

Discourses/Articles
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THE MESSAGE OF SWAMI SIVANANDA

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Om Namo Narayanaya.

Om Saha navavatu; Saha nau bhunaktu;
Saha viryam karavavahai;
Tejasvi navadhitamastu;
Ma vidvishavahai;
Om Santih; Santih; Santih.

At this moment we contemplate the basic fact of the great system of this universe of which we are inhabitants – citizens – in whose great purposive activity we are participants. We may characterise the structure of the universe as one of immense peace and internal coordination, stability and integrality. It is well known to people that man is a microcosmic symbol of the whole universe. The peace that we generally conceive in our minds is what we experience within ourselves, and the coordinated activity of the internal mechanism of the human personality is well known to be at the back of all experience of internal peace.

Generally, when we speak of peace in the world – peace of mankind – we forget very easily that it is an experience and every experience is attended with a sober mental operation. It is an inward acceptance of the operation of a great law and justice which we may call peace. As far as the human being is concerned, the peace that is longed for, aspired for, while it is an internal experience, it is to a large extent conditioned by outer circumstances so that the outer events outside, the conditions prevailing in the world, act upon the human individual; and here we have an obvious indication that though peace is an internal experience of every person, it is not totally isolated from outer circumstance.

The immediate vicinity of a human individual is the family. The family circumstance, the situation of the members within a single group we call the family, conditions the peace, happiness and security of each member, each person of the family. So while the experience of peace in a family is an individual affair because each one experiences it within himself or herself, it is a total operation taking place because the peace of each individual in the family is an organic part of the total action called the peace of the whole family. Hence we may say that the peace of an individual member in a family group is related to the total structure of the peace of the entire family as an integral part is related to the whole to which it belongs.

The peace of the family is not a conglomeration of little bits of individual peace. The peace of mind of many people put together is not to be considered as the total peace of the family. The family is more than a group of persons – it is a wholeness of purposiveness and a

totality of intention. This analogy of the relation of the individual to the family can be extended further to the larger atmosphere of human existence which, in a similar manner, conditions all lower levels. The larger community in which a family lives is the conditioning factor of the peace and solidarity and security of the family. It is well known that a single family in the midst of others cannot have peace if the rest are not in peace. And we know, in a similar way, a community of people is, again, a part of a wider, still larger atmosphere we call the nation. The country, the nation to which each individual belongs, stands above each individual. We may say that the national spirit is a transcendent operation; it is not merely an external or outward atmosphere. The country, the nation, is a spirit of obedience and internal coordination and cooperation. It is an awareness that arises in a total mind of what we may call the nation or the country and it far surpasses in character, in quality, the geographical shape which the country may take. The country is not a piece of land. It is a spirit operating in the minds of the people. And thus the peace of the country is the peace of the community. It is also the peace of the family and the peace of every individual.

While we strive for world peace and the well-being of humanity as a whole, it must be clear to our minds as to what we are actually seeking. The conditioning factors cannot be totally segregated from the aspiring centre. The world is, today, far wider than it appears to the naked eye. This little earth which enshrines all humanity and all living beings is one of the members in a larger family in the solar system. Any sufficiently educated intellect would be able to appreciate the fact that the earth can have no peace if the whole solar system is not in order. This appreciation does not require much of deep thinking. This system of living, which is superintended by the great energy-centre Surya-Narayana, the sun in the sky – this belonging of ourselves to this great operation in the firmament, this solar system to which I made reference – is not outside us. The sun is not above our heads; it is the centre of our life.

It has to be borne in mind that the factors that determine our security, existence and peace are not external, but they are transcendent. In this sense we may say that the soul of a particular structure is neither inside nor outside but above, in a logical sense - not above physically. Scientists sometimes tell us today that the solar system is something like the working of an atom, or conversely, the atom is working in the same way as the solar system operates. That means to say, the central nucleus of this cosmic atom, the solar system, is the sun, comparable to the soul of man; and in Indian tradition, sun – Surya-Narayana – is regarded as the superintending principle over the Atman or the soul of man. This solar system therefore is transcendent to each one and not outside. It is a part of the large universe, which also should be considered as a transcendent inclusiveness rather than an externality.

The idea of the external is what limits us. The universe is not outside us and we are not outside it. The operation of the whole of creation is a single act, as is the case with the operation of the physiological organism of a human individual. The working of any organ of the body is the working of the whole system. If the finger moves or if the legs walk, it is the entire organism that acts at one stroke, simultaneously. Thus is the manner in which we may awaken ourselves to the facts of creation. The world is one whole; and the peace of the world, which is so much in need at this moment of human history today, is not merely a matter that concerns merely this physical earth, but it is a grace that has to descend on the earth from above, which the larger family to which the earth belongs. This intelligence, this centrality of the cosmos which is the governing principle behind every historical operation,

natural or human, is the great God of the universe. The vision of man has to be integral in order that it may be successful, which means to say that it is necessary for every thinking person to be able to conceive facts in a total fashion and not piecemeal, segmented or in little bits as if they are disconnected, one from the other. This is a hard job. This kind of concentration of mind in an unselfish manner – namely, the way of a sense of belonging of each one to a larger purpose and duty, an organisation or a great goal – is really a great education.

In this world we have many a master come as ambassadors from the centre of the universe, as it were, to proclaim this message of the great reality of the universe. These are the Incarnations, the Avatars, the sages and the saints, and while the world throughout its history has been fortunate enough to be blessed with the coming of these lights from above, India was indeed thrice-blessed that it had throughout its history a continuous line of these comings – Avatars, Rishis, Munis, sages and saints. This whole of the country is sustaining it even today, and the freedom of the country in the language of the great scriptures of this land is called Atma-swaraja, or the freedom of the spirit. The spirit is that which enlivens every part of the organisation of which it is the centre. The analogy that I mentioned just now by way of illustration – the individual, the family, the community, the nation and the universe – is only to bring out the fact that the centre of every system of action or operation or life is everything that matters here. We may call it the soul of the organisation. In the lowest sense it is the physical body, and then we have the larger dimensions of the very same soulfulness of the different degrees and levels of organisation reaching up to the greatest generality we call all creation, of which there is the final spirit that enlivens every cell of it. It is in this sense that we say that there is only one soul in the whole universe – the unlimited absolute Godhead. To visualise life in this fashion would be to entertain a spiritual outlook of life. The sages and the saints, the masters and the Incarnations, come as representatives of this great fact of the universe – the Atman of the cosmos, the Godhead of the universe, are our sustenance.

At this moment I am face to face with a most glorious incident in the history of this country and the chronicle of this world, namely, the message that was spread by a superhuman master recently before our own eyes, a veritable universal pressed into action through and in the form of a visible personality – the great master Swami Sivananda, who stood for God and man at the same time. It is now 100 years, nearing, since this great soul incarnated itself on this earth. And some of us had the blessing of living, almost rubbing shoulders with him and imbibing this universal message of world solidarity and peace directly by personal communication. At this hour of the coming of his great centenary, which culminates in the year 1987, all blessed souls who received his grace, who knew him and know him as he was, as he is, and as he worked, are girding up their loins to hoist the flag of this universality of world peace by an inwardness and togetherness of cooperation among themselves with which they wish to gather the spirit of all people in the world and broadcast in their own personal lives, through their messages and in their deeds, this veritable gospel of world peace, universal solidarity and the final blessedness of man. This message, this life, was embodied in the very person of this great master, Swami Sivananda. His personality was his action. His very life was his teaching, and to see him was really for every one of us to see before our own eyes a physical form of what unselfishness actually means. He did not live

for himself, because he never was. He was fixed in that which was more than what appeared through his person.

A little analogy, here again, will make the matter a little clear. An official in the government stands for more than what he appears to be physically. A representative of a large administrative system called the government is not a physical person. It is an operative force which is as large as the jurisdiction over which he holds sway. In a similar manner, this great person stood above the visible personality of himself, above the physical limitations of his body, beyond the normal limitations of human thought, and comprehended the entire gamut of spiritual unification of mankind. Utter givingness, self dedication and working for the cause of people in the name of the Almighty who sent us here for His own great purpose was what he lived for and what he stood for. His writings, which run to more than 300 texts, touch upon almost every theme in the different branches of learning. Medical science, astronomy, ethics, aesthetics, history, philosophy, religion, mysticism, and all those subjects which relate to human life's welfare were the themes of his writing. And I should not forget to reiterate that his writing, his message, was embodied in his actual life. He lived his thought and he spoke what he thought. A coordination of the inward comprehensiveness of the spirit of this great master with his thought and speech and action stood for the welfare of our country and for all mankind. 'Godman' is the word we may use to designate such great personalities.

At this hour we also remember this master for the service that he has rendered for the unification of the religions of the world. Every religious faith, creed or cult was considered by him as a very necessary pedestal in the ascent of the spirit to its universal, immortal goal. The facets of human approach to the fulfilment of purposes were actually the facets of a single crystal of the total life of creation as a whole. So to this great master, every living being – not merely human beings, everything that lived and breathed on this earth – was a friend. Not merely a friend in a social sense, a veritable replica of one's own self. Thus love was the law of his life. The law that operates in this world is love. Where love is absent, law is a carcass. It is a mechanism without vitality in it. Such is the law, the Satya and the Rita which the great scriptures of the country, the Vedas, speak of.

What is our duty at this moment in the context of the coming of the great centenary? To endeavour, in our own humble way – from whatever be the placement of ours in this world in society – to endeavour to be what he was in our own individual lives so that we may emanate as the sun emanates rays from itself. As rays project from the sun, in a similar way we may emanate from our own purified integrated soulful personality the strength of the world. The whole world is operating through every person. This is a great solacing message indeed. As the whole body is operating through every limb of the body, the whole creation of God is active in every cell of every living being and in every atom. This is a great message which will keep us in peace for ever and ever.

In this organism of the universe, how could there be competition? Do limbs of the body fight among themselves? Is there not a coordination which is most beautiful and astounding among the limbs of the body – the eyes, the ears, the nose, the lungs, the heart, the hands, the feet and what not? Has anyone seen one limb contending with another? And if man is the replica of the cosmos, the universe, the world, mankind is to be considered as a similar

organism in which competition has to be ruled out. The law of life is not contention, not competition, not strife, not battle, not war, not exploitation, not subjection or putting another thing for the utilisation of one's own self, but to visualise every person, every living being, every object, everything everywhere as an end in itself, as we consider every part of our body as an end in itself and not as a means to somebody else.

This is a great vision of what we may call the soulfulness the Atmatva of things, in which vision, you may call spirituality, is included every other kind of vision. It is only this vision that can bring peace to this world; else, human individuals will belong to contending parties who will work for their own mutual destruction. Is the world going to ruin or is it to work for its own survival? The survival of an organism is in its internal capacity to coordinate the parts of itself into a singleness of soul. I am again coming to the point of the soul being there in this whole world. And there is a single soul which is reflected in every little individual soul. Thus, where the soul does not determine thought, action and speech, life becomes a dead mechanism, a lifeless movement. To infuse this kind of cosmic life, a spirit of cooperation, love and affection, charitableness and unselfishness – the spirit of giving rather than taking – is the law of life, which is the expression of the love of life. All great saints and masters stood for a perfect obedience to law, which is the law of internal affection in the light of the souls which enliven all living beings everywhere. Such large vision this master had before our own eyes. His physical presence vanished out of sight in the year 1963; and some of us, like myself, should be considered as indeed blessed for having physically served him and visibly having received concrete emblems of grace and blessing from him. I for one can say that whatever I am today, or whatever those like me are today, is because of what he was.

May this message spread everywhere throughout the world today when there is anxiety and anguish in the heart of every person even in regard to the morrow. The political atmosphere and the social conditions prevailing at this hour, in this world, have created such difficulties in the psyche of man that one cannot say what will happen to the mentality of people. There is no saying what will happen tomorrow. Have we come to this world to live in this state of anxiety? Are we actually living, or are we dying? This anguish-born, anxiety-ridden, tension-torn life is veritable death indeed; and to infuse the real life into this impending deathlike existence, these great masters have come to us. And we contemplate this great master today who silently, without adumbration, without announcement, proclamation or without even being known much to the public, worked for the solidarity, integration and the welfare of the whole country, and blessed the whole earth.

Today there is possibly no country in the world which has not heard his name, though he himself physically did not go outside his country. Every nation in the world knows who Swami Sivananda was. As very few can there be in this world who do not know the name of Mahatma Gandhi, such a great personality lived with us, and I take this opportunity of communicating my heartfelt feelings to all, not merely in this country but the world over – my feelings that we have an obligation to these great servants of humanity, which obligation we can fulfil only by our becoming servants. And may we be the servants of this great servant of God Almighty. We shall be blessed. Unless we invoke this great spirit of final blessing and peace to the world, we shall not see the light of peace anywhere.

To reiterate, again, it was the message of immense cooperation with everything and every person, a spirit of sharing what one has with others, to see humanity in human beings as one sees humanity in one's own self. To keep in mind that to be human is to rise above the animal level of competition and the law of the jungle, the saint lives for others. The animal lives for itself. The animal cares not for the world; it cares only for itself. The saint cares not for himself; he cares for the whole world. Here is the difference between a saint and an animal. And even a human being, who is just a steppingstone to the sainthood and the sagehood of humanity, the superhuman ideal of humanity is to be expected as something above the animal indeed. The animal considers another animal as its exploited stuff – it can be even a diet which it can gobble up – but man cannot eat another man. Humanity – human quality – is represented by the capacity to see in others what oneself is. Another person cannot be my diet, which means to say we cannot convert any person into a utilitarian, exploited stuff. No man is a servant in this world. Everyone is an independent status and a selfhood in himself. If I would not like to be exploited, and I would not like to be a servant, I would not wish to be utilized as a tool under the pressure of somebody's thumb, how would anyone else expect that? What I am, that others are. To be able to feel like this in this expected charitableness of vision is to be human. And the human alone can become the divine. From matter there is evolution above to the kingdom of life in vegetables, plants and trees. Above is the animal which works on instinct. Still above is man who works on reason, and beyond man is the superman, the Godman, the sage who represents the Ultimate Reality.

So while evolution has brought humanity today to this level of rationality and an ability to think and form judgements systematically with consideration of pros and cons, evolution has not stopped. The impulse in man, the urge within us to be better, to expand more and to become more perfect, is an indication that human life or the state of humanity is not the end of evolution. We have to rise to Godhead, which is to embrace all space and time in a blend of eternity.

Swami Sivananda – the great master, I should say from the bottom of my heart – stood, lived, worked for the great God of the cosmos. We owe a duty to him, and what is the manner in which we can express our dutifulness, obedience, affection and gratitude to him except by living in the manner that he lived and to communicate his message, din this knowledge into the ears of all people so that mankind be in peace, the world be blessed and the kingdom of God may descend on this earth for the immortal glory of this whole creation. This is the message of Swami Sivananda and this is the message of peace of mankind. This is God's message for the well-being of all. May peace be to the whole world.

Om purnamadah purnamidam purnaah purnamudachyate,
purnasya purnamadaya purnamevaavashishyate.

Om Shanti! Shanti! Shanti!