

THE AIMS OF HUMAN EXISTENCE – PART 3 OF 3

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No success in any field of life can be achieved without *tapas*. *Tapas* is the guarantee for success in any walk of life, in any direction of any activity. We have been told that creation originated with the *tapas* of the Creator. The Nasadiya Sukta of the Veda tells us that the Supreme Creator performed a *tapas* when He willed this vast creation, and the whole of His creation is vibrant with the various degrees and manifestations of this supreme *tapas*. In this sense, we may say that the whole creation is only *tapas*, and the activities of nature in its generality and of people in its particularity are all engendered by a force which can be best described as *tapas*. I for one cannot believe that there is anything worthwhile in this world except *tapas*. But what is *tapas*? It is a well-known term which has been interpreted, explained and understood in perhaps as many ways as there are people in the world.

First of all, let us try to fix our attention on that supreme circumstance when the Creator Himself appeared to have been performing a *tapas*. What was the kind of *tapas* that the Father of the universe did at the time of willing this creation? It is a concentratedness of Universal thought. We can only say that it must have been something like a gathering up of the energies of the whole creation into a particular point of *tapas*: every particle of the whole of being was gathered up into a mighty energy intended for the performance of a function which had a cosmic purpose before itself. Such must have been the *tapas* of the Almighty—a universe concentrating on itself, as it were, for the actualisation of its future purposes in the form of this vast manifestation through the multitudinous degrees of its expression.

We cannot think what God did not think. We cannot be what God Himself is not. We cannot possess what is not God's possession, and we cannot have a satisfaction which is not God's, because this mighty Originator of this cosmos has somehow planted Himself in the heart of everything that He has created, so that He is the pumping house of even the littlest energy that is the cause of the movement of even an ant crawling. In this sense we may say that this great energy of the cosmic *tapas* of the Almighty is motivating even the movement of the littlest atom and the crawling of an insect—what to speak of the activities of ours?

Here I see a little light which may explain the significance behind Karma Yoga, a great teaching that we have in the Bhagavadgita. The meaning of Karma Yoga seems to be apparent before our eyes when we delve a little

deep into the mystery of the way in which the original *tapas* of the Almighty is motivating every action in the universe. Thus it appears—it follows from this theorem, this thesis, this position—that our activities, our movements, even our thoughts, intentions and feelings are remote and perhaps rarefied reverberations of this original intention of the Creator when He willed this cosmos. So what is this Karma Yoga, and what does it amount to?

It appears to me that the whole of the gospel of the Bhagavadgita, which is the Karma Yoga that we hear of always, is our conscious participation in the intention of this supreme *tapas* of the Creator. So Karma Yoga is also a kind of *tapas*. And, any type of life which can be regarded as having an element of divinity in it has to be a form of *tapas* because wherever divinity is present, even in the least modicum of expression, God is present and, therefore, *tapas* is present.

This is one aspect of the meaning of the great word *tapas*. The other aspect is its practical implementation in our workaday life in this empirical world. *Tapas* is the force we generate in ourselves by which we approximate our personalities to the requirements of the divine ordination. Any movement, any activity, any thought, any feeling, any intention or purpose in our minds that may deviate from the intention of the supreme will of the Almighty is contrary to *tapas*, is the opposite of divinity, is not spirituality, not religion.

There is no object before God—a very important thing we have to remember always. God has nothing external to see with His eyes. And, therefore, whenever we see something outside us, we have to that extent dropped down

from that status which can be regarded as in consonance with the existence of God. The consciousness of a world outside – even seeing an object or, much worse, getting attracted towards it by either love or hatred—is an utter fall from the status of divinity. And an extrication of oneself from this impulsion towards the objects of the senses, primarily psychologically, would be the performance of a *tapas* on our part.

Tapas has been mostly regarded in a very prosaic and gross manner as putting on tattered clothes, sleeping little, eating less, talking not, becoming frail in the body, and so on. This is the least that can be said about the spiritual significance of *tapas*. The concentration of consciousness in its direction towards this supreme *tapas* of the Almighty is the *tapas* that we can perform. It involves withdrawal of the senses, of course. The restraint of the senses from the operation in terms of the objects outside is, no doubt, *tapas*; but here we may go wrong in a little bit of enthusiasm, misinterpreting and misconstruing the meaning of this process of self-withdrawal.

The restraint of the senses, or the withdrawal of the senses from contact with objects, does not mean closing the eyes or plugging the ears. It is an adjustment of consciousness. Ultimately, what we call sense activity is a movement of consciousness. It is not merely an operation of the eyeballs or an activity of the eardrums. There is an inward apparatus, an inner structure of our personality, which urges itself forward, outside itself, to come in contact with those other than its own self. I told you there is no other than Itself for God. So whenever there is an urge towards an ‘other than one’s own self’, there is an undivine

activity. And so *tapas* as a divine procedure that we have to adopt in our divine lives would amount to a re-turning of the consciousness in a manner which cannot easily be described in words or language. It is a circus feat, to some extent. It is very difficult to understand, very difficult to explain what it actually means to turn the consciousness away from its objectification of movement and centralise it in that status which can be in consonance with that mighty will of the Creator, the supreme *tapas* that He performed.

If we can perform *tapas* and be examples of *tapas*, then we will succeed in every one of our pious activities and our endeavours. But if there is even a subtle desire lurking inside to have a little bit of name, fame, recognition, authority, power and money, or even a word of thanks, then that would not be the quality of *tapas* that we require.

To describe Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj as a founder or a president of the Divine Life Society is to describe him in the poorest manner possible because he was not just a founder of the Divine Life Society; he was himself something, even if the Divine Life Society were not to be there. He was a man of God who lived a life of utter divine vision, a descent of a power which originated this universe. And he was himself a completeness and a comprehensiveness which can be best described as integration. So to lead the divine life would certainly be to emulate the great example of this great master. To emulate him is not to found a Divine Life Society or to open a branch. That is a secondary matter. To emulate him would be to live as he lived, to think as he thought and to be as he was, to have the same purpose in our minds that was his main intention in his very descent into this world. I do not

believe that he had a world outside him, though it looked as if he was a man of hectic activity and had association with every blessed thing in the world.

As the Yoga Vasishtha puts it, men of God are *maha-kartas*, *maha-bhogtas* and *maha-tyagis*. This is a very interesting description of great masters given in the Yoga Vasishtha. They are great doers, great enjoyers and great renouncers. There is nothing that they cannot do, there is nothing that they cannot enjoy, and there is nothing that they cannot renounce. This is to be a *maha-karta*, *maha-bhogta* and *maha-tyagi*, and such was the characteristic of the personality of the great master Swami Sivananda.

So to be a disciple of this great saint and sage, to be a follower of his ideals, would be first and foremost to live in that centrality of awareness and purpose for which he came to this world and which he demonstrated in his personal life. And, to repeat his own words, it would be to consider God as first, the world as the next and one's own self as the last. This pithy maxim of his is a total gospel, a complete message and a whole instruction to every one of us.

We are today at the closing session of this conference which has been organised to create a wave of spirituality in the world. It has no other intention, and it should not have any other intention. And this wave of spirituality, this God-consciousness, can be spread in the world only if it can be generated within ourselves, first and foremost. Unless we are powerhouses in ourselves, we cannot conduct electricity to others. It is essential, therefore, for every one of us seated here or everyone who is associated with this organisation and conference to gird up one's loins to be honestly and sincerely fixed in one's attention towards the achievement

of this purpose of, first of all, creating a force of the spirit in oneself – which cannot be achieved unless one is a *tapasvin*, to come to the point again. We have to be great *tapasvins*, and to be a *tapasvin* is not to tie the hair on the head or to drop the cloth and walk with bare feet. These are not the points. The important thing is what we are thinking throughout the day in our minds. You have been thinking something from morning to night since many days. Take stock of all these thoughts. “Before—yesterday, today, many days before—many thoughts, many feelings passed through me. What were they? Have they anything to do with the purpose for which I am supposed to be in this world, and for which I have come here? Or are they erratic thoughts, aberrant ideas with no relationship whatsoever with the intended ideals or the adumbrated purpose of the conference?”

There is no possibility of any kind of demonstration before God. It is an utter impossibility because any kind of show, any kind of external appearance is not called for in a world which has been generated by the *tapas* of the Supreme Almighty and which is presently working even in the least of creations, as I mentioned to you. So you cannot forget this fact. Therefore, to be a *tapasvin* ora Divine Lifer, or to be a devotee and a follower of Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj or a Divine Life Conference member means being a great example in one’s own self of a life divine which may be appreciated in the eyes of God.

I have the habit of creating an internal atmosphere in my own self by placing myself in the presence of the Almighty. It is difficult to imagine what it is. But one can, with some effort, place oneself in the presence of this

Mighty Omnipresence. “Before this vision of this multi-faced Being, what is my value? What is the certificate that I can receive from this all-visioned Being?” God must be seeing us even now and He must be thinking about us just now. And your conscience just now can tell you what God is thinking about you. Don’t say, “I do not know what God is thinking about me.” Your deepest secret recesses of the heart, the conscience as we call it, will tell you what God is thinking about you. And *that* you really are, and not what other people say – not your document, not your paper, not your certificate, not anything that anyone thinks about you is what you are. But what is lurking in your deepest conscience and secretly speaks is the voice of God; and that, perhaps, is what God thinks about you. Place yourself in this position in meditation, and beware of the future.

Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj was never tired of saying that death is a great teacher. In the Katha Upanishad Yama, the Lord of Death, teaches the great message of the spirit to Nachiketas. Naturally, nothing can be a better teacher than death, because death is the leveller of all beings. “Sceptre and crown will tumble down,” as the poet says, and the king and the beggar will sleep the same sleep. Such is the activity of the Supreme Annihilator of all things. Who can be a better instructor for you into the mysteries of things than He? Death is a great teacher whose orders may be received at any moment. You must pursue learning and accumulate the worthwhile treasures of life as if you are immortals here. Don’t say, “I am dying tomorrow; why should I study anything?” You must imagine that you are immortal and going to live forever. So pursue your studies and increase your wisdom, knowledge and learning. But pursue the path

of righteousness as if death has caught hold of the crest of your hair and is strangling your throat just now. If death were to come just now and hold your neck, what would be your thought at that moment? Let that thought be the perpetual thought throughout the day, because death can catch hold of one's throat at any moment of time. And it is futile to imagine that this warrant will be received by us after fifty or sixty years, etc. History is a lesson to us. So the great master's teaching is that we should be vigilant and finally we are here alone in this world. This is a great saying of mighty wisdom.

Spirituality arises in our heart and springs forth from within us when we recognise our aloneness in this world. Many of our artificial activities and the so-called movements and appearances are due to the existence of other people around us. We cannot be natural persons before other people. We are natural only in the bathroom or when we are alone in the bedroom. Otherwise, we are always artificial. We cannot think what we want to think, we cannot speak what we want to speak, and we cannot be what we want to be. It is very difficult to live in the world. But we are absolutely alone, really speaking. That we have friends and associations is an illusion before us. "*Adavante cha yannasti vartamane ani tat tatha*" is an old saying. That which was not in the beginning and will not be in the end is not in the middle either. If we had no friends and we brought nothing when we came to this world, and if we can have no friends and we shall not take anything when we go from this world, we have no friends and possessions even now. We are wholly deluded to imagine that we have friends and associations and supporters in this world. A day

will come when we will be knocked down from under our feet and we will be utterly helpless in this flood of the movements of the world; so instead of expecting this kick from nature which can come any day in our life, it is better to be honourably prepared to live a life of loneliness.

Again I come to this point of being alone—a word which was emphasised by great mystics like Plotinus when he said that it is a flight of the alone to the Alone, while describing the nature of spiritual life. The alone flies to the Alone. When I say ‘the alone’, you must be able to understand the meaning of it. It does not mean that you can be inside your room and lock the door and then you become alone. Not so. Here again, it is the aloneness of the spirit. “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” We must understand what it is to be poor in spirit. Our aloneness can be achieved even here, just now, in the conference. It may look that we are in the midst of many people and, therefore, this is not aloneness. To be alone, we have to go to the forest behind Vishwanath Mandir or we must be in our meditation rooms. Here, how can we be alone? Even when we are in the forest, we may not be alone. Even in our single meditation room with closed doors, we may not be alone. And we can be alone even in the thick of a city because aloneness is, again, an attitude of consciousness. It is a recognition within oneself of one’s spiritual placement in the context of creation, where external relationships are uncalled for.

To again come to the point where I began, there is no external object before God’s eyes. Therefore, this great aloneness, which God was and God is, is reflected in every aloneness of each individual particularity. God is reflected

everywhere and in everything, and His characteristics are present everywhere. So while His *tapas* is also reverberating through every one of us in every form of activity and purposive movement, His aloneness is also reflected in every one of us. Therefore, when a time for it comes, we feel disgusted with everything. A day comes in one's life when one begins to wither, "I am fed up with everything. I had enough of everything. I had a surfeit. Let me be alone."

This idea to be alone is a reflection of the aloneness of the Absolute, and it is not capable of achievement merely by moving geographically, physically, from one place to another place, because this aloneness is a characteristic of consciousness. It is a status of our being, where we are able to coordinate our existence, our being with the Almighty Aloneness—Aloneness with a capital A—in the presence of which outside persons do not exist and nothing can be. In this context of our inner communion or association with this mighty Aloneness of God, we are alone even now in the apparent multitude of the audience or conference here. So one can be a great *tapasvin* in one minute, just now, without having to wash one's face or take a bath and sit in the meditation room, because *tapas* is an immediate action of consciousness and it is a decision taken by it, a determination to place itself in a particular context of this vast creation of God. We must first of all realise the context of our being in the world, our placement in society, our relationship with anything and, finally, the relevance of our present individual existence to the vast creation of God. This is to achieve suddenly a status of inward *tapas* and to be alone in a mood of worship of God.

This inward attunement, about which I spoke to you in these few words, perhaps is the inner core of spirituality, the essence of religion, and, in my humble opinion, this is the great intended message of Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj. God bless you all.