VEDAVYASA
THE PARAGON OF POWER AND WISDOM
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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 Sivananda Ashram, Headquarters of The Divine Life Society, has decided to bring out one hundred booklets comprising the illuminating discourses of Worshipful Sri Swami Krishnanandaji Maharaj.

Worshipful Sri Swami Krishnanandaji Maharaj arrived in Rishikeh in the summer of 1944, and remained here until attaining Mahasamadhi in November 2001. Swami Krishnanandaji was a master of practically every system of Indian thought and Western philosophy. “Many Sankaras are rolled into one Krishnananda,” said Sri Gurudev Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj.

Over the years Sri Swami Krishnanandaji Maharaj gave many profound and insightful discourses during Sunday night satsanga, and on holy occasions such as Sri Gurudev Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj’s birthday, Sri Krishna Janmashtami, Maha
Sivaratri, etc., and also during Sadhana Week and to the students of the Yoga Vedanta Forest Academy. Sri Swami Krishnanandaji 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 Swami Krishnanandaji Maharaj’s discourses in booklet form as our worshipful offering at Swamiji’s holy feet on the blessed occasion of his Birth Centenary. The present booklet, ‘Vedavyasa—the Paragon of Power and Wisdom’, consists of a message given on Guru Purnima, the 27th of July, 1980.

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
VEDAVYASA—THE PARAGON OF POWER AND WISDOM

The holy Guru Purnima has an ancient traditional association with the worship of the Brahmavidya Gurus, the teachers of the Science of God, the Masters who were known as srotiyas and brahmanishthas. A Guru is defined as a sage of perfection endowed with the two great qualifications of srotiyatva and brahmanishthatva—learned and also spiritually exalted. The interesting sidelight which learned men try to throw on the meaning of these two terms, ‘srotiya’ and ‘brahmanishtha’, is that a teacher of the science of the Spirit should be not only intellectually learned but also spiritually established. The reason for expecting these two qualifications from one person is that while no doubt it is true and wonderful that establishment in God-consciousness is a most praiseworthy achievement of any individual, at any time, it is necessary that he should also have the apparatus to communicate this knowledge to the students, the aspirants or the disciples. This apparatus is nothing
but the psychology or the knowledge of the process of teaching, which calls for a sort of learning in the scriptures and in the requirements of logical approach to things—what generally today is known as scholarship. A mere scholar would not be an appropriate person to teach the science of the Spirit, because he should also have an experience inside. The force of conviction cannot be conveyed merely by learning, whatever be the expanse or vastness of that education. The knowledge has to come from his heart, which means to say that he should also have the insight into the reality about which he is speaking or on which he is communicating his knowledge. So, this is the meaning of the Guru being a srotriya and a brahmanishtha.

One of the greatest Gurus our country has known and adores even now, is the great Sage Veda Vyasa, known as Krishna Dvaipayana. He is reputed not only as the author of the Mahabharata, the Brahma Sutras and the Puranas, but also as the most exemplary sage of the greatest perfection one could imagine. He was a God-man, or we may say a man-God, whose powers and knowledge were unsurpassed. He could see the past, the present and the future at one stroke. He was a person endowed with cosmic-consciousness. Nothing was
unknown to him, at any time, in all the realms of existence. This was the sage who blessed Sanjaya with that intuition by which he could, as if through a television, see what was happening during the course of the Mahabharata war, though he himself was not on the battlefield. Not merely that, he could even know what people were thinking in their minds. What anybody would feel and what any one was contemplating or proposing to do—those also were known to Sanjaya by the blessing of Sage Vyasa. We can imagine the extent of the realisation or Perfection which Sage Vyasa attained. Mighty was his power.

There are many incidents about his greatness and power recounted in the Puranas, especially in the Mahabharata. One would not believe if one reads the narration given towards the end of the Mahabharata about a great power that he exercised on a particular occasion. When the war was over and destruction wrought to the hilt, the Pandavas were in their camp mourning over the death of their relatives. To console them, as it were, the great Master, Sage Vyasa, comes there and speaks a few words to the satisfaction of their hearts. “What do you want? What are you grieving for? What is your desire?” He put these questions to the Pandava
brothers. And the old lady Kunti was also seated there. The lady said, “What is my desire except to see my own kith and kin.” Gandhari, the mother of the Kauravas, on the other side, also expressed the same wish. “All my children have been destroyed in war, and I have none today to call my own. O, Great Master! You know my sorrow, and what desire can I have except to have a sight of these children of mine whom I have lost forever.” The Sage said, “You shall see all of them, do not be bothered.” Next morning, he entered the Ganga waist-deep, offered a prayer, raised both his hands and poured the Ganga water down with an invocation which brought down all the heroes from heaven. All those dead people started rising up, one by one, from the waters of the Ganga. It was something marvellous to see, and one could not trust one’s own eyes. Karna, Duryodhana and all the others who were no more, came up to the surface and shook hands with those seated there. And it is said that one complete night they spent happily together in mutual chat, as a fraternity in a single family. And the next morning, there was nobody! They had all vanished. We, today, cannot understand all these things, because these mysterious phenomena are beyond our understanding. Our brains cannot work. For these great men who could
see the whole cosmos and all its realms of existence, there was no birth or death. Nobody was born and nobody died—only they shifted their locations—and so Masters like Vyasa could summon anybody from anywhere, just as one can write a letter to a person in Kanyakumari and request him to be here, or one can go to New York and see someone there. There is no birth or death involved in this; it is only a change of position or location. So, no one is destroyed. Everybody is here and everything is just now, in one place or the other, in one form or the other; and all the heroes of ancient history are even today alive somewhere. They are not destroyed. Everything is everywhere in a most concrete form.

Such a realisation was a possession of this great Master Krishna Dvaipayana Vyasa who has given us the great message of the Mahabharata and the Bhagavadgita. Really speaking, he should be regarded as the builder of India. The Mahabharata is nothing but Greater India, which built up the vast edifice of cultural integrity, whose centrality and core we have in the Bhagavadgita. He is supposed to have commenced a great work called the Brahma Sutras on this sacred day—the full moon day in the month of Ashadha. This is the Vyasa Purnima, as it is called usually, dedicated to the great Vyasa, and
incidentally dedicated to all the Gurus because of the fact that Vyasa is considered as the Guru of all Gurus. Hence this is also called as Guru Purnima.

Usually, this is the day on which people who have entered into the order of Sannyasa take a vow, as it were, of remaining in one place for four months during the rainy season, and study the Brahma Sutras or any other scripture like the Upanishads. This is done as a sacred austerity and a homage to Sage Vyasa. In the Brahma Sutras, he enters into a deep discussion of the subjects dealt with in the Upanishads. In a way, the Brahma Sutras are regarded as an annotation on certain knotty points in the Upanishads, which raise doubts in the minds of its readers. *Athato brahma jijnasa*, is the first *sutra*. “We now enter into an enquiry into the nature of Brahman.” With this statement begins this great work, the Brahma Sutras. An enquiry into the nature of Brahman is our duty, after having equipped ourselves with the requisite qualifications of a seeker or an aspirant, by passing through the earlier stages of self-purification by service and devotion. All this is implied, as the commentators make out in detail, in the pithy words, ‘*atha*’ and ‘*atah*’ occurring in this *sutra* at the very beginning. “Now, therefore, an enquiry into the nature of Brahman,” is the meaning
of this aphorism. Inasmuch as aphorisms are not detailed expositions of any theme, but are very pithy indications only of what is hiddenly implied in their substance, the terms ‘atha’ and ‘atah’ are explained by subsequent commentators as indicating prior qualifications of a student who has to enter into an enquiry into the nature of God, Brahman or the Supreme Being. It means that not all and sundry can enter into this enquiry, because the subject of study is so profound, almost beyond the comprehension of the human mind, that ordinary intellectuality or even curiosity towards knowledge would not be adequate for the purpose. The depth of the subject requires a corresponding receptive capacity on the part of the disciple or the student. A desire-ridden or egoistic person, with a sense of self-importance through his own bodily individuality, would be an unfit student. Only a clean mirror can reflect sunlight; a heap of bricks or a mass of pitch cannot bring about this effect of reflection. The nature of Brahman discussed in these Sutras is such that it cannot stand in consonance with any kind of self-affirmation on the part of the student. The characteristics of the subject are such that usual empirical attitude of the ego is just the opposite of the requirement here. So one who is hard-boiled in
his ego or sensuality, or even in a social involvement, would not be a proper student of the Brahma Sutras. The Acharyas who have commented on the Sutras tell us that the requirement on the part of a student here is utter self-purification, which means to say, a thinning out of one’s egoism by *karma* and *upasana*, which precede *jnana*, the subject of the Brahma Sutras.

Service of the Guru was primarily regarded as *karma* in those days. The connotation of *karma*, as a necessary part of the self-purification process, is service of the Master and studentship under him for a long period, during which time the surrender of the student to the Guru becomes so complete that he becomes a fit student for initiation. In the Upanishads, we have various instances mentioned of the studentship of sincere seekers who served their Masters or Gurus for several years, expecting nothing and undergoing unthinkable hardship as a part of their training in the *gurukula*. Even this service alone was not adequate, because the knowledge of Brahman, being an all-comprehensive super-individual insight, has to be preceded by a concentration of the mind on higher concepts than the usually individualised perceptions of objects, for which purpose various *upasanas* were prescribed.
From multiplicity we raise ourselves to a concept of Supreme Unity, where the mind offers its adoration to the Reality as an ideal Creator, Preserver and Destroyer, who is the cause of the origin, the sustenance and the dissolution of the universe. But Brahman, according to the Sutras, or according to the Upanishads, rather, is something superior to our notion of creator, preserver and destroyer.

So, while at the very commencement of the Brahma Sutras we are introduced to the subject of an enquiry into the nature of the Supreme Absolute, a tentative definition of the Absolute is given in the subsequent *sutra*, as “That from which everything proceeds”. *Janmadyasya yatah*, is the second *sutra*. *Janma, sthiti* and *samhara*—the origin, the abiding and the transformation or dissolution of all things—are caused by something. *Yato va imani bhutani jayante yena jatani jivanti yatprayantyabhisamvisanti tadvijijnasasva tad Brahma*—is the statement of the Upanishad. When the disciple asked the Guru, “What is Brahman?” he was told, “Brahman is That from which everything comes, in which everything resides and into which everything returns in the end.” This is the definition of Brahman given in the second *sutra*: *janmadyasya yatah*. But, this is a cosmological definition and not an ontological one.
as our philosophers would expect. It is cosmological because it presupposes the existence of the universe, without which notion the idea of a Creator or a Preserver or a Destroyer would not arise in our minds. Brahman is God as such and not as He appears to our senses or is reflected through this creation, the universe.

God must have been there even before He created the universe. This is something very simple for us to appreciate. What was God before he created the universe? This our minds cannot understand. Where is He sitting? We may say that God is in heaven. But who created the heaven? God created the heaven. So, He is in the heaven which He Himself created. But, where was He before He created the heaven? You are in your house, but before you built your house, where were you? You must have been somewhere! However, with regard to ‘where was God before creation’, even that idea of ‘somewhere’ should not arise, because that also is an idea about ‘space’, which comes after creation. Well, the mind is not prepared to go further. So, the author of the Sutras does not want to bother us or involve us too much in a quandary of this nature because, as I mentioned to you, the mind has to be taken gradually from one stage to another stage,
from the perceptible phenomena to conceptual ideality, from *karma* to *upasana*, beyond which we have to rise to the realisation which cannot be expressed in language. That is Brahman. However, the Sutrakara, the author Krishna Dvaipayana Vyasa, tells us that even the fact that God created the universe, everything is sustained by Him and everything returns to Him, is something that we cannot know merely with the power of our intellect. Intellect is insufficient to understand even this fact of the creatorship, etc., of the Supreme Being. The scripture is the authority. Revelation is our guide. The ancient teachers’ proclamations are to be our light. Or else, our poor brains cannot know that God created this world.

So, *sastra-yonitvat* is the third *sutra*, because of the fact that *sastra* or the scripture is the base or the foundation of the knowledge of God as the Creator, Preserver and Destroyer. Therefore, the final authority is *sastra*. *Pratyaksha* and *anumana*—perception and inference—are not sufficient, because perception is direct operation of the senses in regard to visible things, and God is not a visible object. Therefore, God cannot be regarded as an object of *pratyaksha pramana* or proof of perceptual operations of the senses. So it fails. Inference is based on perception;
we cannot, therefore, regard inference also as finally valid, because there are inferential philosophies which deny the existence of God. Sankhya is one, and we have many other schools of very profound philosophy even in the West, all based on very incisive logic—induction, deduction, etc. But, they come to the conclusion that we may exist and the world can go on even without a God. So it is not true that the intellect is always a safe guide in coming to the conviction that God is the Creator, Preserver and Destroyer. God is not an object of either sensory perception or inferential logic. This knowledge can come to us only by instruction from a Master, from a Guru, through revelation which is recorded in the scriptures. *Sastra* is the scripture, which is the document available to us of the revelations of the great Masters. So, Agama Praman—scriptural or revelatory authority—is final.

This can be corroborated by the statements of the Upanishads themselves, says the author in the fourth *sutra*: *tattu samanvayat*.

These four *sutras* are regarded by philosophers in India as the sum and substance of logical philosophy. The commentaries on these four *sutras* by the great Acharyas—Sankara, Ramanuja, Madhva—etc., are regarded as final proclamations of Vedantic
truths in India. A very vast subject is the Brahma Sutras. There are more than five hundred aphorisms touching upon all themes: ontology, cosmology, eschatology, psychology and what not! Everything concerned with religion and spirituality is there. The *sutras* are very difficult to understand. Many *sutras* convey no meaning at all, if we study them merely from the grammatical point of view. In some *sutras* there are only one or two words, which give us no sense. To cite only one such case, one *sutra* merely says: *smaryate cha*—which means ‘it is remembered’. What is remembered, we cannot understand. The commentators are the receivers of the tradition. *Sampradaya acharyaih*—these are the words uttered by Acharya Sankara. He says, “We know it through the tradition of the great Masters.” He does not say, “Through my logic I understand.” Sankara, though he was a master logician, was also a great respecter of ancient tradition and Gurus. That is the humility of the great man, together with the power of his intellect.

While we enter into the path of the Spirit, humility is the great weapon we have, and we have no other weapon. God is not afraid of logic. But He will, perhaps, condescend to come down to the level of the humble supplicant who surrenders himself
to the great Light that is illuminating the whole world everywhere. The great Master Dattatreya is supposed to have told us, *Isvaranugrahad eva pumsam advaita vasana*: The idea of unity arises only by the grace of God. The idea of unity cannot arise by logical deduction. However much we may struggle and rack our heads, the notion of unity cannot arise in our heads. We have a great philosopher called George Hegel in the West, who was an opponent of intuition. He hated it like dirt, and he was a great worshipper of reason, intellect and logic. But he was also one who proclaimed the existence of the great Absolute. William James, the great psychologist of America, in one of his works tells us that the idea of the Absolute would not arise in the mind unless by an intuition or an insight, because any sifting of the apparatus of logic cannot lead us to this notion, since all logic is dilatory, mandatory and only a dove-tailing of particulars. A mixing up of many parts cannot make the total unit, even as many limbs put together do not make a human being. What we call the human being is not merely the limbs put together. It is some integral peculiarity, a significance, a meaning, a profundity which cannot be identified with the limbs of the body. Logic, being merely a limb of understanding, cannot produce this
peculiar significance called the Supreme Notion of God. This is something that is very interestingly made out by Acharya Sankara also, who says that unbridled reason cannot be our guide in the path of the Spirit.

I have given you only some indication of the line along which the author of the Brahma Sutras takes the mind of the student, through a very long, tortuous exposition of the various themes involved in the study of philosophy and brings him to the grand conclusion that once he reaches Brahman, once he reaches God, there is no return into this world. Anavrittih sabdat, snavrittih sabdat, says the author. ‘Sabda’ means scriptures, and ‘sabdat’ means from scriptures. From scriptures we learn that there is no return to this mortal coil after entering God. Yatgatva na nivartante, na sah punaravartate—this is what we hear from the scriptures. We are really frightened about all these things. “Then I will not go there, because I cannot come back!” This is our fear. This fear will prevent us from going to God. But, friends, do not be afraid of going to God because it is said that you will not come back and see the beauty of the world. A person with such doubts is an unprepared aspirant. The mind has not been purified yet. It has not been burnt and burnished
through the services of the Guru and the Upasana of God. I conclude with these few words that we require the grace of the Guru. And we had our great Master, Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj, nay we have Him even now, and I can confidently say that His Spirit is ruling this Ashram and is guiding the hearts of all His followers and devotees. His blessings are ever upon us, and God is with us.
One of the greatest gurus our country has known and adores even now, is the great Sage Veda Vyasa, known as Krishna Dvaipayana. He is reputed not only as the author of the Mahabharata, the Brahma Sutras and the Puranas, but also as the most exemplary sage of the greatest perfection one could imagine. He was a God-man, or we may say a man-God, whose powers and knowledge were unsurpassed. He could see the past, the present and the future at one stroke. He was a person endowed with cosmic-consciousness. Nothing was unknown to him, at any time, in all the realms of existence.

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