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**A
SLOW
AND
STEADY
RELIGIOUS
AWAKENING**

SWAMI KRISHNANANDA

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PUBLISHERS' NOTE

The 25th of April 2022 marks the auspicious occasion of the Birth Centenary of Worshipful Sri Swami Krishnanandaji Maharaj. To commemorate this sacred occasion, the Headquarters Ashram has decided to bring out booklets comprising the illuminating discourses of Worshipful Sri Swami Krishnanandaji Maharaj for free distribution.

Worshipful Sri Swami Krishnanandaji Maharaj arrived at the holy abode of Gurudev Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj in 1944, and remained here until his Mahasamadhi in November 2001. Swamiji Maharaj was a master of practically every system of Indian thought and Western philosophy. "Many Sankaras are rolled into one Krishnananda," said Sri Gurudev.

Over the years, Swami Maharaj gave many profound and insightful discourses during Sunday night Satsanga, and on holy occasions such as Sri Gurudev's birthday, Sri Krishna Janmasthanami, Mahasivaratri, etc., and also during Sadhana Week and Yoga Vedanta Courses conducted by the Yoga

Vedanta Forest Academy of the Ashram. Sri Swami Maharaj always spoke extempore, spontaneously, without any preparation, and every discourse was fresh, unique, and divinely inspired. The audience was bathed in that stupendous unfathomable energy that radiated from Swamiji Maharaj during these discourses.

We are immensely happy to bring out some of Sri Swamiji Maharaj's discourses in booklet form as our worshipful offering at his holy feet on the blessed occasion of his Birth Centenary. The present booklet, '**A Slow and Steady Religious Awakening**', consists of two discourses given by Sri Swami Krishnanandaji Maharaj on February 14th, 1988, and on holy Sri Guru Purnima, July 26th, 1991.

May the abundant blessings of the Almighty Lord, Sadgurudev Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj and Worshipful Sri Swami Krishnanandaji Maharaj be upon all.

—The Divine Life Society

A SLOW AND STEADY RELIGIOUS AWAKENING

As is the growth of a little baby into the maturity of education and culture, so may be said to be the process adopted in the scheme of evolution towards the rise of the religious consciousness. In the individual, as well as in nature, there is an incipency of life which is seen outwardly in nature as inanimate existence and, in the human individual particularly, as a state of life which has almost an absence of the motivating principles of life.

In the earliest stage of development of a human individual, the state of awareness may be said to be practically absent, though it is present as a potential for further development. If the procedure adopted by nature in the process of evolution is true, the higher forms of life are latently present even in inanimate life, the lowest form of natural existence.

Matter effloresces, it is said, into the vegetable consciousness through further subdivisions of the growth of life. It is not that a stone suddenly

becomes a tree. There are many other antecedent conditions to be followed, too many for us to count. With all these antecedents which are far beyond the comprehension of ordinary thinking, there seems to be a tendency of development from the lowest form of natural existence to the visible forms of life we see in the vegetable kingdom. There is life in plants and trees, but there is not thought, and not even the instinct that we see in animals. Instinct grows later on. Instinct develops into consciousness and self-consciousness in the human individual, and this human self-consciousness is also a pointer to a further possibility of development.

We are usually told by teachers that religion begins when the intellect stops or the reason is hushed. This is to say that the religious consciousness is, to a large extent, superhuman. The religious consciousness is not merely human consciousness. It is not intellection, induction or deduction. It is not the known forms of ratiocination. There is a potential above these available forms of human knowledge.

As the individual grows from an unlettered baby, almost equivalent to a plant or a vegetable for all practical purposes, it moves through these varied processes of evolution which nature adopts

objectively in this world. The vegetable forms of consciousness gradually develop into instincts which operate blindly, knowing what they require but not knowing why it is that they require it. Instinct is not rational in this sense. The possession of a faculty which we call reason can distinguish between the pros and cons of a condition. It can infer circumstances from situations prevailing at present. It can infer the present circumstances from the past, and the future circumstances from the present. Instinct has no such ability. It is just living in the present.

Nature, including all human individuals and all of life, is said to be gradually moving from the lower forms of life to higher forms. The lowest form is a total abolition of self-consciousness, as in a stone, a rock. The sense of a dream type of consciousness arises gradually through the plant and the animal forms. They are conscious, but not self-conscious. The awareness of 'I know' is said to be consciousness. But 'I know that I know' is an adaptation of this consciousness to a little higher degree, and it becomes therein what we call self-consciousness. Even if you are aware, you must also be aware that you are aware.

The human individual has this prerogative of being self-conscious. But, unfortunately for all

human nature, this self-consciousness, which is a blessing granted far above the animal and plant kingdoms, is associated with what we call egoism. Self-consciousness goes with egoism. The knowledge that I know, the consciousness of one's knowledge of a particular object—I know that I know—is not merely an abstract awareness of the object, but it is an affirmation of that knowledge in an individualistic capacity, tied so concretely to the individual that it becomes almost an affirmation of the body itself. The so-called ego of the human individual is not merely an affirmation of consciousness; it is, finally and further on, tantamount to an affirmation of the physical existence of the individual.

The pure abstract consciousness which asserts itself, to the exclusion of other similar types of knowledge, is bad enough. It is bad because it excludes the existence and value of other similar types of self-awareness, but it becomes still worse when this self-awareness gets tethered to what we call body-consciousness. In human awareness, the ego, the reason and the body get clubbed together. Hence is the difficulty in extricating the aspiration for religion and spirituality from this muddle of involvement of consciousness in the ego and the body.

It is a hard task because our awareness that we are the body—our body-consciousness, so-called—is so very intense that we cannot believe that we are anything more than the body. Every inch, every cell of our body is alive with the capacity to affirm that it is all-in-all. The I, which is originally a conscious affirmation, becomes a physical affirmation, a purely materialistic assertion of the existence of the body as the be-all and end-all of all things, so that the comforts of the body and the pleasures of everything related to the body become the meaning of all possible life in the world. We seek nothing but this support of physicality.

Religion is far from this. The consciousness of a religious attitude is superior to the available consciousness in natural evolution. The naturalistic form of evolution ends with human nature. In this world, we do not see any species above humanity. At least as far as we can understand, humanity today is the finality that nature has reached in this world. The inanimate existence has become the plant, and the plant has become the animal, and the animal has become the human. It has not gone further.

Nature also seems to have attempted the manufacture of superhuman individuals, to whom we oftentimes make reference as saints, sages,

Incarnations, *avataras*, etc. The *avatara purushas*, the Incarnations, the Godmen, the saints and sages we adore are not mere human beings. They are superhuman in their comprehension. Where lies the super-humanity of these individuals, or rather, what is the inner constituent of this superhuman knowledge which a superhuman individual is said to possess? We hear it said again and again that they have intuition, while ordinary human beings have only reason, intellection, understanding, which is based on logic.

In order to understand any particular given situation, we have to argue through logic. A particular circumstance is prevailing at present; we compare this circumstance with other similar circumstances that have occurred earlier, and we infer the possible consequences that may follow from the present condition by the observation of similar circumstances which have arisen earlier and the consequences that followed therefrom. This is not the process used by the *avatara*, Incarnation, or sage.

Our perceptions are mediate, whereas spiritual perception is said to be immediate, or non-mediate. Mediacy is necessary for us to be aware of the existence of anything. To know something, we require a mechanism of knowledge. We require eyes to see, a

mind to think, and an arguing intellect to judge the consequence of what is perceived. Thus, there is a handicap in our attempt to know anything, namely, that we have to depend on certain apparatuses and the healthy condition of these instruments. The extent of the health of these instruments will also decide the extent of the veracity of the knowledge that we gain through perception, whether through the sense organs or through mentation.

We cannot say, therefore, under the existing conditions of human knowledge, that our knowledge is infallible. It is mediate. The conditions that are to prevail in order that we may know a particular object, and the nature of the instruments we employ, decide the nature of the knowledge we gain. But immediate knowledge is a direct grasp of the object as such. This direct grasp in a super-mediate comprehension is said to be intuition. Religious awareness is an intuitive perception. It is not a knowledge that is obtained through the medium of the sense organs or the mental capacities. What is the meaning of this direct grasp? In what way is it direct, as contrasted from the indirect grasp through the sense organs? The directness of perception in religious awareness consists in a sort of identity, an *en rapport* that is established between the knower and the known.

Knowledge is always an inward process. It does not come to us from outside. It is an illumination that is taking place spontaneously from inside, under given conditions. This inwardness of the potential of knowledge in us directly enters into the potential of the object of knowledge. It grasps that object by communing and harmonising itself with it.

The Yoga Sutras give us an analogy to describe this condition of direct perception of an object. In ordinary perception, knowledge moves in the direction of an externally placed object. But here in the intuitive grasp, it is difficult to know whether knowledge moves from the knowing subject to the object outside, or if it moves from the object to the subject. The analogy, the comparison, is water in two tanks on a similar level. Both tanks are on an equal level, and both tanks are filled to the brim with water. There is a connecting passage from one tank to the other tank. Water flows from one tank to the other tank—from this tank to that tank, and from that tank to this tank—so that when the water moves through that conduit passage, one cannot know which water flows and in what direction, whether A moves towards B or B moves towards A. In an intuitive grasp of the object, so-called, the object beholds the subject as intensely as the subject beholds the object, so that the

object is not a passive existence being subjected to the activity of a knowing subject.

In our knowing processes, we appear to be active in the form of perceptual operation, and the object seems to be passively lying there, ready to be grasped by us through our perception and knowledge, as if it has no independent existence at all. But every object is also a subject from its own point of view. When I look at you and know that you are there, it may appear that I am a subject of knowledge and you are the object cognised, perceived by me; but as you are also looking at me and seeing me, from your point of view you are the subject of perception and I am the object. It is, therefore, a question of the standpoint and the emphasis laid on the knowledge aspect of the cognition of an object.

Every little thing in the world is a subject from its own point of view because it has a desire to survive, a desire to know, a desire to perpetuate itself and to live as long as possible, and to expand its dimension. These characteristics, present in any particular thing, are also seen to be equally present in all things. For instance, nobody wishes to die. The survival instinct is equally present in all living beings, and survival is not merely a desire to live for a few days. It is a longing to persist endlessly.

On the other hand, there is another instinct prevalent in everyone, namely, the expansion of the dimension of oneself. We wish to annex our kingdom as much as possible. Politically, of course, it is the direct grabbing of someone else's land and property, but in other forms of the manifestation of this instinct it is a psychological expansion of one's dimension by the affirmation of the ego, dominating others, exercising authority or ruling a kingdom, for instance. That is a psychological expansion of one's little otherwise physical dimension. There is a desire to survive at the cost of others' survival. This instinct is present in everyone. When everything goes to the dogs, we find that we would like others to go to the dogs, and not our own selves. Therefore, the survival instinct also goes together with the ego instinct.

Religious consciousness is quite distinguished from all these instincts and forms of knowledge. There is a universality behind it, and not just the particularity to which all individual knowledge is tied. The way in which we perceive an object depends upon the conditions of the body, the sense organs, our instincts or predilections, the religious faith to which we belong, the language we speak, and our cultural background. Even our physiological condition, such as the health of our liver for

instance, may affect our thinking and feeling, but this is a purely particularised form of knowledge, not valid for other persons. Everyone may not know a thing in the same way as we know it. But religious perception is universally valid. It is like seeing a thing in daylight, unlike in dream perceptions, which are valid only for the dreaming individual. Your dreams are your dreams; they need not necessarily be the same as another person's dreams. But perception in broad daylight, in the midday sun, for instance, is a common perception. This kind of perception may be considered as an example of universal perception.

Extending this analogy, we may say that there is a common perception available at the back of our rationality—the perception of the Atman, the pure Self—beholding all things in terms of the pure Self also existing in objects. This may be said to be the reach of religious awareness. The Self beholding things, or the attempt of the Self to behold things only from its point of view—that is, the point of view of the pure Self or the Spirit in man independent of the encrustations which have subsequently grown due to association with the body and the mind—may be said to be the beginning of spirituality or religion. It is the language that is spoken by the Universal in the individual, not the language of

the tongue of man but an instinctive capacity to communicate by the self in respect of another self. It is a far more developed instinct than the usual encrusted instinct, which is inferior to the reasoning capacity. Here is an instinct which is superior to reason, which collects information not by sifting information through logical analysis but by coming into union, in a fraternity of existence, with that which is to be known.

The medium that we usually adopt in the perception of an object melts down into the substance out of which the *vishayi* and the *vishaya* are made. In philosophical parlance we generally say the knowing principle is *vishayi chaitanya*. *Vishayi* is one who knows the *vishaya*, or the object. The object itself is called *vishaya chaitanya*. Consciousness that is embodied in the form of an outside object is *vishaya chaitanya*. Consciousness that is embodied in the perceiving subject is *vishayi chaitanya*. Now, the *vishayi* or the *vishaya*, the knower or the known, cannot come in contact with each other unless there is a medium, that medium being called *pramana chaitanya*, the instrument of knowing. *Pramana* is perception, inference, verbal testimony, comparison, and so on, as theories of knowledge tell us. These instruments, these media that we adopt in

knowing the objects, vary from person to person, from condition to condition, and from one state of feeling and emotion to another state of feeling and emotion.

The Yoga Sutras particularly are before us as a great guide in understanding what true religious awareness can be. There is a sutra of Patanjali: *kṣīṇavṛtteḥ abhijātasye iva mañeḥ grahīṭṛ grahaṇa grāhyeṣu tatstha tadañjanatā samāpattiḥ* (Y.S. 1.41). *Grahīṭṛ grahaṇa grāhyeṣu* are terms used for the knower who is the *vishayi*, the known which is the *vishaya*, and the medium of knowledge which is the *pramana chaitanya*. They coalesce into a single mass of existence. The object that is out there in order to be known, and the subject which is here that knows the object, and also the medium of knowledge which covers the distance existing between the knower and the known, all melt down together into a pool of awareness. They may become a veritable sea of awareness. It is also called a level of God-consciousness. The religious consciousness is also one degree of God-consciousness. The similarity between these levels is in the comprehensiveness which characterises a particular level, the comprehensiveness being the capacity of the knower to absorb the existence and characteristics of the object into itself.

Scriptures describe degrees of knowledge. These degrees of knowledge are just degrees of God-consciousness. God-consciousness is the same as a degree of universal consciousness. The universal need not necessarily mean the ultimate universal. The *brihat samanya* or the ultimate *samanya* is, of course, the final universality, which is what we call God Himself—the That which Is. But the manifestation of God can also be seen in lesser levels, where the gulf between the seer and the seen gets gradually diminished, and in a more condensed and concretised form of the union of the subject with the object, this universal can be explained. The more do we feel in our own selves an affinity of ourselves with the object of our knowledge, the more are we religious, the more are we spiritual. The less do we feel the vital connection between ourselves and another, the less are we religious and the less are we spiritual.

Usually, we have no religious consciousness in our daily life. There is nothing of spirituality there because there is a separation of ourselves from everybody else. There is not merely a gulf, so to say; there is a severe cutting off of the very vitality of connection of one with the other in our daily life, so that I have nothing to do with you and you have

nothing to do with me. We can live independently of each other.

This total independence that we assert in our life and the simultaneous adoption on our part of a non-connection with objects outside is the opposite of the requirement of religious consciousness. Friendliness is said to be a good quality, but it is only an ethical manifestation in society of an inward necessity to be at one with the existence and characteristics of an object. Mostly, moral instructions and ethical mandates are social exercises forcefully imposed upon us in terms of an inward undercurrent of uniformity that exists among all beings, and inasmuch as this inward uniformity is not visible to the eyes, we impose the characteristic of this inward connection outwardly by way of an injunction of codes of law, rules, regulations, etc. But mere rules and regulations will not work because they are the blind movements of an intention inside, and the intention has to become self-conscious. Unconscious intentions do not work, finally.

Hence, when we wholeheartedly take to spiritual life or religion as such, we have to first of all be clear in our minds as to the background of the rise of this knowledge in us. What do we actually seek when we wish to be religious, and what do we actually

mean when we say it is the God of the universe that we are in search of? And, while this psychological affirmation is clear enough, to what extent is it put into practice in our daily life? Our understanding, that is, the understanding of our intellect asserting the necessity of our being ethically and practically in communion with others, has to gradually sink into our feeling. This awareness that is consciously operating in our mind during waking life should enter into the feeling, and we must not merely understand it but feel a living connection of ourselves with the atmosphere, the environment around us.

Our love for people should not be an instruction put into practice. It should be a necessity we feel in our own selves. It is not a scripture that is being quoted and then implemented; it is a feeling that arises in our own selves as a manifestation of the wider self that we basically are. The religions practised in the world are the forms taken by the basic religious consciousness, which is an asking for a more than what we are, a greater than what we are, a larger than what we possess; and to the extent that we are never satisfied with what we are and feel satisfied with everything that we have, to that extent we may be said to be religiously awakened.

Saints tell us that it is necessary for us to be satisfied with what we have but we should not be satisfied with what we are. Mostly in ordinary life we feel satisfied with what we are, and pat ourselves on our back, but we are never satisfied with what we have. There is a desire to possess external property, belongings, not knowing the fact that the desire for external possessions is inversely proportional to our inward condition. The more are we poor inside, the more do we wish to be richer outside. The grabbing of material wealth or possessions of any kind is an indication of the inner poverty of the individual. The richness inside has been completely extinguished by the wind of desire for external things.

The awareness of a religious goal inside us is also, simultaneously, an awareness for a self-satisfying principle within our own selves. We are complete in ourselves. Religious consciousness is also a consciousness of completeness, self-sufficiency and self-adequacy in every way. That is, we accept as a spiritual principle that the potentials for the fulfilment of all our longings are present in our own selves. Every human being is a miniature cosmos. Inasmuch as we are a cross-section of the whole universe, everything that we can find in the universe we can find in our own selves.

In fact, we are not a miniature. To say that is also an understatement of facts. We appear to be a mini-universe because of the limitation of our knowledge to this particular body, just as when we look at the vast sky through a small cup, it may appear to be encased within the walls of the little cup. We know very well that space is not limited by buildings. Walls cannot limit space. Yet, we may feel that a space is small. That is, the littleness of spatiality arises on account of enclosures, such as walls, etc. Therefore, we feel we are a miniature, a mini *brahmanda* or a small cross-section of things, due to our interpretation of our own selves in terms of this bodily existence. We can never forget this body at any time, under any circumstance. It goes with us as a dog follows us. There are great examples that even in the heights of religious pursuits the body has persisted, and the bodily demands were felt even at levels which we should consider as far beyond human understanding. Hunger and thirst, and the fear of death, which constitute the basic essentials of physical clambering, do not leave us easily.

Hence, yoga texts also caution us that we should transcend the body, not reject the body. We should transcend society, not reject society. We should transcend the world, not reject the world. A

distinction has to be drawn between rejecting and transcending. Transcendence is a mastery that we gain over a thing to such an extent that it no more torments us. We are no longer its slaves. At present, we are to some extent slaves of this body and the whims and fancies of the mind. We are its slaves, and as long as we are its slaves we cannot reject it. No servant can reject that of which he is a subject. Transcendence is control over that which originally subjected us to its own rules and laws.

The physical body, social relations and the world as a whole stand before us, and we have to give them an answer. Your body, society, and the whole world will ask you, "What are you going to do with me?" Are you going to tell the body "I kick you out" and tell society "I care a fig for you" and tell the world "Go to the dogs"? You cannot say that.

The religious awakening is a gradual blossoming of the flower of the longing for perfection. It is a fructification of life into a beautiful edible fruit of overcoming the limitations to which you were originally subject. Overcoming limitations is quite different from rejecting the limitations while they are there. The consciousness of limitation cannot be abandoned, cannot be rejected. As long as that limitation is a part of one's consciousness, it is a

reality. A reality is that which your consciousness accepts as reality. You may say this body is not real and the world is also not real, but what is the use of saying that? Your consciousness has to feel it and affirm it. This is something to be carefully noted. The consciousness of perception has to be convinced that this body is not real; but as long as it is involved in the body, it cannot so easily feel that way. If you are involved in a condition, you cannot control that condition. You can stand outside the condition and then be a master of it. You cannot control anything if you are involved in that particular thing. So to the extent you are involved in this body, involved in human society and involved in the laws of nature, there is no question of abandoning them.

The world cannot be renounced so long as you belong to the world. You cannot renounce that to which you belong. It is a contradiction in terms. Can you get out of your body and look at it as an object in the same way as you look at other things in the world? Can you stand outside your body? Can you stand outside society and behold society as something totally external to you so that you do not belong to society? Can you stand outside the world and then look at the world as an object? Then you can renounce the world, renounce society,

and renounce this body also. As long as you are in society, vitally controlled by it, and also controlled by the bodily requirements and the natural laws of the world, they are not to be abandoned.

Actually, in religion, in spirituality, there is no such thing as abandoning or rejecting anything because the idea of abandoning or rejecting arises due to a false notion that what is actually not there is real. How can you say that a real thing is not there? A real thing is certainly there; only an unreal thing is not there. A real thing cannot be rejected, and an unreal thing need not be rejected. *Nāsato vidyate bhāvo nābhāvo vidyate sataḥ* (B.G. 2.16). This is a warning given to us in the Bhagavadgita. That which your consciousness affirms as a reality is to be gradually transcended by meditational processes, and not emotionally rejected. No one can renounce the world who has not first renounced himself. First you renounce yourself, and then you can renounce the world. Together with you, the world goes also. But if you stand as a solid individual as you were before—inside the world physically, materially and bodily—how will you extricate yourself from the clutches of the world?

Religion, or spirituality, is a gradual growth into stages of perfection. It is not a sudden jump to the

skies. It is a fulfilment of the requirements of every level of existence, all degrees of reality, slowly, even if it takes many lives to achieve this purpose. If you have to take many lives, so be it. It does not matter, provided that you get a pass mark in every level through which you pass and no jump is attempted at any level.

Hence, the physicality of the body, the reality of human society and the *artharthi* nature of the whole physical existence have to be taken into consideration and transcended by experience, and not rejected by feeling. The great scriptures of the world are our guides. The Upanishads, the Bhagavadgita, the New Testament and other great writings of masters such as the Sufi saints, and saints and sages of India, and their lives themselves, are before us as guiding lights to live a spiritual life. Without a good guide, without a master either in the form of a scripture or a person, it will be hard to tread the path of the Spirit, which is religion, which is spirituality.

Slow is the movement, as is the movement of a growing tree. Slow-growing trees mature proportionately. The toughest timber comes from slow-growing trees. Quickly growing trees are not as tough as rosewood, for instance. In a similar

manner, excessive enthusiasm in religious life is not called for. A persistence, a tenacity and an ardour in practice are necessary, but not an overestimation of oneself. The tax payable at every check post is also to be paid, and the check posts are this body, human society, and the whole world at large. Pay your dues and cross the border, and then you are free.

THE GURU IS A SUPER-PERSON

Guru Purnima, the holy, most blessed occasion of the year, is very much connected with the *purnima*, or the fullness, of the devotion of the aspiring soul to the Guru of this universe. We also call this most auspicious occasion Vyasa Purnima, dedicating our memories, our hearts, our feelings and our souls to the majestic power that has been planted on this earth in the form of Sri Krishna Dvaipayana Vyasa who, as tradition goes, is eternally present.

Bhagavan Sri Vyasa is one of the Chiranjivis, eternal existences who will continue to be with us as long as the world lasts. But the potency of this presence is far above the level of human understanding because human nature is never full, it is not *purna*, and Bhagavan Vyasa represents the *purnatva* of spiritual potency, spiritual power, and spiritual magnificence. We are accustomed to material magnificence—the magnificence of gadgets, the magnificence of physical comfort, the magnificence of everything that pleases the eyes and the ears and the sensations. But these are deceptive

presentations that show us what is not there, and hide what is really there. This is the reason why people in the world who are able to think and perceive only in terms of sensations cannot even imagine the presence of such mighty existences as Bhagavan Vyasa.

Closely associated with this mighty power is the presence of Nara-Narayana in this world. These are the supreme potentates who are physically here in our own vicinity, we may say, if we go by the words of the scripture that these eternal radiances—Narayana and Nara, and also Bhagavan Sri Vyasa—are invisibly performing their austerity in the most sanctified shrine of holy Badrinath.

Guru Purnima, as I mentioned, is the fullness of our approach to the Guru. The great Guru is our goal. Anything that is transcendent to us, which propels us, which is our ideal, which keeps us restless because of its presence, which fulfils us and makes us complete, can be regarded as our Guru.

In the hierarchy of the Masters narrated in the verse *Narayanam padmabhavam vasishtam...*, etc., we are given a hierarchy of the Gurus before us, a degree of the manner in which we have to approach these Masters, because there are Masters above Masters, Gurus above Gurus. That seems to be the

message behind these gradations mentioned in the verse *Narayanam padmabhavam vasishtam...*, etc.

The immediate Guru is our visible Master. To us, of course, it is Worshipful Gurudev Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj, and others may have devotion to their own Masters who are visible guides to them in this world. But behind the visibility of the Guru, there is an invisibility which is the real soul of the Guru. The Guru, the Master, the spiritual preceptor or the divine presence is not to be regarded as an external reality in front of us which we can photograph with a camera. We have to be a little cautious in our understanding of the meaning of the word 'Guru'. It is a Master's presence which overcomes us, overwhelms us, rises above us, transcends us, engulfs us, and includes us in its presence.

The higher is not merely the external. The Guru is a higher presence, and not an external schoolmaster whom we can see seated on a chair in an educational institution. He may be that also, but there is a difference between a Guru and a schoolmaster. The Guru is a spiritual presence. The spirituality implied in the presence of the Guru makes the Guru a presence that involves us in its total existence. The Guru is above us. The aboveness of the Guru, or the

spiritual presence, is a proper explanation for why the Guru is not merely an external personality. In that sense, our Guru never dies. It is a perpetual presence. Vyasa, Nara-Narayana, and Worshipful Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj are presences. A spiritual presence cannot vanish. It has to be there in some degree. When it is physically invisible, it becomes more potent by the rarefied form it takes as a power and not merely as a visible object.

In our meditations and prayers we often find it difficult to conceive what this presence is, and on what we are contemplating. We have an inveterate habit of imagining that all things are outside us, even God Himself. Though we may accept that God Almighty is the Creator of the universe, the idea of an outsidership of His presence seeps into our consciousness, and we cannot easily accommodate ourselves to the requirement that all superphysical realities are also transcendent in their nature. The word 'transcendence' negates its externality.

Now, a Guru or a Master, a spiritual presence representative of God Almighty, being transcendent, involves us in its presence. When automatic *shaktipada* takes place, as it were, as put in language, the Guru enters us. The external cannot enter us because externality keeps the two

terms of relation apart from each other. But the Guru is not such a term of relation which is purely outside in space and time. Here is the essence of the spirituality behind the Guru, who does not exist merely as a person before us. The Guru is not a person, but a super-person. The super-personality of the Guru is the divinity thereof; so is Bhagavan Krishna Dvaipayana Vyasa, so is Nara-Narayana, and so is every degree of manifestation before us of God Almighty Himself.

This feeling in us—the acceptance of the fact that our existence as aspiring souls or disciples is totally involved in the existence of the ideal which we adore, on which we contemplate—will make us *purna*, complete. Otherwise, we remain as fractions; we remain as individuals, parts of a whole but not capable of entertaining the wholeness of Reality in our own selves. We cannot even think God as a wholeness if we remain in our own egoistic affirmations as an isolated, finite person. The I-ness should participate in the presence of the divine existence before us, call it Guru or God, such that, for the time being, we flow into it, melt into it, become it, and it inundates us. At that time it is that we feel that power inside us. We feel as if some energy has entered us, and that we are more than a person.

This is our meditation, this prayer that Guru Purnima, the fullness of the moon, may also be the fullness of our mental structure, our understanding, our psychophysical makeup, and everything that we are. Let everyone find a few minutes to ponder over this matter as to what this *purnatva* is, what this fullness is, and how it is that we do not feel any indication of fullness in our personalities. We feel that we are small individuals, little persons, a drop in the sea of humanity. We are frightened by the world, afraid of people, afraid of nature, and afraid of everything because we are unable to feel a sense of communion with that which actually belongs to us and in which we are inextricably involved.

Spiritual contemplations, prayers, are not merely words that we utter, a ritual that we perform, or a routine with which we are accustomed. It is a total dedication of ourselves. The world 'total' has to be underlined. The totality of our existence has to be placed before the totality of the ideal. I have emphasised the word '*purna*', fullness. The fullness is that which includes ourselves and our ideal in a greater fullness, if we can conceive what it could be, which rises higher and higher as it becomes more generalised, until it becomes the final fullness. When the lower degrees of fullness are involved, subsumed

and absorbed in this way, there is only one fullness. This should be our meditation, and here in this holy shrine of Sri Gurudev may we feel the presence of Bhagavan Sri Vyasa.

We are told that Masters walk in front of us, though we may not be able to visualise their presence. Just now a great Master may be in front of us. In his compassion he may be here to bless us. Our physical eyes may not be able to notice his presence, but may we accept that great truth. There are many things in this world which our frail intellect cannot appreciate. Let us be humble; let us abolish ourselves and negate this individuality so that we may become full. May God bless you.

Our love for people should not be an instruction put into practice. It should be a necessity we feel in our own selves. It is not a scripture that is being quoted and then implemented; it is a feeling that arises in our own selves as a manifestation of the wider self that we basically are. The religions practised in the world are the forms taken by the basic religious consciousness, which is an asking for a more than what we are, a greater than what we are, a larger than what we possess; and to the extent that we are never satisfied with what we are and feel satisfied with everything that we have, to that extent we may be said to be religiously awakened.

—SWAMI KRISHNANANDA



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