

SIVANANDA—THE PHYSICIAN OF THE SOUL

SWAMI KRISHNANANDA

The Divine Life Society

Sivananda Ashram, Rishikesh, India

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To the humble followers of Gurudev Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj, the 8th of September is a momentous occasion every year. This is not merely a celebration of the birthday anniversary of the great Master, but an eternally significant event of the advent of the Spirit in this world in a new dimension and with a reoriented perspective. This birthday anniversary celebration, as relevant to the great Master Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj, is a rejoicing of the spirit for all his disciples, and its meaning cannot be anything but spiritual. I may take this opportunity of pointing out and reminding you all that the coming into incarnation of Gurudev Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj had a special meaning to this world of the modern age.

This is the twentieth century, and history has taken a leap, as it were, by means of an advance into what we may call an industrial revolution and a gigantic technological step in the direction of a complete transformation of human values. Mankind's vision of things has changed, right from the beginning of the twentieth century, on account of innumerable constructive changes that have

taken place in various fields of life—in every field of life, we should say. The beginning of the twentieth century was an occasion for the starting of a scientific revolution, with the advent of masters such as Albert Einstein. It was also the time for a revolution from the point of view of international relationship, when nations began to come closer and closer in their internal comity. The significance of the United Nations began to be realised more and more in its real connotation and connection with the different nations. The twentieth century has also been very eventful in many other aspects. Man has conceived the meaning of political unity, national unity and international understanding, in their true significance. This century has seen the coming into activity of many great Masters such as Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Swami Vivekananda, Swami Ramatirtha, Sri Aurobindo, Sri Ramana Maharshi, Mahatma Gandhi, Dr. Radhakrishnan, and many others. All these giants in the field of mind and spirit have given a magical touch to the total perspective of human values. So in many respects we should say this twentieth century has been, perhaps, a type of crowning edifice in the historical evolution of the ages.

In this very context was born another great Master, H.H. Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj. I shall tell you the special significance of his coming into the midst of mankind that it is today. What is that special significance? A few of us have had the blessed opportunity of living physically in contact with this Master for many, many years. So, we may confidently say, in all humility, that we have some sort of a personal knowledge of his own practical life and the meaning of the message that he intended to convey to mankind. I should say that we have to regard

ourselves as thrice blessed for having been given this opportunity by God, the Almighty, to live physically in his presence for years and years. And to live in the physical presence of such Masters is to bask in the sunshine of the Spirit. You know what it is to bask in the sun. It is to infuse your personality with health-giving rays of a dynamic storehouse of energy. As they say, the company that you keep, the books that you read and the way in which you conduct yourself in your daily life are supposed to be the insignia of your inner substance, real worth and intrinsic validity. And to keep company with giants of the Spirit such as Gurudev Sivanandaji is to be within a very powerful energising influence which brings together into a focus through its own manifestation of personality the aspirations of all mankind.

I may say here that the aspirations of mankind may be said to have found an articulation, to a very pronounced degree, in the personality and the mission of Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj. He gave voice and fluent expression to the inner urges of the human being. Every one of us has an urge within us, a desire, an aspiration, a longing and a hope, all of which we cannot adequately express on account of the weaknesses of our own personalities. For example, why do we elect a person as a representative of a constituency? That person is made a member of the Legislative Assembly or the Legislative Council in the Parliament because we ourselves cannot express our ideas properly. We are unable to speak our deeper feelings in a proper language and place them before the Parliament in an adequate context. So, we elect a proper person. And the person whom we elect as a Member of Parliament, or for

the matter of that, any kind of representation, is supposed to be capable of articulating our inner aspirations and our inner feelings. In other words, he expresses the total spirit of the people who have elected him. Likewise, these great spiritual Masters can be regarded as the total representation of the aspirations and the inexpressible feelings of all mankind.

We know that Jesus the Christ was called the Son of Man, apart from the fact that he was called the Son of God. Why was he called the Son of Man? Everybody is a son of man. What was the speciality in Christ being called the Son of Man? The meaning is that he was the Son of Man, i.e., the son of total mankind and not a son of Joseph or Mr. so-and-so, as we all are in the ordinary sense of the term. When we say Christ was the Son of Man, we mean that he was the expression of the total feeling of humanity. And in the culture of Bharatavarsha, we have the tradition that the Avatara or the incarnation of God is the summoning of the Almighty by the total aspiration of mankind. God does not incarnate Himself by the call of one man merely, unless, of course, that one man is capable of drawing into his personality the powers of all other people also due to his peculiar relationship with God. Ordinarily, a single individual cannot call the total power of God, just as a drop cannot summon the power of the whole ocean.

But, the personality of Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj was unique as far as his relationship with God is concerned. There were many, as I mentioned to you earlier, of his calibre and category who could summon into activity, into implementation, into a forceful manifestation, the deeper feelings of man and the crying aspirations of the soul which

were neglected, unfortunately, notwithstanding the fact that the beginning of the twentieth century has seen the revolutions of science and industry, business and commerce, and international nearness of approach. While everything was achieved, one thing alone was ignored. That is why we are grieved even today. Everybody has a sorrow in his heart. We have radios and televisions; we have planes and cars; we have the best food to eat and most attractive clothes to put on; we have social status and position; we have money to spend and to burn. There is nothing that we lack, materially speaking. But we are unhappy, we are sorrow-stricken, and we have a grief at the bottom of our hearts. This is the essence of the whole matter. This grief is present in every human being—you, me, and everyone—in spite of the fact that we have all comforts conceivable that can be bestowed upon us by science and industry.

The purpose of the incarnation of these Masters is to point out where the crux of the whole problem lies. They are the physicians of the soul and they come to diagnose the illness of the spirit in man. Though for all practical purposes a person may be looking healthy and handsome, he may be secretly sick, not knowing the reason behind the sickness, and an expert doctor alone can find out what is wrong with him. Similarly, though we seem to be happy and smiling outwardly in social and public life, there is a peculiar lacuna in our approach to things in general on account of which we are sorrow-stricken in our hearts, and this can be diagnosed and cured only by spiritual adepts. Masters and geniuses of the type of Gurudev Sivanandaji, whose birthday we observe on the 8th of September every year, have pointed out where the illness of man actually lies.

This illness is a common illness of all people. It is a secret disease which is infecting every human being.

Though desires vary from person to person, and though predilections and idiosyncrasies of each are different from those of other people, there is a peculiar trait in every individual which is common with everybody else. And that is the one cementing element which can bring all people together on a common platform. But for that element, there is nothing similar amongst us. We are dissimilar in every respect. We speak different languages, and we have different ideals in social life. We eat different kinds of food, and we have differences in every respect. But, there is one thing which keeps us together, and that is what we call the soul of man. Bodies are different, languages are different, houses are different—everything may be different, but the soul cannot be different. My soul and your soul are the same, and they speak the same language. Though verbally I may be speaking in a vernacular of India or in the English language, and somebody else may be speaking in French or German, the soul in all speaks in a single language. The language of the soul in the West is the same as the language of the soul in the East. The language of the soul of a man is the same as the language of the soul of a woman or that of a child, for the matter of that, because the soul is indistinguishable in its characteristic. While the characteristics of personalities may differ, the characteristics of the structure of the soul do not differ. So, here is a common ground for a real unity among all people.

A few days back, a person came from All India Radio, Delhi, and asked me to give a message to be broadcast on All India Radio concerning 'the relevance of religion to

national integration'. I was trying to explain, in that short message which I gave on tape, that it is very strange that he should speak of the relevance of religion to national integration, as if there can be any other relevance, because that would be like speaking of the relevance of the soul to the body of an individual. What is the relevance of the soul to the body? There cannot be any other relevance. The soul is the only relevance conceivable. Minus the soul, what is the body? You remove your soul from your personality, and let us see what you are. You will simply disintegrate into smithereens the moment the soul is withdrawn from your personality.

You may wonder why it should happen. The soul is not a spark of light or a centre of gravity that is situated in a location of your personality, as ordinarily you may wrongly conceive. The soul is not any such thing. It is a peculiar 'something' which is difficult to explain in language. It is like electric energy. You cannot say where electricity is. Is it inside the body or outside the body? Is it inside the powerhouse? It is in every speck of creation. In every atom of the world is electricity present. Likewise, the soul is present in every nook and corner of this creation. It is not sitting inside the body like a small insect or a flame of a candle inside a pot. To conceive it as being located somewhere would be a very peculiar and childish notion. The soul is that integrating 'something' which brings the cells of the body together into a bodily form. It is the force which brings together the various thoughts of your mind and enables the harmonious functioning of anything that you can call as yourself. If, therefore, the soul is to be withdrawn, you will not exist any more. That which you

call the 'you' or the 'I' is the soul. It is not something different from what you are. What you yourself are, that is the soul. And if the soul is removed, you yourself are removed. So what is left there? Nothing. You do not have a soul; you yourself are the soul. Do not say, "I have a soul inside me." As I just mentioned, this is a peculiar baby's idea of the soul. What you yourself are, that is the soul. So, minus you, what is the soul; and minus the soul, what are you? They are identical. You are the soul; the soul is you.

Now, to ignore the existence and the operation of the soul in human conduct and activity would be to ignore yourself completely. What would happen to you, if you ignore yourself in the programme of life? The question is very strange. If everybody starts ignoring one's own self—I ignore myself totally, you ignore yourself totally, everybody ignores himself or herself totally in the meaning of life—then what remains in life? There would be no such thing as life itself.

Hence, to remove religion is to remove the soul. That is what I was trying to tell our friend who came to me from All India Radio. Religion is the science of the soul. It is not Hinduism, Christianity, Buddhism, Islam, etc. These are not religions. These are only the shapes that religion has taken in social relationship. Religion is the character of the soul made manifest in outward conduct and activity. And if the soul is what you are, then religion is your conduct, and you cannot say that your conduct can be other than the religious. Your conduct and activity have to be religious because you are the soul, and religion is the conduct and activity and expression of the soul. So, to live a kind of life minus religion is to think the unthinkable and the

impossible. There is no such thing as a life without religion. That would be like your living without a soul. That would be, again, to live without your own self. That is an absurdity of the first water.

This is a very difficult thing to conceive in the mind. People had a very wrong notion of spirituality, of religion, of God even, of creation, of social relationship, etc. To set right these errors of thought in mankind in general and to show a path to the whole of humanity, Masters such as Swami Sivanandaji were born. The philosophy and the religion of Swami Sivanandaji is the philosophy and the religion of mankind. He did not come to preach Hinduism. He did not belong to any particular religion. He did not even act as a human being. He acted as a super-personality and as a representative of God, the Almighty, who cannot be regarded as a prerogative of any particular creed or cult. God is an impersonal existence, whose representation was this Master and Masters of his kind.