

THE SECULAR AND THE SPIRITUAL

by

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(Spoken at a Retreat on December 27, 1996)

Throughout the ancient and medieval periods of European history there has been a cleavage between the state and the church. The state was the secular side, and the church was the spiritual side. There was no commerce between the two aspects of life. Catholic Christianity, headed by the Pope, had suzerainty over even the kings of the different states, and the secular ruler of a particular state could not completely go against the mandates of the Vatican. This state of affairs continued for a long time in European history. There had been no connection between the spiritual and the secular. The king was the man of the earth, and the Pope was the man of God; that was the difference.

It went on like this for a long time, through the medieval ages, until King Henry VIII of England felt a need to confront the Pope. He had his own peculiarities, and whoever has read British history will know what those peculiarities were. In order to obey the mandate of the Pope, he condescended to commit the most heinous crimes to human nature. Later, he could not get on with this condition. He severed his connection from the Pope and said he was the head of the English Church. He became the secular head, as well as the spiritual one. Added to this, the rise of Protestant Christianity

made the power of the Pope a little weak, and the gulf between the secular and the spiritual slowly started getting narrowed down.

Now, as spiritual seekers, what do we understand from this dichotomy imagined between the secular and the spiritual? Is there such a thing called the secular? Is there anything called spiritual which is incompatible with the secular needs of people? Is a human being a composite of two departments? Have you noticed in your own personal life a secular side and a spiritual side, or do you feel that you are a whole, integrated person? It is not possible for you to distinguish between the demands of your relation to the world and the demands of your relation to God. They cannot stand as two watertight compartments.

It is a very interesting subject. Is there anything called the secular? Does it exist at all? If it exists, it is tantamount to an opposition to the requirements of divine living. Is the world opposing spiritual life? Has God created a world which is constituted of evil, with nothing good in this world? Can you say that God has created an evil world? You would not say that. Then, how has the secular idea arisen in the mind of people?

I mentioned yesterday your involvement in the total operation of the universe. I mentioned that you are a part of human society. Now, would you call this aspect of your life a secular aspect? Do you consider what usually goes by the name of the secular is something redundant, worth giving up as early as possible, and you would like to be spiritual minus association with human society? I mentioned yesterday that such a thing is not possible. Human society is not outside you. You yourself are a part of human society. People do not understand that they themselves constitute an element in the structure of human society.

So, you are involved in the vast sea of humanity. Humanity is the nature of a human being. It is not sitting outside somewhere. When we speak of society, we generally imagine that it is external to us, forgetting for the time being

that we are vitally connected with this vast arena of human involvement we call society. Society is a total structure. It is an integrated operation taking place under the commands of human requirement. If such an integrated approach to the structure of human society were not necessary, we would not be living in human society. That it is inseparable from you shows that the secular is inseparable from yourself. If you are not satisfied with imagining that you are a secular individual, you will say, "No, it is not like that; I am not secular. I am a pure spirit inside, aspiring for God."

Now, tell me what your status is actually. Being a part of human society, and being a part of the community of spiritual seekers – are these two aspects contradictory? Do you belong to two worlds at the same time? You will not accept that you are living in two worlds, with one leg here and another leg there, upstairs. You are everywhere; wherever human society is, there you are. And, I added yesterday, wherever nature is, there you also are.

Keep in mind the subtlety of thinking involved in this process. You are everywhere, as you are a unit of human society, which is everywhere. You are also everywhere because you are a part of nature, which has no distinctions of inward and outward, right and left, or up and down. It is a total integrated operation, and it is inseparable from you.

The whole of nature is working through you, through this bodily structure called an individuality. Earth, water, fire, air, and ether – these elements constitute your body. As long as the world of five elements continues to exist, you will be existing. You will be existing as a miniature universe, a miniature nature, appearing to be moving independently, as it were, though such an independence is not granted. Where is the independence?

Now, we come back to this question of the secular and the spiritual. Did you notice that the very idea of this disparity between the secular and the spiritual is ill-founded? It is based on wrong thinking, right from the beginning. It is the consequence of the child-like imagination that God is

above and the earth is below. Do you believe that God is above and the earth is below? This is again a peculiar trait of the baby mind of humanity, which looks up in order to see God, and looks down in order to see the world, and looks sideways in order to see human society. Is human society spread out sideways? Is the earth down below, and is God above the skies?

If you apply your intelligence, you may not accept that it is so. But, in our daily life, we are still babies only. Spiritual bankruptcy is ingrained in the very nature of thinking. If you go deep into the nature of what true spirituality is, everybody is spiritually bankrupt. There is a vacuum inside.

That is why any amount of worship of God in temples, churches, and religious places has not quenched the thirst of anyone who is longing for a satisfaction which has not been found anywhere in this world. Whatever be your religion, you are an unhappy person. Is it so? You are a spiritual seeker, yet you are an unhappy person. What makes you unhappy and inadequate in your own self? There is no religious leader or spiritual seeker who does not have a sense of a secret inadequacy in one's own self. That is because our concepts of God, society and nature are finite concepts. Our God who is above the sky becomes a finite God; because He is above, He is not below, so you have a finite God. And society is outside, so it is a finite conception of human society. And you consider nature as something outside, so that also is a finite conception of nature. We ourselves are finite individuals, so that we live in a tremendous chaotic assemblage of finitudes in thinking. How would you expect any satisfaction in this world?

I am introducing you to a subject that is very poignant. Spiritual life is not a joke; it is not an entertainment. It is not an experiment: "If it is there, let me see; if it is not there, let it go." It is the fact of life that is vibrating through your heart and telling you, "I am here, as a complete perfection, and I am not outside you. I am not above; I am not below; I am not sideways. I am that which is everywhere."

Every human being, looking like a tiny finitude, carries within its own bosom the potentialities of infinite existence. God is dancing through your heart, society is operating through your veins, and nature is throbbing through the entire system. Are you alone in this world? Then, what is the inadequacy that you feel in yourself? You are not alone in this world. Not only you are in society, but you are the society. Not only are you confronting nature outside, you are the nature. It is not necessary to look to the skies to perceive God; no.

There was a great French mathematician called Laplace; he wrote five volumes on the mechanics of the astronomical universe based on Newton's theory. The book is called "Celestial Mechanics". Napoleon' saw that book and told Laplace: "Sir, in your scheme I am not seeing God anywhere." Laplace's reply was, "Your Highness, I have used the best of telescopes, and I have not seen God anywhere." It is a very humorous conversation between two people.

So, with any amount of looking up you will not see God, because that which you expect to be above you is a fraction of truth. This is why we are not happy in this world. There is nothing that we do in our life that can fully satisfy us, because we have wrenched ourselves from our vital connection with the reality of life. What is the reality of life?

I introduced you to the concept of the truths of life yesterday, and I am telling you today that there is no such thing as the secular and the spiritual. They do not exist. Such distinctions are drawn due to a defect in the perceptual psychology of human nature. We make a distinction philosophically between the phenomena and the noumena, for instance. That distinction also does not exist. To say that the phenomenon is somewhere and the noumenon is somewhere else is another way of saying that spirituality is somewhere and secularity is somewhere else. You cannot think the existence of the noumenon because you have already accepted that you are involved in phenomena. How does a person who is totally phenomena, bound by space,

time, and causal relations, have an idea of that which is above phenomena? How can you know that God exists if what you know is just the world external to you?

There is a suggestive inferential consequence following from even the fact of involvement in phenomena. You cannot know that you are a finite individual unless simultaneously you accept that there is something more than the finite. The limitation that you impose upon your finitude is like a fence that you have pitched around yourself, but there must be something outside the fence, also. Why do you want fencing if there is nothing outside the fence? The fencing implies that there is something beyond the fence.

The idea of limitation or finitude suggests, at the same time, the existence of that which is not finite. So God exists, because it is the necessary corollary following from the inviolable acceptance of your being a finite being. If you are finite, the Infinite has to exist; otherwise, you cannot even know that you are finite. You cannot say, "I am a poor person," unless you have an idea of what it is to be not poor. The correlative always follows from the acceptance of a particular position. But we are too dull in our understanding; we only go a little bit, and then do not go sufficiently far.

What is the consequence of all this deliberation? You do not belong to this world only; then, that would be to say that you are only secular, and there is nothing else in you. We consider the secular as the unspiritual; there is no such thing.

Imagine, for the time being, the state of the Creator of the universe. Transport your consciousness to the status of the Creator. Apply your will to some extent; rise up, immediately. Let the whole being of yours rise to the level of that creative omnipresence which contemplates the creation of the universe.

You see the world. Do you believe that God also sees the world? Does He see the world in the same way as you see it? Certainly not. How would God envisage the world of creation? Can you imagine what it is? God's envisaging of His

creation would be something like a self-contemplation of God. He contemplates Himself as All-in-all.

If God were to see the world, He would not see it as an object that He has to encounter through the sense organs. God has no sense organs. He can grasp without hands; He can see without eyes; He can walk without legs; He can hear without ears; He can think without a brain. There is nothing which He cannot do by mere existence. His existence is His activity. In our case, existence is not activity. If we just exist, it does not mean that we are engaged in any activity. Activity for us is an externalised operation apart from our pure existence. This distinguishes us from God-Being.

The sun is very active. You know very well how active the sun is, but the sun has no eyes, ears, legs, hands, and no working medium. The very existence of the sun is the life of all creatures. There is a state where existence itself is activity. God's existence is God's work. As human beings, we cannot imagine such a thing at all. We cannot understand how existence itself is an operation.

Here we may draw a sideline in order that we may know what spiritual activity is. In traditional parlance, we call it karma yoga. It is not karma, as such. Karma is ordinary work, but karma yoga is a spiritual movement of your totality in the atmosphere of your involvement, about which I told you something just now. When your being expands beyond the limitations of body, and appears to be moving outside, when your little dimension of finitude of existence increases its dimension and moves outside, you are working as a spiritual seeker, as a spiritual leader, as a God-person.

Karma yoga does not bind, but karma binds. Action binds. Every action produces a reaction, but there is a kind of action which will not produce any reaction – that is divine action. When your actions and activities are nothing but emanations of your being, in the same way as all the operations going on in the world are emanations of the existence of the sun, then nothing affects you.

People read the Bhagavad Gita, but very rarely one can make out the sense of its teaching. It does not deny the value of work, but it should be work as God works, and not as a finite, localized individual works. Here in this concept of action, duty and spirituality, the distinction drawn wrongly between the holy and the unholy is abolished. The unholy things become holy when they are transmuted into the sanctity of the spirit which beholds these so-called unholy things.

God has not created unholy things. He has manifested Himself as this universe, and He has manifested as yourself, also. So, you have to behold yourself as God would behold you. True spirituality is the vision of God. It is a vision of God, not merely in the sense of an experience of God, but the vision which is necessary to behold the world correctly in its proper perspective.

When you think like this, in a total fashion, leaving nothing outside you, and embracing all reality that can be conceived in the mind, you feel a completed, filled satisfaction. A sea of delight will enter into you.

There is a word in the Yoga System known as *samadhi*, or communion. There, the celestial delight takes possession of you, it is said. What kind of delight is it? It is the delight of totality in experience, abolishing the cleavage between the object outside and the subject of perception. The thing which you consider as outside you, limiting your existence, enters into you, melting its local existence. Or, you may say, you melt down your perceiving individual existence and enter the object.

In deep meditation on any conceived spiritual object, you cannot know who is meditating on what. It may be that you are contemplating the object, or it may be that the other side, the object, is contemplating you. If you have eyes to see the object, the object also has eyes of a different nature to see you. Everything in the world sees you, knows you, understands you, and reacts to you. It is not that only you see the world; it sees you. A tree standing in front of you knows

what you are thinking about it. Do not say they are foolish, unrecognized entities in the world.

“Everywhere there are eyes.” What is the meaning of this statement? Every atom is a perceiving unit. Every atom is a solar system. There is a sun vibrating inside the atom as a nucleus. It is in the Bhagavad Gita that we hear that everywhere It has eyes. And, your eyes are its eyes only. This is the whole interesting point about it. These eyes with which you are seeing me, these eyes with which I am seeing you, do not belong to you, and do not belong to me, also. They belong to That which actually sees.

The eyeballs cannot see anything. There is an operation which is conscious that is responsible for the perception of things. That consciousness, which is actually the seer, is common to both the so-called seeing individual and the object apparently regarded as that which is seen. The commingling of the seer and the seen in a blend of inclusiveness, transcending both the subjective side and the objective side, which is the transcendent side, is Samadhi.

What you experience there is impossible to imagine now, wedded as you are to this body consciousness. If the world of objects melts down into liquid and enters into you, what would you feel at that time? You would feel that molten steel has been injected into your personality. We cannot have any words to explain what it is. Molten steel, the essence of strength, has entered you, and you have become the embodiment of that impossible-to-conceive energy, strength, and power. That is all we can say. The more we think about it, the less it is that we will be able to express it in language, because language is used only to express the relationship between one thing and another thing. But when such a relationship is abolished completely in a transcendent operation of the melting down of both this side and that side, what language, which word, can explain that condition?

If you can contemplate this possibility in your own personal life, you will be moving like a little god walking on the road. Heavens will be there at your beck and call. The

winds of the high heavens, blown by the angels above, will be wafting their fragrance around you, even when you are walking on the road outside. Do not feel that you are a deserted, unwanted, unrecognized individual. You are very much recognized. You are very valuable. You are dear to the gods; do not forget this. And they are with you now, at this moment.

I do not know if many of you know the Mahabharata story. It is the story of a war. The great spiritual ambassador who played an important role in this war was Sri Krishna, an incarnation of the Absolute, a ray of the complete Existence. When he was admonishing the opposite side, he raised a point: "You should not be under the impression that I am sitting alone here, as an isolated individual, and you can encounter me as a person sitting here. I am not a person. All the fourteen worlds are here just now. All the angels of all the realms of being are here just now. In one instant they will descend into action. Do you want to see it?" And he exhibited his cosmic form. The whole universe started vibrating in a little hall. All the fourteen realms of being, everything, was scintillating, like solar orbs. Wonderstruck people closed their eyes because it was impossible to see the brilliance of God.

This means to say that everything is here just now. You need not have to go to the temple to meditate. Here is the temple. You can create a temple wherever you are because the feelings that you entertain in your heart, the conviction that you have about true spirituality, and the love and regard that you evince in light of this concept of true spirituality, making no distinction between the outer and the inner, no distinction between the secular and the spiritual, will create a temple around you. Wherever you go, you move in a temple, in a chariot, in a glory that is not of this earth.

You must have confidence. You must not have doubt in your mind, because while time takes many days and many months to act, eternity does not take many months. Eternity is not constituted of days and months and years. It is just

here and now. That is the divinity which transcends the secular side and the spiritual side. There are no sides at all for spiritual experience. Inasmuch as we have no words in language to describe that which transcends the concepts of spirituality and secularity, we are forced to use these words again and again, though they are not complete in themselves.

What would be the style of your speaking in regard to that transcendence where the secular and the spiritual, as conceived, join together, shake hands with each other, commingle, and become one experience? We have no words in the dictionary to explain that condition. Your true nature cannot be known by any kind of language. You are what you are. That is all.

Here is something worthwhile contemplating. You are not listening to some speech given by somebody; whatever I tell you is a kind of medicine for the illness of life, and it has to be made part and parcel of your daily experience. But the frailty of human nature often introduces itself as first priority, and will not allow you to think in this widened fashion.

That is why a little time has to be taken every day. You must have a little leisure, an hour or two hours, when you are totally alone to yourself. Do not be always with somebody else. Be alone at least sometime. It may be one hour, it may be two hours; or before you go to bed, you are alone. Contemplate this truth. The true aloneness, with which you came, the true aloneness with which you will depart from this world, is also the aloneness which you are experiencing now, even in the middle.

This alone that you are is seeking to fly to the Alone that is everywhere. Mystics call this process of divine ascent as the flight of the alone to the Alone. There is aloneness everywhere; multiplicity is unknown. Duality does not exist. The Alone created the world, and the alone that you are is a replica of that Supreme Aloneness. This photocopy, this replica, this reflection, this little particle, as it were, of that Supreme Aloneness is seeking to unite itself with that

Ultimate Aloneness, so that the alone that you are even now, in an artificial socialized way, will reach the ultimate fundamental Aloneness, which you are unable to speak about in any language. We call it God. Again, the moment you utter the word 'God', you have an idea that He is above, far away, many kilometers away, not near you.

The habit of thinking in terms of sense perception and body consciousness prevents us from thinking truly in the light of God-vision. That is why I said you must have some leisure and be alone to yourself. Do not be talkative; do not go on chit-chatting and saying anything you like. What is the use of talking? You have talked enough. You are learned people; you have seen the world. Why do you talk again and again? What are you going to say? It is a waste of time. Now be satisfied with whatever God has given you, and be complete in yourself, which has to be felt in your daily life. You will find that in this little microcosmic individuality of yours, the whole macrocosm will rise to action. The son of man will become the son of God. Be happy.