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GOD, MAN AND THE UNIVERSE

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, '**God, Man and the Universe**', consists of a talk addressed to the students of the Yoga Vedanta Forest Academy.

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

GOD, MAN AND THE UNIVERSE

While people, the world over, are generally acquainted with the word 'Yoga', there are perhaps as many ideas and definitions of Yoga as there are minds in the world. It is often said that there is a world under every hat. Each person has his own conception of what Yoga is, sometimes overemphasised, sometimes underestimated, sometimes misconstrued, and oftentimes deliberately misrepresented for reasons or motives of one's own. But, seekers of what they call 'Perfection' would do well to take things seriously, and not dabble with the subject as a sociological problem, or something that will win wealth, name and fame. Yoga is something which is dear to all. Nothing can be dearer to man than Yoga, if one can know what it really means. It is not merely a subject that one may choose for one's studies, as in a college, for the purpose of a pass or a degree. It is a system which we are to accommodate into our own personal and practical day-to-day life as an art, by which we shall place ourselves in a greater proximity to that great

ideal of all life than is the circumstance or situation of ours today, at this hour.

What is Yoga?

There is a glib definition of Yoga as 'union', an offhand description of it with which we are all familiar. But it is not easily known as to what this union is about, and who is going to be united with what. And what for is this union, is also a kind of doubt that will occur to our minds. Firstly, it may not be clear as to what are the items that are to be united in this union called Yoga. The second thing: Why should one struggle to have this union? What does one gain out of this? What is the purpose and what is the mystery behind it? These difficulties, psychologically, may present themselves, all of which have to be cleared at the very outset.

The system of Yoga is a practice, and this practice is nothing but the conduct of our life in our day-to-day manoeuvring of facts, in the light of the nature of things, or we may say, in the light of the structure of the universe. We cannot behave in a way which is irrelevant to the nature of things, because we are in the world, and not outside the world. Hence, the system or principle that is operating behind the world, or the universe, will expect us to respect

the law which is reigning supreme in the world, or the universe, and anyone who is adamant enough to turn a deaf ear to the cause of the law of life would be penalised by the law, by an automatic working of the rule of the universe. The system of the universe is so automatic and spontaneous that it does not require an operator independent of it. In a way, we may say that the universe works like a large computer system. It works of its own accord. Reaction is set to action automatically, without any person operating this machine. Action and reaction are equal and opposite. This is something known to everyone in the physical and mathematical realms. This is so, because of the arrangement of things which we call the universe. And we should not forget that we are not outside this universe. Neither are we outside human society, nor are we outside the world or this planet earth or this astronomical cosmos. Inasmuch as we are inseparably related to this large atmosphere called human society, the world, and the universe, our conduct should be in consonance with the way in which this atmosphere works. Thus, it may be said that Yoga is that necessary conduct of the personality or the individuality of anyone which abides by the requisition of the law of the universe. Many a time we go wrong in our outlook of life, in

our judgement of things, and in our behaviour in society, due to the fact that we have no knowledge adequately of the way in which the universe is working, and therefore we do not know what is our precise relation to the universe. It follows naturally from this ignorance of ours that our conduct in life can be an aberration from the requirements of the laws or rules of the universe.

Knowledge Should Precede Practice

The first and foremost thing that would be required of us, as students of Yoga, would be not to jump suddenly into certain techniques of practice, because the practice is only a necessary consequence of the knowledge of, or insight into, the structure of things. If knowledge is lacking, the practice can go wrong. Hence, it is often emphasised in philosophical circles that ethics is based on metaphysics. Ethics, here, means anything that is practical, not necessarily what is called social morality or personal behaviour in the usual sense of the term. Philosophically speaking, ethics is any kind of practical requirement on the part of the individual in the light of the structure of the cosmos. And the knowledge of the structure of the cosmos can be said to be metaphysics. And what follows

from it automatically as a demand on our natural behaviour is the ethics thereof. Yoga, therefore, is a part of ethics in this generalised sense. So, before we know what this practical aspect of Yoga is, we would like to know with advantage how this practice comes about at all under the nature of things. We have heard it said many a time that Yoga is based on the Samkhya, which means to say, in another language, that ethics is based on metaphysics, that action is based on knowledge. We cannot move an inch unless we know how to move, where to move, and also why to move. These questions have to be clarified in our consciousness before we take any step in any direction, whether it be Yoga, or otherwise.

‘Samkhya’ is a general term technically employed in the ancient language of the philosophies of India, to represent knowledge of Reality, acquaintance with the make-up or structure of things in general. What is this world made of? What do we mean by the universe, and what is our position here? If we know the placement of ours in the atmosphere of things, we would know what to do under a given condition. We need not be told that we should practise Yoga. We ourselves will know that it is necessary, because of the very nature of the circumstances. We need not be told that we should eat food; hunger will tell us

that we should eat. A particular circumstance which is clear to our mind will also tell us at the same time what we should do under the circumstance. So, to go on dinning into the ears of people that they should do Yoga is not necessary. What is necessary is to enlighten them on the nature of the circumstance under which they are living.

Samkhya—The Wisdom of Life

People are ignorant; that is the main disease of humanity. Ignorance has been a sort of bliss, because it has been bringing a wrong type of satisfaction by which one is ruled by the conviction that everything is fine and nothing is wrong anywhere. Education is the primary requirement of humanity. What we lack is not money or buildings or lands so much as education. We may think that we are educated people, but ours is an education which helps in getting on with things, somehow, by a kind of adjustment from day to day. A knowledge of getting-on is not the same as the wisdom of life. The wisdom of life is designated as the Samkhya. We may be under the impression that Samkhya is some sort of a doctrine propounded by an ancient sage, called Kapila, in a series of aphorisms, called sutras, collectively forming one of the systems of

philosophy well known in India. This may be so. The Samkhya is this, of course. But, it is not necessary to take Samkhya in this restricted sense only, though Samkhya is also the system propounded by the sage Kapila. For instance, the word Samkhya occurs in scriptures other than the one pertaining to the traditional system going by that name. It finds a place in texts which may be said to be anterior to the system promulgated by Kapila. The word occurs in the Manu Smriti, in the Mahabharata and in the Bhagavad Gita where the term Samkhya is used in a broader sense, and not merely in the restricted meaning that may be associated with the classical system of Kapila. The Samkhya of Kapila is a clear-cut mathematical procedure of defining things according to the vision which must have propelled the sage under the conditions of his times.

However, our interest is practical, and not merely theoretical. We are more concerned with living a good life, a better life, than with knowing many things. We need not go much into the abyss of the technicalities of the metaphysical Samkhya at present. We may do well to understand that it generally means a knowledge of things as they are, and as they ought to be, as a logical consequence that must follow from the implications of our own

experiences. What we know as philosophy is only an implication that follows spontaneously from an observation of the facts of experience. If we have enough time and patience to go deep into our daily experiences, we will realise that there is something beneath the surface movements of life that we call experience. Generally, we are dashed hither and thither by the waves of our daily activities, due to which we are left with neither the time nor the capacity to read between the lines in respect of our daily life. The general pattern of the universe presented to us by the ancient adepts is such that it seems to be a large family of integrated contents. The universe is full of citizens or inhabitants; not necessarily living beings like us, but even other elements which we may regard from our own point of view as non-living and inanimate. The great scriptures of Yoga envisage a universe which is larger than what we see with our naked eyes. The universe is not merely what we see, though it includes this also. We look up to the skies, and all around and we see something. This is our physical universe, where we have the solar system, the sun and the moon and the stars, and the vast sky, inaccessible to ordinary sensory perception. We see all around us many things—people, animals, plants, hills and so on.

The Universe and Our Place in It

The vision of India has gone deeper than what is available to the naked eyes and has proclaimed the truth that there are planes, or levels of manifestation, of what is known as the universe. This physical structure around us is one plane, a particular density, we may say. It does not, however, mean that there are many universes, but only that there are many levels or degrees of density through which the universe reveals itself to experience by a graduated arrangement of itself. These levels, these degrees or planes of density, are called Lokas: Bhu-Loka, Bhuvan-Loka, Svar-Loka, Mahar-Loka, Jana-Loka, Tapo-Loka and Satya-Loka. These are supposed to be levels above the physical plane we are accustomed to, ranging beyond the ken of ordinary perception, invisible to the eye, such that we cannot even think what they could be. We are also told that there are levels below the earth or the physical level, and they are known as Atala, Vitala, Sutala, Talatala, Mahatala, Rasatala and Patala. There are about fourteen planes. Well, there can be more than fourteen, also. These are roughly calculated stages, visualised by the ancient seers, of the degrees of experience through which one has to pass in the evolution of oneself. These planes

of existence, or Lokas, are stages through which everyone has to pass. It is possible that we have already passed through some of the lower levels. We have taken for granted that we have come to the physical level by rising above the lower levels through ages of experience, by transformation. The biological and physical sciences today are fond of insisting on what is called the evolution of life, a movement from matter to life and mind, and from mind to intellect or the human reason, in which state we are today. This is something akin, in a way, to the doctrine of a series in the levels of experience. We are on the human level. It does not mean that the human universe is the entire universe, because there are lower levels and there are also levels above. There is a necessity, therefore, for us to evolve further from the state of man; and many have held that we have to become supermen.

The term 'superman' is a description associated with the possibilities ahead of us, superior to our present state of experience. It is not possible for us to rest content here. We are thoroughly dissatisfied with everything, because this is not our permanent home. The earth is not our permanent habitat, because we are in a process of rising up. We are moving further and further ahead. As we have

already come from lower levels to the human level, we have to go further on to the more advanced, subtler and more pervasive levels—the levels of the angels, gods, celestials and so on. We hear of them in the scriptures. An indication of these experiences is given to us in the Taittiriya Upanishad, for instance, where we are told that above men are the Pitris, above the Pitris are the Gandharvas. Then we have the Devas, or the gods, or the angels, then the ruler of the angels called Indra, then the Guru or the preceptor of the gods, called Brihaspati, the great repository of wisdom. Beyond that stage is the Creator. Such details of the existence of higher realms of experience are available in scriptures of this kind not only in India, but also in other countries. So, we can imagine what our position here is. We cannot be happy in this world. This is certain, because happiness is nothing but an automatic consequence of the attainment of perfection. The more we move towards perfection, the more are we happy. And perfection seems to be far away from us in the light of this little analysis that we have in the Upanishad. If we have to advance through various planes that are above this physical human level, we cannot be happy here forever. Nothing can satisfy us. Not the possession of the whole world,

the emperorship of this whole earth, can satisfy us, for reasons quite obvious and clear to everyone. We cannot have satisfaction here, because we cannot be perfect here. We cannot be perfect here, because we have not completed the stages of our evolution. We are on a lower level, yet.

The Evolutionary Process

These ideas have something to do with the knowledge of the structure of things, Samkhya. This knowledge will make us wake up a little to the situation in which we are today, and we would then be anxious to know what would be our future, and what we could do under the circumstances here to improve ourselves in the direction of our movement or ascent higher. Why should we not take to the practice of Yoga, if Yoga means the effort to evolve into the higher realms of living, towards the final attainment of ultimate perfection, which alone can make us satisfied fully? Who on earth can forego the practice of Yoga if this is the state of affairs, and why should anybody tell us that we should do Yoga? It would be clear like daylight to everyone, once the knowledge of the structure of things is gained.

The practice of Yoga is not what is important; it is the need that one feels for the practice of Yoga

that is important. That comes first, and the practice follows afterwards. If we do not feel the need at all, whence comes the practice? We do not feel the need, because we are totally ignorant. We are living in a fool's paradise, under the impression that everything is fine, when, in fact, everything is dead wrong. The universe is moving rapidly, like a fast running railway train, towards its destination, and we are as if sealed in this vehicle, this moving train. We cannot keep quiet. We have to move with the train that moves, because we are in it; we are in the universe that moves, and we have to move. So, we are not stable, independent indivisible isolated beings as we appear to ourselves. We are not self-identified individualities. Rather, we are masses of a process; we are bundles of a movement. This is because of the fact that we cannot be stable, self-identified indivisibilities in an evolving universe. Therefore, great thinkers like Gautama Buddha were tirelessly telling us that we could not touch the same water in a river, the next moment. Every second we are touching new water in a flowing river. Likewise, when we are touching our own body, after a few minutes, perhaps, we are touching something different. It is not the thing that we saw, or was there, a few minutes before. When a train is moving, we

see new objects every second, because it is passing through areas not covered already.

The universe is moving, and this unavoidable movement of the universe is called evolution. Whether or not it is the evolution as described by Darwin or Lamarck or the Upanishads, it makes no difference. There is such a thing called evolution, which is another name for the necessity felt by the finite to move towards the infinite. Nothing finite can rest content with its own self. Nobody likes limitations of any kind. We do not like bondage. We resent it whole-heartedly. We do not like any kind of restriction imposed upon us by anything from outside. This is the cause behind the struggle for freedom, because we are limited in every way. The body is a limitation. My existence here is limited by the existence of people outside in the world, and there are other limitations of a social and political nature, about which we are not happy. Because, who likes to be limited, restricted, bound in a prison, as it were? We want to be free birds. We want to have a say of our own in everything. This is not possible in this world. The real freedom that the soul is asking for is unavailable in this finite world of finite individualities and limited patterns of experience.

We are too much enmeshed in prejudices psychologically, and even rationally. Even as there are emotional and sentimental prejudices, we have intellectual and rational prejudices. They may all look highly reasonable things, but they can be self-assertions of personality. They look reasonable, because the mind and the reason have been tied up by knots to such ways of thinking; and they are called the idols of the cave and idols of various other types mentioned by a learned man of England, Francis Bacon, by which what he means is a prejudice of the mind and a stereotyped movement of the way of thinking into which we are born from our childhood. Our parents have told us something and our schoolmasters and professors have said something else. The society tells us yet another thing. We are born in a particular nation, which has its own ways and modes of thinking, and its own ideologies according to which it has to work. These are the ways in which we get brainwashed right from childhood. We have to decondition ourselves if we have to practise Yoga. Any kind of a conditioned mind is unfit for this purpose. We should shed all these preconditions and notions that we are such-and-such, and this and that, that we are particular religionists, that we are Hindus

or Christians or Muslims, that we are monks or householders, or even that we are men or women. These are the prejudices which are hard-boiled things, and they cannot leave us easily. They are a part and parcel of our consciousness. Existence is the same as consciousness, and our prejudiced existence has become one with our consciousness, so that we cannot even detect that we have any prejudice in our minds. Everything looks fine, and we seem to be spotless in our ideas and ideologies. That is why we have been told again and again that a teacher is necessary here on the path.

The mind is enmeshed in various types of inborn traits which are not necessarily compatible with the nature of things. This universe, this world, this large atmosphere around us, is not constituted of bits of matter or isolated units that have no connection with one another. 'Universe' is a very appropriate word to signify this atmosphere. It is the opposite of chaos. Chaos is a confused medley of particulars which have their own ways and move in their own directions, having absolutely no relation with one another. But, 'universe' is a word which signifies arrangement of things, and order in that arrangement, where the particulars are characterised not merely by external connections, but also by an internal

relation. The definition of what an internal relation is, as distinguished from an external connection, can be illustrated by an example. People forming the body of parliament in a country have a connection with one another, because they form one corporate whole called the parliament. They have naturally a relationship with one another, but this relationship of the units constituting the body of parliament can be broken any day by various methods of political manoeuvring about which everyone knows so well. Thus, there is no real internal relationship of the members of parliament as between themselves. A man may resign his post as a member of parliament. Even when he functions as a member, internally he is not related to anyone. He is an independent person. Here, the connection of them all with the parliament is an external connection. An internal relationship is an inviolable connection, whereas an external connection is such that it can be snapped if necessity arises.

Our relationship to the universe is not like the relationship of the members of a parliament or a corporate body. Our relationship to the universe is internal, inviolable, inexorable and eternal; it cannot die. We are related to the universe for ever and ever, and we can never sever this relationship

at any time. Well, we may consider the limbs of the body as inviolably related to the body, but even this organic connection of the limbs of the body to the structure called the body is of an inferior type. This is so, because a part of the body can be severed. We can cut off the arm of a person, or any other limb of a person, by amputation, and the relationship of this part to the body will cease, but with no amputation and under no circumstances can we sever our relationship with this world or the universe. No amputation is possible here. No kind of severance of relationship of the particulars or individuals is possible under any circumstance in respect of this vast universe. We are eternally related to it since ages, and in the scheme of evolution, if we have risen to this level of humanity by rising from the bottom, we did exist before we were human beings. The prior existence of the individual in other bodies or other species of beings is proved automatically by the fact of the evolution of things, and this fact also proves post-existence for the individual.

Evolution is a fact, and mankind is certainly not the ultimate pinnacle of the process of evolution. If there has been evolution from lower levels to the present level, then it also has to be there from the present level to even higher levels. We did exist

centuries and aeons before, and we will continue to exist aeons hence also. We are eternal units of this large structure called the universe. We are not citizens of this world at all. We belong neither to Orissa nor to Madras. What puny, petty ideas we have got in our minds! I am a Maharashtrian, I am a Punjabi, a Tamilian, a Keralite... and so on! How low have we come! How shameful is our existence when we think of these little things as our real marks of identification! In truth, we seem to belong to a large structure, a universe which is behind us and ahead of us through various realms of being. Even while we try to conceive of this structure, we will have consternation every moment of time. We will be looking around on all sides trying to figure out where we are standing at all. "Am I of this world? Am I in this world? Am I in a world at all or am I somewhere else?"—Faced with these questions, one is bound to be shocked; one will not be able to say anything. Such would be one's wonder and consternation at this little insight into the nature of the universe and one's own relationship to it. So, this little picture of the structure of things or the nature of the universe may be regarded as a preface or an introduction to certain other details that we may have to know about the universe itself.

Purusha and Prakriti-Nature of the Original Split in Brahman

It is true that the large structure of the universe is so vast that it extends behind us in the lower levels and it stretches ahead of us into the higher reaches of evolution. But, there are minute details associated with the analysis we have made, about which also we should know something, in order that we may be left with no doubts in our minds about the practice of Yoga. Before we step into the realm of Yogic practice, we should be free from every kind of intellectual doubt and emotional tension. These two things should be cast out like devils. Intellectual doubts and emotional tensions are our greatest enemies in our spiritual pursuit. All doubts must be cleared either by studies, or by resorting to advice from one's own teacher, or both. That this vast universe was once a large mass, indivisible and undifferentiated in its nature, is something that every religion tells us. The Bible, the Upanishads, why, even modern science—all tell the same thing, practically, that the universe was one indistinguishable undivided mass of matter. Science tells us that it was an atom. The universe was an atom originally, and it split into two, or it became four. It became eight, it became sixteen, it became thirty two, sixty four, endlessly millionfold,

unthinkably multifarious and multitudinous, as it is now. This is what modern physics will tell us. In the beginning was the word, says the Bible. So is the proclamation of the Upanishads and the Vedas, and every scripture practically. Biology tells us that there was one cell originally. We were originally a single cell or a mono cell or a uni-cell. And this one cell split into two to give us a bi-cell, or splits into four to give us a quarter-cell, and so on. I met a physician in Bombay, a great expert. He told me, "Swamiji, today medical science is coming to the very same conclusions which the Upanishads proclaimed thousands of years back. The universe was one or started with one single undivided being. We also say the same thing now. One single unit of individual, a little drop, or perhaps something smaller than a drop, something more minute than what we may call a cell—this is the origin of the large body of the human being." And the doctor told me that if this little cell was minutely analysed scientifically it could tell us how long the body evolving from it would live, the experiences it would pass through, and every other detail till the death of the individual. It all has been decided in this little cell. And what else does the Upanishad tell us! The great Will of the Supreme Being is the original determinant of

all the individuals of the universe. Even a sparrow cannot fall without the will of God; a leaf cannot move without the will of the Supreme. We cannot eat a thing unless it is permitted by the Law of the Cosmos. Now, this seems to be the origin of things, a single undivided unity which, as our masters tell us and scriptures proclaim, somehow appeared to have divided itself into two. It has not really split itself into two because if it had really become two and hundred and so on, it cannot become one again, and there would be no chance of our reaching God. But, the fact of the possibility of attaining liberation and the chance of attaining God just at this moment should be adequate proof of there not being a real split; and the Vedanta philosophy goes so far as to say that the split is something of the nature of the split that takes place in dream. There is a bifurcation, a modification, a multiplication into individualities and particularities in the dream world. But, it does not really take place; because, when we wake up from dream, the particulars get absorbed into the unity of our mind as if they had never existed at all, notwithstanding the fact that we saw the particulars. So, this is a distinguishing feature of the Vedanta philosophy, which makes a departure from the other doctrines by emphasising

that if there had been a real bifurcation or division in the original unity, there would be no chance of liberation of the individuals. In that case, we would be always divided from God.

We cannot even think of unity if the idea of unity had not been implanted in our minds. A finite which is really finite, cannot think of the infinite. The idea of the infinite cannot arise in the finite brain, because the two are contradictions. But the idea of the infinite does arise in our mind, and we cry to break the boundaries of the finitude and reach an endlessness of being horizontally as well as in quality. So, it may be true that God did not cease to be God when He created the world. He is still the same God that He was, and He shall be the same God in future too. God is eternal. He is not a changing substance, or an object that ceases to be itself in becoming an effect. This is a highly intricate and interesting philosophical point. This universe, that was one and that is one, does appear as a multitude, but not suddenly. It becomes two at first. This becoming of the one into two is what the Samkhya refers to as purusha and prakriti, consciousness and its object, the spirit within and the world outside. The original bifurcation or division is of the one being into the seer and the seen, the

subject and the object. The one becomes two, as we may say. There was a state of being which was there prior even to this division of the one into the seer and the seen, namely, a consciousness of Being. We have to stretch our imagination to feel what this state would be like, because even the awareness that one is, is a kind of limitation on absoluteness. The state of absoluteness is not even the self-awareness or consciousness of one's being, the feeling "I am", but something transcendent to it, far beyond it. Subsequently, it is the state of "I am"—ness; *Aham Asmi*, as the Upanishad puts it. Posterior to this universal self-awareness is the division of the one into the twofold so-called realities of consciousness and its object, *Purusha* and *Prakriti*. The *Samkhya*, in its classical form, talks much of these two principles—*Purusha* and *Prakriti*. There are only two things in this universe. Nothing else. Consciousness and what is not consciousness. There cannot be anything else. There is a perceiver and there is the perceived. This is classical *Samkhya*, of which the practical implementation is supposed to be *Yoga*.

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