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The Spirit of the **Sadhana**

Swami Krishnananda



**THE SPIRIT OF
SADHANA**

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 Spirit of Sadhana**', comprises an inspiring discourse of Sri Swamiji Krishnanandaji Maharaj enlightening Sadhakas on the true meaning of Sadhana.

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 SPIRIT OF SADHANA

The unselfishness of an action is to be judged by the extent to which it bears relevance to the universal set-up of things. It has, in fact, nothing to do with my thinking, your thinking, or anyone's thinking. The nature of Truth does not depend upon human thought and feeling. It has an existence of its own, and it, in its exalted supremacy and majestic universality and comprehensiveness, determines even the thoughts and the feelings of people; not the other way round. It is curious that every human being enshrines an intrinsic habit of holding that truths are judged by human thought, or much worse, one's own individual thought. The human cannot become the divine merely because human history has passed through many centuries of temporal process. The divine is a qualitative transformation of the general attitude of consciousness and not a quantitative calculation of syllogistic conclusions. When Truth takes possession of us, we no more think it or judge it in our own way, but participate in its being, which is a different thing altogether from

our definitions of truth, law and justice; goodness, virtue and rectitude.

It makes little difference whether one is a student on the path of devotion or the path of knowledge. *Sadhakas*, real as well as the so-called ones who imagine themselves to be such, often waste their time in wrangling over matters which have no concern with *sadhana* but which can beguile them into the belief that they are utilising their time most beneficially. It does not mean that there can be anyone who is perfectly free from all faults, for everyone has some defects which can be so serious as to be impossible of eradicating in one life. For the defects may be ingrained in one's own nature and they die only when the person concerned dies. But the presence of such a defect should not discourage one in acting rightly, for to wait until the time when one would be totally free from all defects in order to commence *sadhana* would be like waiting for the cessation of the waves in the ocean in order to take a bath in it. Life is a perpetual struggle, an unending suffering, a series of vexations, agonies and anxieties, in which one thing follows even before the other has not subsided. Under these circumstances, we are likely to be satisfied with the observation that everyone has defects, and we are none the worse.

Many times we go one step above and feel elated and superior just because there is someone inferior to us. The very presence of the small makes us look big. And we feel contented in looking at the picture of the world which is painted dark all over by our minds which do not want to see good in anything. These are the nets in which the minds of Sadhakas can be caught, and mostly they are actually caught, so that they pass away from this world in the same condition in which they are born, in spite of the efforts which they initially put forth when a spark of *sattva* splashed forth within them, for it can be extinguished easily by the storms that blow in the world.

The *spirit of sadhana* in the *Inner Path* is more important than the outward form with which most people usually busy themselves. One spends the whole day in counting beads, and thinks that his *sadhana* is over with that. Another attends the temple, rings the bell and does some exercises, reads a few books, so that the hours of the day are all filled up, which is all enough to make him think that he is busy with his *sadhana*. Now, all this is the outward form which *sadhana* may take, and a very necessary form, and it is quite all right as far as it goes. It loses its meaning only when it is deprived of

the spirit and the purpose with which it is expected to be done. It is to be remembered that *sadhana* is not any kind of bodily action that is outwardly demonstrated in the world, but a state of mind, a condition of thinking, a consciousness in which one lives. Suppose one counts ten thousand beads on a particular day, with a heart filled with rancour and an emotion in a state of ebullition caused by frustration, prejudice or jealousy, the beads are not going to do one any good. All actions are symbols of an inward mood of mind, and when the mood is absent, the action by itself has no significance. The majority of *sadhanas* are lost in the wilderness of erratic thoughts and confused ideologies. This is the precise reason why, very often, there is no success in *sadhana*, despite years of routines that are being followed, perhaps with great enthusiasm but bereft of the spirit needed.

It is difficult to make one understand that the spirit of *sadhana* is determined by the extent to which one aspires for God-realisation. This is such a difficult thing to grasp that no amount of explanation, ordinarily, has any effect on the minds of *Sadhakas*. We have heard the words 'God' and 'Realisation' so many times that they are likely to lose their meaning, due to their being glibly used

every now and then in life. But gold does not become cheap just because we utter its name a thousand times a day. Its value is intrinsic. Unless our routine of *sadhana* is charged with the ideal of God-realisation, it will turn out to be useless in the end, and mean nothing in substance. *Maya* works in various ways. In one it acts as a preventive against the very taking of the right step. It acts as a tremendous obstacle even at the commencement of the proposed effort. This happens when there is opposition from one's relatives, from the state of one's bodily health, or from want of creature comforts that are the minimum which one would need even to live on earth. But *maya* can also oppose the Sadhaka by making him take the wrong step and imagine that he is moving in the right direction. The latter predicament is worse than the former. For, there, one cannot even know that one is being befooled. Most people cannot avoid falling into this pit, which *maya* has dug for everyone. But the worst form which it can take is when people mistake an ethical dogma or a traditional routine of the socialised religion for the spiritual meaning of one's approach to the Absolute.

The ideal of God-realisation which is mentioned as the background of the spirit of *sadhana* is, it is

to be reiterated, incapable of being maintained throughout one's life with equanimity. Even great saints are said to have lost their patience and balance some time or the other in their lives, in their attempts to maintain this spirit perpetually. There is no one who has been entirely free from the clutches of error, which grips one in the form of greed, anger, lust, jealousy, bewilderment, melancholy, lethargy, a subtle desire for name, fame and power, which lurks like a creeping snake inside an ant-hill, and, above all, the worst of things—a feeling that one has achieved the desired end, and the only thing that remains now is to share one's realisation with others. Students who have honestly taken to the spiritual path in the beginning have been often misled into the ruts of a desire for such things as *tantrik siddhis* through *mantras* and rituals on the one side and a longing to pursue grammar and literature, or astronomy and palmistry, on the other side. It is not that there is anything intrinsically wrong with these *sadhakas*, for their trouble is that they have not found a suitable Guru to guide them in these confused conditions when they feel lost in a sea of hopelessness.

Now, let us come to the ideal of God-realisation again—that mysterious something which is extremely difficult for the mind to comprehend

because it has no temptations to offer to the anxious mind of the seeker. Ordinarily, *sadhakas* are not attracted by anything that is really signified by the term 'God-realisation'. To many it is just a nebulous phrase conveying not much practical sense, and to others it is a reality of doubtful value, since it is not clear to them as to what it is really going to bring to them. Unfortunately, that God-realisation is not going to offer us anything we want in the world is the feeling of many a seeker, because, as pre-conditions of this realisation we are asked to renounce desires and want God alone. Now, how can one want God alone and nothing else that is of glory and beauty and splendour and joy in the world? What do we gain by reaching God and losing everything else which we would like to enjoy? Though theoretically, by the argument of the intellect, we may conclude the God is the sole objective to be aspired for, the heart with its feelings that are accustomed to see and hear of the pleasures of this creation cannot reconcile itself with the arid logic that sees no good in the tasty dishes which this splendid universe with its glorious heavens is ready to offer it. These are facts which every one has to confront on the way to God-realisation, and it is not easy to get over the temptations as long as the heart is not united with

the understanding. In most cases the head and the heart are like a quarrelling couple who make a hell of the family. There cannot be peace unless the two have common aims and cooperate with each other in the fulfilment of a higher ideal.

The students of both the path of devotion and the path of knowledge should remember one very important point, for it is this point which decides whether their *sadhana* is successful or not. To the *bhakta* or devotee, God is everything, and he sees God in this manifestation as the world. This does not mean that the devotee should have reached, in the very beginning itself, the state of *para-bhakti* or the devotion which sees the whole world as God shining in various forms. Even in the initial stages of *bhakti*, when such a vision of God is very far, when one is busy with the worship of an image in the temple or in one's own house, or when one is engaged in *purasccharana* of a sacred *mantra*, or in *svadhyaya* or sacred study, the important prerequisite is exclusive devotion to one's *sadhana*, whatever be the form of the *sadhana*, even if it be in a primitive form, where one is concerned only with one's *sadhana* and not with the affairs of the world outside. This exclusiveness of devotion saves one from falling into mental states of lust, anger, greed, jealousy, ambition,

etc., for the *sadhaka* has no time to think such things. This is so even when the *sadhana* is in its beginning stages. What, then, should be the fortune of him who, in his rarefied devotion, sees God everywhere, in the high and the low alike?

To the student of knowledge, objects, as such, do not exist, for, to him, all objects or things are transformed into the status of a Universal Seer or a Totality of Subjectness, where the 'worldness' of the world vanishes, thus leaving no scope for him to get caught in the passions and ambitions which flood what we called the world. There is only a 'Seer' who is everywhere and nothing that is 'seen', for the 'seen' is also the 'Seer' himself appearing, as dream-objects are nothing but the thinking of the mind which is unified into a single whole in waking. Where, then, is a chance for prejudice, anger, craving and egotistic expressions?

This is the spirit of *sadhana*, whether in devotion (*bhakti*) or knowledge (*jnana*), which is to animate the daily routine of the *sadhaka*. It is this that gives meaning to *sadhana*. It is this, again, that decides one's success or failure in spiritual practice—to what extent and in what proportion the God-element in *sadhana* preponderates over other aims and objectives.

The spirit of sadhana in the Inner Path is more important than the outward form with which most people usually busy themselves. One spends the whole day in counting beads, and thinks that his sadhana is over with that. Another attends the temple, rings the bell and does some exercises, reads a few books, so that the hours of the day are all filled up, which is all enough to make him think that he is busy with his sadhana. Now, all this is the outward form which sadhana may take, and a very necessary form, and it is quite all right as far as it goes. It loses its meaning only when it is deprived of the spirit and the purpose with which it is expected to be done. It is to be remembered that sadhana is not any kind of bodily action that is outwardly demonstrated in the world, but a state of mind, a condition of thinking, a consciousness in which one lives.

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