



Satsang by Swami Amar Jyoti

Freedom from Fear

In this day and age we cherish freedom of thought and freedom of mind, but does this freedom really drive away fear? Nobody wants fear, but we all fear, at least most of us. Can we truly be free from fear?

ACCORDING TO THE Vedic scriptures, one of the three blocks to achieving joy is fear. Commonly we fear an unknown person, our unknown future or an unknown situation. We go for a job interview and we are afraid or nervous about what might happen. Normally we attribute the cause of fear to something on the relative plane, something that basically we don't know. The classical example given in the scriptures is: in the darkness you mistake a coiled rope for a snake and you are afraid. When you turn on a light, you see that it is a rope and you are relieved. Your fear was due to the darkness. Had the light been on, you would have seen that it is a rope.

The same is true for the Absolute. We are ignorant or unconscious of the Light, God, Truth. That ignorance causes fear, which creates insecurity, which creates illusions of loss, nervousness, panic, depression—"I was afraid of what he would say... I was afraid of what would happen... I was afraid I would lose what I have." Fundamentally, therefore, our ignorance is the cause of fear.

We may attribute our fears to certain conditions in our lives but basically that is not true. If, in the example above, the darkness were not there, you would not have feared the snake. Now you say, "I was afraid that it was a snake," but actually you were afraid because of the darkness. The mind needs or wants an escape route. Why? It is psychological. If you are afraid of a snake, no one is going to blame you, because your fear of snakes is very realistic. But if you are afraid because you do not see or you are ignorant, then you are to blame. In the basic root cause of fear—ignorance—it is *you* who are to blame; therefore we blame conditions. Why? Ego.

Self-preservation of ego will not allow itself to be blamed. That is why we are habituated to put the responsibility of our fears on conditions and circumstances, including genes or ancestral inheritance. That is why we are busy praising or blaming conditions and situations in our lives. We are the creator of our fears because of our ignorance, called darkness—this is the *very cause* of fear. If the light were there, you would see the reality of the rope, not the illusion of the snake. Here the snake symbolizes *samsara*, the material, three-dimensional creation.

So fear is one of the major blocks to attaining joy. It is also a major block to freedom. Freedom and joy go together. You may say, "I want to be free and joyful," but unless you remove the cause of your fear you cannot be free. You can imagine it or boast about it in an egotistical manner, but you will not be free. Freedom and joy do not come by assertions, claiming and demanding. If you do not want to be afraid, you have to remove the cause of fear. According to the Vedas, the root or basic cause of fear is ignorance, but the immediate cause of fear is selfishness. In this day and age we cherish freedom of thought and freedom of mind, but does this freedom really drive away fear? Nobody wants fear, but we all fear, at least most of us. Can we truly be free from fear?

Saints and sages, holy people and prophets never speak of things they have not gone through; they are not imaginary philosophers. The only difference is:

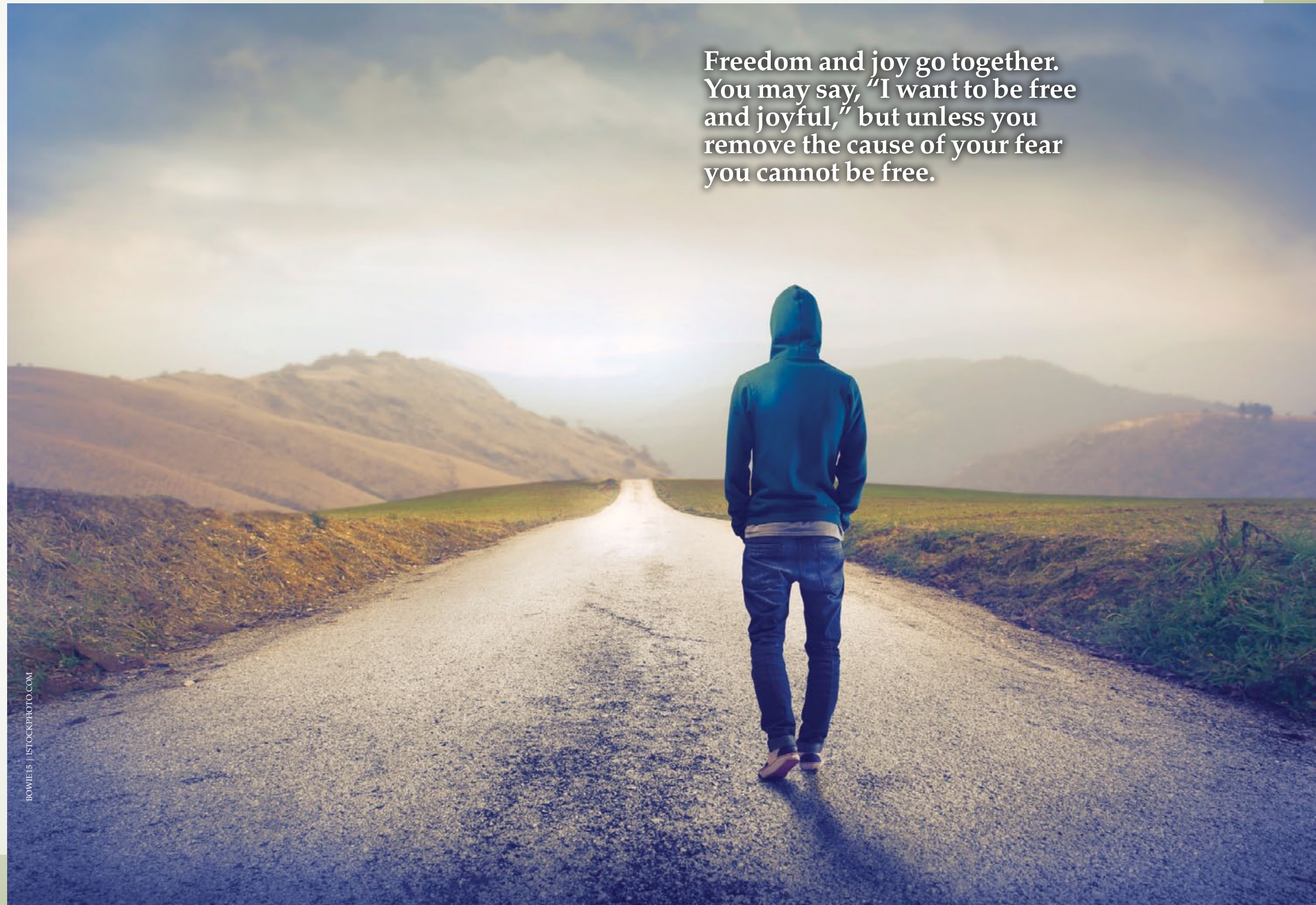
they experience a little and understand much, while ordinarily we experience much and understand little. In understanding fear and fearlessness, we can simply say, "Don't be selfish and you will be fearless," but it is very difficult to do. Is there an easier way? One immediate

answer is: at least we can reduce our selfishness by some understanding. This is easier to attain than being totally selfless. Let's say, if you have power or wealth and relative freedom of mind and body, you may feel mighty to some extent. Is it possible to use your

God-given talents and bounties judiciously, beneficially, not hurting others?

If I'm an artist, I have freedom to express my richness of art, my power of art, as long as I do not exploit anyone. The art piece is inanimate, but let's

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imagine, if it were to use me, how would that be? Immediately it comes to mind that if I am not a creative artist, if I am not a really high-class artist, then art gets to be a monotonous expression. Every time I go to the canvas and palette and brushes, I start painting the same things over and over. It becomes boring. It's using me now. I am not free.

Often it happens that those who have talents and bounties, to whatever degree, every time they get into action—work, a situation, relationships—they do the same things over and over again. Let's say you have certain bounties or talents. Each time you come into a certain situation, you repeat the same things, day after day. Eventually this monotony, this pattern, begins to

control you. You become a victim of your own bounties. Then your mind creates the pattern of making you *secure* it. If it were spontaneous, creative and fresh, not bound or limited, you would not need security. Once the sense of security comes into your mind, the other side of that is fear of losing it. So security actually makes you fearful.

We are each born with certain bounties and talents that flourish within us during our lifetimes. There is nothing wrong with that. Is there any way that we can draw a line where we use those bounties but they do not use us? Is it possible to acknowledge: "This is my limit of using my power, my talents, so that they don't use me"? Unless we understand the genesis of fear, we cannot be free from fear. We all say, "I'm afraid of this... I'm afraid of that..." We fear bad news, all kinds of things. I've gone through these things too, but I have seen that as long as we are holding tenaciously to our sense of security, fear tenaciously holds us as well.

True fearlessness leads to freedom of the soul, but ordinarily the freedom we want is of mind, thoughts and ego. This is a misplacement of freedom. As long as we are holding on to security in this limited sense, fear will remain. There is no way of securing your mind, thoughts and ego except if it is on a sound basis. As long as you are afraid, you will not be free. Fear cripples the mind and psyche. It dissipates our energy, therefore we cannot fly; we cannot be free. Why should we not have freedom of thought? Freedom of thought, unless it is on a sound basis, is an ego trip. If our thoughts are focused on our spiritual goal, our salvation, our Source, then we are on a sound basis. Who will say that freedom of power, freedom of might, freedom of riches is bad? But if it is not on a sound basis, it will lead to exploitation. That is what has happened and what will be happening.

We have to learn how to use our talents and bounties, physical or mental or otherwise, so that they do not use us. When we use our bounties in this way, we will not exploit anyone, and our bounties will not use us. In this way we have control over our situation. Because when we lose control, we fear insecurity. Then we are busy trying to control others, not our own minds, our own potential. And those who are busy controlling others fear the most.

Therefore might, power and riches do not necessarily constitute fearlessness. We have seen penniless beggars, ascetics with nothing, and they are completely fearless. It does not mean that by having nothing we will be fearless, but while owning, do we have control of our lives, our talents and bounties? Do we use them to our benefit and to benefit others? Do you love your family and friends in such a way that you are not afraid of their loss or that something might happen to them? If your love is selfless, you will not be afraid, but if your love is not on a sound basis, then fear of loss, agony and separation will continue.

Real freedom, not just freedom of thought, mind and ego, is where your soul is free. True fearlessness and freedom are both the same.

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Whether it is work or worship, if you have a proper focus and your mind and thoughts are on a sound basis, you will not be afraid.

not arise—it can arise anywhere. Human nature is the same. But we can cover it up: “This is the ashram, this is the church, this is the temple, so naturally everything we do is for God’s sake.” Really? Inside, have you checked on yourself a little bit? Is everything you are doing on a sound basis, or are you a victim of your own conditions, created by expressions of your own mind? Ask yourself: have your meditations, your worship, your books, chanting, all your practices, been to the best of your ability? Have you made use of them for your benefit or have you just done those things? If by going to holy places, holy people and worshipping God we are still afraid, something is wrong. So much so that it is said in some scriptures that we should fear God. I can never accept this. It is wrongly written—very *badly* written—and this has carried on for centuries. I mean: if we are afraid of God, God is a bad or wicked guy. We never admit: *I don’t love Him enough*. If we loved God, we would not fear Him.

Come back again to these two things: focus and a sound basis. Whether it is work or worship, if you have a proper focus and your mind and thoughts are on a sound basis, you will not be afraid. You might have seen that when your mind is diverted, out of focus, or you desire something bereft of the path you are on, you will be nervous and afraid. You can suppress it for the time being, as you suppress your conscience, but for how long? I have seen in my own life that whenever I am fearful of anything, I try to go to the root cause. What is making me afraid? Invariably it will be the security of something, someone, or some situation—I am holding on to an attachment.

What is the remedy? Deal with things on a sound basis and leave the results up to God. Is it easy to do? No, but by practice it can become so. Try to apply this in your situation, the situation you have created. Ask yourself: have I created a pattern in my own mind and then become victim to my own pattern, my own conditions? If the answer is *yes*, that loss of security is what makes you fear. Do not hold on to your mental pattern or conditions and you will become fearless.

You do not have to change your situation necessarily, because usually, if you change to something else, that will also have a hold on you. Change your psychology of holding the situation. Without avoiding the causes of fear, you cannot be free from fear. Simply a pious wish not to have fear

will not make you fearless.

We all want freedom from fear. But if you want freedom and joy, you have to be a conscious being. Awakening is synonymous with bliss. This is a peaceful method, not rebellious, revolutionary, revengeful, or games of mind. It is a very smooth transition, like meditation, so that you can be free and joyful on the path to Enlightenment. You can try to remove the conditions that are causing your fear but you will see that it will not last long. Someone or something else will come along. Remove one office manager and another will come in. We want things on our own terms, including peace and joy and freedom, but these do not come on our own terms. We can dream about it, we can talk about it, we can write about it, but it does not happen because these are not the solution.

Unless you drink water, your thirst will not be appeased. Even if you eat food when you are thirsty, it will not appease your thirst; it increases it. You *know* when your hunger or thirst is appeased; even a child knows. It is that simple. When you are free, you are free. You will know it. When you are joyful, you are joyful. No one has to teach you how to recognize your own joyfulness. If you have realized the Truth, if you have achieved the Light, you will be joyful and free, whatever your conditions. 🌸

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Is it natural to fear these things? No. You have *accepted* that it is natural, but I would say humbly: it is unnatural. Because if it were natural, the conclusion would be that love breeds agony, separation and pain. Such love is not worth aspiring to. Love should be some kind of fulfillment. Do you use the bounty of love therefore in the way you should, or does it make you suffer? We call both love but one is attachment, the other is love.

Whether it is expressed or not, over ninety percent of people are afraid, in spite of so many bounties. And when we do not use our bounties as they should be used, often I have seen that we lose them, whether we like it or not. God takes them away. Rightly used, bounties can be enjoyed lifelong. Some have weaknesses and renounce the things that are corrupting them; some do not. But if they are not rightly using

their bounties they will lose them or be exploited or controlled by them. And the fear is always there, even in dreams. The situation that has controlled them becomes the real world for them. Anything else is a side issue. The very thing that is keeping them in darkness becomes their main attraction every day.

Real freedom, not just freedom of thought, mind and ego, is where your soul is free. True fearlessness and freedom are both the same. Therefore freedom from fear, as I see it, comes not from feeling secure but from how we base our lives so that we are not running after security all the time. I am not against security itself if it is on a sound basis, not as made-up conditions, conditions that we have projected.

If you want freedom of the soul, put your life on a sound basis, wherever you may be. It’s not that in a temple, ashram, or institute the same situation could

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