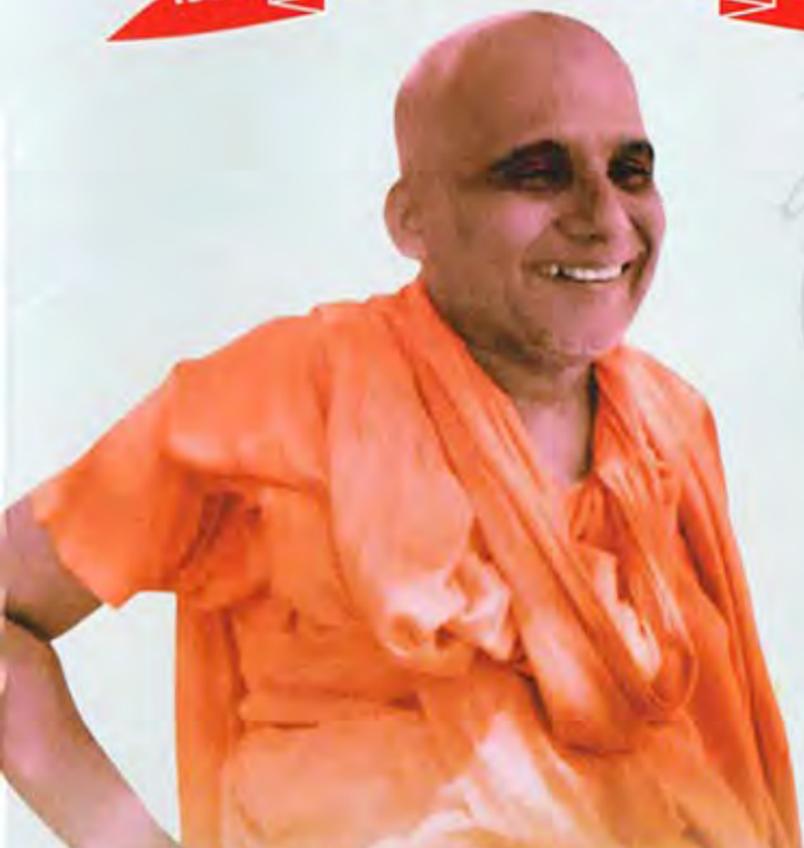




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THE DIVINE INCARNATION AND GOD-ORIENTED ACTIVITY

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, **'The Divine Incarnation and God-oriented Activity'**, comprise Sri Swamiji Krishnanandaji Maharaj's illuminating discourse on the fourth chapter of the Srimad Bhagavadgita.

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

THE DIVINE INCARNATION AND GOD-ORIENTED ACTIVITY

It was told to us that desire is the obstacle, and it is again told that desires are so powerful that they cannot be easily subdued unless we resort to the Atman, the great Reality. Is this an easy method? Is anyone going to succeed in this practice? We are weak in our understanding, no doubt, feeble in our will, and forceful in our desires. Under these circumstances, which are obvious to everyone, is there a hope at all of any substantial achievement, spiritually? Or, are we merely groping in darkness? Is it a hopeless case ultimately, if we are so fragile in our understanding and the powers of the world are so far above our head and shoulders?

Now comes a highly solacing message in the Fourth Chapter, where we are consoled by the paternal instruction and secret that things are not so bad as they appear. All this tremendous technique of the practice of yoga detailed in the Second and Third Chapters may appear to be hard for every one of us. But we need not be disappointed

or dejected in our moods. God is the Supreme Viewer of the whole Cosmos. The Omniscience and Omnipotence of God are of such a nature that we, as units inextricably involved in the Being of God, will have the occasion to receive His Grace, for God moves in this world in the form of His Incarnations, manifestations, expressions, functions and activities.

There is a great truth behind the working of things, which is more incomprehensible than what is available to our understanding. We are reminded of the interesting exclamation of Hamlet that there are more things in heaven and earth than our philosophy dreams of. We may rack our heads and try to understand the mysteries of things, and find that everything is a hopeless affair. We can understand nothing, finally. Yes, this may be true when we view things from one aspect, but there is another aspect which is equally important, if not more important than the other one, viz., the power of God which surpasses the force of anything in the world. And the presence of God is immediate, and not just a remote possibility, as it may appear to our present way of thinking. God is not a future, distant, a possible achievement. He is not a transcendent Creator, unreachable, unthinkable and ununderstandable. God is also deeply present

inseparably from our essential essence. Our soul, our self, is basically related to the Supreme Absolute. So, the law of the Absolute operates in ourselves, and equally so in all things everywhere. The manner in which God works in this world is what is known as the Divine Function of the Incarnation. The way in which God descends, as it were, to the levels of the various degrees of the cosmos is the Incarnation of God, whose function is to trace back all particulars to the universal, the Absolute.

The Incarnation is a symbol of universal integration. The Divine Incarnation is the individual symbol of a universal purpose. Divine Incarnations are considered apparently as individuals, but really they are universals. We are told often that they walk on earth with their feet planted on the physical level, but their heads move in the heavens. The Incarnations are universal beings, and they are superhuman in their knowledge and power. The distinction between an ordinary individual and a Divine Incarnation is this, that while the individual is confined in its consciousness to the operations of the sense faculties, the mind and the intellect, the Incarnation has an intuitive perception of the interrelatedness of all things and there is a vision of the Absolute perpetually before the eyes of the

Incarnation, notwithstanding the fact that it appears to have descended to the level of the particular individuals.

Thus, it is difficult to fully understand the meaning of an Incarnation. We do not know how it happens. Even today we cannot easily say what it actually is. It is a miracle. Finally, one would realise that the whole thing is a marvel. Our logic has to fail in the end because it is a very feeble prop which appears to be guiding us to a certain extent, but in the end it leaves us as an unreliable support. And our search for God has to be a function of our soul within, rather than an activity of the intellect or the empirical understanding. Religion is an operation of the soul; it is not philosophical or academic intellection. When we come in touch with God's Presence even in the minutest manner we become religious. We have been hearing oftentimes from great men that religion begins where the intellect ends.

Religion in this sense is the working of God within us consciously, though, unconsciously, He works even now, in everything. We are asleep to the function of God in us. When we become awake to this working of God in ourselves, we have become religious. An unconscious movement is not to be

regarded as religious action. It must be a conscious, purposeful movement of the soul towards God, and a recognition of His presence in all things, as His Incarnations.

Whenever there is a crisis in the world, God is supposed to incarnate Himself. This is a ringing message of the Fourth Chapter of the Bhagavadgita, in verses which are often quoted by spiritual aspirants and religious practitioners. The responsibility of God over the universe is much more than our responsibility in regard to anything. And He is perpetually active, timelessly putting forth effort for the redemption of the universe into His Being.

What we are required to do is only to accept the Presence, ask for God, seek Him from the recesses of our being, and we shall find Him. We require faith rather than logic. And when faith is firm enough, when our search for God is sincere, when we believe in God wholeheartedly, and do not merely give lip sympathy to His Presence, when we cease to be professors of religion, but become embodiments of the religious consciousness, when our whole being accepts that God is, which is another way of saying that we should have faith in the working of God, religion takes possession of us, and this stage, where

we become truly religious in the proper sense of the term, is the condition of the Saint, the Sage.

Here we have the highest religious message given to us in a few verses in the Fourth Chapter, touching upon the compassion of God upon humanity, the universe in its entirety, the mercy that God showers upon every being, and the instantaneous action of God at moments of crisis, suffering and extremist movements in the wrong direction, away from the centre of God's Being. Whenever such a catastrophic direction is discovered anywhere in the world, God takes an instantaneous action in a timeless manner. That is how an Incarnation works.

We need not be disappointed that we are weaklings and that we cannot understand. More than understanding is an acceptance of this feeling for God, the Presence of God. Faith transcends reason in a way, and religion is finally a faith of the soul, a spirit, a surrender of one's self, which shall be the final message of the Gita when it concludes in the Eighteenth Chapter—a total submission of ourselves to the Presence of God by a wholehearted acceptance of His being, from our soul. This is the highest religion, and God's Grace shall be bestowed upon us as a matter of right, and we need not be in a mood of melancholy or dejection of spirit.

Now, with this solacing religious message which is offered us in the beginning of the Fourth Chapter, we are also introduced into the need for activities in consonance with this message, with this state of religious living. The emphasis that we find laid everywhere throughout the chapters of the Bhagavadgita is that we should not suddenly imagine that we are in the topmost level. We have to be cautious in recognising where we stand at any given moment of time. And the Gita makes it clear that, according to it, yoga is the establishment of harmony in all the levels of being. There is nothing superior or inferior in this world. Everything that God has created has a value in its own level, or stage. And the level in which we are now is also equally valuable, and its value has to be recognised by us; we cannot reject it as if it is not there.

Our action, our conduct, our movement, our behaviour in the particular atmosphere in which we are placed has to be one of harmony with that atmosphere. This is yoga, and the need to understand the way in which we can conduct ourselves in harmony with the atmosphere is stringent. And what is this action which has to be performed in such a manner that it is in harmony with the movement of things outside in the given atmosphere? When

the harmony is established between ourselves and the environment outside, our actions cease to be actions; they become movements of Cosmic Power.

Action, then, becomes non-action; one can see action in non-action and non-action in action. Our intelligence has to rise to that level where we should be able to recognise inaction in action and action in inaction. When our action is set in tune with the movements of things outside, action becomes non-action. It is as if we are doing nothing, because we are moving in harmony with the whole pattern of the environment outside, with which we are connected, and of which we are a part, organically. When we are in union with the laws of the universe, our actions are not our actions. They are laws operating in themselves in an impersonal manner.

But there are other actions which appear to be non-actions while they are really actions. For instance, people are often under the impression that when they can keep quiet, doing nothing, they are in an inactive state. We have referred to this matter earlier on another occasion. There is no such thing as keeping quiet as long as we are individuals. As long as we have a feeling, a conviction that we are a body, a psychophysical entity, the universal is far away from us, and we are cut off from the atmosphere,

we have a desire of some kind or other. We are human beings, and we cannot convince ourselves that we have any kind of organic connection with things outside. Under such conditions, inaction is impossible. Even when we keep quiet, imagining that we are doing nothing, we are doing something, because the mind is acting, and mental action is real action, and that is the source of bondage as well as freedom.

But when action is performed as a *yajna*, or sacrifice—we have to recall to our memory what sacrifice is—then all our efforts and movements become sacrifices of the self in the knowledge of this unity of ourselves with things, performed as an adoration of the Deity which superintends over our actions as a transcendent principle existing between us and the atmosphere outside. Such action is sacrifice, and such action is no action; it melts like a piece of snow or ice-ball before the blazing Sun. The so-called binding noose of action breaks, as if it had not been there at all, and is burnt in the fire of knowledge.

This is knowledge wherein the individual that performs the action, the end toward which it is directed, the process of the action—all these appear to be one continuous movement of a single Reality,

like the dashing of the waves in the ocean, one colliding with the other, the waves and the process of their collision and that which is connecting them together, all being one mass of water and the very force of this water. The action is dedicated to the Absolute, and we ourselves as individuals, as the source of action, are a part of that Absolute, and the process of the offering of ourselves through the medium of action is also a working of the Absolute itself—Brahman. The aim or the objective of this action is also the Absolute. It is all a movement of the universal force of God-Being within itself, as every movement of the waters in the ocean can be regarded as the single movement of the root of the ocean itself. This is the *yajna* described in the Fourth Chapter as compatible with action in this world. Knowledge-based action is karma yoga.

So, there is an exposition in this chapter of the way of the combination of action with knowledge. It was told in the Second Chapter that knowledge is necessary and action has to be rooted in it. The imperative was declared there. And how actions are really not our actions was mentioned in the Third Chapter. Now, how this action can really be rooted in knowledge, how this performance has to become a practical day-to-day affair in our life, is explained

in the Fourth Chapter. This particular section emphasises the necessity to behold a unity between activity and knowledge.

Often we make a distinction between the two, and no one can help making this distinction. We can never believe, ordinarily, that knowing is the same as acting. And so, under a misapprehension that the two are different, we take to a way of knowledge, severing ourselves from action or activity altogether; or, otherwise, we go to the other extreme and plunge into activity without proper understanding, or knowledge. Action is to be the movement of knowledge itself. Again, to bring the old analogy, the waves have to be the ocean. The knowledge of the structure of things has to be not only the root, the base of our actions, but this knowledge itself has to become a movement in the form of action.

What we call activity is the movement of our being. It is not something outside us, as the rays of the Sun can be said to be the movement of the power and force of the Sun itself. Our efforts, our endeavours, our conduct and behaviour and action in this world are a spatiotemporal expression of our own being. When this spatiotemporality is cut off from the movement of our being, when we do not any more regard ourselves as helpless victims at the

hands of this isolatedness in space and time, we, then, become a universal being participating in the purpose of the Cosmos. Then it is that we receive the Grace of God, for God is non-spatial and non-temporal. God's actions are not individualised movements towards some ulterior purpose.

Human beings as we are today in this condition, we will find it difficult to understand what all this means. Religion is not an easy affair, and yoga is not meant for all, unless one is prepared wholly in one's being towards this completion of one's life's purpose. We are, therefore, required to prepare ourselves for this arduous task in the form of yoga.

We are not to forget the messages of the earlier chapters when we go further. The chapters in the Bhagavadgita are not watertight compartments. There is an ascending series of thought, a vital connection between one chapter and another, and though it may often appear that the one repeats the idea of the other, the so-called repetition is only with a different purpose and with a special significance, and not a mere tautological mention of the same idea.

We have to recast our mind back to the very conditions of the First Chapter, as if we are preparing for an examination on a particular subject,

wherein we go on muttering within our own minds the earlier stages of our studies when we go ahead through the further chapters of a textbook, so that we may not forget the earlier one in our absorption in the later thoughts therein. There is a continuity of thought and a wholeness of purpose motivating the entire message of the Gita throughout the eighteen chapters, even as there is a continuity and an organic wholeness in the various processes of our development from babyhood to adulthood and a maturity of feeling in our own physiological personality. We do not give up our baby body when we become adults. We have only grown into maturity in a larger wholeness and knowledge and power when we become adults and grown-up persons. So is the system followed in the methodology of the development of thought in the various chapters of the Gita.

Thus, the Fourth Chapter gives us two important aspects of the message of yoga. Firstly, God's Hands move in this world as Incarnations which cannot be counted in number. It is not that there is only Incarnation historically. Every event in the world is a divine miracle beyond the understanding of the human individual, and this divine miracle is the working of the Incarnations.

The Incarnations have various degrees of intensity in their workings, and are in that particular shape or form which would be required under the circumstances of the case. Hence it is that we see a diversity among the messages of the prophets and the Incarnations accepted by the various religions of the world. They are not diversified really. They appear to be so on account of the diversity of the needs of the circumstances which necessitated their descent, even as various types of medical prescriptions may be required in different cases presented before a medical practitioner. It does not mean that the prescriptions are all cut off one from the other with no relation among themselves. There is a relation, but they appear to be unconnected on account of difference in the cases.

So, while there is an apparent disparity in the teachings of the leaders of religion and the Incarnations accepted by people, the so-called differences are only on the surface. The intention is the same. They come from the same source for the fulfilment of a common purpose. Finally, we may say that there is only one religion in the whole world, which manifests itself as various religions on account of the vehicles through which it functions, according to the times and climes of the world through the

history of the universe. Such is the first message of the Fourth Chapter, a great and wondrous miracle of God working as Incarnation in the various events of the world, at all times, perpetually.

The other message of the chapter is that we have to perform, perforce, action as integrated beings in the structure of the universe, basing it on a knowledge of the wholeness of things and our basic relationship with the environment in which we are, so that karma yoga becomes more and more intensive as we rise higher and higher in the level of our comprehension. When we realise God, when we enter into the being of God, when we are established in the wholeness of God's Being, which is called realisation of God, action becomes knowledge in the literal sense, so that the two do not exist even in thought or memory. Action is being, and being is action; God's existence is the same as God's activity, and God's activity is the same as God's existence, as distinguished from what it appears in our own individual level.

The Divine Incarnation is the individual symbol of a universal purpose. Divine Incarnations are considered apparently as individuals but really they are universals. We are told often that they walk on earth with their feet planted on the physical level, but their heads move in the heavens. The Incarnations are universal beings and they are super-human in their knowledge and power.

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