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THE PATH OF DIVINE DEVOTION

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 Janmasthan, 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 Path of Divine Devotion**', comprises a soul-stirring discourse of Sri Swamiji Krishnanandaji Maharaj on divine love towards god.

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 PATH OF DIVINE DEVOTION

Religion, in fact, is the way in which we daily establish our relation with God. The manner in which we contact God in our life is our practical religion. Mostly, our love for God keeps us in a state of reverence and awe and creates in us a particular type of devotion, known as Aisvaryapradhana-Bhakti, i.e., the love of God and adoration of God as Creator, Father and Sovereign Supreme, as Ishvara, or the Master of Creation. But there is another type of internal contact that the devotee establishes with God, more intimate, we may say, in a sense, an attitude of affection for God, which goes by the name of Madhuryapradhana-Bhakti. Here, intellectuality, ratiocination and analytical approach cease, and the soul speaks to God in its own language of unquestioned rapture. It contacts God in the vitality of being, rather than the words which the tongue speaks. Love needs no philosophy, nor does devotion to God.

We hear of saints like Narada travelling to all the worlds including Vaikuntha, Satyalokha and Kailasa.

These analogies of Divine Masters penetrating through the realms of the cosmos, contacting God on one side and meeting men and even demons on the other side, is a representation of the significance of divine devotion, the extent to which it can have an impact on everyone and everything, especially as we have it portrayed in the Epics and the Puranas. Creation is said to be constituted of different realms, or Lokas, as they are called; and to make the relevance of God to creation interesting, catching and vibrating to the soul, to stir the personality and make one's hair stand on end even by listening to the glories of God, these notable scriptures employ a technique of presenting God as a Personality, not entirely dissimilar to our own. God also lives in a realm as we do, though His region is all-inclusive, while ours is localised. God is the repository of supreme compassion, pity and mercy. He is not merely a judge who is only mathematically precise, regardless of our representations. God is concerned not only with law, but also justice. Dharma is not merely law, it is also due dispensation of justice. If there are five hundred witnesses manipulating against an innocent person, he can be penalised with even capital punishment, because there is evidence. This is law working. But it is not justice. God is

justice, it is true, not merely law; but God has also a tender feeling towards His creation, to man and to all creatures. To know that we love God and that God loves us is certainly a greater satisfaction than any other consolation that we may have in terms of legal protection or judicial security.

The special emphasis of the Epics and the Puranas is that God can hear us and speak to us, and we can speak to God. The stories, analogies and symbols that these scriptures employ for describing man's relation with God, and vice versa, signify that God is nearer to us than we imagine; and He will help us even if we are unconscious of His presence. It is not that God thinks of us only if we think of Him. Our relation to God is not a bargain or compromise; it is not a give-and-take covenant. God is portrayed not merely as Grandfather (Pitamaha) or Father (Pita) but also as Mother (Mata) and Supporter (Dhata). The Lord proclaims in the Bhagavad Gita that He is the Saviour, the Protector, the Generator, the Withdrawer, the Sustainer, the Onlooker, the Supervisor, and many other things of that nature, which make out that God is all and is everything.

It should follow, therefore, that it is easier to contact God than anything else in this world. Some purely rationalistic texts of a logical character

may argue that God is difficult of approach, more difficult than anything in the world; but here we are told that other things are more difficult to approach than God. The point is that things in the world are not so near to us as we imagine; they maintain a spatial distance from us, and are away from us, but God is nearer to us than anything else, for God is not in space. The inclusiveness of God keeps us always non-separate from Him. God is nearer to us than parent, wife or children, all which relation will break down when one is in real difficulty, but God's help comes instantaneously. Our human relations may help us when we maintain a requisite relationship with them, but our relation to God is not conditioned in any manner. It is told, again and again, that God loves us more than we seem to love Him.

An interesting incident is recorded in the Drona-Parva of the Mahabharata, the mere listening to which would strike us with wonder and make us sob for the love that God has for man. Towards the end of this Book, Arjuna is speaking to Bhagavan Vedavyasa and exclaims: "Master, can you explain to me one interesting thing? Whenever I was up in arms in battle, I used to see some mysterious figure moving in front of me, which I could not decipher

properly, something visible sometimes, sometimes invisible, but not touching the ground. I saw a figure like that of a human being, now coming out of the mist as it were, making himself slightly visible to my eyes, now going into the background of the misty atmosphere of the war field. He was doing nothing, looking this way and that way, moving to this corner and that corner. The only speciality that I observed in his appearance was that he had a trident in his hand, a knot-of hair on his head, and I saw some snakes round his neck. I could not understand who it was or what it was and what was the meaning behind it.”

Sage Vyasa smiled and replied: “Arjuna, it is good that you have spoken to me about this mystery which you could not understand, nor can anyone understand. Do you know who fought this war and who it was that is bringing you victory? Who can stand before valiant warriors like Bhishma and Drona? Is there a man in all the world who can face them in war? But who defeated them? Someone else has worked this miracle in your favour but remained always in the background. Do you know whom you saw? It was Lord Siva. You are indeed blessed. He knew the predicament in which you all were since your opponents were indomitable. Lord Siva knew

this and He was moving in the midst of the forces in war sucking the energy of the Kaurava regiments by His mere presence, but not taking any direct action. Oh, who could stand before Him if He were really to take up arms? Blessed art thou that you could see Him.”

God works like this. And there are other instances to the same effect, as on occasions when Bhishma spoke to Duryodhana in plain words. Duryodhana used to feel diffident and despondent as he could not see during the regime of Bhishma in the war any symptom of victory being on his side. Angered and upset, Duryodhana used to meet Bhishma frequently in the evening and cry out: “What is this? What is happening, grandsire? Thousands of my people are being slain every day and you are yet alive, the invincible commander-in-chief.” Bhishma would reply, “My dear child, do not tease me and taunt me every day. You are under the wrong impression that I am only pretending to fight and have not done my work well. But it is not so. I would have pounded all the Pandava forces in a single day but for the presence of that inscrutable person who is sitting there as the charioteer of Arjuna. But for His subtle intervention from moment to moment, the Pandava regiments would not have

been there on the first day itself. I could have single-handedly uprooted the Pandava army. You do not know my strength. I have told you several times that you should not engage yourself in a conflict with those whom Krishna is helping. But you would not listen to me. And now you come and speak to me unpleasant words which are unbecoming on your part.” Bhishma indeed did his best. He went to the extreme of his ferocity. Like blazing fire he began to burn the opposing forces. Thousands were massacred by the arrows that Bhishma shot. But not a single Pandava could be killed. Again Duryodhana wept at night: “What is all this, Master; you could not kill even a single Pandava? And I have depended on you for my security. After so many days of battle you could not bring down even a single Pandava.” Again it was the same reply which Bhishma gave. “My dear boy, I do not want to get angry with you though you often irritate me with these words. But I shall tell you the truth once again. You cannot win this war as long as Krishna is on the other side.” “Well, this is the old story again,” said Duryodhana. “I am not here depending on you senile people. I have stalwarts like Karna.” There could have been a cutting reply from Bhishma to this unwarranted verbal attack from Duryodhana, but Bhishma held

his tongue, because there was no use frowning on the stupid man who would not listen to sage advice.

And how does God help? Asvatthama's role in the Mahabharata, again, is a case in point. After a lot of importunity Asvatthama obtained from his father Drona the knowledge of an invincible missile known as Narayana-Astra. After repeated pressure from the son, the father initiated him into this terrific mystery, saying, "All right, come here, I shall give you something now. But beware, I am giving you fire in your hands by which you can burn the world, but, my child, do not use it against devotees of God. "It will not work against those who are protected by Narayana. I am warning you in this regard, lest you should yourself be in danger if you misuse it." Yet, Drona was cautious. He would not tell him how to withdraw the missile, because if it could be withdrawn, it could be used again several times. Knowing the immaturity and lack of understanding from which Asvatthama suffered and his eagerness to use it one day or the other, Drona taught him its use once only and never told him how to use it a second time.

And we know how the occasion came for it. When Drona left his mortal coil, the fury of Asvatthama knew no bounds. He yelled out, "My father has

given me some power; and today there shall be none remaining on the Pandava side.” Saying this, Asvatthama let off the Narayana-Astra. Then what happened? Not even thousands of atomic bombs can work that devastation which Narayana-Astra is capable of. The Astra multiplied itself millionfold, the whole sky was filled with burning missiles; there was no sky, no stars, no sun and no moon; it was all fire. When Arjuna, who was not initiated into this Astra by Drona on account of his partiality for his son, saw it, he queried Krishna, “Lord, what is it that is coming? This is something new which I have not had the occasion to see before.” Krishna replied: “I know what it is, and there is no remedy for this. No one can stand up against this Astra of Narayana, which has emanated from my own being. There is no one who can face it, not even the greatest of warriors. The best thing for you all would be now to stop fighting, throw down your arms and offer obeisance to this Astra with folded hands, because this weapon will not attack anyone who is not its enemy. Therefore, prostrate yourselves before it, and all shall be well.” On hearing the words of Krishna, Arjuna ordered the entire army to throw down its weapons, shouting loudly: “Prostrate yourselves before this great fire that is coming. That is the only

way of saving yourselves.” And all did so, except Bhima, who retorted: “I am not a coward. I shall not bend before anyone. I shall see to it.” Saying thus, Bhima took up his mace and began brandishing it against the Astra. Arjuna and Krishna argued with Bhima, “This is not the time to show your valour. Come down from your chariot and throw down your mace. They pulled him down to the ground. And, well, the Astra, beholding no one against it, extinguished itself. The Astra entered the body of Krishna himself, for he was Narayana standing there far the welfare of the righteous and the devout.

Asvatthama was gazing from the top of a tree, to see the ashes of the Pandavas. But no such thing happened. No ashes and no fire. The Pandavas were up in arms once again as if nothing had happened. Asvatthama left the field cursing all including even his father, saying that he was duped by his father’s false initiation which was really of no utility to him. “These days even parents tell lies.” Thus he cried and went out. On the way he met Vyasa, who explained to him that his father had not told him a lie and had initiated him properly. The only difficulty was, the Narayana-Astra was used against Narayana Himself. That was the reason why it did not work. We should not use our power against God. Human

effort cannot contradict Divine Majesty.

The wondrous way in which the great Incarnation Krishna furnished divine robes to Draupadi, the way in which He invisibly fed the Sage Durvasa and his thousands of disciples on prayer from Draupadi, the stunning drama of His going as an ambassador to the court of the Kauravas on behalf of the Pandavas, His revelation of the Cosmic Form in that assembly, His mighty role as divinity incarnate, in the Bhishma, Drona and Karna Parvas in the Mahabharata, are all too grand and glorious to be put in any word or language.

Again, we have instances like the release of the Sudarsana-Chakra of Narayana on the predicament of Ambarisha who became the target of Durvasa's anger, as we have it recorded in the Srimad Bhagavata.

The point is that such miraculous divine occurrences, the subtle workings of God, above the ken of the human mind, bring out the fact that God is always conscious of what our needs are and takes immediate steps to redress the sorrows of the devotees. In fact, God works His miracles every moment. Every incident in the life of the world is a divine miracle. The tales in the Epics and Puranas highlight the ways in which God can be loved and

encountered. God is adored in the affectionate personifications as Father, Friend, Master, Child, or one's Beloved. God is also adored as the immensely compassionate Mother. We call it devotion when we run after God. What do we call it when God is running after us and wants us perennially? In fact, this latter mystery is the pinnacle that divine devotion can reach. It is not just enough if we want God; His wanting us is, indeed, the supreme attainment. The Lord's promise in the Bhagavad Gita is well known: "Those who contemplate on Me undividedly and worship Me as the All, to them, who are ever united with Me, I provide what they need, and protect what they have."

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