. Maybe we have to pass through hundreds of lives (if you believe in reincarnation) – enjoying and enjoying and enjoying. Then an opportunity might come for you to turn inwards and follow and pursuit the path of God, the path of real holiness, which is God. Thank you.

[Announcements about Durga Puja and Vijaya times not included.] "Vijaya the word vijaya means victory, a function of the power of Shakti, the Divine Mother, over the power of evil."

Om. madhu vātā ṛtāyate madhu kṣaranti sindhavaḥ
 mādhvīrnaḥ santvoṣadhīḥ
 madhu naktamutoṣaso madhumat pārthivaṃ rajah
 madhu dyaurastu naḥ pitā
 madhumān no vanaspatirmadhumānastu sūryaḥ
 mādhvīrghāvo bhavantu naḥ
 Om Madhu madhu madhu.³

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. 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.

1. Pranava Yoga. Wikipedia. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pranava_yoga.

Accessed 1/30/14. [Not sure which one is closest: "Speaking from the perspective of the Infinite Being, enumerating his major manifestation-embodiments, Krishna says: "I am the syllable Om."(Gita 7:8) He also says the same thing in 9:17 ("I am...the sacred monosyllable") and 10:25 ("Among words I am the monosyllable Om").

What to "do" with aum is then outlined by Krishna: "Engaged in the practice of concentration... uttering the monosyllable Om--the Brahman--remembering Me always, he...attains to the supreme goal. I am easily attainable by that ever-steadfast Yogi who constantly and daily remembers Me."– Bhagavad Gita 6:13; 8:12-14]

2. Rg Veda Book 1: Hymn 164, verse 46 <http://hinduquotes.blogspot.com/p/rig-veda-truth-is-one.html> Accessed 1/30/14.

3. Transliteration of Rg Veda verse Book 1, Hymn 90, verses 6-8 from <http://www.sacred-texts.com/hin/rvsan/rv01090.htm> accessed February 27, 2014 [This a slightly simpler transliteration format than in earlier transcriptions.] Verse number from "Wisdom from the Hindu Tradition, with commentary." Compiled and translated by Dr. T.K. Venkateswaran. <http://origin.org/ucs/doc.cfm?e=1&ps=2&edit=1&fg=3176&fi=1152> accessed February 27, 2014.