

# ENGLISH SPEECHES

WITH BIG  
SUBTITLES



## GAUR GOPAL DAS

### THE TREE OF LIFE

<https://youtu.be/y0oWA2yVB3s>

It is my great honor and pleasure... privileged to be amongst all of you here this evening... Oh, this afternoon, I am still in Germany!

I travel a lot, and I see that every country has a USP, a unique selling proposition. When we talk about the United States of America, it has a USP: Liberty, freedom, comfort for the citizens.

When we talk about the United Kingdom, it has a USP: Royalty, the supremacy of the Queen. When we travel to Japan, Japan has a USP: technology. You travel to the Middle East; the Middle East has a USP: Oil.

And when we talk about India, India also has a USP, a unique selling proposition, something that all of us are known for.

Sometimes they say, how do you recognize an Indian? An Indian is known by a man or a lady who will use the shampoo till the last bit by putting water to the bottle.

How do you recognize an Indian? You would know an Indian by a man or a lady who will use the belan, the rolling pin, to squeeze the last bit of the toothpaste out of the toothpaste.

How do you recognize an Indian? An Indian is a person who gives another person a missed call, that culture doesn't exist in the world. There's nothing like a missed call in the world, by the way, ladies and gentlemen.

How do you know an Indian? You would know an Indian by a person who will use a T-shirt till there's a hole in it. And once it's unusable in the day, because there is a hole in it, you would probably start using it in the night. And if it's still not usable in the night any longer, you keep it for Holi. And if it's not even usable for Holi, then you'll use it as pochha (mop). Then you know for sure you know then that you are truly an Indian.

Yes, ladies and gentlemen, we are known for our sparing nature, no wonder a lot of people of this world are super-wealthy, in this country are super-wealthy.

India is known for Bollywood. India is known for its cricket. India is known for its beautiful architecture, magnificent edifices. India is known for its Himalayas. India's known for its literary contributions. India is known to be a developing economy now. Indeed, India is known for many, many things.

But what India is especially known for on this planet Earth is its unique contribution in the field of spirituality. Wherever I travel in the world, I see people glorifying, talking about eulogizing the principle of spirituality that comes from this great land: Bharat Bhumi.

People from America, people from Europe, people from different parts of the world come to India to see the beauty of India. But if you go to Rishikesh, if you go to the Himalayas, there's a lot of people out there who are coming here to learn spirituality, who are coming here to learn yoga, who are coming here to learn the inner engineering, the inner ecology of life.

Of course, when we talk about wellness, how can we neglect the principle of spiritual wellness? This afternoon, I thought I would share with you an analogy that one of my spiritual mentors, his Holiness Sacinandana Swami, who was a German by birth, once told me. It's a beautiful analogy; it's called The Tree of Life.

Whenever we look at a beautiful tree, one of the most essential parts of the tree is its roots. A tree has three aspects to it, essentially. One is the roots; the second is the trunk, and third is the crown of the tree.

And when we talk about the roots, a healthy tree has healthy roots. The deeper the roots, the stronger the roots, the tree stands strong in storms, cyclones, hurricanes, and tornados. And the roots are not seen to our eyes.

Ladies and gentlemen, those roots are compared to our spirituality. Our achievements are seen to people; our gadgets are seen to people; our money is seen to people. Our accolades are seen to people. Our charisma is seen to people. Our success is seen to people.

What's not seen to the eyes of the people is our roots, our spiritual development. And therefore, I always say, if we do not work on what is unseen, it's very difficult to sustain what is seen.

We also need to look at the roots, and that's why I say the roots... strengthening the roots happens by connection. Connection to our own selves, connection to divinity. That's why meditation, yoga, chanting prayer, is gaining such popularity all over the world because everyone sees that the unseen roots need to be strengthened so that the tree is strong.

And when those roots are strong, the second aspect which is the trunk of the tree... the trunk of the tree is our physical and our emotional well-being. That's the trunk. And a trunk can stand strong, and a trunk can stand stable only if the roots are deep and strong.

If the roots aren't deep and strong, the trunk is dodgy and wobbly. A hurricane or a cyclone can shake it, sometimes even uproot it from the very core.

I remember very well in the year 2009... I believe it was 9th of July. I received a phone call from my mom, half-one in the morning, and she was crying on the phone.

I guessed it: the inevitable has happened. My father was bedridden from Parkinson's disease. I knew something untoward had taken place.

Obviously, my father had passed away.

I went for the cremation. My father's body was lying on stage. A few family friends, a couple of relatives were all there.

They started talking about my father, on this good thing, and all of that. And then, one member who was the leader of the community I belong to and who also happened to be family spoke a few words about my father.

And then he said, "Actually this man would have lived longer. But the cause of this man's death is a son."

He called me the killer of my father. Did you hear that? Could there be an insult worse than that?

That night when I went to my mom's house, even after years of my spiritual practice, I was tossing and turning as these words rang in my ears, that I was the killer of my father. It was because of me that my father had died.

Ladies and gentlemen, my mind was restless. My emotional state had been disturbed. And when your emotional state is disturbed, you can't sleep, you can't get anything of your life... your experience of life is proportional to your emotional state. Therefore, William Blake said the mind can make heaven out of hell or hell out of heaven.

That night as I tossed and turned, I remember one statement my guru Radhanath Swami, the author of The Journey Home... if you can grab it, read it; beautiful book. He said, "Do not give the remote control of your emotions to someone else."

That man by what he was saying was pressing a button on the remote control and making me feel trash. I depend on you to say that your talk was great and feel good, and I depend on you to say that my talk was bad, and I feel trash. That means I've given the remote control to you. I feel good because you make me feel good. I feel bad because you make me feel bad.

And how shallow is life? Well, I don't have the guts to take the control of my emotions in my own hands.

Ladies and gentlemen, we have to learn how to take the control of our feelings in our own hand. I will not allow any damned person under the Sun to make me feel good or bad by what he or she says. If they say good, fine, that's good—appreciation, nice. I'm happy with it. And even if they trash me, fine; it's their opinion. It's the way they think.

Ladies and gentlemen, the trunk is our physical and our emotional stability. And I'm not getting into the physical well-being, because of paucity of time obviously.

And the last one is the CROWN. The crown is our contribution to the world. The crown is where the fruits come. The crown is where the leaves come. The crown is where the flowers come. And the fruits are for others. The flowers are for others. The leaves are for others. The shade that the crown of the tree gives is for others. Our contribution to others.

I'm saying this because people say that life is like an ice cream, you should enjoy it before it melts. It'll indeed melt away.

I say life is like a candle. You should bring light to others before it melts. Both the ice cream melts, and the candle melts. But the ideology behind the ice-cream is selfish enjoyment. And the ideology behind the

candle is selfless contribution, selfless service to others. And each of us in our own ways must learn how to contribute, like the crown of the tree.

I must end with this little thing that I want to say.

This last one point I would like to mention is this: if you have ever been on a flight, the members of the cabin crew will come there and say: ladies and gentlemen, this is a seatbelt. I know. This is how you buckle it. I know. I know some pilots are sitting here; I must apologize. If there'd be a lack of oxygen supply in the cabin, oxygen masks will drop from the cabin above your heads. Secure your mask properly and breathe normally. Make sure your oxygen mask is secured properly before you help others. God, I thought this is the height of selfishness.

But if you don't keep yourself in place, you can't help others. If you don't have resources, you can't share your resources. If you don't feel loved, you can't share love. If you don't feel hoped, you can't give hope. If you don't feel uplifted, you can't uplift others. Therefore be selfish first. Care for your roots. Care for your trunk, because only when your roots and trunk are in place, then the crown can give others.

How many of you look to like to look beautiful? Any of you like to look handsome? Those who are not raising the hands think they are already good-looking. Anyway, that's another story of it.

One lady teacher came to class and wrote on the whiteboard: I am beautiful; which tense is it?

The student says past tense, madam.

You know, our late president Shri Abdul Kalam Ji said a very nice thing which left a deep mark on me. He said, if you really want to look handsome, give your hand to some. And you will automatically look handsome because handsomeness is not about beauty and looks, it's about how we contribute to people.

I conclude by saying, if you are beautiful, it's God's gift to you. If you live your life beautiful, it's your gift to God.

And therefore the Tree of Life is about three things: ROOTS, unseen to the world. Deepen them by connection to the divine, connection to God, your spiritual practice, your meditation, your prayer.

The TRUNK which is about cultivation of emotional and physical wellness, emotional stability. Do not allow others to remote-control you.

And three, the CROWN is about contribution. Giving, returning back, a sense of purpose, because the purpose of life is a life of purpose, and thus, the Tree of Life teaches us three things: connection, cultivation, and contribution.

Ladies and gentlemen, I wish to thank all of you very, very much for your kind attention. Thank you very much.

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