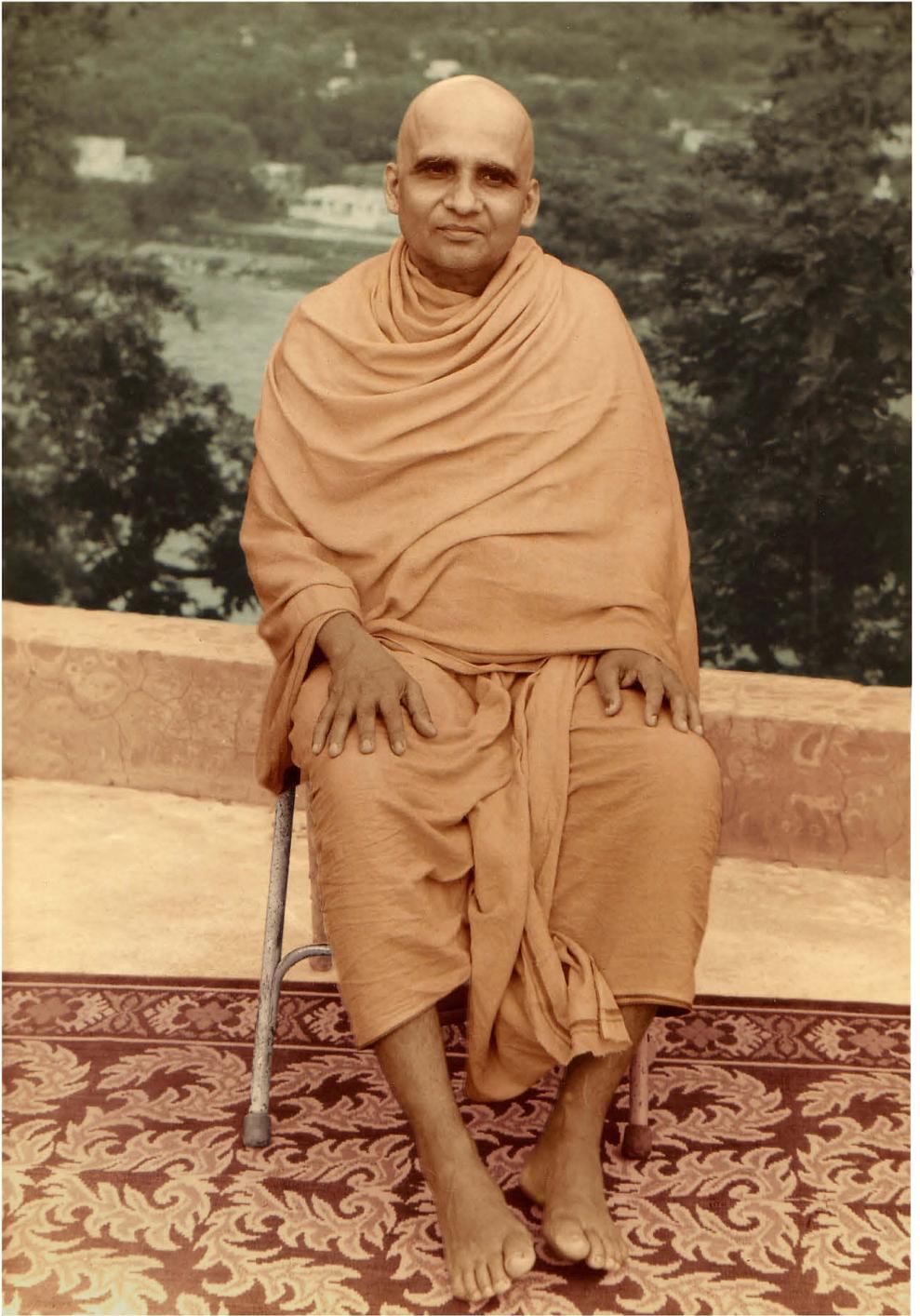


SPIRITUAL IMPORT OF RELIGIOUS FESTIVALS



Swami
Krishnananda



SRI SWAMI KRISHNANANDAJI

SPIRITUAL IMPORT OF RELIGIOUS FESTIVALS

SWAMI KRISHNANANDA



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PUBLISHER'S NOTE TO THE THIRD EDITION

As time passes, contexts change and the relevance of a book written many years ago gains new significance. So it is with *The Spiritual Import of Religious Festivals*.

In this 21st century as people have fully merged into consumerism, the intention and drive behind celebrating festivals has completely been erased making them yet another occasion for celebration in the secular sense, an occasion to indulge in more clothes, more food, more adornments, filling the moment which was intended for spiritual ascent with noise and material—both antithetical to the original intention.

This book is intended for anyone who wants to go deeper into why festivals came to be, their historical origin and critically their spiritual significance. Those who are already on the path spiritual will find terrific acceleration to their endeavors, enhanced meaning to their understanding thus far and a new spirit to their pace. Others will find a clarification for why they need to alter their approach to 'celebrating' these moments in history that repeat year after year. It is very striking, even if obvious, that these events repeat year after year as if God Himself is giving us yet another chance to renew our relationship with life.

This book is a compilation of the lectures on religious festivals, delivered by Swami Krishnananda on different occasions. Swamiji has only briefly hinted at the 'story' behind the festival while his effort has been entirely to

stress the significance of the rituals of a festival with the spiritual ascension of man. As the Publisher's Note to the second edition rightly observed, "There is a *meaning* behind every *act*, or ritual in the religious field, even as there is a hidden purpose behind the implementation of any project or the doing of any work. Rarely are religions seen to awaken themselves to the spirit that they are expected to convey, the living flame which they enshrine and without which they remain forms without content."

Since these were lectures in their original form, the transcription seeks to retain the spoken word form more to transport the enriching, divine flavour of Swamiji's words and feelings to the reader. This is experienced distinctively in the lectures in the Appendix, which carry with them extra fire and intensity, especially since the subject matter itself was such.

We are pleased to release this third edition of *Spiritual Import of Religious Festivals* on the auspicious occasion of the 5th anniversary of the Mahasamadhi of Revered Sri Swami Krishnanandaji. May his blessings and grace fill us even as we soak in the words of his messages.

SHIVANANDANAGAR,

23rd November, 2006

—THE DIVINE LIFE SOCIETY

PREFACE

These random ideas which I expressed on various occasions have been brought together by the effort of my colleagues in the Ashram, and it should go without saying that this effort will amply be rewarded by the benefit that it is likely to render to spiritual seekers the world over. Being words spoken on the spur of the moment, they are perhaps more in the form of a visualisation or communication than a text deliberately written in any systematic manner. As it is well said that philosophy is the autobiography of the philosopher, students are likely to find here the infrastructure, the trend and the outlook that I sought to present to participants in religion, with a view to be of some aid to them in their efforts to find a meaning in religious life, or perhaps in life in its generality. Unprepared and unpremeditated as these disquisitions are, they will evidently carry a novel force of conviction arising from feeling and from a vision which can be considered as the framework of one's existence.

I shall be thankful if students, seekers and readers find here something which they would regard as their own.

—SWAMI KRISHNANANDA

INTRODUCTION

The earliest statement of the Nature of Reality occurs in the first book of the Rig Veda: “*Ekam sat-viprah bahudha vadanti*”—the ONE BEING, the wise diversely speak of.

The tenth book of the Rig Veda regards the highest conception of God both as the Impersonal and the Personal. The Nasadiya Sukta states that the Supreme Being is both the Unmanifest and the Manifest, Existence as well as Non-existence, the Supreme Indeterminable.

The Purusha Sukta proclaims that all this Universe is God as the Supreme Person—the Purusha, with thousands of heads, thousands of eyes, thousands of limbs in His Cosmic Body. He envelops the whole cosmos and transcends it to infinity.

The Narayana Sukta exclaims that whatever is anywhere, visible or invisible, all this is pervaded by Narayana, within and without.

The Hiranyagarbha Sukta of the Rig Veda declares that God manifested Himself in the beginning as the Creator of the Universe, encompassing all things, including everything within Himself, the collective totality, as it were, of the whole of creation, animating it as the Supreme Intelligence.

The Satarudriya or Rudra Adhyaya of the Yajur Veda identifies all things, the high and the low, the moving and the unmoving, the good and the bad, the beautiful and the

ugly—nay, every conceivable thing, with the all-pervading Siva, or Rudra, as the Supreme God.

The Isavasya Upanishad says that the whole Universe is pervaded by Isvara or God, who is both within and without it. He is the moving and the unmoving, He is far and near, He is within all these and without all these.

The Kena Upanishad says that the Supreme Reality is beyond the perception of the senses and the mind because the senses and the mind can visualise and conceive only the objects, while Reality is the Supreme Subject, the very precondition of all sensation, thinking, understanding, etc. No one can behold God because He is the beholder of all things.

The Kathopanishad has it that God is the Root of this Tree of world existence. The realisation of God is regarded as the Supreme blessedness or Sreyas, as distinct from Preyas or temporal experience of satisfaction.

The Prasna Upanishad says that God is the Supreme Prajapati or Creator, in whom are blended both the matter and energy of the Universe. God is symbolised in Pranava, or Omkara.

The Mundaka Upanishad gives the image of the Supreme Being as the One Ocean into which all the rivers of individual existence enter and with which they become one, as their final goal.

The Mandukya Upanishad regards the Supreme Being as the Turiya, or the Transcendent Consciousness, beyond the states of waking, dreaming and deep sleep.

The Taittiriya Upanishad regards the Reality as the Atman, or the Self, beyond the physical, vital, mental, intellectual and causal aspects (sheaths) of the personality. It also identifies this Atman with the Supreme Absolute, or Brahman.

The Aitareya Upanishad states that the Supreme Atman has manifested itself as the objective Universe from the one side and as the subjective individuals on the other side, whereby factors which are effects of God's creation become causes of the individual's perception, by a reversal of the process.

The Chhandogya Upanishad says that all this Universe is Brahman Manifest, in all its states of manifestation. The Upanishad regards objects as really aspects of the one Subject known as the Vaishvanara Atman. It also holds that the Supreme Being is the Infinite, or Bhuma, in which one sees nothing else, hears nothing else, and understands nothing else except the Self as the only existence.

In the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad we are told that the Supreme Being is Pure Consciousness, in which subjects and objects merge together in a state of Universality.

The Supreme Being knew only Itself as 'I-Am', inclusive of everything. As He is the Knower of all things, no one can know Him, except as 'He Is'.

The Svetasvatara Upanishad says, "Thou art the Woman", "Thou art the Man", "Thou art Girl", "Thou art Boy", "Thou deceiveth us as the old man tottering with the stick", "Thou moveth everywhere, in the form of everything, in all directions", "Thou art the dark-blue Butterfly, and the Green Parrot with red eyes", "Thou art

the thunder cloud, the Seasons and the Oceans”, “Thou art without beginning and beyond all Time and Space”, “Thou art That from which all the Universes are born”. “That alone is Fire. That is the Sun. That is Air, That is the Moon, That is also the Starry Firmament, That is the Waters, That is Prajapati, That is Brahman.”

That Divine Being who, though Himself formless, gives rise to various forms in different ways with the help of His Supreme Power for His own inscrutable purpose, and Who dissolves the whole Universe in Himself in the end—may He endow us with pure understanding.

He is the Great Being who shines effulgent like the Sun, beyond all darkness. Knowing Him alone one crosses beyond death. There is no other way of going over there.

The One God, Creator of the heaven and earth, is possessed of all eyes, all faces, all hands, and all feet in this Universe. It is He who inspires all to do their respective functions, as if fanning their fire into flames of movement.

Manu says, in his Smriti, that in the beginning, all this existence was one Undifferentiated Mass of Unmanifestedness, indefinable, unarguable and unknown in every way. From this Supreme Condition arose the Universe of names and forms, through the medium of the Self-existent Creator, Swayambhu.

The Mahabharata says that Narayana alone was in the beginning—the primus of the creative, preservative, and destructive principles, the Trinity known as Brahma, Vishnu and Siva—the Supreme Hari, multi-headed, multi-eyed, multi-footed, multi-armed, multi-limbed. This was the Supreme Seed of all Creation, subtler than the

subtlest, greater than the greatest, larger than the largest, and more magnificent than even the best of all things, more powerful than even the wind and all the gods, more resplendent than the Sun and the Moon, and more internal than even the mind and the intellect. He is the Creator, the Father Supreme.

The Bhagavadgita in the Mahabharata says that the Supreme Brahman is beyond existence and non-existence. It has hands and feet everywhere, heads, mouths, eyes everywhere, ears everywhere, and it exists enveloping everything. Undivided, it appears as divided among beings; attributeless, it appears to have attributes in association with things. It is the Light of all lights, beyond all darkness, and is situated in the hearts of all beings.

He is the sacrifice, He is the oblation, He is the performer thereof, He is the recitation or the chant, He is the sacred fire, He is that which is offered into it. He is the father, the mother, the grandfather, the support, the One knowable Thing. He is the three Vedas, the Goal of all beings, the Protector, the Reality, the Witness, the Repository, the Refuge, the Friend, the beginning, the middle and the end of all things. He is immortality and death, existence as well as non-existence. He is the Visvarupa, the Cosmic Form, blazing like fire and consuming all things.

According to the Bhagavata and the Mahabharata, God especially manifested Himself as Bhagavan Sri Krishna, who is regarded as the foremost of the divine Incarnations, in whose personality the Supreme Being is fully focussed and manifest.

Srimad Bhagavata says that He is Brahman (the Absolute), Paramatman (God), Bhagavan (the Incarnation).

According to the Pancharatra Agama and the Vaishnava theology, God has five forms: the Para or the Transcendent, Antaryamin or the Immanent, Vyuha or the Collective (known as Vasudeva, Sankarshana, Pradyumna and Aniruddha), Vibhava or the Incarnation, and Archa or the symbolic form of daily worship.

According to Saiva tradition, God is Pati, the Lord who controls the individuals known as Pasu, with His Power known as Pasa.

According to the Sakta tradition, God is the Divine Universal Mother of all things, Adi-Sakti, or the original Creative Power, manifesting Herself as Kriya-Sakti or Durga, Ichha-Sakti or Lakshmi, and Jnana-Sakti or Sarasvati. But the Supreme Mother is beyond all these forms. She is One, alone, without a second.

According to the Bhakti tradition, God is the Supreme Object of Love, in respect of Whom love is evinced as in respect of one's father, mother, friend, son, master, or one's own beloved, in the five forms of affection known as Shanta, Sakhya, Vatsalya, Dasya and Madhurya.

To the Vaishnavas, God is in Vaikuntha as Vishnu. To the Saivas, God is in Kailasa as Siva, or Rudra. To the Saktas, God is in Manidvipa, as the Supreme Sakti or the Divine Mother. To the Ganapatyas, God is Ganesa, or Ganapati. To the Sauras, God is Surya, the Sun. To the Kaumaras, God is Kumara, or Skanda.

To saints like Tulasidas, God is Rama; to saints like Surdas, He is Krishna. To saints like Kabirdas, He is the

Impersonal, Attributeless One, known by various names for purposes of worship and meditation.

All the Vaishnava saints worship Him as either Rama or Krishna, Narayana or Vishnu. The Saiva saints worship Him as Paramasiva. The Saktas worship Him as Adi-sakti. The philosopher-saints worship Him as Brahman, the Absolute, as Isvara, Hiranyagarbha, and Virat or the Cosmic Being.

The Vira-Saivas worship God as Siva, especially manifest as the Linga (symbolised in the rounded sacred stone which they wear round their necks).

The symbol of Vishnu is the Saligrama, the symbol of Siva is the Linga, and the symbol of Devi is the Yantra (sometimes, a Mantra).

According to the Nyaya and Vaiseshika schools, God is the instrumental cause of creation—like a potter fashioning a pot of clay—but not the material cause of creation.

The Samkhya school holds that there are only two Primary Principles, Purusha and Prakriti, and creation is only a manifestation or evolution of the constituents of Prakriti due to the action of Purusha's consciousness. There is no other God than these two Principles.

The Yoga school of Patanjali accepts God's existence as a Special Purusha free from all afflictions, Karmas, the effects of Karmas and impressions or potencies of a binding nature. But this Purusha, known as Isvara, according to Patanjali's Yoga System, is not the creator of the world, but a Witness thereof. Nor is He the goal of the aspirations of the Jivas or individuals.

The Yogavasishtha defines Reality as the Consciousness which is between and transcends the subjective and objective aspects in perception and cognition, etc. Consciousness is the Absolute, Brahman, the only existence, of which the world is only an appearance.

The Brahmasutra states that God is That from Whom this Universe proceeds, in Whom it subsists, and to Whom, in the end, it returns.

Kalidasa, in his Raghuvamsa and Kumarasambhava, points out that God is the Supreme Being, is prior to the forms of Brahma, Vishnu and Siva, who are three aspects or phases of God, and that Brahma, Vishnu and Siva, being three forms of one and the same Reality, are equal to one another in every respect, without inferiority or superiority among them.

Bhartrihari prays to that Infinite Consciousness, which is Peaceful Effulgence, which is undifferentiated by the interference of space, time, causal relation, etc., and whose essence is Self-experience alone.

Madhusudana Sarasvati blends Advaita Vedanta and Bhakti-Rasa, and he is the author of the most polemical and authoritative Advaita text, known as the 'Advaitasiddhi', and of an unparalleled compendium of the various processes and stages of devotion to God, known as 'Bhaktirasayana'. His commentary on the Bhagavadgita is a monument of a fusion of knowledge of the Impersonal Absolute with devotion to the Personal God.

Religions are founded on a metaphysical rock bottom. There is a philosophical import behind every ethical canon.

Generally, the tradition of worship of Deities in India is according to a sort of protocol which the devotees associate with the importance of the Deities. For instance, worshippers of a particular Deity, such as Ganesa, Siva, Vishnu, Surya or Skanda, will place their own Deity as the first in importance and every other Deity as secondary. There is another tradition according to which the order of worship places Ganesa as the first, to be worshipped on any occasion, and then Devi, Siva, Vishnu, Surya and Skanda. This order may get slightly changed in different circles of religious belief. But the discourses recorded in this book do not follow any of these patterns but a chronological arrangement according to the festivals that come one after the other, seriatim, during the course of the calendar of the year, that is, from the beginning of the year to the end of the year. The functions and festivals repeat themselves every year on specific days or dates. Thus, the order in which the festivals or the Deities of worship are mentioned here follow their calendar-wise chronology.

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**SPIRITUAL IMPORT
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RELIGIOUS FESTIVALS**

WHAT IS RELIGION? *

The New Year is fast approaching and we will be in another year within a couple of hours. Years have come and years have gone. We have celebrated the ushering in of the New Year many a time, but we are no better than what we were many years back. Why so? Religion, which is supposed to help us in this respect, does not seem to be of much avail, because we have not understood what religion is. So let us now ponder over this very important subject: “What is religion?”

In a broad way, religion may be regarded as pure common sense. It is not a compulsion or an imposition that is inflicted upon one by people from outside. It is something which we cannot avoid, due to the very setup of things. We know there are certain things in life which we cannot avoid because of the circumstances under which we are placed. Sometimes people start saying, “What can I do? I cannot avoid it; the situation is such.” Sometimes we are placed under such circumstances that we have to do something, whether we like it or not, want it or not. Likewise, religion is something which we are obliged to accept as something unavoidable, which we can never entirely turn a deaf ear to, under the conditions in which we exist in this world. As long as we are in this world, there is religion. And we shall be always in some world, which is a name we give to the universal atmosphere in all its planes or levels of expression. Thus, the world is not going to

* A message given on the eve of the New Year, the 31st of December, 1973.

vanish. If religion can be defined as the duty that we owe to the Universe, then religion is eternal; it can never cease to be.

The other question that arises as a sort of corollary from this position is: "What is meditation?" The same answer holds good, in essence, for this question also. If we know what religion is, we will also know what meditation is, because meditation is nothing but the contemplation of the fact of religion. So, when religion is known, meditation also is known. The duty that we owe to the Universe is our religion. Can there be, then, many religions in the world? This question also is automatically answered in this small aphoristic answer: "Religion is the duty of man to the Universe."

Can there be many kinds of duty towards the Universe? This query can only be answered by an analogy. There is a family consisting of many members—father, mother, brother, sister, children, and so on. Each member of the family owes a duty towards every other member of the family. Now, does this duty vary from member to member, or not? It varies, and it does not vary. Both answers hold good here. It varies in the sense that the capacity of each person is different from that of the other persons. It does not vary in the sense that it is the duty of each member of the family to work towards the fulfilment of the common purpose of the family. One member may wash the vessels every day. Another member may wash the clothes. A third member may go shopping. A fourth may receive visitors and guests, and a fifth may cook dinner. Now, these are all different functions which each member of the family performs. But, what is the purpose behind all these different

activities or functions? It is to keep the solidarity of the family and to keep the family alive as a 'whole', and not to keep each individual member alive separately, like unconnected bricks in a heap. The family is not merely its members, but it is something more than each individual member, just as a government is not any governmental official, merely. Every official is a part of the government. Yet no single official can be said to be the government, as such. The government is invisible to the eyes. You cannot see it anywhere. If you search for the government, you cannot see it. You will only see persons, and yet, all these persons put together do not make the government. Then what is the government? It is the 'principle' behind the operations of these people. The 'principle' is not seen, only the people are seen. You can see the President, you can see the Prime Minister, you can see the Ministers, and many others. All these people put together, as different individuals, also, do not constitute what you mean by government. The officials are the limbs of the organism or the body called the government. In a similar manner, we may conceive and understand religion. So is also any kind of organisational setup—a society, for instance. An organisation is not people and buildings. Rather, it is a 'principle' which everything else has to subservise. There is a principle operating behind all the things that you see. This principle is the law, the nation, the cultural cohesion of kindred aspirations. This is government. This is society. This is organisation. This is family. This is religion, wherein the principle of organisational living reaches its cosmical climax.

There is also a principle operating behind the variegated duties that you owe to the Universe. This principle is to be the object of your meditation. I said, when you know what religion is, then you know what meditation is. Meditation is the contemplation on the foundational principle of religion. Religion is a principle. Please remember this. It is not a formality. It is not a cult or a creed, or an action or an activity of individuals. It is a cementing force in human society, even as the governmental system cements the officials as well as the citizens. Hence, going to the temple, offering worship, reading the scriptures, doing charitable work, and rolling the beads—all these, while they look like religion, do not make religion as such, because religion is more a state of consciousness, outlook, feeling and attitude than a mere form bereft of this inner significance. Without the members, there is no family, and yet the members are not the family. This is an enigma behind the distinction between the principle and its manifestation. Religion as a principle is invisible. And without the principle there cannot be religion. Behind all activity there is a policy, as you call it. “What is your policy?” people ask. You have seen activities, but what is the policy behind the activities? That is very essential. If that is missing, the activities lose sense. Likewise, your religion and your religious activities will have no significance if there is no policy behind it. And what is this policy? Why do you do this in this manner and not the other way? The policy is to manifest your relationship to the Universe. The policy of the family is that each member of the family should manifest his or her relationship to the other members. Though the activity may vary in its shape and form, the relationship does not vary.

The child does a little work, the mother does something else and the father does a different kind of work. There is no superiority or inferiority in the work or duties here. The significance behind each one's activities is identical, which is all a love for what they call the family, though they cannot explain or define what family is. Patriotism, the spirit of love for the nation, is not love for any official of the government, or even for a set of persons. It is love for a principle behind what you call nationality or the national spirit. The 'national spirit' is different from the 'people of the country'. These are all difficult things to comprehend for an untrained mind. Likewise, an untrained mind cannot understand what religion is.

Now I come to the subject of religion, about which I said earlier, that your relationship to the Universe determines what your religion is. But what is your relationship to the Universe? Can you tell me, what is your particular relationship to your family? You belong to the family in such a manner that you cannot be 'out' of it. Likewise, you belong to the Universe in such a manner that you are never 'outside' it even for a single moment. The good of the Universe is your good, even as the good of the family is the good of every member of the family, as the good of the nation is the good of every citizen, and as the good of the whole is the good of the parts. The good of the body, or the health of the body, is the good of every limb of the body. So, too, religion is not merely an activity of the limbs of the body or a group of people. It is not what you do with your hands and feet merely. It is an attitude that you develop in your consciousness. When you look at the world, what do you think of it? And that is your religion.

When you gaze at the world, what is your opinion about it? That is your religion; not what you do in the temples and the churches. That is not sufficient religion, though it is a part of religion. It is just a manifestation of the spirit of religion. And the spirit of religion is your attitude. Thus, religion is an attitude of consciousness. It is not an activity or function that you perform, as an individual. It is a general attitude of affection for the Whole to which you belong in the atmosphere of the Universe.

This is a highly philosophical problem, if you push it to its logical limits. It is a very crucial matter, determining our very life itself. If you have a chaotic attitude towards the Universe, you will have a chaotic religion, you will lead a chaotic life, and confusion will be the consequence. If you do not know what exactly is your relation to your family, you know what will happen to the family. There will be no family. It will be disintegrated. You stand together as one force when you say "I am from this family". Just as you have an integrated force called the family and another integrated force called the nation, you have an integrated force called humanity or mankind. When you speak of humanity, you speak of all mankind. Just as there is a force called mankind, a force called nation or family, there is a force called the Universe. This is essential to understand.

Now, to understand this, you need not go to the scriptures for reading. Pure common sense alone is enough. You cannot say that you are outside the Universe. You are in it and you know what bounties you enjoy from it. You cannot live without the resources of Nature. You want water and air, you want light and heat, you want food; and all these come from the Universe. Do you not contribute

your mite to the maintenance of the family because the family supports you by providing you with education, food, medical aid, love and care, and helps you in all ways? Does each member not owe an obligation to the family which supports him? Likewise the Universe sustains us with food, water, air; the very breath that we breathe and our very existence is determined by it. Thank God, the planets do not dash against one another, crushing our heads. Suppose there is a collision of the planets, you can imagine what would happen to us. No such thing happens, and everything is wonderfully maintained. There is a system in the cosmos which protects us. It gives us training and education and enables us to be alive here. Do we not owe an obligation towards it? That is our religion. Now, this obligation cannot vary in its spirit. That is what I am trying to point out. Though your functions may vary, the spirit behind them cannot vary. The child's attitude towards the family is the same as the attitude of the big father towards the family, though their functions are different. Likewise, you must look upon the Universe as a single family, where you owe an attitude of cooperation, collaboration and non-exploitation in respect of everyone. You cannot exploit the family, for you know that is not good; that is not becoming of a member of the family. You should try to sustain it. Similarly, we should not exploit the world, or Nature as a whole. We should not exploit even God. That is not proper. Exploitation is always bad, wherever it is. The law of life is cooperation and not competition and exploitation. "We should not take what we have not given," to put it in simple language. Religion, in its highest form, is this great principle or policy, as explained.

In actual practice, in day-to-day life, religion takes the form of: "Do not take what you have not given." Whenever you take something from the world, please consider whether you have given something equally, in any form, to the world. If you have given nothing, take nothing. If you have taken one thing, you have to give one thing. Otherwise, the Universe will set up a revolt against you. When the Universe revolts against you, you know what will happen to you. You will not be there, for you will be pounded. Unfortunately, the Universe has already set up a revolution against us. That is why there is birth and death. The series of births and deaths is nothing but the punishment meted out to us by the law of the cosmos for infringing its principles. You always regard the Universe as something outside you, as a foreigner, as a stranger, and you want to exploit it—nay, conquer it. You always talk of conquering Nature as if it is an enemy. Do you talk of conquering the family to which you belong? Never, is the answer. Then why do you talk of conquering Nature? Poor Nature, it is your own. Why do you want to conquer it? You are a part of it. Know this and act accordingly. Then, like a loving mother, Nature will come and take you on her lap. The Universe will sustain you. There is no fear in this world. Fear is unknown to the one who cooperates with the world. But, for the one who exploits, there is fear everywhere, and such a man cannot exist without fear and anxiety for a moment. If you are a good man, you will not exploit any person or individual, any facility that is provided to you, not even Nature and God. Religion is this conscious attitude of yours towards the Universe, philosophically, and in principle. And in practice, it is following the instruction: "Do not take more than what you

give. Do not exploit, but cooperate". Feel that you belong to the Universe, which is your family. It is better to remember the analogy of the family, so that you may know what your position in this world is.

There is something more about which nothing need be specially said, because it is implied. Just as there is a head of the family, there is a Head of this Universal Family. You cannot see Him easily. But you can see Him when you cooperate with His laws. The law will take you to Him. The law has also ordained that we shall have actual, direct contact with the Head of this Universal Family who is the creator of this cosmos. When this Universe takes care of you, it is implied that God Himself takes care of you. Religion is not yours, not mine, and it is not of the East or the West. There are not many religions. There is only one religion, in fact. It is a scientific principle that operates in the Universe. Religion is the greatest science. People ask, "Is religion scientific?" This is a stupid question because religion is the only science, ultimately, that is going to be successful in the world. There is no such question as whether religion is scientific; I say there is no other science. All other sciences are the children of this supreme science which goes by the name of religion, without which man cannot even exist in this world. Religion is metaphysical, philosophical, and psychological, ethical and practical, social, political, and everything. It permeates every fibre of our existence. It is the Supreme Law that operates everywhere, governing men and women, young and old, every person, in all walks of life. It is an Eternal Law. It is the Law of God, the Law of Nature.

May this be your contemplation on the eve of the New Year, throughout the year and also throughout your life. May this understanding of the real religion lead you to the realisation of the true God, is my prayer at this auspicious moment when the New Year is about to ring in.

SUN—THE EYE OF THE WORLD *

In Sanskrit, Makara Sankranti means the time when the sun crosses the tropic of Capricorn. The day is of special significance to all those leading a spiritual life and mention has been made of the commencement of this new period in such scriptures as the Upanishads and the Bhagavadgita. The sun comes to the North, energising and invigorating all life wherever it is, and on whatever he sheds his light. In esoteric parlance, in mystic terminology, the sun is regarded as the presiding deity over the self of man, while the moon is the presiding deity over the mind of man. The self or the soul is different from the mind; the Atman and the Manas are differentiated by their metaphysical and psychological characteristics, respectively. The self of man is presided over by the sun or Surya. The sun is designated as Atmakaraka. "*Surya atma jagatas tasthanascha,*" says the Veda. The Rig Veda proclaims the spiritual presiding principle in the sun as the invigorator, energiser of the self of all created beings. That is the meaning of the Vedic prayer mentioned above. Of all the things that move and do not move, of all that is organic or inorganic, of everything in creation, the solar principle is the self, as it were, the pivot around which all individual energies revolve. We live by the sun and die if the sun is not to be. Spiritually envisaged, esoterically conceived, the sun is not merely a huge orb of atomic energy as the physicists would tell us, but a radiant mass of life-giving

* Makara Sankranti message given on the 14th of January, 1972.

vitality to everyone. The sun is not merely a heating principle, like an electric heater or a fire-like burning mass, or a huge conflagration of fire, because these cannot give you that energy which the sun supplies to you. I shall give a small analogy to give you an idea as to what the sun can contain and does contain.

Do you know what the earth contains? Can you imagine what energy, what vitality, what abundance, what resources are contained in the earth? You have there gold, you have diamonds, you have mineral resources lying under different parts and bowels of the earth, you have gas and petrol and what not; and where do you get this energy from, for the sake of the living beings on earth? The trees vigorously rise from the earth, sucking energy from the bottom of the earth, and they seek energy from above—from the rays of the sun. When we geologically and physically look into the structure of this earth, and chemically examine its contents, biologically investigate into its resources, as a pure scientific mind, we will realise that the earth is not dead matter. It is energy-embodiment, on whose bounties we are alive here. The food that we eat is not dead matter, otherwise it cannot give us energy. From where do we get energy? From the food that we eat. From where do we get the food? From the earth. If energy is to come from food, naturally the source of it must be full of energy. The earth cannot be inanimate, as we generally dub it to be. It is not inorganic; there is something organic and living, meaningful and significant in it, and even many millions of years ago the earth had been declared to be a part of the solar constitution. As our wise men tell us, once upon a time a mighty gigantic star happened to rush by the

side of the electromagnetic field of the sun—some light years away from the sun, of course, not merely a few miles. The impact of this upon the orb of the sun was such that it broke off a little piece of the sun. That little piece, being a flaming, diverging, powerful energy-block, rushing from the sun, boiling with the flame of what the sun is, is supposed to have come down after thousands of years, cooling down gradually from the flaming condition in which it was to a cooler condition, and from the cooler condition to a still cooler condition, then from that condition into the gaseous condition, from the gaseous to the liquid condition, and from the liquid condition to the solid condition that we see today. So, all this wonderful earth is nothing but a part of the sun, and its greatness can be traced back to the greatness of the sun which cannot be, by logical deduction, a mere physical or inorganic form as uninformed science may tell us.

There is something wonderful and mysterious in the sun and there is some great significance in connecting the principle of the sun with the self of man, as there is also equal significance in connecting of the moon with the mind of man. You may know that during the full moon and the new moon days the mind gets affected. Those who are weaklings and who are not mentally strong will feel this impact more than normal persons. Normal persons do not feel it, but those who are not normal in their minds will feel the effect strongly. The moon, the stars, the sun and all the stellar system exert a mutual influence amongst themselves. You may know that during the full moon the ocean rises up, wells up as if to greet the rising moon and, naturally, the pull must be felt everywhere on earth, but you cannot see it.

Such is the invisible impact of the higher forces of nature, whose father is the sun. When the sun's influence is felt more and more, the self is supposed to also exert influence in its activity, operation. So, this particular day, we call Makara Sankranti, is holy.

The Upanishads and the Bhagavadgita tell us that those who die during these six months of the northern course of the sun, rise from the earthly entanglements to the higher regions presided over by noble deities, finally piercing through the orb of the sun. Crossing the barrier of the sun, the soul crosses still higher regions of resplendence and spiritual magnificence. The Upanishads and such scriptures describe that while the passage of the moon during the six months of the southern course of the sun is the passage of return to the earth, the passage through the sun is the passage to salvation, liberation of the spirit.

Those who cross the barrier of the sun come not to this mortal world again. They go to higher regions until the soul reaches universal salvation, until the soul becomes everything, enters into everything everywhere, as the Mundaka Upanishad tells us. Seekers of Truth, aspirants on the path of Yoga, devotees of God, lovers of mankind—all these have to pay tribute to the supreme father of energy, vitality, deathlessness, which is Surya. "*Suryah pratyaksha devata*": The sun is the visible God. If you have any visible God, it is the sun before you. You cannot see God in His pristine excellence, but you can see God through the operation of his powers in nature. In the Purusha Sukta, the sun is compared to the eyes of the Virat Purusha, the Cosmic Person. These are true comparisons and symbols which give us an idea of the magnitude and the importance

of the sun in our life. People pray that their death should take place during the six-month period of the northern movement of the sun. In the Mahabharata we are told that Bhishma waited for his departure until the sun moved to the north. So there is not merely an astronomical or physical significance to our lives in the movement of the sun towards the north, but there is also a biological, vital and psychological as well as spiritual meaning in this northern sojourn of the sun. Devotees and seekers of Yoga have, therefore, to bring to their minds this internal world and its significance which is beyond and farther than the physical world. The inner world is deeper than the outer.

In some of the scriptures we are told that there are twelve suns. Where are the twelve suns? We see only one sun in the sky. We can regard these twelve suns as the principle inherent within the physical sun, one behind the other. Just as we have the vital body behind the physical body, the mental body behind the vital body, the intellectual body behind the mental body, and the spiritual principle in us behind the intellectual body, so also there are energies behind energies, powers within powers, one transcending the other, until the twelfth sun is reached. It is identified with Maha-Vishnu or the Supreme Benefactor of Creation, the Ruler of the Cosmos. The twelfth sun is Vishnu Himself. He cannot be seen with the physical eyes because these esoteric suns are internal to the physical sun. You cannot see the vital body or the mental body, intellectual body or the spiritual principle in yourself. You cannot see anything inside the body. Inasmuch as we live in the physical body and see a physical world, we see also a physical sun. When we enter the vital body, we will enter

the vital world and see a vital sun, and so on and so forth, and when we reach the ultimate principle within us by the practice of Yoga, we will see the hidden essence behind the world. It is not a country; it is not a realm, a village or a city, or any locality populated by people. A marvellous ocean of light and energy is presided over by the twelfth sun, says the scripture.

There is much behind these great observances such as the Makara Sankranti and many others of a similar nature, in the spiritual destiny of man. We live a material life, not knowing what we really are, what the world is. We seem to be so ignorant of the values that are inherent and within us that we are dashed hither and thither by the winds of fate, controlling the physical world and the physical body of people. The more you move inward into yourself, the more you will also see the inner mystery of the world. When you go to the vital body within you, you can see the vital body of other people seated here. Because you are now in the physical body, you see the physical body of others. When you enter your mental body, you can see the minds of other people, and when you enter your intellectual body, you can see the intellects of other people seated here. And when you enter your spiritual principle within, you can see the spirituality in the world and the spiritual principle in the whole cosmos.

The twelve suns described in the Srimad Bhagavata and other scriptures are not twelve physical suns hanging in the sky, but twelve layers of principle, one behind the other, culminating in the spiritual Reality as the sun, wherein the individual, the world and God become one. In the physical realm you are different, the world is different and God is

different. There is no connection apparently between one and the other. When you go deeper, the three principles come nearer and nearer to one another. The world is absolutely isolated now. You have no control over it; it threatens you every moment. You are afraid of the world. Why? Because it is physically isolated from your physical body. And so God is also a transcendent something of which you have no concept today. But when you go inwardly by a power of concentration and meditation, you simultaneously, as a parallel movement, also enter into the subtler realms of the world outside, so much so that the outsidersness of the world becomes less in proportion to the internal experience that you have in your own self. The more you are physically conscious, the more the world also is external to you. The more you are inwardly conscious, the nearer is the world to you. The inimical world, the so-called unfriendly world, becomes friendly when you enter into the subtler and subtler realms of your own being. And when you reach the divine principle within you, the world does not merely remain as a friend but becomes an inseparable experience of your own. The world ceases to be an outer phenomenon. There will be no world as such. The thing called the world ceases to be the moment you enter into the spiritual principle within you, which is the same as the spiritual principle within the world, which is also the same as the spiritual principle of the universe. It is only here that God, world and the soul become united. This is the liberation that we are ultimately seeking.

So there is much of a message in this religious observance of Makara Sankranti and we shall all, as humble seekers of Truth, do well to contemplate this inner divinity

presiding over the solar symbol in our creation and endeavour to be more and more spiritual in our life—which is not to change to a different order or kind of life from the one in which we are, but to enter into a new meaning of life in this very life. To be spiritual, to enter the realm spiritual, is not to enter into an order of life as people mistakenly imagine. It is not shifting from place to place, moving from one corner of the earth to another corner of the earth, or changing the mode of living in this world. This is not spirituality. What is really meant is to enter one step inward into your life rather than move outwardly, diametrically. It is not a horizontal movement but an inward gesture of the soul towards its own centre.

It is difficult to understand what spirituality is, however much you may read philosophy. Spirituality is not a kind of life that you lead. It is the inner meaning of all kinds of life in the world. It is not isolated from other types of life. It is the meaning and significance behind every kind of life, whatever be your profession or the duties you perform in the world. There are people who imagine that spirituality is for the later period of one's life. It has nothing to do with 'doing'. As I mentioned to you, it is the significance behind what you are and what you do. So you cannot fix it for a period of time—tomorrow or the day after. No such thing is possible in spirituality, because the spiritual is the meaning behind things. How can you fix the meaning to a distant future, as if you do not want to live today? The meaning behind existence and activity is what is meant by the spiritual. If there is any worth in what you are and what you do, that is spirituality.

This is what the Upanishads and other scriptures like the Bhagavadgita speak of. They speak of the interpretation of God in the world—such as the sun whose northern movement commences today, and on account of which we regard this day as auspicious Makara Sankranti. So, you should take all this seriously to your heart on this auspicious day and contemplate for a moment the deeper truths of your own personal lives, the deeper truths of nature outside and the deeper truths implied in the relationship between yourselves and the nature outside. There are three implications, three meanings, three significances or three hidden realities—the one within ourselves, the second in nature outside, and the third which is implied in the relation between ourselves and the nature outside, which is called God, invisible to our physical perception.

Those who are Brahmacharis may do more Gayatri Mantra Japa, which is presided over by the sun, from today onwards. Those who have other Mantras as their Ishta-Mantra may do more Japa of that Mantra from today onwards. Those who are advanced enough to take to pure contemplation and meditation will do well to bring the true God into their lives—not the visible God or the imagined God, but the real God in the sense of what spirituality is—into their own lives as the meaning and the significance behind what anything is and what anything can be in this world. The spiritual reality, finally, is the significance behind what anything is and what anything does, whatever we are and whatever we do—which means to say, there is no life without spirituality because life without spirituality is a misnomer; it is meaningless; it is absurd. This is the

kind of life that every individual being has to endeavour to live, and we should utilise this opportunity as another happy occasion to contemplate God in His real nature, thus accelerating the speed of our movement towards Him, approximating ourselves more and more nearer to that Supreme Absolute and making our life blessed by living it practically in our day-to-day existence, and thus also to assist the atmosphere around so that we and all people in the world may become fit for the supreme union with that ideal Godhead, the Absolute. We pray that by this influence which we exert in the world, love, solidarity and peace may prevail everywhere.

SIVA—THE MYSTIC NIGHT *

We conceive God as glory, as creativity and as austerity. Vishnu is glory and magnificence, Brahma is creativity force, and Siva is austerity and renunciation. You might have heard it said that God is the embodiment of six attributes of which renunciation is one. You will be wondering how God can renounce things. He is not a Sannyasin. He is not an ascetic like a Vairagin or a Sadhu. What is He going to renounce? How do you conceive Siva as an austere Yogin or a renunciate? What does He renounce? The all-pervading Almighty, what has He to give up or abandon? Here is the secret of what renunciation is! It is not renunciation of anything, because there is nothing outside Him; renunciation does not mean abandonment of an object. If that had been the definition of renunciation, that cannot apply to God. God does not renounce or abandon any object, because all objects are a part of His Cosmic Body. Then how do you represent God as an embodiment of Vairagya (dispassion)? Bhagavan, who is endowed with 'Bhaga' or glories of a sixfold nature, is also an embodiment of Vairagya. Do you identify Him with a Sannyasin, possessing nothing? No, never. God is the possessor of all things. Then, how can you call Him a renunciate, a Sannyasin or a Vairagin? The secret behind the concept or the consciousness of Vairagya, renunciation is here, in the identification of this attribute with God. It is only when we interpret things in terms of God that things

* A talk given on the 22nd of February, 1973, a week before Mahasivaratri.

become clear. Otherwise, we get confused. We cannot know what goodness is, we cannot know what evil is, we cannot know what virtue is, unless we refer all these values of life to the concept of God in His Perfection. The only standard of reference for us in all matters of life's values, is the existence of God. So, the concept of renunciation, which has been very much misused, also gets rectified, clarified and purified when it is understood with reference to the existence of God whose special manifestation, in this context, is known as Lord Siva.

God does not renounce anything. Then, in that case what is renunciation in this context? It is the freedom from the consciousness of externality. This is called Vairagya. How can you abandon things? All things are there in front of you, like trees in a forest or stones in the jungle. There is nothing like abandonment of things, because they are internally related to you. Nobody can renounce anything, because everything in this world is connected to everything else. Then what is Vairagya? Vairagya is not renunciation of any object; it is impossible. Everything clings to you. But the idea that things are outside you, makes you get attached to them. This false attachment is Raga, and its absence is Vi-raga. The condition of Vi-raga is Vairagya. As God has no consciousness of externality, because everything is embodied in Him, there cannot be a greater renunciate than God. And in as much as this Consciousness of God is the highest form of Wisdom, He is the repository of Jnana.

In our religious tradition, Lord Siva is represented as an aspect of God, the Almighty. He presents before us the ideal of supreme renunciation born of Divine Realisation

—not born of frustration, not born of an escapist attitude, not born of defeatism, but born of an insight into the nature of things, a clear understanding of the nature of life and the wisdom of existence in its completeness. This is the source of Vairagya, or renunciation. You do not want anything, not because you cannot get things, but because you have realised the interconnectedness of things and the unity of all purpose in consciousness. All desires get hushed, sublimated and boiled down to the divine Being only when this realisation comes. God does not possess things. Possession is a relationship of one thing with another thing. But, God is super-relative. That is why we call Him the Absolute—He is not relative. Anything that is related to something else comes under the category of relative. God is not related to anything else, because He is All-comprehensive. And, thus, in His all-comprehensive Absoluteness, which is height of wisdom conceivable, there is also the concomitant character of freedom from the consciousness of externality, and therefore, as a corollary, freedom from attachment to anything. Thus Lord Siva is the height of austerity, Master Yogin, portrayed as seated in a lotus pose, as the king of all ascetics; not that He has the desire for self-control, but He is what self-control is itself. He does not practise self-control. Self-control itself is symbolised in the personality of Lord Siva. Such a wondrous concept of a glorious majestic picture of the Almighty, as Lord Siva, is before us for adoration during Mahasivaratri.

We observe fast during the day and vigil during the night. The idea is that we control the senses, which represent the outgoing tendency of our mind, symbolised in

fasting, and we also control the Tamasic inert condition of sleep to which we are subject every day. When these two tendencies in us are overcome, we transcend the conscious and the unconscious levels of our personality and reach the superconscious level. While the waking condition is the conscious level, sleep is the unconscious level. Both are obstacles to God-realisation. We are shifted from one condition to another. We are shunted, as it were, from waking to sleep and from sleep to waking, every day. But the super-conscious is not known to us. The symbology of fast and vigil on Sivaratri is significant of self-control; Rajas and Tamas are subdued, and God is glorified. The glorification of God and the control of the senses mean one and the same thing, because it is only in God-consciousness that all senses can be controlled. When you see God, the senses melt like butter melting before fire. They cannot exist any more. All the ornaments become the solid mass of gold when they are heated to the boiling point. Likewise, in the furnace of God-consciousness, the sense-energies melt into a continuum of universality.

In the famous Rudra-Adhyaya or the Satarudriya of the Yajur Veda, we have a majestic, universalised description of Lord Siva, a chant which we are accustomed to every day in the temple. Only those who know what Sanskrit is, what the Vedas are and what worship is, can appreciate what this Satarudriya chant also is. It is one of the most powerful prayers ever conceived by the human mind. It is filled with a threefold meaning. According to the culture of this country, everything is threefold—objective, subjective and universal. Everything in the world, from the smallest to the biggest, has an objective character, a subjective

character and an universal character. Objectively you are something, subjectively you are another thing and universally you are a third thing. It all depends upon the point of view from which you interpret a particular thing, person or object. When you objectively interpret a thing, it looks like one thing; when you subjectively analyse it, it is another thing; and from the universal point of view, it is a third something altogether.

Likewise, this Mantra, the Satarudriya of the Yajurveda, a hymn to Lord Siva, has an objective meaning, a subjective meaning and a divine, supreme, supra-mental, universal meaning. Objectively, it is a prayer for the control of the forces of nature. Subjectively, it is a prayer for self-control and the rousing of the spiritual consciousness. Universally, it is a surge of the soul towards God-realisation. It has an Adhiyajnika, Adhibhautika, Adhidaivika and Adhyatmika meaning, as we usually put it. It has a tremendous meaning. The Vedas, the Mantras of the Vedas, are filled with such threefold or fourfold meaning. Hence it is difficult to understand the full meaning of any Mantra of the Veda. "*Ananta vai vedah*": Infinite is the meaning of the Vedas. The meaning of the Vedas is infinite. It has no end at all. It is mathematics; it is chemistry; it is physics; it is Ayurveda; it is psychology; it is metaphysics; it is philosophy; it is spirituality; it is meditation; it is love; it is ecstasy. You will find everything in every Mantra of the Veda. All depends upon how you look upon it, how you feel it. A person may be a father, he may be a brother, he may be a son, he may be a friend, but all the while he is one and the same person. Attitudes are different on account of the various relationships. So the Rudra Adhyaya before us

is a majestic prayer for world peace, international peace, subjective peace, universal peace and God-consciousness.

It is difficult to chant this Veda Mantra called the Satarudriya, because it requires a training—as in music, for example. Everybody cannot sing. It requires tremendous training for years together. Likewise, the chanting of the Mantras of the Veda requires training for years together, and not for a few days only. Just as one who does not know how to sing will make a jarring noise and you will like to get up and go away rather than listen to it, so also when you chant the Mantra wrongly, the gods will get up and go away. They will not bear it any more. Hence, it requires training. But once it is properly learnt, it becomes a protection for you from catastrophes of every kind—physical, psychological and what not. So, those who know may chant it, recite it and take part in the recitation of it every day in the temple, at least during the worship on Mahasivaratri.

Those who cannot do this because it is difficult, can chant the Mantra ‘Om Namah Sivaya’, the Panchakshara Mantra of Lord Siva with Om preceding it. It is a Kavacha, a kind of armour that you put on. This armour will protect you from danger of every kind. It will protect you and also all those whom you want to be protected. It will protect your family; it will protect your country; it will protect the whole world. It can cease wars and tensions of every kind, provided you offer the prayers wholeheartedly from the bottom of your heart. Collective prayer is very effective. If a hundred persons join together and pray, it will have a greater effect than one person praying. Of course, if that single person is very powerful, even one person’s

prayer is all right. But where personalities have their own weaknesses and foibles, it is better that people have congregational prayer. When all the minds are put together they form a great energy. It surges forth into God.

So, during this period preceding Sivaratri, prayer is to be offered to Lord Siva as the Master of Yogin, as the incarnation of all virtues and powers, as a facet of the Almighty Lord. The glory of Lord Siva is sung in the Siva Purana, in the Yajur Veda Rudra Adhyaya, as I mentioned, and in the Mahabharata. You will be wonderstruck at the force with which Vyasa and other sages sing the glories of God—of Vishnu, of Narayana, of Siva, of Devi in the various Puranas and epics—because these masterpieces have been written by those who had the vision of God. Only one who has the vision of God can express with a soulful force. Otherwise, it will be an empty sound without much significance and thought. So, chant the Mantra ‘Om Namah Sivaya’ as many times as possible every day, mentally or even verbally as is convenient, with self-control—which means to say, without any thought of sense-object. If you chant the Mantra together with the thought of sense-objects, then there is divided devotion. It is like dividing the course of a river in two different directions so that the force of the waters gets lessened. Suppose you have five sense-objects, and towards all of them your senses are running, and you are thinking of God also at the same time—then energy is divided, concentration becomes weak and meditation is not successful. No meditation will become successful if the senses are active, because the senses oppose the effort at meditation. While meditation is the collective force of the

mind concentrating itself on God-consciousness, the senses, when they are active, do the opposite of meditation and you become a tremendous extrovert. You are connected to the objects of sense rather than the universal concept which is God. God is unity, whereas sense objects are multiplicity. They are the opposite of what you are aiming at in your spiritual life.

With moderate behaviour in every manner in your spiritual life, you will attain success. As the Bhagavadgita beautifully puts it, “Moderate in your eating, moderate in your activity, moderate in your speech, moderate in your sleep”—form the golden mean, the *via-media*, the golden path. God is the harmony of all powers in the universe. Harmony means the middle course—neither this extreme nor that extreme. You cannot say whether it is or it is not. We do not know what it is. As Buddha said, “‘Nothing is’, is one extreme; ‘everything is’, is another extreme. God is in the middle. Truth is in the middle.” So, the middle path is the best path, which is the path of austerity with understanding. This is the characteristic of the middle path. When there is understanding without austerity, it is useless. When there is austerity without understanding, that is also useless. There must be austerity with understanding and understanding with austerity, knowledge with self-control and self-control with knowledge; that is wisdom. Knowledge with self-control is called wisdom, whereas knowledge without self-control is mere dry intellectuality. That is of no use. And austerity without understanding is a kind of foolishness. It will have no proper result.

Lord Siva is not merely an austere Being but also a repository of Knowledge. All worshippers of knowledge

also worship Lord Siva, as He is the God of all students, scholars and seekers of wisdom and knowledge. Thus, Mahasivaratri is a very blessed God-sent opportunity for us. So on this day, pray to Lord Siva with all your heart, with all your soul, fully trusting on the might of God, wanting nothing from the objects of sense, and delighted within that the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand. God is bound to come. The powers of the cosmos are everywhere and they can be invoked at any time by us, provided we are strong enough in our will and in the method of invocation. We are blessed because we live in the Kingdom of God. We are blessed because we are seekers of Truth. We are blessed because we are disciples of a great Master. We are blessed, thrice blessed, four-times, five-times blessed because we are seeking God who also seeks everything in this creation. God seeks the world and the world seeks God. This is the mystery of creation, the subtlety of the spiritual path and the glory of the meditative life. Jnana and Vairagya combined is Lord Siva, who is worshipped on Mahasivaratri day.

Lord Siva is easily pleased. He is called Asutosh. Asutosh means 'easily pleased'. He is not a difficult Person. You can quickly please Lord Siva. If you call Him, He will come. Sometimes He is also called 'Bhole Baba'—a very simple, not complicated Person. He comes to help you, even unasked. He helped the Pandavas. The Pandava brothers were in war with the Kauravas in the Mahabharata battle, and Lord Siva helped them without their knowing that the help was being offered. Lord Siva helped the Pandavas invisibly—and why would He not help us? He

helps all those who tread the righteous path. So let us tread the path of righteousness and be recipients of Divine Grace.

We may look at the whole thing from another angle of vision. The Sanskrit word ‘Sivaratri’ means ‘the night of Siva’. On this holy day we are to fast during the day and keep vigil during the night. You may be wondering why Siva is connected with the night and not with the day—otherwise we could observe vigil during daytime and fast during the night. Instead of that, why has the whole thing been put topsy-turvy? Siva being connected with night has a highly spiritual and mystical connotation. It is not that divinity as manifest in the form of Lord Siva has any special connection with the period we call night. If you study deeply the Upanishads and such mystical texts of high spiritual significance, you will realise that the Supreme Being, the Absolute, is designated in its primordial condition as a Supreme Darkness due to excess of light. This adjective or qualification ‘due to excess of light’ must be added. It is darkness because of the excess of light. When you look at the sun directly for a few minutes and then look elsewhere, you will see only darkness. The sun has dazzled you to such an extent that all else appears as darkness. It is said in the Mahabharata that when Lord Sri Krishna showed the Cosmic Form in the court of the Kauravas, everything was dark, as it were. The intensity of the light was such that it looked like darkness to the eyes of man. In one of the famous creation-hymns of the Rigveda we have a similar reference made to the original condition of creation. There is the hymn of the Veda called the Nasadiya Sukta, wherein it is said, “*Tama asit tamasa gudhamagre*”: Darkness there was; at first concealed in

darkness. According to us, light is perception of objects, and therefore non-perception of objects is regarded by us as night, because knowledge or consciousness unrelated to the perceptual process is unknown to the human mind.

Generally, to know is to know an object; and if it is not to know an object, it is not to know anything at all. For example, take the state of deep sleep. Why do we fall asleep? Do you know the reason? What is the cause for our going to sleep every night? Where is the necessity? The necessity is psychological and, to some extent, highly metaphysical. The senses cannot always continue perceiving objects, because perception is a fatiguing process. The whole body, the whole nervous system, the entire psychological apparatus becomes active in the process of the perception of objects. And without our knowing what is happening, the senses get tired. They cannot go on contemplating things all twenty-four hours of the day. Why should they not be contemplating objects of sense throughout the day, all twenty-four hours of the day? The reason is that perception is an unnatural process from the point of view of consciousness as such. Perception of an object is the alienation of an aspect of our personality through the avenue of a particular sense in respect of its object. All this is difficult for many to grasp. This is a highly psychological secret. Consciousness is indivisible. This is a simple fact. Many of you would have heard about it. Consciousness is undivided; it is incapable of division into parts. So it cannot be cut into two sections—subject and object. On the basis of this fact there cannot be a division between the seer and the seen in the process of

perception. To make this clear, let us see what happens in dream.

In dream we see objects like mountains, rivers, persons, etc. But they are not there. Things which are not there become visible in dream. Now, did the mountain you saw in dream exist? It did not. But did you see it? Yes, you saw it. How did you see, when it was not there? Is it possible to see a non-existent object? How can non-existent things be seen? It is contradictory statement to say that non-existent things can be seen. What do you see when things are not there? You will be wonderstruck! What happens in dream is that there is an alienation of the mind into the objects of perception; and the mind itself becomes the mountain there. There is tension created due to the separation of a part of the mind into the object and a part of it existing as the perceiving subject. That is why we are restless in dream. We cannot be happy. It is neither waking nor it is sleep. It is very difficult to be happy in this condition because a tense situation of consciousness is created. What happened in dream, the same happens to us in the waking condition also. Just as the mind in dream divided itself into two sections—the perceiving subject and the object that was seen—in the waking state also, it divides itself into the subject and object. It is like a divided personality. It is as if your own personality has been cut into two halves, of which one half is the ‘seer’ and the other half is the ‘seen’. It is as if one part of your personality gazes at another part of your own personality. You are looking at your own self as if you are a different person. You are objectifying yourself; you alienate yourself. What

can be more false and undesirable than this situation? It is a mental sickness.

Now you are able to understand this situation in dream on account of the comparison that you make between waking and dream. When you wake up, you do not see the dream objects, and then you begin to analyse the condition in which you were when you were dreaming. You say, when you are awake, that you are in a world of reality, whereas in dream you were in a world of unreality. How do you know that the world of dream was a world of unreality? It is merely because you compare it with the waking condition which you consider as real. How do you know that the world of waking is real? You cannot say anything about this, because there is nothing with which you can compare it, as you did in the case of the dream. If you can know another standard of reference, higher than the waking condition, you would have been able to make a judgement of it—whether the waking condition is real or unreal, good or bad and so on. When you are dreaming, you do not know that the objects are unreal. You consider them as real and you take it for granted. The comparison between the dream and the waking world is responsible for our judgement of the unreality of the dream world. But with what will you compare the waking world? There is at present nothing to compare it with, and therefore you are in a condition which is self-sufficient, self-complacent and incapable of rectification.

When you feel that you are perfectly right, nobody can teach you. Nobody can set you right, because you think that you are right. The question of teaching arises only when you feel that you are ignorant and you need teaching. The

waking world is only an indication as to what could be happening or what is perhaps happening. You cannot know what is happening actually, unless you transcend this condition, which you have not done yet. But, by the conclusion that you can draw from an analysis of the dream condition, you can conclude to some extent that in the waking state also you are in a fool's paradise. What is the guarantee that you will not wake up again from this waking world, into something else? Just as in dream you did not know that you were dreaming, in this waking also you do not know that you are in a state similar to dream. You think that this world in waking is a hard fact and a solid reality, just as you believed the world of dream also to be real. To the senses an absence of perception is equal to darkness—the darkness that we experience in deep sleep.

Let us come back to the subject of Sivaratri, the night of Siva. When you perceive an object, you call it waking. When you do not perceive it, it is darkness. Now in the waking condition—the so-called waking world—you see present before you a world of objects, as you are intelligent. In dream also there is a sort of intelligence. But in deep sleep there is no intelligence. What happens? The senses and the intellect withdraw themselves into their source. There is no perceptual activity, and so the absence of perception is equated to the presence of darkness. The cosmic Primeval condition of the creative will of God, before creation—a state appearing like darkness, or night—is what we call the condition of Siva. It is very important to remember that the state of Siva is the primordial condition of the creative will of God, where there is no externality of perception, there being nothing

outside God; and so, for us, it is like darkness or night. It is Siva's night—Sivaratri. For Him it is not night. It is all Light. Siva is not sitting in darkness. The Creative Will of God is Omniscience, Omnipotence, Omnipresence—all combined. Sometimes we designate this condition as Isvara.

The Supreme Absolute, which is indeterminable, when it is associated with the Creative Will with a tendency to create the Cosmos, is Isvara in Vedantic parlance, and Siva in Puranic terminology. This is the very precise condition described in the Nasadiya Sukta of the Veda as Tamas or darkness. This is, to repeat again, darkness due to the excess of the Light of the divine Absolute. If you look at God, what will you see? You will see nothing. The eyes cannot see Him because He is such dazzling light. When the frequency of light gets intensified to a very high level, light will not be seen by the eyes. When the frequency is lowered and comes down to the level of the structure of the retina of the eye, only then you can see light. There are various kinds of lights, various intensities or frequencies, and the higher frequencies are incapable of cognisance by the senses on account of their structural deformity. So if you see God, you will see nothing.

As a matter of fact, we are seeing God even now. But we are not able to recognise Him. The world that we see before us is God Himself. There is no such thing as the world. The world does not exist. It is only a name that we have given to the Supreme Being. Call the dog a bad name and then hang it. Who asked you to call it a world? Why do you give such a name? You yourself have given it a name and say, "Oh, this is the world!" You can call it by another name. You are free to give any name to it. Really there is

no such thing as a world. It does not exist. The world is only a name that you give to a distortion created in the perception of your consciousness due to its isolation into the subject and the object.

To come back to the analogy of dream again, the mountain that you saw in dream was not a mountain; it was only consciousness. There was no mountain. But it looked like a hard something in front of you, against which you could hit your dream head. You see buildings in dream. It was consciousness that projected itself into the hard substance of bricks and buildings, mountains and rivers, persons and animals, etc., in dream. The world of dream does not exist. You know it very well, and yet it appears. What is it that appears? The consciousness itself projects itself outwardly, in space and time created by itself, and then you call it a world. Likewise, in the waking state also the Cosmic Consciousness has projected itself into this world. The world is Cosmic Consciousness. The Supreme Divinity Himself is revealed here in the form of this world. As the dream world is nothing but consciousness, the waking world also is nothing but consciousness, God. This is the essence of the whole matter. So you are seeing God. I am right in saying that. What you see in front of you is God only. It is not a building. There is no such thing as a building. But you call it a building due to an error of perception, due to ignorance and due to not being able to analyse the situation in which you are involved. We are caught up in a mess, in a paradox, in a confusion; and the confusion has entered us, entered into the bones, as it were, into the very fibre of our being and made us the fools that we are today. It is to awaken ourselves from this ignorance

and to come to a state of that supreme blessedness of the recognition of God in this very world, that we practise Sadhana. The highest of Sadhanas is meditation on God.

On Sivaratri, therefore, you are supposed to contemplate God as the creator of the world, as the Supreme Being unknown to the Creative Will, in that primordial condition of non-objectivity which is the darkness of Siva. In the Bhagavadgita there is a similar verse which has some sort of a resemblance to this situation. “*Ya nisa sarvabhutanam tasyam jagarti samyami; yasyam jagrati bhutani sa nisa pasyato muneh*”: That which is night to the ignorant, is day to the wise; and that which is day to the wise, is night to the ignorant. The ignorant feel the world as daylight and a brightly illumined objective something; and that does not exist for a wise person. The wise see God in all His effulgence; and that does not exist for the ignorant. While the wise see God, the ignorant do not see Him; and while the ignorant see the world, the wise do not see it. That is the meaning of this verse in the second chapter of the Gita. When we see sunlight, the owl does not see it. That is the difference. The owl cannot see the sun, but we can. So, we are owls, because we do not see the self-effulgent sun—the Pure Consciousness. And he who sees this sun—the Pure Consciousness, God—is the sage, the illumined adept in Yoga.

Sivaratri is a blessed occasion for all to practise self-restraint, self-control, contemplation, Svadhyaya, Japa and meditation, as much as possible within our capacity. We have the whole of the night at our disposal. We can do Japa or we can do the chanting of the Mantra, ‘Om Namah

Sivaya'. We can also meditate. It is a period of Sadhana. Functions like Mahasivaratri, Ramanavami, Janmashtami, Navaratri are not functions in the sense of festoons and celebrations for the satisfaction of the human mind. They are functions of the Spirit; they are celebrations of the Spirit. In as much as we are unable to think of God throughout the day, for all the 365 days of the year, such occasions are created so that at least periodically we may recall to our memory our original destiny, our Divine Abode. The glory of God is displayed before us in the form of these spiritual occasions.

RAMA—THE APOTHEOSIS OF HUMAN PERFECTION *

Let us observe this auspicious occasion of Sri Ramanavami as a moment of contemplation on a special spark of Divinity that made its advent on the earth. Popularly speaking, in ancient historical times, to emphasise the historical advent of this great Divinity on earth has been the exoteric side of the epics as people generally understand it. This popular emphasis on the incarnations of God on earth has taken the form of epics like the Ramayana. We are told in the Ramayana of Sage Valmiki, in the earliest of these documents, that it was a history par excellence, a history of a chronological procession of divine exploits which is what we generally mean by a divine epic. It is believed that the earliest record of the history of Rama, the Ramayana of Valmiki, was written during the lifetime of Rama Himself. It was not a biography written later on, after several years. It was composed then and there by a contemporary of Rama, Sage Valmiki, and so it is but proper that devotees take it as the most authentic of documents pertaining to the history or life story of Rama. Surprising though it may appear, this master poet who composed the Ramayana was an illiterate brute in his earlier life, but suddenly transformed into a Master whose genius is today regarded as incomparable in the history of Sanskrit literature. This total transformation by a magical touch, as it were, was given to Valmiki by another

* Sri Ramanavami message given on the 23rd of March, 1972.

genius, Sage Narada. One genius created another genius, and this genius has written an epic, stirring the soul of man, on a genius of human perfection, Sri Rama Himself. And so, even today a contemplation on these aspects of holiness and perfection brings us into contact with a unique feature, namely humanity as it ought to be properly understood and brought to bear on practical life.

The whole of the Ramayana is an epic of humanity. Humanity does not mean mankind, but that which particularly characterises human nature. It is in this sense that Sri Rama is oftentimes called the paragon of humanity, an example of the perfection of human nature. This perfection of human nature is not inclusive of the foibles of man in his lower endowments. In the majestic words of Valmiki with which the epic commences, we are given a description of what this perfection of humanity is, as an answer given by Sage Narada to a question put by Sage Valmiki as to who is the ideal of human nature. “Who do you think, O Sage, is the perfect embodiment of humanity in this world, and can you give me an example of such perfection?” was the question put by Valmiki to Narada. And then, Narada commences a dignified description of a personality whom today we know and adore as Sri Rama. That majestic feature of bodily personality, the ideal perfection of physiological structure, the profundity and beauty of understanding, dignity of behaviour, exemplary nature of conduct—to put it in one word, ‘perfection’ as conceived or as conceivable by the human understanding—this is what comes forth as an answer from the great Sage Narada.

We have two epics, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, just as in the West they have two epics, the Iliad and the Odyssey. These two parallel movements of epic stories, known as the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, give us a complete picture of the process of the advancement of the human soul towards its Perfection. It is not to be taken as a surprise that the culture of Bharatavarsha is a culture of the Spirit, so that anything that is said and done or believed in, is directly or indirectly connected with the march of the Spirit towards the recognition of its Perfection. We have no other culture here except the culture of the Spirit. A connecting of the visible phenomena with what underlies the phenomena is the significance of the epics. And these two masterstrokes of genius given to us by Valmiki and Vyasa, in the form of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, give us the religion of India.

There were some over-enthusiastic orientalist in the West particularly, and sometimes in the East also, who began to believe that the culture of India is in the Vedas and the Upanishads. But, if we bestow a little thought on the actual situation, it will become clear that if the Vedas and the Upanishads were the sole basis of the culture of India, the Indian culture would have been wiped out like the cultures of Egypt, Greece or Rome. These cultures are only names to us now. They do not actually exist any more. They vanished in the process of time on account of their inflexibility, their rigidity of character and their emphasis on a particular aspect of human life. If, as people often believe, the dicta of the Vedas and Upanishads alone were to be taken as the foundation of Indian culture, there would

have been no Indian culture today. It would have gone to the winds, because what we have in the Vedas and the Upanishads are 'principles' like theorems of geometry or algebra, which are wonderful enough, and which are the basis of all scientific approaches and discoveries. Nevertheless, they are principles, and the masses do not live on principles. When we talk or when we move about in the streets, we do not think of the principles behind speaking and walking. We work with the peculiar manifestation of our personality which is spontaneous in its nature. Principles somehow have the aroma of fixity and rigidity. They cannot be changed. But, emotion seeks a spontaneous expression of itself and this feature, this peculiarity of human nature, was taken notice of by the sages of the Vedic times.

In the Srimad Bhagavata, one among the eighteen Puranas, at the very commencement itself we are told that Vyasa felt the necessity of composing the Mahabharata and the Srimad Bhagavata. And for a similar reason was the Ramayana composed. We believe what we see with our eyes, what we hear with our ears, what we perceive with the other organs, and what we feel from our hearts. We are incapable of believing anything else. Pure principles, though they may be eternal facts, are incapable of evoking the emotion of man. Hence, even the elite and the intelligentsia of mankind today think of God in the epic parlance, and not in the Upanishadic parlance. When you and I think of God, we think of the epic God only and not the Upanishadic God or the Vedic God. The meaning is that we think of a humanised relationship between ourselves and the Creator. When we de-humanise the Creator or take

Him above what the human mind is capable of conceiving, the relationship between man and God gets snapped, and the vast majority amongst us, excepting perhaps the very few spiritual heroes, fall down to a level lower than that of the human being. So the need was felt to bring home to the mind of man that concept of Perfection and Divinity which can be contained in the human mind, in the form of human perfection, animated by the force of that which is superhuman. Such was the personality of Sri Rama, the superhuman element infusing a personality of a human being. It is difficult to understand this peculiar blend, just as it is difficult to understand masters, sages and adepts in yoga and even spiritual life. This is because they are a blend of what we see and what we cannot see. What we see is the form of their lives and what we cannot see is the essence, the meaning and the significance of what they live.

In the Ramayana, we have such a contradictory picture of the personality of Rama, presented by Valmiki, where we are asked sometimes to look upon him as the perfected man and sometimes as a perfection of Divinity itself manifest. It is in the Yuddha Kanda of Valmiki's Ramayana, (I am not talking of Tulasidas's Ramayana because that has a different approach altogether) for the first time, we have a proclamation of the divinity of Rama, where Mandodari in deep sorrow over the death of Ravana, her husband, exclaims that it is Narayana that has come as Nara which fact is unknown to Ravana and due to his ignorance, he has mistaken Rama for a human being. The contradiction which Valmiki brings out is that while he puts these words in the mouth of Mandodari, he puts a different type of statement in the mouth of Rama himself. When the

whole theme is over, the drama played out, Brahma comes and speaks to Rama, “Thou art Lord Narayana, Thy play in this world is over, and we seek Thy entry back into Vaikuntha.” And Rama says in reply, “What are you speaking? I do not know anything. Am I Narayana? I think I am only a man—*atmanam manusham manye*. Whatever you may think or speak about me, I think I am a man, I am a human being.” These are the words of Rama himself. While Rama himself thinks that he is only a man, Brahma speaks of Him as Narayana and wants Him to go back to His Abode, as His drama in this world is over. These interesting dramatic contradictions are brought into play by the genius of Valmiki, deliberately, to fulfill the purpose of the epic. Otherwise, there would be no meaning in the play itself.

It was not at all given to Rama to proclaim Himself as Narayana. That was not the purpose of the Avatara at all. It was to defeat the purpose of Ravana who had a poor opinion of human beings. Being a demon, he thought that human beings and monkeys were only a morsel of food for him. On account of this, he deliberately omitted men and monkeys from the list of his possible future enemies when he asked for boons from Brahma. “May I not have death from any one—Gods, Kinnaras, Kimpurushas, Daityas, Danavas, all superhuman beings,” was the boon he asked. But he never said anything about monkeys and men. He thought: “They are only food for me; what need to fear them.” Now, this neglect, this contemptuous attitude of Ravana towards aspects through which God could manifest Himself and does manifest Himself, was the occasion for God Himself to teach humanity that He can work miracles

even through the lowest of His manifestations. And the other side of the teaching of the epic is that through humanity we reach Divinity.

Sometimes, we are told that the ten Avatars—incarnations of Vishnu beginning from the incarnation as Fish, the Matsya Avatara; the incarnation as Tortoise, the Kurma Avatara; the incarnation as Boar, the Varaha Avatara; and so on—represent the process of the evolution of the human consciousness to the perfection of its Realisation. From this point of view of understanding of human nature and its evolution, the stage which was enacted by Rama, God in human form was the penultimate step which Consciousness takes in its attempt at Self-realisation. He showed what human perfection is and how it becomes a stepping-stone to divine perfection. This we can know only when we read the whole of the Ramayana from the beginning to the end, reading also between the lines. Most of us do not know what the whole Ramayana is. We know only some outline—that Rama was a son of Dasaratha, he learnt archery from Visvamitra, married Sita, who was stolen by Ravana, and then he befriended Sugriva and Hanuman, crossed the ocean, went to Lanka and then killed Ravana. This is all the Ramayana we know. Everyone knows only this much of it. But this is not the whole of Ramayana, whether it is the Ramayana of Tulasidas, Valmiki or anyone else. The real Ramayana is the spirit that is manifest in its words when we read the original of the Masters. Whether it is Kamban's Ramayana or Tulasidas's Ramayana or Valmiki's Ramayana, ultimately it makes no difference because it is said that all great men think alike. All these masters thought alike and

they had a common purpose. One wrote in Tamil, another wrote in Hindi and the third wrote in Sanskrit, but the spirit expressed by these is similar and common, and it is directed to the same purpose of transforming human nature into divine perfection.

I will now give an outline of the background of the writing of the Ramayana and the purpose behind the epics of India. The other more important aspect relevant to a Sadhaka or seeker of Truth is that Sri Ramanavami, the birthday of Sri Ramachandra, is a day for divine contemplation. It is an occasion for intensified contemplation on the Spirit, God, or Sri Rama, as we call Him. It is a day of self-control and an occasion to raise our emotions, feelings and understanding to the level of the understanding of Valmiki or Tulasidas or Kamban, or of Sri Rama Himself. These contemplations are processes by which Consciousness, our own Self, establishes relationship with the powers of the cosmos. The observation of the birthday of Sri Rama, or the celebration of Sri Ramanavami, is not a day of mere rejoicing or feasting, but a day of spiritual contemplation and self-restraint by which we become en rapport with the forces of the world. What was the power of Rama? Why was He so powerful and forceful? We say that He was an incarnation of God. But, why is God so powerful, while we are not? What is the difference? What makes these masters, heroes and incarnations centres of such energy, force and activity, while we are the contrary of it? The simple reason is that they are en rapport with the forces of the universe, while we are cut off from them. They are facing the light of the sun and so they drink the nectar of the rays of the sun. But we

turn our backs to the sun and see only darkness. This is the difference between mortal men and divine incarnations who are immortal, eternal emblems moving on this earth. So, in these contemplations today, as on similar such occasions, we should recharge the cells of our personality by introducing a new light of divinity into ourselves. Let not the day pass in waste, in idle talk or merely hearing a few words about the Ramayana from someone. These celebrations are only indications for you, pointers to you, to help you to raise yourself up to a state higher than you were yesterday. If your days have not been spent without getting at least an iota of satisfaction or contentment that you have become a worthy child of God, in His eyes, you should consider your life as unworthily spent.

One of the central questions in your spiritual diary should be, “What am I in the eyes of God?” But this question is never put and you do not want to know the answer. You always wish to know, “What am I in the eyes of people, in the eyes of my neighbours, in the eyes of the public? What does the country think about me? What do the vote-givers think about me? What is the international opinion about me?” Never for a moment do you think, “What does God think about me?” Let this be your contemplation. The moment you begin to know what God thinks about you, you will not speak afterwards; your mouth will be hushed. It will be hushed for two reasons. One reason is that you would look so small and insignificant, a nothing, and all your importance vanishes in toto when you compare yourself in His light. The other reason is that you would feel lifted up into a state of joy that the time has come for you to realise your true duty as a

human being, which is nothing but realisation of God. This is what Sri Rama teaches us in the Rama Gita, as His final message—how the soul should come out of the cage of flesh, like a lion breaking its boundaries and roaring in its majesty or power. The moment you begin to recognise your true status in this world, you become powerful, not because you possess large wealth or you have a seat in the Parliament or in the cabinet, but because you have a seat in the constitution of the universe. When this seat is given to you, you become a member of the government of the cosmos. And here the powers are not given by votes or by plebiscite. People do not raise hands to make you a member. Something else—mysterious and miraculous—takes place. Your cells become revitalised. They get charged with a power totally unknown up to this time. From where does this power come? It does not come from anywhere. You keep yourself open to the powers that are and allow them to enter into you, while up to this time you were preventing them from entering into you.

What are we doing now? It is something like building a house with four walls, without any ventilation, and sitting inside in pitch darkness while the sun is shining outside in all its might and glory. The sun has come up wanting to enlighten the whole world with its lustre and force. But we live in a dungeon, covering ourselves with a blanket and closing our eyes so that the energy and the light of the sun may not have any effect on our personality. This is what we do in our relationship with God and in our relationship with the forces of the universe. The forces of the universe are just here, within this hall—wherever we are. They are not far away in the skies. You can keep yourself open to them

or keep yourself shut to them. Thoughts which are directed to the body and to the centre of the personality called the ego, prevent the entry of universal forces into our personality, so that the more important we look in our own eyes, the more impervious we are to the entry of the forces of the cosmos. The bigger we are in the world, the worse we are from the point of view of spiritual strength and knowledge, because this self-importance, self-assertion, Ahamkara, personality-consciousness, body-consciousness, social-consciousness and status-consciousness—all these put together act as psychological barriers which shut off the forces of the cosmos from entering into us. These forces of the cosmos are not absent. They are just here, and the moment we think in terms of them, they enter into us. When we think in terms of our own personality, they run away from us. So contemplation on the Masters and Incarnations and the recognition of the forces of divinities which manifest as incarnations and sages are the ways in which a Sadhaka should observe Ramanavami, the day of God's incarnation or a celebration of a birthday of a superhuman Master. Our birthright is to imbibe the grace of the Masters, to assume the contour and personality equal to theirs, to attain Sarupya or equality of personality with them, to become like them and to imbibe their characteristics by meditation on them.

So the epic of Ramayana is a long meditation on the superior manifestation of God in the form of Sri Ramachandra. Terror was Rama, thunderbolt was Rama—says Valmiki. But butter was Rama, a rose petal was Rama, all compassion was Rama—says the same Sage Valmiki. In anger, Rama was fierce like fire—fire

comparable only with the fire during the dissolution of the cosmos, and at the same time nobody could be so compassionate, goodhearted and simple as Rama himself was. This is the dramatic contradiction of personality which Valmiki introduces into his epic, to bring out the greatness of the divine personality. What are the characteristics of great men? They are harder than a diamond but softer than a lotus petal. The great Masters are harder than a diamond and, therefore, you cannot do anything to them and they will never budge from their principles. You cannot shake them by your powerful logic and argumentation. This is only one side of these great Masters. The other side is that no person can be so good, merciful and tenderhearted as them, which characteristics are revealed in proper time. Such is the mysterious combination, a terrific manifestation of divinity combined with most perfect humane characteristics and features that we see in Sri Rama.

I had occasions to go through the beautiful descriptions in the Valmiki Ramayana in Sanskrit, but I had less opportunity to go through the Tulasidas Ramayana. I believe that the comparisons and descriptions are almost similar. Without telling you what they actually want to tell you—this is the peculiarity of poets in general—they imply their meaning in words which, without your knowing, influence your emotions and the total personality. Slowly, without your knowing what is happening, the whole personality is shaken up from beginning to end when you read the Ramayana. You come out burnt and burnished, beautified and purified, because of a very graduated purification process which you undergo in your emotions and your understanding, when you pass from Kanda to

Kanda in the Ramayana, until you reach the Pattabhisheka Kanda, the crowning glory of the Ramayana epic.

I shall conclude with a prayer and a request. We are humble seekers; we are not Masters. We are small people trying to follow the footsteps of great Masters like Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj, in our own humble, faltering way, trying to raise our minds to true devotion to God. In this attempt, let us be honest to ourselves. This is my prayer to my own self and to all. *Honesty of conscience* is the watchword of a Sadhaka. Honesty of conscience has a very important significance which we have to make note of. Many times we may look honest, but we are not really honest in the deepest core of our feelings. Then it upsets the whole structure of our endeavour in the life spiritual, because spiritual life is nothing but the life that we lead in the bottom of our being, and not the life that we live in our rooms or in our offices or colleges or factories. What our conscience speaks is our spiritual voice. And if our conscience is not honest and pure, well, you will see the sure outcome of it—an utter failure in the spiritual path. It is difficult to be true to one's conscience, because of the circumstances under which people generally live. The pressure of society, the needs of the body and the weaknesses of flesh are such that it is difficult to be true to one's conscience. It only means that it is difficult to live the spiritual life, to have divine characteristics imbibed into our personality, and to be a devotee of God. In short, it is difficult to realise God.

For this purpose—the purpose of overcoming these unavoidable limitations of our personality—the remedy is to contemplate on the lives of saints. What a difficult but

ideal life Saint Tulasidas lived! What a hard and painful life all our saints lived, in spite of the great obstacles placed on their path by the vast majority of the public! How difficult it is to be a man of God can be known only when we study the lives of saints. To be a man of God is to be a fool in the eyes of the public. This seems to be a necessary outcome of turning one's face towards God. "*Yasyaham anugrihnamī tasya vittam haramyaham.*" "When I want to shed My grace on any person, I deprive him of all his pleasure-centres," is a famous statement reported to have been made by Lord Narayana Himself as recorded in the Srimad Bhagavata. What are our pleasure-centres? We know them very well. The greatest fortress of our pleasure is our own personality-consciousness, our egoism. We have many other pleasure-centres, no doubt, but the greatest among all of them is what we call, in common parlance, Izzat, dignity of personality, self-respect. This self-respect was unknown to great masters and saints. They respected God and so they were humiliated in the eyes of people, put down as 'no-ones' in the eyes of the world. What torture and what suffering they underwent—it is something terrifying, if you think over it. We have only to read the lives of a few saints of the past. We can read even the life of such a recent personality as Swami Sivanandaji. While it is easy to think that we believe in God, it is really difficult to be true to the salt. Hence, may we take these auspicious occasions as occasions for honest Sadhana of our own conscience and spirit also, and not the Sadhana of the hands, the limbs and the feet alone. We have the Sadhana of the limbs of the body, in the form of ritualistic worship with waving the lights in the temple, opening a scripture and reading it loudly through the vocal organ, and paying obeisance

physically by Sashtanga Namaskara through the body. All these are beautiful, wonderful and very necessary. But they become null and void if the conscience is set at naught and is opposed in its spirit to all our outer performances of rituals and religious observances. God is within us, in the deepest root of our being, and to turn to Him would be to turn to ourselves, in our essence, finally. This should be the spirit of Sadhana and devotion to God—and nothing can be more difficult, because it is the death of the individual personality. “Die to live,” as Gurudev Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj used to say. If you want to live in the Eternity, you have to die to the temporal, which means to say that you should die to all that you regard as beautiful, meaningful and valuable in this world. Who can do this? No ordinary man is prepared for this. No ordinary mortal can have the courage, the power and the strength to face the weaknesses of flesh, the foibles of human nature and the impetuosity of the human ego. Who can face these powerful demons? Who can face Ravana? No one, not all the gods, not even Indra could face him. And who are we? It is not a joke to face and overcome these great negative forces. They are awful—this is the only word we can use here. They are so terrifying that even a mere thought of them is enough to make one run away. Such is the terror that one has to meet with before one becomes fit for God-realisation. “The fear of the Absolute,” said Plotinus, a great saint of the West. Entering the Absolute is like entering a lion’s den, from which you cannot come back. Fierce is the ocean, fierce is the lion, fierce is the conflagration of fire, fierce is the love of God. No one can love God, unless one is prepared to die, wholly and totally, to the so-called good, beautiful and pleasant in this world, to this body and to the ego. Hard is the job!

Difficult is the task! God's grace is the only saving factor. So, may we pray to Him, the Almighty, that He may bless us with this uncanny courage, knowledge and strength, that we may realise Him in all His Glory in this very birth.

SANKARA—THE GENIUS *

AN ANALYSIS OF CHRONOLOGICAL AND LOGICAL PROCESS

Today is Vaisakha Sukla Panchami, the fifth day in the bright fortnight in the month of April-May, when we celebrate the advent of the great Acharya Sankara who is often referred to, by his followers, as Bhashyakara (the commentator on the Prasthanas Traya—the Brahma Sutras, the Upanishads and the Bhagavadgita). The famous and unforgettable event of his life and work is a consequence of the chronology of social history as well as a consequence of the logic of human thought. The immortal service that he has done for the world is thus an outcome of a chronological process as well as a logical one.

First of all, let us see what the chronological significance of the work of Acharya Sankara is, in the social history of India in particular and the world in general. Chronology is the sequence of history, and if we trace back the condition of the human society, particularly in India, during the time of the most ancient of human conditions available to us for study—the time of the Vedas from where we begin the study of human history—we realise that there was, during the time of the sages of the Vedas, a spontaneous tendency to recognise God in creation. This is the specific characteristic of the time of the Veda Samhitas—to visualise and to behold the Creator in what is created, and to see the One in the many. Destiny, perhaps, willed

* Sankara Jayanti message given on the 17th of May, 1972.

that this should be the beginning of our cultural history so far as it can be recollected by our memories and available data, historically as well as archaeologically. The Samhitas of the Vedas are spontaneous hymns and prayers offered to God in His multifaceted manifestation as this cosmos. To the sages of the Veda Samhitas, the rise of the sun was a manifestation of God. It was the glorious God Aditya that was rising. The dawn was a manifestation of divinity. Similarly, the sunset had its own glory, revealing the divinity of God. The heat of summer, the pouring rains, the cold of winter, and the changing seasons—all that is visible as well as conceptual became a vehicle for enshrining devotion to God. It was a spontaneity of feeling which was, in a sense, a natural result of the intuition of the sages. Throughout the Samhitas, if we make a deep study of them, we will see spread out in various places, thoughts and devotional feelings in their various emphases and stresses, all beckoning the aspiration of the human soul to what is implied and what is hidden behind the manifested phenomena.

Now here, in this psychological situation of mankind, we have a twofold significance from the point of view of cultural history. On the one hand, it was a visible expression of an inner realisation by which the sages plumbed the depths of infinity and proclaimed for all eternity and to all mankind: “*Ekam sat viprah bahudha vadanti, Indram Varunam Mitram Agni...*” All the variety, whether in the field of the Adhidaiva (the transcendent, the presiding principle) or the Adhibhuta (the objective, the world) or the Adhyatma (the subjective, the individual), is a glorious facet or expression of the Supreme Being who is

designated in the very commencement of the Rig Veda as Ekam Sat—the One Being, without associating the Being with any cult, creed and religious faith. The most catholic definition of the Supreme Reality we have is given to us for the first time given in the body of the Rigveda Samhita: Ekam Sat—the One Being, One Reality, One Substance, One Existence that the sages recognise and designate as the manifold. In various ways they sing of the glories of this One Mighty Being. But on the other hand, for pure exoteric observation, it would rather look like an acceptance of polytheism or the worship of many gods, as if there is a real multiplicity of the realm of the Adhidaiva, as a counterpart to the multiplicity that we see in the realm of the Adhibhuta or the physical world. The variety of the physical world became the source of a susceptible feeling in the minds of people later on, through the passage of time, that, perhaps, the souls also are many and the gods also are many, because the objects in the world are many!

This is a slightly posterior period to that of the exuberance of the Veda Samhita Mantras wherein there was only a spontaneous spiritual outpouring of devotion to the One on account of Its having been recognised in realisation, in direct experience. But, when we make a study of these outpourings, they do not look like the manifestations of the One Experience. All study that is historical is exoteric, prosaic, mechanised and sensory, and hence the esoteric significance that was the background of the very origination of these Veda Mantras got lost in the process of time, in the passage of history. The outward form and the visible significance as hymns offered to the various centres of divinity—the many gods, as they usually say—got

emphasised, and these gods became not only objects of reverence, but also objects of fear. It was not that gods were always beneficent. They could also be wrathful. While in the earlier stages of the Veda Samhitas, it was not fear of God or even a reverence, in the ordinary sense of the term, cherished towards God that was the cause of these hymns, but an automatic outpouring in ecstatic poetry of a diviner experience felt within; later on, these recorded hymns became historical record of the utterances of the ancient masters. These Mantras which were visibly recorded for posterity became objects of study and also vehicles for invocation of the many gods. To the originators of these Mantras, the gods were not manifold; they were the many phases of the One. But, now, they lost their connection with the original unity or the background, and only the phases are seen as the multifarious divinities presiding over the quarters of the cosmos—Indra, Agni, Varuna, Mitra, Aryama and many such celestials. These deities began to be invoked through the very same Mantras which were originally the revelations of the sages. While in the original Samhitas, in their primordial condition, they were effects of a diviner experience, now they became a cause rather than an effect of an invocation of these multifarious gods. We invoke these gods by placation, by propitiation, by begging and by requesting them not to do us any harm. We pray: “Oh mighty God, save us from calamities, from catastrophes. Oh great God, give us all our needs and desires. May our wants be fulfilled.”

In a third stratum of thought in this march of social history, these very divinities which were thus propitiated, began to be recognised as being almost like human

individuals. Now they can get angry as any human being can get angry and they can also be pleased as any human being can be pleased. Perhaps they could even be bribed through various types of offering. Thus we hear of contention among the very gods and fights among the celestials, which is really very strange. How could the gods fight amongst themselves? But that is envisaged by the mind which studied the gods and the celestials in the light of human nature. As we are, so the gods also are. So, as we please people, we have to please the gods also in the very same way, applying the same methodology as we apply towards human beings. When a friend comes, we give him a cup of tea, hot water for bathing, lunch, and a soft bed for reclining and resting, and he is mightily pleased. Even so do we appease the gods by offering the very same articles of satisfaction as we offer to human beings.

But how could we transfer these objects that we would like to offer to the gods in the celestial region? They are invisible! The celestials are not known and they are not seen. So sacrifices or Yajnas were instituted, and the holy fire, the sacred Agni became the secret messenger or the carrier of the oblations to the gods. We say, “*Agnaye svaha*” and make offerings to the Supreme Messenger of the Divine Being, Agni. May He be pleased. In all the Havans and Yajnas, we will find the first deity to be invoked is Agni. This ritual is called Agnisthapanam. It is invocation of the celestial behind the principle of fire, or the divinity of fire, who is called Fire-god, Agnidevata. He is first invoked and then He is told: “Please take this to Indra”, “Please take this to Yama”, “Please take this to Varuna”, and so on. He will carry our offerings to the

particular deities who are addressed through the Mantras with the suffix 'Svaha', in the Yajnas.

Now, we know very well how we have slowly drifted away from the original intention of the Veda Mantras by the degeneration of the time process—the advent of Treta, Dvapara and Kali Yuga, or whatever we may call it. So, the emphasis got completely shifted from the universal to the external, material, and even prejudiced way of thinking. The offerings in these Yajnas or sacrifices meant to propitiate the gods that are many, were in the beginning holy articles such as clarified butter, certain grains and pulses, wood from sacred trees like Asvattha, Palasa and so on, gruel cooked out of rice, Payasam, Charu, etc. But once we make a mistake, we do not stop with it. It goes on multiplying, and there is an aggregate of errors. Mistake after mistake began to be committed with the pious intention of propitiating the gods; all kinds of offerings were poured into the sacred fire. Well, it came to a climax when even living beings were mercilessly offered because of the belief that a particular Devata would be pleased. There were occasions, which we can read in the Puranas, when people who had no children prayed to the gods for bestowing upon them a child, on the condition that it would be offered again to the Devata as a Balidana. Such is the desire for a child, though it is meant only to be sacrificed later on! This practice continues in some parts even today, even in this fag end of the twentieth century. Narabali, and Yajnas such as Gomedha, Asvamedha were instituted for acquiring material gain—increasing earthly prosperity—side by side with a conviction that the gods would be pleased thereby. We have not only gone away from the

centre of truth, but we have also now begun to interfere with the welfare of other people in the world. This is naturally intolerable to the very law that operates in the universe. Where is that original intention of the Veda Mantras which was only a consequence of the great Divine experience of the Supreme Being by the great sages, and where are we now, utilising these Mantras for offering oblations into the sacred fire for propitiating the multiplicity of gods for earthly suzerainty and sensory satisfaction!

It was at this time that Gautama, the Buddha, was born in this country. When anything goes to the extreme, the other extreme is set up. A very hot day means there will be a cyclone; winds will start blowing, breaking branches of trees, and there may be a shower of rain. Now, the clock has come full circle and the hour has struck for the other extreme step to be taken. While there was a deep feeling and conviction that there are many gods guarding the quarters of the cosmos, who are our well-wishers and without whose satisfaction we cannot be happy in this world—these very gods, who were regarded as our very life, were denied by Buddha. He said that they did not exist at all. This is the other extreme. See where we have come to! You say, the gods are protecting you; I say, they do not exist at all and it is your mind that works. So, from the spiritual realisation and mystical experience of the sages of the Veda Samhitas, we came down to a worship and inner adoration of the multiplicity of gods. Then we came still further down to the time when we began to make physical offerings to the sacred fire for the satisfaction of the gods, without any feeling or compunction in offering living

beings—even human beings—in the sacrifices. There was such a thing called Narmedha or the offering of a human being in sacrifice. If the gods themselves do not exist, where comes the sacrifice? It has no meaning. So, the first historically known reformer in our land was Gautama, the Buddha. He was a reformer in the sense that he put a check to the further growth of this externalising tendency of ritualised devotion to an imagined set of multiple of gods. But for him, it would have landed people in a catastrophe. We do not know what would have happened. This tendency was checked by the psychological philosophy of Buddha, and the divinities were completely ignored. Now, the divinity, if at all there is one, is the thinking principle in the human being himself. The world is made by the mind; it is purely psychological. It is a projection of ideas. It is a notion in our minds that is this world and even these gods. This was a beautiful psychological analysis made by the Buddha, which was an ethical idealism which he propounded in contradistinction to the ritualistic ceremonialism of the Brahmanas which succeeded the Veda Samhitas.

It sometimes happens that children interfere with the transistor and spoil the whole music which the parents had tuned. This happened in the case of the followers of this great reformer, who began to interpret his teachings in their own way—even as it also happened with the followers of the Vedas, who interpreted the Mantras in their own way and landed themselves in ceremonialism, ritualism and mechanised sacrifices. That the world is only an idea, and that the gods do not exist—which was one of the predominant teachings of the Buddha—received special

emphasis in certain schools of Buddhism. And Buddha's philosophy did not end with the death of Buddha. It continued, but in a ramified form, not as a single stream. It ramified itself into four streams at least—the Vijñānavāda which taught that internal ideas manifest themselves as external objects, the Vaibhāshika which held that really existent external objects are directly perceived, the Sautrāntika which contended that the perception of external objects is entirely determined by the processes of internal ideas, and lastly we had what has been called Nihilism, Sunyavāda, or the Madhyamika doctrine which was the view of there being nothing at all in reality. So this controversy was another kind of catastrophe that got introduced into human thought. From somewhere we have gone to some other place, not knowing the direction at all. The intention of the originators of the great thoughts and the sages of divine experience were all wonderful. But, time has its own say in every matter and things slowly get diluted as time passes on. The pure gets adulterated until it loses all content, meaning and reality. The worst mistake that we can do in anything is to go to the extreme in it. Even in a good thing, we should not go to the extreme. Then it ceases to be a good thing and becomes a bad thing. Even truth can become untruth, when it is taken to the extreme. Ahimsa can become Himsa when it is taken to the extreme. Virtue can become vice when it is completely taken to the breaking point. So all these good thoughts which are necessary as reformations in the history of man, got distorted by the passage of time and people began to argue in various ways, positing realities according to their own whims, fancies and predilections, and there was again another chaos.

The next step was the advent of Sankara to rectify this extreme that was brought about in human thought by the adulterated forms of Buddhistic idealism, which were all extreme types of thinking. They had some truth in them, but they were not the whole truth. For example, it is not true that the world is created by our ideas, and yet it is true that our ideas have some say in the projection of the forms of objects. It is not true that the objects are physical in their nature, yet it is true that they have some physicality in them independent of human thought. It is not true that nothing exists, as the Nihilists say, but yet it is true that things do not exist as they appear to the senses. All these aspects of truth had to be brought into relief by a new method of approach altogether which was the purpose of the mission of Acharya Sankara. This was the consequence chronologically speaking, as I mentioned to you—a historical reason for the teaching which Sankara gave in the way he did.

I started by saying that besides the chronological process, there was also a logical reason for the development of this thought which is another interesting stream of the psychological history of man, while what I have said so far is the historical, purely sociological or chronological aspect of the significance of Sankara's work in this country and in the world. Let us now see its logical significance. His thought is a logical consequence of all the thoughts that preceded his coming into being. There were systems of thought called the Darsanas. You must have heard of the schools of thought known as Nyaya, Vaiseshika, Sankhya, Yoga, Mimamsa and certain other mystical and ritualistic philosophies which were in minority, of course, yet

prevalent during the time of Sankara. The immediate or rather the crudest form of human perception is taking for granted whatever is seen by the senses. “Oh, I am seeing it there, and therefore it is there. Just because I see it there, it is there.” This is the uncritical acceptance of things. We know very well that just because something is there before our eyes, it need not necessarily be there, because certain things can present themselves before our eyes yet they may not be there really. Yet uncritically we accept everything that is visible to the eyes.

Now, this philosophy of uncritical acceptance of everything that is visible or everything that is sensible, to put it more generally, became the incentive behind the systems of thought called the Nyaya and the Vaiseshika, whose conclusion is that things are physical and psychological. There is no other reality conceivable. This conclusion is arrived at by a system of logic, argumentation, or a systematic, syllogistic process of argument. Inasmuch as the followers of this system entirely depended on the syllogism of human thinking, logical argumentation, deducing things from given premises, the system is called the Nyaya. ‘Nyaya’ means logic. It is, therefore, a logical system of pluralistic realism. It is logical because it is syllogistic. It is pluralistic because they accept the multiplicity of physical entities. It is realism because the world, according to them, is external to the human mind and it is not a part of the process of human thinking. What about God? Is there a place for a Creator in this scheme of things? Yes, this school of thought does accord a place. But He is like a potter making a pot, a carpenter making a table, an engineer or a mechanic constructing a machine. What

does this imply? The potter can make the pot, or not make it; and he can break the pot, if he likes. The pot has nothing to do with the potter; it is completely outside him. By a similar analogy, God was regarded as an extra-cosmic being, outside the cosmos. The potter is outside the pot and cannot be inside the pot. Likewise God cannot be in the world, and He is outside the world, because if He is in the world, how can He create it? So the logical realism of the Nyaya and the Vaiseshika, which are brother systems, concluded that God is beyond the world and outside the world. And a multiplicity of material was posited as the stuff out of which this extra-cosmic creator began to mould this cosmos, as a potter would shape a pot by manipulating the clay-material that is available to him outside.

But many questions posed themselves before the minds of people. This philosophy was found not satisfactory. How could we reach this God who is extra-cosmic—what is the way? Is there a ladder from earth to heaven where God lives? His hands cannot reach us and our thoughts cannot reach Him. There seems to be some defect in these systems. This was the decision made by the Sankhya, which was a later development of philosophical thought. According to this School, it is not true that there are many physical entities or realities as the Nyaya and the Vaiseshika thought. All these manifold objects could be boiled down to certain fundamental essences or principles which are the building bricks of the cosmos. While the Vaiseshika and the Nyaya thought that there is earth, water, fire, air, ether, mind, soul and so on, all independent of the other, though in their finer essences as atoms, etc., yet the multiplicity was accepted. But the Sankhya thought out this

matter more deeply, and felt that it is not true that there are five elements. They are only five degrees of the intensity of one element. One element or principle, one being or stuff has modified itself into various densities. This was what Sankhya taught. There are not five elements—earth, water, fire, air and ether. Even the mind is not an independent entity. It is also a modification, in a particular form, of the very same stuff which is the substance out of which the cosmos is made. And if at all we have to accept more than one reality due to the exigency of experience and thought, we can at best accept only two entities: consciousness which sees and that which is seen, the experiencer and the experienced, the seer and the seen—or, to put it more precisely, consciousness and matter. These are the only two things that exist anywhere, and not more. We do not have five elements, many souls, etc., absolutely independent in their inner structure.

So, there was a logical development of thought from the Nyaya and the Vaisesika, when the Sankhya philosophy developed its conclusions in regard to what is called Purusha and Prakriti. It is this Purusha and Prakriti that we generally call God and the world, in popular language. Why should we accept two entities? Who told you that there is a Purusha and there is a Prakriti? How do you know that there is consciousness and there is matter? Can you prove this? Can you substantiate this thesis? Yes, was the answer of the Sankhya. No human being can escape noticing an object outside in the world. You may try your best and stretch your imagination to its farthest limits, but you cannot escape the recognition of an object outside. It is there. It may be this or it may be that. But something is

there outside. That is what you call matter. Matter is that which is other than consciousness; it is that which consciousness recognises, sees or comes in contact with. That which has not the characteristic of consciousness is matter. The distinguishing feature of that which is different from consciousness is that it is non-intelligent and, therefore, it cannot think. This is a wonderful philosophy. You can read it in detail in your leisure time. And as a matter of fact, Vedanta is nothing but an amplification of the Sankhya. The seed of the Vedanta was sown by the Sankhya itself. We have to give enough credit to the thinkers of the Sankhya for having paved the way for the onward march of later thinkers like Sankara.

Well, there is something very interesting to note in this philosophy of the Sankhya again. Is this satisfactory? The Sankhya thought that for certain obvious reasons the Nyaya and the Vaiseshika were not satisfactory, especially in its theory of God. The liberation, the nature of the soul and such other conclusions of the Nyaya and the Vaiseshika were almost preposterous. No thinking mind would accept them. So, the Sankhya came forward and proclaimed that liberation is a fact. There is such a thing as liberation or salvation. But, salvation is nothing but Purusha resting in himself, consciousness resting in itself, thought merging into its source. It is self-illumination of consciousness, independent of its contact with matter. This is Kaivalya, Ekatva, Absolute Independence. Thus there is no provision for God in the Sankhya system. This is not necessary at all, because we can get on in the world even without a God. Why not? The world and the world experiences are nothing but the contact of Spirit with matter. And liberation is

nothing but separation of the Spirit from matter. We have explained the whole of experience here and hereafter with these two principles alone—Purusha and Prakriti, consciousness and matter.

But, and a great but, can you get on with this philosophy? Can you answer all questions of ethics and practical life with these two principles of Purusha and Prakriti alone? No, we cannot answer all questions and solve all problems with these two principles alone, because there is a small difficulty caused by the acceptance of the law of Karma which is recognised even by the Sankhya. Karma is nothing but the reaction that is set up to an action. It is the nemesis that follows every action that an individual or Purusha does. Merit is rewarded and demerit is punished. But who does this? Does Purusha reward himself for the merit he does, and does Purusha punish himself for the sin he commits? This would be a very absurd conclusion, obviously. Who would like to punish oneself? Even if I do a wrong, I would not like to be punished. But there is nobody else who can punish the Purusha for the wrong that he does. Prakriti cannot do it because it is unintelligent, and Purusha will not do it because he himself is the doer. So, this is no good. The need for someone to dispense justice was felt by the Yoga system of thought which came after the Sankhya.

The Yoga School was systematised—not originated, of course—and logically presented by Patanjali later on. Yoga said that an Isvara is essential. Otherwise, we cannot escape this difficulty of the Law of Karma. Reward and punishment will be meaningless on the basis of the law of Karma if a Supreme Dispenser of justice does not exist.

God exists, said Patanjali. But this God is only like a judge in a court with whom we are not directly connected except when there is a case. When the case is over, we do not care for the judge. We go away homeward. Such was the God mentioned in the Sutras of Patanjali—very essential, very necessary, yet not organically connected with our life. He hangs loosely in the system of Yoga. So, for the first time in the history of philosophical thought in India, God, world and soul, all three, were posited in a manner satisfactory for all practical purposes, in the system of Yoga propounded by Maharshi Patanjali.

But what is the goal of life according to Yoga? Is it God-realisation? According to Yoga, God-realisation is not the goal, because this God is necessary only for the sake of dispensing justice to the Purushas. The goal of life is self-withdrawal. Consciousness or the essence of the Purusha resting in itself is liberation and the final goal of life. It has nothing to do with Isvara who is also, after all, one of the Purushas, though He may be a special Purusha—Purusha-visesha. What is the internal relationship among Purusha, Prakriti and Isvara? There is no proper answer. Unless there is a relationship among entities, how can we posit the entities? It is logically inadmissible and it is an untenable thesis. We should not say that there are two things, unless we are able to explain the relationship between the two things. How do we know that they exist? Our consciousness that posits the existence of two objects transcends the two objects. The very fact that we know that there is a God and a world and there are Purushas, shows that we who make this judgement have intrinsically something, some principle which seems to transcend the

limitation of these three posited principles. Here we have an introduction to the Vedanta philosophy. God is there. Yes, it is wonderful. World is there. Yes, we see it. The Purushas are there. Yes, we do experience them. But what is the internal connection among these things? What is the relevance that obtains between these three principles? This could not be answered by either the Sankhya or the Yoga.

With this introductory remark on the inadequacies of all the earlier systems of thought, Sri Sankara came forward as a genius of philosophic thought, as a Master who could solve with one stroke all the problems of life with his mighty system of psychology, wondrous system of metaphysics, his master technique of Yogic meditation and his soul-enrapturing ideal of the realisation of Brahman as the goal of life. Such was the significance, chronological as well as logical, of the great mission and work of Acharya Sankara in Bharatavarsha, which has done mighty good not only to the citizens of this country but also to all seeking souls throughout the world.

The goal of human life depends upon the relation of the human individual to the world. Unless this relation is understood, the goal also cannot be properly specified. We are very much connected with the world outside; we know it very well. And unless we know what sort of connection it is that we are supposed to have with the world outside, we cannot properly ascertain the nature of the goal of human life. Religious teachers and prophets came to specify the goal of human life, the ultimate purpose behind all the activities of mankind. And they differed from one another in their concept of the relation of the individual to the cosmos. So we have schools of thought—Nyaya,

Vaisesika, Sankhya, Yoga, Mimamsa and Vedanta, known as the orthodox schools of philosophy; the Charvakas, the Jainas, the Vaibhasikas, the Sautrantikas, the Vaijnanikas and the Sunyavadins among the heterodox ones. Even in the Vedanta, we have various sections—the Advaita, the Visishtadvaita, the Dvaita, the Shuddhadvaita, the Dvaitadvaita, Achintyabhedabheda, Saiva Siddhanta, the Sakta school, and so many other schools. The schools are so many that we do not know where we stand, finally. This was the condition of the human mind in its philosophical level when Sankara's advent took place on this earth. Hundreds of cults and dogmas prevailed. Pasupatas, Saivas, Bhairavas, Kapalikas were all rampant during his time. He came to give to mankind a gospel of healthy living.

It is not easy to understand the gospel of Adi Sankaracharya. I do not believe that even today the majority of mankind really understands it. It is not just a glib word 'Advaita'. What is the meaning of Advaita? That itself is a difficult thing to conceive. It is not a system opposed to other systems, but a method of interpretation of values by which we can healthily coordinate the existing systems of thought and construct a system of philosophy according to which we can live happily in every stage of our life. I do not intend to go into the details of this philosophical background. But suffice it to say that the Vedanta of Sankara came as a remedy to the diversified ways of thinking which created an unnecessary conflict even in daily practices of human beings, and this he did without going contrary to the injunctions of the Vedas and the Upanishads. Scripture and reason were the two aids in the arguments of Sankara. He was a tremendous logician,

the like of which it is difficult to imagine ordinarily, who based his arguments entirely on the principles of logic, but without contradicting the intuitional revelations of the Vedas and the Upanishads. Every argument was logically precise, culminating in an irrefutable conclusion. But it was based on the evidence of the scriptures like the Upanishads, the Bhagavadgita and the Samhitas of the Vedas. He came to combine the validity of scripture with the limitations of reason and the value of reason. Intuition is not opposed to intellect, was what Sankara proclaimed. Nor can we say that intellect is complete in itself. The conclusions of the intellect have to be corroborated by the revelations of the Srutis. Sruti, Yukti and Anubhava—scripture, argument and experience—have to go parallel along a path leading to a single goal. Scripture is the support for the argument, while argument supplies the strength for the exposition of the scripture, both of which lead to the direct experience or Anubhava. Reality is experience. Brahma Sakshatkara is the same as Anubhava of the Supreme Being.

Unfortunately, today we have no proper expositions of the Vedanta philosophy. They are all in bits and tracts, here and there; a complete philosophy of Sankara is not available in any single book. We may read any book written anywhere, but we will not find a complete presentation of his philosophy. There will be only a section of it, a part of it, a phase of it or an aspect of it presented, so that it always gives a wrong view of the philosophy. This is unfortunate; but this is understandable, because it is not easy for a single man to write or to touch upon all the aspects of this single, all-comprehensive philosophy. The Upanishads themselves are all-comprehensive and an exposition of them, which is

the system of Vedanta, has naturally to be many-sided. We cannot read any particular textbook and say we have understood Vedanta, because all textbooks deal with certain aspects—the theory of perception, or the logical part of it alone, or only the Sadhana aspects of it and so on, are touched upon. We have masterly expositions of Advaita Vedanta given in such books as the *Khandana Khanda Khadya* of Sriharsha or the *Tattva Pradipika* of Chitsukha or the *Advaita Siddhi* of Madhusudana Saraswati, but we will not understand the spirit of Vedanta even after reading all these books, because they are only arguments leading to certain conclusions of Advaita, but not the entirety of it. Even if we read the Brahma Sutra Bhashya of Sankara, we will not know or understand the entire teaching of it. It requires study under a Guru to have a complete view of the entire perspective of Sankara's teaching.

It is really interesting that the fate of the Advaita Vedanta later on, in the passage of time, was similar to that of Buddhism. It was misrepresented. As Buddha was misrepresented, and Christ is being misrepresented, Sankara was also misrepresented. So to counteract the misrepresented attitudes, there came other Acharyas like Ramanuja, Madhva and others. One cannot wholly and satisfactorily explain the subtle relation of the soul to God. Though many schools of philosophy have come up, they are like dismembered bodies, and not a complete whole. Just because we have limbs cut off and thrown everywhere, it does not mean that we have a complete human system. Unfortunately, we have only such limbs cut off—Dvaitins, Advaitins and Visishtadvaitins, etc. But we do not have a very satisfactory and happy blend of thought. Therefore, it

is necessary that such a new orientation has to be attempted without a biased approach of any school, keeping in view only the goal of mankind as a whole and not merely as a system or a school of thought. Such an attempt has to be made, and the success of it depends entirely upon the genius of the man concerned, because Sankara himself was a genius.

Sankaracharya's works must be studied not merely for the philosophical depths of his writings but also for the beauty of his language. Of course, unless one knows Sanskrit one cannot appreciate his style. "*Vakyam prasanna-gambhiram*"—his sentences are very smooth-flowing, very deep and beautiful. They are not complicated arguments. They are very simple, but full of depth and literary beauty which we will find only in such poets like Kalidasa. Of course, Sankaracharya mostly wrote his commentaries in prose though he has also written poems of various kinds. They are so simple, so sonorous and so beautiful. For the beauty of the language of Sanskrit, and the depth of philosophical wisdom and the help they can offer us in our practical life, his works have to be studied. There is a beautiful poem by Sankara known as *Prabodha Sudhakara*. It is a very beautiful work because it combines Bhakti and Vedanta. Sankaracharya was also a devotee. All great Vedantins are also devotees. It is very mysterious. Madhusudana Saraswati was an utter Vedantin but he was a devotee of Lord Krishna. We do not know how we can combine them. But they did.

Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj was a great admirer of Adi Sankaracharya, and in his teachings we will find the spirit of Sankara. If we can understand Swami Sivanandaji

Maharaj properly, we can understand Sankaracharya also. Of course, it is very difficult to understand both, because they are many-sided geniuses. So let us study their works and try to live a practical life of Vedanta and Bhakti.

SIVANANDA—THE FIRE OF SANNYASA *

Swami Sivanandaji was known as Dr. Kuppuswamy in his Purvashrama. He arrived in Rishikesh in the year 1922 when there was practically nothing in Rishikesh except a few almshouses (Kshetras) and Sadhus staying in isolated thatched huts. It was the year when there were unprecedented floods. Everywhere there was water and water alone. In all the rivers of India there was flood beyond limit. It was the biggest flood ever seen in Rishikesh. The next big flood we had was, of course, in July 1963, immediately after Swami Sivanandaji's Mahasamadhi, when it flooded Sri Gurudev's Kutir neck-deep. After that we did not have a flood of that kind. It was in that year 1922, that Gurudev H.H. Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj, then known as Dr. Kuppuswamy, came to Rishikesh and stayed on the other side of the Ganga, in Svargashram, which is an ancient institution. A few Sadhus and Sannyasins were put up there, living on alms and practising their meditations. Perhaps, the Svargashram Kshetra was functioning in a small measure even then.

Two years afterwards, in the year 1924, he came across a great, saintly person known as Swami Visvananda Sarasvati, whom he met, as it is said, only for a few minutes, and from whom he received initiation into the sacred order of Sannyasa, as Swami Sivananda Sarasvati.

* Talk given on the 1st of June, 1972, the Sannyasa anniversary of Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj.

This was on the 1st of June. This Swami Visvananda Sarasvati is little known to the public and, perhaps, personally he was not even acquainted to Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj. It was a unique coming together of two personalities, as if ordained by God Himself, and Jnana Sannyasa, as it is known, was offered to Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj. Jnana Sannyasa implies Sannyasa without ritual. The ritualistic confirmation of this Jnana Sannyasa was subsequently performed by the great Sri Swami Vishnudevanandaji Maharaj of Kailas Ashram, who attained Mahasamadhi very recently. Thus, Swami Visvanandaji Maharaj was his Diksha Guru, while Swami Vishnudevanandaji Maharaj was his Sannyasa Kriya Guru. But Swami Sivanandaji had equal regard for both.

From the year 1924, after he received Sannyasa, Swami Sivanandaji started a rigorous life of Tapas, or austerity. People who had the blessedness to see him in those days described him as a fire of renunciation. There was an old Swamiji in the Kailas Ashram, who is now no more, who used to come to our hospital for medicine. He was a regular patient. Every day he used to come with some trouble or the other. He had seen Swamiji in those days—1924 and onwards. He used to give us an idea as to what Swamiji looked like, in what esteem he was held by people in Svargashram, what was the type of Tapas he was performing to the astonishment of the other Sadhus, and the great reverence which he commanded from all the Mahatmas of Svargashram. The only two centres in Rishikesh which had a little population then were the Svargashram on the one side and the Kalikambalivala Kshetra in another place. There was nothing here where the

Divine Life Society is situated now. This place, known as Muni-ki-reti, was an uninhabited forest. They say even wild animals used to crawl in these areas. When the land was dug up for some construction, they discovered even bones and skulls. No one knew what exactly was the situation or condition of this area. It was completely deserted, uninhabited by human beings. Such were the days when Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj entered the life of austerity in Svargashram.

From the year 1924 till the year 1936—for 12 years—he was an incognito Mahatma doing his own Tapasya for a purpose which he alone knew. None of us were there and no disciples were there. He had neither associates, nor friends. What we hear from people who had seen him in those days amounts to this: that he wore little clothing and ate no delicious diet—which, of course, was not available at all even if he wanted. The only food that was available to Mahatmas in those days was dry bread (Chapattis, Rotis, the Pulka which had no ghee or oil) and Dal which also had no fat, neither ghee nor oil. People say that Swamiji did not take the Dal even; he used to take only the dry bread from the Kshetra and drank Ganga water with it. You know what will happen if you eat only dry bread and drink Ganga water. You will have diarrhoea instantaneously in this atmosphere. Anyhow he bore it. He was a doctor himself, but he had no medicines with him. He continued to live that austere life with dry bread and Ganga water. There was no question of milk, or tea, or coffee—not even Dal, not even pulse. Vegetables were out of the question. This went on for some years, and people held him in great regard for his tremendous renunciation which he

held as his ideal of personal life. From another little information that we gathered from Swamiji himself during his later years, we understood that he used to go to the other side of the Laxmanjhula bridge. His Kutir was somewhere directly opposite to the Darsana Mahavidyalaya of the present day, and he used to be put up there. But he did not stay in the Kutir for most of the daytime because of fear that people would frequent him. He was a worshipful figure, even from the very beginning of his life in Rishikesh and Svargashram, on account of the distinguished life of austerity that he led. It is difficult to live a life of austerity. Only if you live that life, you will know what it is. It is like death itself. You may even prefer death to a life of that kind. So it was a terror to see him leading a life of that kind, with no clothes on his body. Who would give him clothes? There were no charities of any kind in those days.

As I have already said, he used to absent himself from his Kutir to avoid frequentation by visitors and other Mahatmas, by going to the other side of the bridge. It was then some kind of a rope bridge. Now we have an iron bridge of a modern type. There is a sandy bank which can be seen even now, and Swamiji used to sit there during the night and do his oblations and austerities. During the nearly 26 years of life that we led, physically, with him, I did not get even an inkling as to what sort of meditation he practised, what was the Japa he did and what was the purpose for which he meditated. He would never say anything about these things, nor were we in a position to get any information about these. This is all we knew: that he was staying on the sandy bank on the other side of the Laxmanjhula bridge during the larger part of the day and

night and would come to the Svargashram for his Bhiksha at the appointed time.

The calibre and austerity of the life of Swamiji began to be known by people who had occasion to come to Badrinath and Kedarnath. In those days there were no motorable roads as we have now. From Haridwar onwards pilgrims had to walk on foot, as there was only a footpath. There was a possibility of coming by vehicle up to Haridwar only. I used to hear, in my younger days, that Haridwar was a place full of ice. Perhaps in those days it was very cold, colder than it is now, and people had to carry fire with them to keep themselves warm. Such legends were in vogue then. People who used to go by the footpath to Badrinath had to cross the Laxmanjhula bridge and walk through what is called Phul Chatty, and other wayside halting places. It was all jungle throughout. Swami Sivananda was then known as the great Mahatma of Svargashram. There was neither the Divine Life Society, nor the Sivananda Ashram, even to dream of. He was familiarly known as the great saint of Svargashram—the Virakta Mahatma of Svargashram.

One of the pilgrims who happened to go to Badrinath, and who was a lover of saints, heard of the name of Swami Sivananda. He was a teacher in a high school in Nagpur, and his name was Hari Ganesh Ambekar. He later on joined this Ashram and took Sannyasa. He was our Gurubhai, Swami Hariomananda Sarasvati. He was one of the earliest disciples, if we could call them disciples. They were disciples not in the sense of students who sat at the feet of the Guru, but in the sense that they admired the saint and wanted to keep him in their memory. Swami Hariomananda

Sarasvatiji—Hari Ganesh Ambekar in his Purvashrama—used to send a money order of one rupee per month. That is what we have heard from Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj himself. In those days, one rupee was a very big amount. Those were the days when one kilogram of rice used to cost only one and a half annas or nine paise. So, you know the value of one rupee. He was one of the donors. But this one rupee, Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj never used to spend for himself. He purchased some medicines or a cup of curd—not for himself, but for a neighbour who was sick, suffering from dysentery. We know very well that dysentery was quite common among Sadhus, as they were compelled to eat a diet without any fat or something soothing to the walls of the intestines and stomach. Illness was very common, especially diarrhoea and dysentery. They were the common illnesses of having a dry stomach—without any lubrication. Swamiji used to purchase a little curd and a little medicine and then started his philanthropic activity in a meagre way which culminated in a small dispensary called Satya Sevasrama, in Laxmanjhula. It became a government hospital, and it was functioning until recently. Now it is closed. Thus he commenced his ministry of humanitarian and spiritual service which continued simultaneously, or side by side, with his life of austerity, till the year 1936.

It is very unfortunate that we have no information as to what transpired between him and his Guru, his austerities and what sort of meditation he practised. His reply to queries from his disciples was: “You do not bother about what I did, but you do what I say.” From the attitude he held in regard to life, till late in his life, we could gather by

reading between lines that he was a combination of the heights of Vedanta Philosophy and the pinnacle of austerity or Tapas. He used to define Tapas as “flaming like fire by sense-control”. One day he put a question to me: “What is Tapas? Can you define it?” But, before I could say anything, he himself gave the definition: “Tapas is burning like fire by sense-control.” I remember this definition even today. Tapas is the heat that is produced in our spiritual body by the control of the senses, as their outward movement depletes our energy and makes us the weaklings that we are. Can we dream or imagine for a moment that the status and the spiritual dignity which this Institution commands today, is the efflorescence, flower and the fruit of his Tapas and his spiritual stature! All success is the result of Tapas. This is his teaching. There cannot be a saint without Tapas. There is no spirituality without Tapas. And Tapas is the same as Sannyasa. It is not wearing an ochre-coloured robe. It is neither an order of life, nor a stage into which one enters socially. But, it is an entry into the dedicated life of austerity and control of oneself.

Today, being Sri Gurudev’s Sannyasa anniversary, we should contemplate on the spiritual spark that blazed itself forth as the great Swami Sivananda Sarasvati whose presence and Tapas, whose spirituality, goodness and large-heartedness became the nucleus and the seed for this large institution which vibrates today in the hearts of many people in the world—not as buildings or constitutions, not as visible bodies or institutions, but as spiritual aspirations, noble longings for God-realisation, charitableness in nature and a conviction that the realisation of God is the only goal of life. “God-realisation first, everything else afterwards”

—this was, is and will be the teaching of this saint for ever. Everything else follows automatically from this great surging longing of the heart. There are very few who could so forcibly proclaim this most unpalatable of truths that God-realisation is the primary aim of life. Many like to dilute this concept with ‘plus world’, ‘plus humanity’ and all that. They say, “God plus world”, “God plus humanity”, but here was one who would not add anything to God or God’s Perfection to make it complete. As a matter of fact, to add something to God would be to diminish the Perfection itself. God’s presence and the recognition of Him is the primary objective of all human activity, human longing and desire of every kind. There is no such thing as adding something to God’s perfection, because God is another name for Perfection itself. Can you add something to Perfection? No; for, then it would cease to be Perfection. That is Perfection, to which no addition is necessary, and also Perfection is of such a nature that one cannot subtract anything from It—that Perfection is God.

Most of his earlier writings began with this proclamation: “The goal of life is God-realisation.” He would commence his work—be it a book, or an essay, or a message, or even a lecture—with the sentence, “The goal of life is God-realisation.” Slowly, this concept is becoming more and more academic in these days, i.e., it is accepted only by the intellect as a logical conviction and a rational acceptance of spiritual values but having little bearing on the practical life of people. But to saints of the type of Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj, it was a calling of life and not a mere intellectual conviction or a rational acceptance. When we say that the goal of life is God-realisation, we

have said everything that needs to be said. Vairagya, renunciation or Sannyasa spontaneously flows from the acceptance, from the heart, of the fact that the goal of life is God-realisation. It follows as a necessary consequence. We need not make another statement about it. Vairagya or Sannyasa is the necessary result that follows spontaneously and logically from the acceptance of the reality that the goal of life is God-realisation. If the goal of life should be God-realisation, God should be the Reality, because we cannot regard an unreality or a lesser reality as the goal of life. That which is Real can only be the goal; the unreal cannot be the goal of life, nor can a partial reality be the goal of life. It is the full Reality that alone can be the goal of life. So, God has to be the fullest of realities. And that which is fully Real has to exclude everything else that is tagged on to It externally by associations temporarily contrived by the weaknesses of flesh. So the Sannyasa of Satgurudev Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj was an inner spiritual fire which burnt forth in his practical life and in his teachings and in the instructions which he gave to his disciples.

He had no disciples, and he never said that he had any disciples. On the other hand, he positively used to say, "I have no disciples." He also used to say that he had no organisation or Ashram. He was the same Swami Sivananda who came to Rishikesh in the year 1922 under the name of Kuppuswamy, the same Swami Sivananda who lived through the life of Sannyasa and spirituality and service to mankind, and it was the same Swami Sivananda who attained Mahasamadhi in the year 1963 without any change in his attitude to this world.

Such are the sparkling ideals that he set forth before us. Every first of June, we celebrate and observe the anniversary of this momentous event of his entering into Sannyasa, many years back. And no greater homage could be conceived to this saint than a sincere determination to lead the life that he himself intensely led, and to develop a similar attitude towards life as a whole: that the whole world is enveloped by the Presence of God. The Isavasya Upanishad says, "*Isavasyamidam sarvam, yat kincha jagatyam jagat*": Whatever is moving or unmoving, Sthavara or Jangama, whatever is visible or invisible, all this is indwelt by the supreme Being of God. The Upanishad also says, "*Tena tyaktena bhunjithah.*" Here is the seed of Vairagya and Sannyasa at the very commencement of the Isavasya Upanishad. It says, "Renounce and enjoy." Enjoy by renunciation, not by possession. The enjoyment that comes by renunciation is more intense than the enjoyment that comes by possession of the things of the world. That satisfaction or pleasure or enjoyment which seems to come to us by the acquisition of the objects of sense, is a pain that comes to us in the guise of satisfaction. But that joy which comes to us by renunciation is a real and permanent joy. Why is it so? Because, renunciation is the relinquishment of false values, the abandonment of falsity in our attitude to things, which brings about a spontaneous inflow of God-consciousness and the substance of Reality into our hearts. When our substance or being commingles with our consciousness, there is a manifestation of delight, Ananda. But, in possessing things, in grabbing objects and in coming in contact with the temporary, fleeting values of the world, we do not come in contact with Reality, rather we flee away

from Reality. The more we believe in the reality of objects, the farther we are from Truth or Reality. The more we come in contact with things, the more also are we unwittingly running away from the reality of God. The more we ask for pleasure from the objects of the world by sensory contact, the more is the pain that we invite from them, because all sensory contacts are sources of pain, for they have a beginning and an end. Contact with objects is the opposite of contact with Reality because while objects are external, Reality is Universal. So the more is the contact with objects, the lesser is the contact with Reality; and consequently, greater is the pain that we suffer in this life. So, “*Tena tyaktena bhunjithah*”: Renounce the false values of the world on account of which you have a craving to come in contact with the transitory values, and enjoy the bliss of that union with Reality, the Supreme God indwelling all things. The Isavasya Upanishad adds, “*Ma gridhah kasya svid-dhanam*”: Covet not the things of the world. Do not ask for things which do not really belong to you. The things of the world do not belong to you, because they are unreal. How can unreality belong to you? Therefore, do not ask for the things of the world, which are untrue. Renounce all false values with this awareness that God indwells all creation, both movable and immovable. This is, in some way, the quintessence of the gospel of Divine Life which inspired the teachings and the writings of Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj.

To him we pay our obeisance by directing our thoughts and contemplating on these eternal values, and by proclaiming once again, in the same tone and intensity of feeling and fervour, that the goal of life is God-realisation.

Everything else follows in the wake of this acceptance, as a shadow follows the substance or, as they say, “the tail follows the dog”. One need not separately tell the tail to follow. All the things of the world and all values that are regarded as covetable in life will come in abundance and in plenty, if we accept from the bottom of our hearts that the goal of life is God-realisation, for which ideal Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj lived and sacrificed all his life. Such is his Sannyasa, such is his Vedanta and such is his teaching for our practice. May his Grace be upon us all!

KNOWLEDGE AS MEANS TO FREEDOM*

If our search is for freedom, knowledge is regarded as an endeavour towards the achievement of this freedom. The institutions of the world, whether they are educational, social or political, are instruments for the implementation of this endeavour towards the attainment of human freedom. From this point of view, it is difficult to believe that mankind has different ideals before itself. There seems to be a convergence of ideals, in spite of the diversity of approaches which appear to characterise the efforts of people. An investigative analysis into the structure of the human mind and its longings would certainly reveal that there is a basic similarity of character in the needs of people and the effort on their part to gain greater and greater mastery over the techniques of the achievement of this freedom. This may be also regarded as an advancement in knowledge. So, the increase in knowledge is, in a way, equivalent to the increase in the capacity of a person to achieve freedom. But freedom from what, is the basic question. If this question cannot be answered, we cannot also know what knowledge is, and impliedly what

* Though the Yoga Vedanta Forest Academy was inaugurated by H.H. Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj on the 3rd of July 1948, the construction of the premises for conducting regular and systematic courses of studies was commenced in September 1976 and the Academy now conducts 3 months' courses from July 1979. Hence this talk of Swamiji on the 3rd of July 1977, while the building was under construction, and the thought bestowed on the regular functioning of the Academy after its construction reveal his ideas of the aims and ideals before the Academy, its method of functioning, etc. as distinguished from similar other institutions.

education is, because education is the process of the acquisition of knowledge. So, one thing hangs on the other. If we cannot know what we are asking for, what we are in search of and what is the sort of freedom that we expect in our lives, we cannot also know what is the knowledge that we seek in life. Consequently, we cannot know what should be the educational process. Everything will topple down if the central aim is not clear to our minds. If we have a concept of an Academy in this Ashram, it is certainly not going to be an institution of a social kind, because we have many of such institutions in the world. It is not going to be a series of studies in the fashion of the age-old system of the several branches of learning. While all these learnings, arts and sciences, which we gain in the educational institutions of the world, are good in themselves and necessary as far as they go, since they help us to get on in life in some way or the other, we must know that the intention of mankind is not merely to get on in life, because many can get on beautifully in life on the surface level and yet be very unhappy at the core of their hearts.

Our intention, in consonance with the intention of Sri Gurudev Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj and masters of that calibre, has certainly not been to tread the beaten track of social tradition or even personal idiosyncrasy or sentiment, but to find out some ways and means of unfolding the mysteries that seem to be at the background of the longings of mankind, and to provide them with a true enlightenment, which is perhaps a better word than knowledge. For this purpose, we may have to proceed from one degree of reality to another degree, gradually. It has to be reiterated, at the outset, that we are not to interpret knowledge as

information about some particular subject. Truly speaking, knowledge is a percentage or degree of absorption of one's life into the character of one's knowledge. Knowledge is valuable to that extent alone to which it can be accommodated in one's personal life and remains as a basic foundation for one's search for the ultimate purpose which one is apparently longing for. It is very easy to be comfortable in life. But it is difficult to be happy in life. Society can deceive us into the notion that we are well off. When we conform to the standards of social ethics and idiosyncrasies, naturally we are supported by society. But society is only one segment in the vast circle of human endeavour. It is not the whole of the reality that is pictured before our minds.

What we call institutions, academies, societies, universities, colleges, etc., are certain convenient forms introduced to educate people to acquire the *true knowledge* of life which will make them really free and happy even when they are absolutely alone. These institutions have utterly failed to achieve this purpose. It is no use being free to move in society with the help of an army or a band of policemen. That is not freedom. Freedom is a kind of fearlessness that comes out of the acquisition of the wisdom of life, which again is identical with the reality of life. Thus, whatever groups we form in the social pattern such as institutions, academies or universities, they are not going to serve their purpose as long as they satisfy only the instincts and the sentiments of the groups of people we call society, but do not cater to the needs of the soul.

The soul is not a department of the body. Likewise, I should say, the Academy here is not a department of the

Divine Life Society, but it is the soul that works as the incentive behind every kind of activity, which we call a department, and is the vitality which supports the entire structure. It is not one branch of learning. It is here that we have to draw a distinction between the concept of an academy here and similar concepts that may be elsewhere. We are not going to teach physics, chemistry, mathematics or any particular branch of approach in the line of education, though these branches can be accommodated into the curriculum, provided they are conducive to the development of its ideal—the wholeness which we call Knowledge. From this point of view, it will be difficult to find either teachers or students, because the whole approach is quite novel and unique. If this approach is not going to be understood and implemented, it would be of no use; for, we would then be starting another high school or college, as anyone else may start. Well-to-do people start high schools and colleges. It is not a great asset to mankind, because they are going to teach the same stereotyped humdrum of the branches of studies which we have anywhere in the world. If what we learn cannot make us free and confident in our own self, that knowledge of ours is worthless. Let anyone touch one's own heart and say one is free—free from anxiety, free from harassment from the atmosphere in which one is living and free from suspicions and doubts as to the capacity of one's own self in the achievement of one's purpose. No one can be confident about these things. It means to say that our learning has not been up to the mark. They are only convenient contrivances to live a comfortable life in society. We can be rich in mind and also rich in reputation. We can be the centre or target of the applause of society, which is another way of being deceived

by society. But all this is not going to help us when the last call comes.

The whole purpose of the establishment of the Divine Life Society, and incidentally of the Academy that is in our minds, is not to play a joke with life or become important in human society. It is not that we boost up one more institution among the many others in the world, but to provide an atmosphere or an environment or a suitable set of circumstances which will enable us to proceed further in the art and science of contacting Reality.

Here we come to a very important question: What is Reality? If the art of contacting this ideal of Reality is the great science of life and if that is what we call Yoga, how many of us can have a clear-cut conception of the ideal which we call the Reality? It tantalises us like a mirage and recedes from us like the horizon as we try to approach it. As we grow, our ideas of the very ideal change in our minds and we have doubts as to what it could be. So, naturally, we are unable to adjust ourselves and adapt our personal lives to the ideal that we are holding before us. It is the first and foremost duty of every seeker who regards himself or herself as a student of the Academy here, to see that his or her mind is very clear about the ideal. As I underline this very purpose of the Academy, I cannot believe that Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj has had any other idea in his mind, ultimately, except the liberation of the Spirit—Moksha, as he would call it.

There are many great things in this world which are wonderful from their own point of view and necessary in their own station. But, they are all preparatory and contributory processes to the great achievement and

attainment which we call Freedom, Moksha, which is the aim of spiritual life. The Divine Life Society or the Yoga Vedanta Forest Academy is nothing, if it is not a centre for providing facilities for the enlightenment of the spirit or the human soul. Naturally, when it is concerned with the human soul, it is not concerned with male and female, east and west, north and south, etc., but it is concerned only with the spirit of aspiration, genuineness of approach and sympathy with the nature of Truth. All these are difficult things even to comprehend, apart from their being practised or put into our own daily experiences in life. The conception of Reality, as I mentioned, is the rock-bottom of the very endeavours of knowledge, which again is the process of the achievement of Freedom.

There are different degrees of the one Reality, which we will recognise as we proceed further and further and examine our experiences of life. When we were asleep, it was one kind of reality; and when we were dreaming, it was another kind of reality. When we are awake now, this is also another, different kind of reality. So, which one are we going to regard as the Reality? Anything that we come into contact with or anything that gets absorbed into our consciousness as a part of our experience, goes by the name of reality. So the wisdom of a teacher and the shrewdness or the tact of a disciple lie in the acceptance of the degrees of reality, by which it is meant that we have to move from stage to stage. We should never imagine that we are in a level higher than the one in which we really are. Pride is of no use here, and any kind of self-complacency has to be ruled out. We are before God, as it were, and not before any man. We can deceive man, but we cannot deceive God. We

cannot deceive even our own selves. So it is no use believing that we are something other than what we really are. Whatever be our learning, it stands not before the eye of God. We know it very well that it will also not stand the trials of life, which is also one of the ways we can test the efficacy of our knowledge. When we are in great trouble, in hot water, our present knowledge is not going to help us, which means to say that we have learnt nothing, ultimately. It has been a self-deception throughout, for we have been under the notion that there has been a gradual increase in the content of knowledge.

It is difficult to be free in this sort of approach to things, because we have unfortunately been hypnotised or brainwashed, as it were, right from our childhood, into certain traditional ways of thinking by the society and the community in which we live. We are Brahmins, we are Kshatriyas, we are aristocrats, we are princes, we are of royal families, our father was an Inspector of Schools—such and similar ideas are introduced into the pattern of our thinking. Further, there is something which spoils every effort at learning, viz., the seeking for ‘outcome’ of this learning, “What will my knowledge bring?” This is what every student asks himself when he enters into a school or college. By this he expects some material output from the learning that he gains or the knowledge that he acquires. We are always accustomed to think in terms of human society and material gain, and much more than that—our egoistic satisfaction. It must bring applause and recognition. What do we mean by ‘recognition’? It is recognition from people. We don’t expect recognition from asses or donkeys. Well, we can

imagine, we want recognition from the species to which we belong. That is our wisdom! So, this is a basic defect in the very approach to things. We are still humans, and we want to be applauded by human beings only. We do not bother as to what the gods in the heavens are thinking about us, or what a dog is thinking about us here. What man thinks about us, is the only important thing. It is like a frog thinking about the frogs' world. Under these conditions, we are not going to escape the clutches of Yama or death, which means there is no escape from the process of transformation, destruction and reincarnation unless we change our ways of thinking.

The de-hypnotisation of our mind is our first duty. It is difficult to believe that one would be easily successful in an attempt at such a kind of dehypnotisation. How can we forget such ideas as: "I belong to the Ramakrishna Mission", "I belong to the Divine Life Society", "I am of Sankaracharya's order", "I am of Ramanuja's order"? Even great thinkers are unable to extricate themselves from these parochial ways of thinking; and these are not going to cut ice before God. Yet, we care a hoot for what God thinks about us, if only mankind is going to support us! Now, this attitude that we are going to be happy only among human beings, irrespective of what God or Nature is thinking about us, is a great travesty of things. So it is that the wrath of Nature is coming upon us in the form of death, in spite of whatever humanity has been thinking about us. We might have been carried in palanquins, kept seated on thrones by the great men of the world. But, death is not going to spare us. What is death if not the anger of Nature that has come upon us on account of our disregard for her laws? And the

laws of Nature are nothing but the fingers of God working in the world. We have to be introduced into these mysteries by people who have already trodden the path, who have seen the pitfalls on the way and the obstacles that may come upon us. And then, we should gird up our loins to tread the path which we will find to be a hard nut to crack when we actually try to enter.

If this ideal could be brought home into the minds of people, if this Academy can be a humble nursery of this lofty approach which is multifaceted and many-sided, excluding no aspect of approach to Truth, and free from a parochial approach of every kind, that would, of course, be the real satisfaction of the Founder. Hence, it becomes imperative on the part of both teachers and students of the path of the Spirit to place themselves in the atmosphere of that which they are seeking. This is a very important point to remember, again. We are always in the presence of the ideal which we are seeking and contemplating in our minds. Since God is that ideal, we are in His presence. And one could imagine what sort of psychological attitude one will have to develop and entertain in the presence of that Being which is our ideal. The ideal is not a future one. We always say that God is eternal; naturally, God is not in time. So, a thing that is not in time, cannot also be regarded as something in the future, because the future is a part of time. So it is a continuous present. It is just here. We are under the very nose of That which we are seeking. Wrongly we are under the impression that it is in a distant future, which means to say that it is far off even in space, which again implies that God is not seeing us. So, how many ways there are of deceiving oneself! The forces of Nature are very

vigilant, active and intelligent. They are not sleeping, they are not closing their eyes, and they are not blind. As I have already mentioned to you, these are nothing but the ways in which God's fingers operate in this world. The awakening of oneself into this fact is perhaps the entry into the path of spiritual life. Spiritual life does not necessarily mean living in an Ashram. It does not also mean going to a church, nor does it mean living in a convent. It is not any kind of institutional rigidity that we introduce into our own personal lives. This kind of rigidity, however, becomes a necessity just as medicine becomes a necessity to a sick person. But it does not mean that a person should go on taking medicine throughout his life, even when he is healthy. Similarly, it does not mean that institutions are a necessity for all times. They are necessary even as schools and colleges are necessary. You know well that you will not be in a school or college throughout your lifetime. It is absurd to think like that.

So, Freedom is the final word of this entire approach. And institutional training and discipline in an Academy of the kind in this Ashram is a preparatory step in the achievement of the final aim of personal freedom, which cannot be isolated from universal freedom. You are not going to be always a teacher of spirituality, nor are you going to be also a perpetual student in the Academy. You are going to be a child of God, in the end. We cannot forget the ideal that was in the mind of Gurudev. Those who had the opportunity of living with him for a protracted period and had an insight into his ways of thinking would be able to gather as to what was the ideal before him. It was not name and fame that made him establish this institution. He

needed nothing of that kind. What could one gain by others' saying that one is great? Certainly, it was not money either. It was something else which always escapes the notice of onlookers, because they look at the body of the institution and the personality of the individual. They cannot look at the mind of a person and cannot see the spirit of things, because these always elude their grasp.

Therefore, it is absolutely necessary to be cautious in our daily thinking to see that the purpose for which we began our initial enterprise does not escape our notice later on, due to the clamour of the social atmosphere or even the demands of personal instincts. Towards this great aim, we have to move slowly, gradually, missing not a single step in the long path of development. There is no double promotion here. It is a compulsory movement from one step to the next step—one step only at a time, and not two steps. This is because no unnecessary thing exists in this world. An unnecessary step can be stepped over, but such a one does not exist. Every atom in the universe is a necessary thing for the development of the whole universe. And so, we have to pass through all the stages. We have passed through eighty-four Lakhs of Yonis, as the scriptures tell us. Scientists also tell us that we have passed through the stage of inanimate matter, the vegetable kingdom, the animal world and human life, etc. All these are different ways of saying that we can advance only gradually, stage by stage, and there is no jump from a stone to a man, for example. It has always been a gradual and systematic ascent. Likewise, from mankind to God is not going to be a sudden jump, unless there is an inward refinement of personality through the various levels that we have to

ascend. This requires knowledge as to what are these further levels. This is the type of knowledge that we have to acquire in an Academy of this kind.

So, we require experienced people to teach. We do not want professors. They are not going to teach anything, because they are only bookworms. The teachers in the Academy should have insight into the nature of what they are going to teach, and naturally it is a difficult task. We know this very well. If everything had been so easy, everybody would have attained Freedom. There would have been liberation for all and paradise in this world, as people have been vainly expecting. Ramarajya would have been here. That is not going to be so easy on account of the very nature of things. It is a hard job and difficult indeed in every respect, externally as well as internally, because to think in terms of the requirements of the laws of God is not given to ordinary laymen. Therefore it is that people find it not easy to gain success in spiritual life as they imagine in the early stages of enthusiasm. The laws of God alone operate in the world, and nothing else operates. An acquaintance with the nature of these laws is a primary necessity. But we are acquainted with only social laws, political laws, personal laws and communal laws, rules and regulations of our own making, all of which may not have much relevance. But they assume relevance when they are tuned up to the higher purpose in the mould of which they have to be cast. Human laws, regulations and discipline are supposed to be reflections of the higher ideals that we are going to aspire for. It does not mean that there is any gulf between God and the world. There is a gradual ascent from the world to God. It is a process of evolution. So the studies

in academies of this kind are going to be absolutely novel. From the point of view of this envisagement that is in my mind, I doubt very much whether it can function in this manner so easily. It requires a strong foundation, hard efforts and a body of thinkers along these lines, and it also requires real and sincere interest in the whole affair. It is not a slipshod matter.

All these considered, it requires serious thinking by each and every one of us. We are not going to study books merely. We are going to enlighten ourselves in the art of living which is the preparation for God-life that we are aspiring, for the purpose of which people are coming here. Many sincere students come from abroad as seekers. They seek enlightenment into the nature of divine living. Naturally it is difficult to contemplate all at once all the aspects of the approach to the final goal of the Academy. But let us remember the words of Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj who said, "Well, I have put the seed; let it take its own shape. It will sprout into a tendril, grow into a plant and become a tree. It may take fifty years, or it may take three lives. It does not matter." A gardener does not think that he himself will eat the mangoes from the plant that he plants on the soil. He knows that he may not live for so many years. Similarly, it does not mean that we, as individuals seated here, will reap the fruit of this effort. It is a cosmic endeavour in the interest of God's ideal itself, and with the blessings of the Almighty, success has to be there where sincerity is at its background. This is my humble belief.

VEDA VYASA—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 Srotriyas and Brahmanishthas. A Guru is defined as a sage of perfection endowed with the two great qualifications of Srotriyatva and Brahmanishthatva—learned and also spiritually exalted. The interesting sidelight which learned men try to throw on the meaning of these two terms, ‘Srotriya’ 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

* Vyasa Purnima or Guru Purnima message given on the 27th of July, 1980.

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 yatprayantya bhisamvisanti 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.

SAINT—A BLEND OF RIGHTEOUSNESS AND GODLINESS *

The incarnations of God are supposed to come with a power of divinity, whereas the sages and saints are supposed to go with the power of divinity. As the one comes with Divine force, the other goes with that Divine force. This is why we lay much importance on the birthdays of Incarnations and the Mahasamadhi days of Siddhas and Masters. Such a holy occasion we observe every year on the Punyatithi Aradhana Mahotsava of revered Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj.

Divine grace gets gathered up gradually through the lives of such Masters, and they leave this world like shooting stars or blazing comets, with a trail of glories. It is this glory, the lustre of divinity which they enshrined in themselves, that keeps up the humble followers of these Masters in their spiritual pursuits. These Masters come with a commission from God, as it were, and they have their missions to fulfil in their lives. As lustre of light is spread around a luminous star, they keep spreading around themselves a lustre of this divine Power, to propound and proclaim which they descend into this world. Spiritual seekers who have the blessed opportunity of serving them and receiving from them the blessings in the form of knowledge, the grace of the Spirit, are in one sense their representatives, vital links in the chain of Guru-parampara,

* Message given on the 3rd of August, 1972, the Ninth Punyatithi-Aradhana of H.H. Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj.

who keep flowing their spiritual message. Never will this world be in dearth of such great Messengers of Truth. They reveal themselves occasionally and withdraw themselves at other times, but this revelation and withdrawal are like the rising and setting of the sun. Whether the sun rises or sets, it makes no difference to the sun itself; for, the sun neither rises nor sets. To the eyes of the world, God's manifestations appear to come and go, exactly like the rising and setting of the sun. But these manifestations are neither present nor absent as they appear before our eyes in this physical world. The radiance of God is impossible to avoid in our day-to-day life. It is a perpetual presence, like the energy of the sun that vitalises the whole earth, whether the sun shines in the sky or has set. The earth receives the energy of the sun all throughout the twenty-four hours, irrespective of the difference between day and night. So is the energy of God, the grace of the Almighty, perpetually charging the whole creation with its various forms of manifestations. Sometimes we call them Avataras; sometimes we call them Saints, Sages and Masters; and sometimes Yogis or Siddhas. But, all this difference in the names is drawn only by us, in our own way, from our own point of view, and according to our perception of Reality.

Great personalities and geniuses of the Spirit have a double duty to perform—the negative and the positive. While one of their functions is to lessen and mitigate the evils in the world, to remove the darkness of ignorance by initiation into the Spirit, the other function of theirs is to reveal the greatness of God to the world. So our Master, Sadgurudev Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj, was here

before us not merely to dispel the darkness of ignorance of those who were eager to know God and tread the spiritual path, but also to proclaim the glory of God to the whole world. We are reformed not merely by the teachings of such great Masters, but also by their personal examples. They are themselves the embodiments of righteousness. Freedom from evils is their essential character. They have risen above sin and error, but at the same time, their personalities reveal Divinity. Goodness and Godliness are the two aspects of a saintly character. While goodness is a characteristic of freedom from error, evil and ignorance, Godliness is the positive aspect of it by which that which really *Is*, is revealed through them. While goodness and righteousness are the outcome of having arisen from that which is not, Godliness is the result of having entered into what actually *Is*. Attachment to what is not, is Samsara; and entering into what *Is*, is God-realisation. So, Samsara and God are the obverse and reverse of the coin of human experience. On one side, it is Aptakamatva, Akamatva and Kamahatvatva, i.e., righteousness or Dharma is one aspect of saintly life; and on the other side, it is Isvaratva, i.e., Godliness, which is the concomitant factor, the invariably associated factor with this Dharma or righteousness of the saintly life. So, we may safely say that though these great men may appear to belong to our own group of mankind, i.e., seeing things as we see, speaking to us in our own language and understanding our human foibles for the sake of our benefit and spiritual growth, they really belong to what is called the Isvara Koti or the divine group. While Sadhakas belong to the Jiva Koti, Siddhas or Masters belong to the Isvara Koti.

Thus, a luminous star shot through the firmament of the spiritual world in the personality of Sadgurudev Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj. It rushed forth, shed its luminance for a while and rushed away, leaving, as I said, a trail of glories behind it. The luminosity of its presence has been maintaining its impact even till this day, not only in the hearts of all seekers and followers, but also in the whole world. His name is known almost everywhere today in the world of seekers. His writings, his messages, his dispassion and love of God, reverberate through the ears and feelings of all Sadhakas and seekers. Great would be the glory of that blessed seeker who would dedicate himself or herself for fulfilling the mission of this Master, by personal example, by ideal conduct in daily life, by manifestation in practical life that ideal for which the Master lived and which he taught. Following this ideal and living it is regarded as a real Guru Seva, service of the Master. The Guru expects a Sadhaka to become a Siddha and to realise God. The purpose of all teachings and the service performed, on one side by the Master and on the other side by the Sadhaka, is God-realisation. Detached, unselfish service combined with an unceasing flow of God-consciousness, is the spiritual message of Sadgurudev Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj. Pure in heart and divine in status, righteous in conduct and spiritual in aspiration, completely detached from the evanescent show of the world of sense-objects and wholly absorbed in that ardent longing and yearning for God—such is the nature of an ideal follower, disciple or devotee of Sadgurudev Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj.

May we make this an object of our meditation and contemplation. The spiritual message is here through his personal example as well as his precepts. May we endeavour to live it by absorbing it into our own nature, so that we become moving temples of God and mobile branches of the Divine Life Society in our own selves. May we embody in ourselves, through our personal lives and examples, this spiritual message of Sadgurudev. May we become inseparable, living embodiments of the Divine Life Society also, which is only an expanded form of the Master's own personality. The Divine Life Society and Swami Sivananda are inseparable, like the soul and body. The body is not, when the soul does not express itself; and the soul also does not express itself, except through the body. So, while belonging to the Divine Life Society as its members, we are simultaneously asserting our spiritual relationship with a Guru who never made a distinction between the soul within and the world without. For him, spiritual Sadhana and social service meant one and the same thing, because the world without is only an expression of the Self or the Atman within. The Supreme Isvara reveals Himself as the Atman on the one side and as the world on the other side—as the Pancha-Maha-Bhutas, the five great elements, from the objective point of view and as the Self from the subjective point of view. Hence, to lead a spiritual life is to entertain Isvara-Bhavana, God-consciousness. God should be enshrined in our hearts. This is the integral message, the all-comprehensive teaching of Sadgurudev Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj. Let this become not only an objective of our meditation daily, but also a living force to sustain us throughout our life. Let us not make a false distinction between the inner and the outer,

between Sadhana and secular work, between the Atman and the world, between God and His creation. May we be in a position to take together these various phenomena which are manifestations of God Himself and may we be in a position to assert with confidence that great universal truth of the all-comprehensiveness of God, without a distinction of a within or a without, without the distinction of the Jnana and Karma, knowledge and activity, as taught in the great Purusha Sukta of the Veda which says, “*Purusha evedam sarvam, yadbhutam yaccha bhavyam*”: All this is the Purusha—the past, the present and the future. To serve Him is to love Him; to love Him is to meditate on Him; to meditate on Him is to know Him; and to know Him is to realise Him. All means one and the same thing. ‘Sadhana’ is thus a very comprehensive term. To lead a life of the Spirit is to enshrine God in creation, which is our goal.

SRI KRISHNA—THE PURNA-AVATARA*

The Jayanti of Bhagavan Sri Krishna, also known as Sri Krishna Janmashtami, falls on the eighth day in the dark fortnight of the month of Bhadrapada (August-September). The observance of this holy day and the performance of this sacred worship to the great Incarnation is a symbol of an intensification of our soul's yearning to come nearer to God as much as possible. Bhagavan Sri Krishna is regarded as Purna-Avatarā, which means the full Incarnation. Avatarā is 'Incarnation', and Purna is 'the full'. He is considered to be a complete manifestation of God, not a partial expression of the power and the glory of God.

The power of God is never fully manifest anywhere in the world. It is always manifest or expressed in some percentage as the occasion demands, even as we ourselves, in our own individual capacities, for instance, do not put forth our total energy at any time of the day. Though we work hard from morning to evening, the entire energy of our body, mind and soul does not get revealed on any occasion. Perhaps, months may pass without an occasion for the whole energy of our system to manifest even once, because the circumstance does not demand it. We only express a little of our thought, a little fraction of our understanding and a partial form of our energy as would be necessitated by the nature of the particular context. Likewise, God never manifests Himself wholly unless the occasion is of such an intensified character as to call

* Sri Krishna Janmashtami message given on the 29th of August, 1975.

for such a manifestation. Historically speaking, the circumstances at the time of the advent of Bhagavan Sri Krishna were such that a complete manifestation of the Divine Energy was called for.

We have an idea of what God is and what His total energy would be like, from the point of view of our own humble imaginations, which is, of course, comparable to the idea that a frog in a well may be entertaining in its mind in regard to the Pacific Ocean. That may be the idea we may have in our minds of the total energy of God. Nobody can say what it is. Anyhow, we can understand what 'totality' means, at least in a grammatical sense or linguistic significance. Bhagavan Sri Krishna, the full Avatara, the complete manifestation of God, is the object of our worship, prayer and meditation on this day. This has a very special relevance to our own personal lives, and its meaning for us is naturally the meaning that is implied in our relationship with God. We have heard from narrations recorded in the scriptures like the Srimad Bhagavata, that Bhagavan Sri Krishna was born at midnight, as it was also the case with the birth of Jesus the Christ. There are many similarities between the births of Krishna and Christ as far as the associations of the phenomena with the occasion are concerned. The darkest part of the night is midnight, and that was the hour of the birth of the Lord. This divine advent took place not at the commencement or at the fag end of the night, but in the thick of the night, midnight, which from the point of view of our own personal Sadhana-life is reminiscent of the conditions under which God would reveal Himself in our own lives. God did not reveal Himself in daylight, but in the dead of night. The

spiritual connotation of this, from the point of view of the relationship of the soul to God, is that the daylight or activity of the senses is the midnight or slumber of the Atman, and the daylight or birth of the Atman is the midnight or slumber of the senses. When the senses cease from their activity, conditions become favourable for the manifestation of God. The Atman does not manifest Itself when the senses are rejoicing in the daylight of their contact with objects. On the other hand, the birth of the Atman is a deathblow to the senses, and the slumbering of the prison guards at the time of the advent of the Lord may be, in a way, compared to the death of the senses at the time of the birth of Divinity. Kamsa represents the ego and all his menials the represent the senses. All these were put to rest at the time of birth of Lord Krishna. Hence, the Bhagavadgita says, “*Ya nisa sarvabhutanam tasyam jagarti samyami, yasyam jagrati bhutani sa nisa pasyato muneh*”: The night of the ignorant is day for the sage, and vice versa, the night of the sage is day for the ignorant.

The Atman is something quite different from what we regard as very dear to us, notwithstanding the fact that we have been told, again and again, that It is the deepest Reality in our personality. All this teaching has remained only a theory for us. We have always been pampering the senses and fondling the ego, in spite of the fact that we know that we are not the ego and the senses, but are the Atman. All this teaching is like pouring water on a rock. It has made no impression upon us. The infinite is the Fullness, the Purna; and the finite is the Apurna. We individuals, the Jivatmans and everything in this world are Apurna, finites, but we enshrine the Infinite in our bosom.

And the manifestation of the Infinite in the finite, the birth of God in man is possible, practicable and inevitable when the obstructions to Its manifestation are obviated totally.

To speak from the point of view of the historical life which Bhagavan Sri Krishna is said to have lived thousands of years ago—let alone the spiritual or the mystical—we see a wholeness manifest in Him. His life was a fullness right from childhood up to the maturity of life. He was a completeness in every respect, even in his babyhood or childhood, a completeness in his adolescence, a completeness in his youth and maturity. He was a fullness of bodily perfection, a fullness of understanding, a fullness of social relationship and political statesmanship, and a fullness in His own Being. This has been revealed even in His outward physical personality—a beauty and a charm that mankind has never seen.

Our meditations and our worships are really silent invocations of the characteristics of the Object of our worship and meditation. Every worship is an invocation, and every form of meditation is an invocation; and invocation means the calling of the force into our own being and the planting of the power of the Divine in our own personality. We have, in ritualistic or Tantric parlance, what is known as Nyasa, which is performed during the time of worship. The Pundits and Archakas who perform worship in temples know what Nyasa means. Nyasa is a Sanskrit word which means ‘placing’, ‘stabilising’, ‘fixing’, ‘invoking’, ‘stamping’. All these meanings are conveyed by the word ‘Nyasa’. At the commencement of the worship, whether it is done in one’s own private sanctum sanctorum in the house or in a public temple, Nyasa is performed by

every worshipper. In this process of Nyasa, what is done is that every part, every aspect, every conceivable characteristic of the Divine Being is located, in an intensity of feeling and invocation, in the corresponding parts and aspects of one's own personality, so that during the time of the worship and meditation, you are in communion with the Divine Being. You are as though possessed by God at that time. You yourself become a sort of Avatara, to put it in a meagre sense, at the time of true worship. The invocation is made in such a complete form, and with such method and system of rituals, that you assume in your body, mind and soul, in your total personality, the various aspects and manifestations of the personality of the Divinity, God.

So, on this day we have such an occasion for worship of Bhagavan Sri Krishna, which means to say that we have to put on in our inward character and meditation, a deep sense of our unity with the various aspects of His personality which are co-extensive with all that is external to Him and all that is transcendent as well as immanent. This is to give you an idea of 'Purnata', what Purna-Avatara would mean and what it also means to worship and meditate and adore such a Purna-Avatara.

If meditation is difficult, worship is also difficult. Any kind of inward communion is a difficult task for the mind, because of its outgoing tendency. The mind never comes in communion with anything in this world at any time. It always longs for contact rather than communion. The senses and the mind are habituated to contact with their objects. The religious invocation of worship and meditation is not an attempt at coming in contact even with a Divinity or a Godhead, but an endeavour to commune oneself with

the Supreme Being, which is the purpose of Nyasa. There is a difference between contact and communion. You can never commune with any object in this world, but you can only come in contact with it. What is the difference between contact and communion? In contact you really do not imbibe the characteristics of the object, and you are not really in possession of the object. In contact, again, you do not receive into yourself the power of the object, and, therefore, you cannot also enjoy that object or have control over it. This would also give an idea of the generally unknown fact that our daily efforts at coming in contact with things, including persons, with a desire to possess and enjoy them, is a futile effort. It will not bring any fruit at all, except pain. The Gita says, “*Ye hi samsparsaja bhogah duhkhayonaya eva te*”: The pleasures born of sense-contact are wombs of pain. Every contact brings pain and suffering and ultimate ruin of oneself. But the religious aspiration of the soul does not long for contact with God, but a communion with Him. In that communion which we try to establish in our spiritual moments of worship and meditation, we simultaneously commune ourselves with the whole of creation, because creation is the cosmic body of God. Thus to worship God is to worship the whole world and to serve God is to serve humanity, and vice versa. That is why we are sometimes told, “*Janata janardana; manava seva madhava seva,*” etc. These sayings have a great significance and a meaning behind them. Janata and Janardana, Manava and Madhava cannot be identical except in terms of the perfection or Purnata of God. Thus our communion with God is simultaneously a communion with everything in the world.

Thus, this is an occasion for us to strengthen ourselves spiritually. Spiritual strength, of course, is the real strength and real power that we are seeking. And in this particularly specialised form of worship and communion with the ideal of Bhagavan Sri Krishna on this holy day, we have, no doubt, made a very vast and comprehensive achievement which will ensure prosperity in every walk of life.

The peculiarity and the speciality of the life of Bhagavan Sri Krishna was that, as I have already hinted, He was an all-comprehensive personality. He was a householder and not a Sannyasin. He had wife and children. He was a politician and a statesman. He was a soldier and also a servant when the time demanded that kind of attitude from Him. And at the same time, He was a person with a comprehensive understanding of the various shades of the difference which relationships put on among things. Therefore, it is difficult to understand, ordinarily, the significance behind many of the things that He did and also many of the things He said, especially in the Bhagavadgita.

The Mahabharata and the Srimad Bhagavata are the monumental records of His life, His activities and His achievements. The Bhagavadgita may be regarded as the great gospel that He gave to mankind. It is as difficult to understand His teaching as it is to understand His own life, because He did not think as we are thinking. His thinking does not comply with the sentimental demands of our human feelings, ethical sense, the usual social morality, and so on and so forth, which we entertain in our own hearts. A total transformation, a transfiguration of all values is brought about in His activity and life, and also in His teachings, so that His life and teachings are a sort of a

superhuman presentation before us. And we know how difficult it is for a human being to confront a superhuman presentation of any kind. But, this is the ideal before us and this is our goal. Whether or not we are able to understand it, this is what the life of Sri Krishna tells us. The Bhagavadgita, the cream of His teaching, also conveys to us that things are not what they seem to our senses. This is what we learn from His life also. There is something quite different from what we sense, feel, think and understand as valuable. This is the Truth behind things for which His life and teachings stood and which He Himself embodied in His own life. This is the message for us today, which we should try to imbibe into our lives by invoking His grace and putting forth honest efforts. As the Gita concludes, where Krishna and Arjuna are together, i.e., where Divine Grace and human effort go together, there is prosperity, victory, happiness and firm polity.

LORD GANESA—THE REMOVER OF OBSTACLES *

Human life is beset with obstacles. We face oppositions and encounter difficulties galore, and the whole of our daily activity may, in a sense, be considered as a struggle against all odds which come in different forms as the sorrows of life. The moment we wake up in the morning, we have to face the obstacle called hunger which we try to obviate by cooking and eating food, the obstacle called thirst which we have to get rid of by drinks, and the obstacles called disease, exhaustion, fatigue, sleeplessness and the like, which we endeavour to remedy by the introduction of various types of medicines. The very presence of people around us is an obstacle and the human individual suddenly becomes restless, and both consciously and unconsciously puts on an attitude of self-defence, as if one has found oneself suddenly in a terrific war field.

The difficulties of life are, to a large extent, the very substance of life itself. The whole of life is a bundle of difficulties. It is a mess of oppositions, which calls for a continuous counteracting force which is what is called human enterprise. If the whole earth were filled with milk and honey, and if there was no fatigue, no old age and death, no hunger and thirst, no opposition and nobody to utter a word, then there would be no activity, no necessity to do anything and no incentive in the direction of any movement. The quantity, the expanse and the magnitude of

* Ganesa Chaturthi message given in September, 1981.

the opposition which comes before us in life is such that no single individual will be able to face it. This whole world is too much for a single man, and considering the incongruous, disproportionate relationship between a single human individual and the vast world outside, there is very little hope of man's achieving anything in this world, successfully, because we cannot bail out the ocean of waters with a spoon, though our effort may be laudable. We are, no doubt, very sincerely industrious in emptying the ocean of its waters with a little spoon or a ladle. Notwithstanding the fact that this effort on our part is praiseworthy, it is not going to lead us to any success, and the expected result will not follow. The ocean cannot be emptied by any amount of bailing out with a spoon. Such seems to be the type of world into which we are born, and people who are acutely conscious of this situation become humble enough to accept that even an inch of success cannot be expected in this world without the miraculous grace of God. So, even the little success that sometimes seems to come to us is a kind of undeserved promotion, as it were, granted to us by the mercy of the Almighty. Our efforts are only a puny child's whining and weeping with a helpless weakness of body and mind. The traditional annual worship of God in this role, as the remover of all obstacles, as Vighna Vinayaka, is known as Vinayaka Chaturthi or Ganesa Chaturthi. It is the day on which we offer special adoration to the Remover of obstacles.

We are terribly afraid of obstacles. There is no other fear in this world except of obstacles. So, we always cry, "Remove the obstacles, clear the path, cleanse the road." On the fourth day of the bright half of the lunar month of

Bhadrapada (August-September) every year, the great Lord Ganapati, called the Lord of Hosts, is worshipped throughout India, and perhaps in many other parts of the world also. There is no Hindu who does not recognise the pre-eminence of the worship of this mysteriously conceived deity called Ganapati whose name occurs right in the beginning of the Rig Veda itself, the earliest of scriptures, where pointedly the name is taken in a Mantra, "*Gananam tva ganapatim havamahe...*"

The fear of God is supposed to be the beginning of religion. A person who has no fear of God also has no religion, because religion is respect for God. The fear of God goes together with the acceptance of the greatness of God and His Power. Wherever there is power, we are afraid of it. An ocean, a lion, an elephant are all powerful things, and we dread the very sight of them.

Tradition conceives this great Remover of Obstacles, Ganapati, as the son of Lord Siva, with a proboscis of an elephant and a protuberant belly, with weapons of various types and with His right hand in a benign gesture of goodwill, grace and blessing. The family of Bhagavan Siva is of a peculiar setup. The Lord of all the worlds lives as one possessing nothing! This manner of living in Mount Kailasa by the great Master of Yogis, Lord Siva, is perhaps a demonstration of the great definition of the glory of Bhagavan, the Supreme Being as possessed of all-knowledge, all-power and all-renunciation. What is Bhagavan and what are His characteristics? 'Bhagavan' is one who has six characteristics. "*Aisvaryasya samagrasya viryasya yasasah sriyah; jnana-vairagyayoh chaiva shannam bhaga itirana*"—these six characteristics

mentioned are all called Bhaga. One who has Bhaga is called Bhagavan. All prosperity, all wealth, all treasure, all glory, all magnificence is Aisvarya. Entire Aisvarya is there. Virya is tremendous energy, force and power. Yasa is fame and renown. Srih is prosperity. Jnana and Vairagya are the pinnacle of wisdom and the pinnacle of renunciation, respectively. Knowledge is supposed to be a benediction from Lord Siva Himself. In the Srimad Bhagavata Mahapurana, at the commencement of the second Skandha, Sri Suka delineates the names of various deities who have to be adored for various purposes. “*Jnanam mahesvaradicchet*”: All knowledge is to be expected from the great Siva. They say that the ocean of Siva is incomprehensible; a part of it was contained in a pot by Brihaspati, and a spoon of it was taken by Panini who is the promulgator of Sanskrit grammar.

You may know the interesting story as to how Panini, the originator of Sanskrit grammar, received knowledge from Lord Siva. He was supposed to be the dullest of the students in a group that was studying from a Guru in Taxila, Taksha Shila. The other boys were very intelligent. Panini was the most stupid, the least intelligent, very much belittled and made fun of by the students in the class. He was deeply hurt that he was being cowed down by other students and that he could not understand anything that the teacher said. Almost in a desperate mood of disgust with everything, he went to the forest and deeply contemplated on Lord Siva. He prayed, “O Lord! Bless me with Knowledge.” It is said that Lord Siva appeared before him, danced and revolved His Dakka or Damaru fourteen times, and the following fourteen sounds were made: 1. *Aiun*, 2.

Rlrk, 3. *Aowng*, 4. *Ai ouch*, 5. *Ha ya va rat*, 6. *Lan*, 7. *Na ma nga na nam*, 8. *Jha bhanj*, 9. *Gha dha dhash*, 10. *Ja ba ga da das*, 11. *Kha pha chha tha tha cha ta tav*, 12. *Ka pay*, 13. *Sa sha sar*, and 14. *Hal*. All this constitutes the very essence of Sanskrit grammar. These sounds, meaningless as they may appear to us, became the foundation of Sanskrit grammar and Sanskrit literature.

So, God can teach us without books and without the usual medium of instruction, by a thought, a sound, a look, a touch or a benign gesture.

Such a Master's son is Sri Ganapati, Sri Ganesa. We have endless stories about our Gods, all partly humorous and partly highly illuminating. The usual belief is that Lord Ganapati is a celibate and He never married, though there is a belief in North India that He has Siddhi and Buddhi, two consorts, behind Him. There is a humorous story about His marriage. He was about to be married and the bridegroom's procession was moving with great gusto from Mount Kailasa, evidently, to the bride's palace. We do not know who that contemplated bride was. We know only that there was a procession of the bridegroom. And His potbelly, it seems, burst on the way due to eating too much, and He took a snake, which is sometimes identified with Subrahmanya, tied it around His stomach, and again ate. It seems Chandra, or the moon, looked at this scene and laughed, saying, "Look at this man who is going for his marriage! His stomach has burst and he is tying it up with a snake!" This took place on the fourth day of the bright half of the lunar month, Bhadrapada (August-September). Ganapati was irritated very much. He cursed the moon: "You fellow, you talk about me like this. You have insulted

me. Well, whoever looks at you on this day will also be similarly insulted.” So, people dread to look at the moon on that day. Chauthi Chandra, the moon on the fourth day of the bright half of the lunar month, is considered very inauspicious, resulting in Apavadam or censure and reproach for the one who sees it. Apavada means undeserved blame and scandal. You might have done nothing, yet somebody will go on telling some evil against you. This is the result of looking at the moon on the fourth day, because it has the curse of Ganapati. But they say, in our tradition of curses, that there is also what is called Sapamoksha, or a kind of remedy. The moon said, “Please excuse me. Why do you curse me like this?” The moon pleaded for some remedy. Then Ganapati, in reply, said, “OK, alright, I pardon you. Whoever looks at you on the first day after the new moon will be relieved of this curse.” I have seen people running to terraces and climbing trees and trying to see the little streak of the moon appearing like a thread on the first day after the new moon, to be rid of all the evils that might have grown around them even by an unconscious look on the fourth day because on that fourth day, especially, the moon is just before our eyes and is very clear. He is located very peculiarly in a position in the sky where one cannot avoid seeing him. So then, when our eyes fall on the moon on the fourth day, we rub our eyes and say, “Oh, very sorry, some mistake has taken place,” and we expect some trouble afterwards. Somebody will say something against us. Anyhow, the remedy is seeing the moon on the first day after the new moon.

The philosophy behind all these traditional worships and Puranic allegories is that the path of spiritual Sadhana

is a mystery by itself and it is not a heroic activity of the Sadhaka, as sometimes he may imagine. No heroism will work there. Even the so-called heroic attitude, which we sometimes put on, is an entry of divine force into us. Just as a child's or a little baby's walking is the strength of the mother who is holding it with her hand, whatever intelligence we have, whatever satisfaction we enjoy in this life, whatever strength we possess, whether physical or psychological, whatever security we have, whatever is worthwhile in our existence, is a modicum of the reflection of God's power. The worship of Maha-Ganapati, with the Mantra "*Om Gam Ganapataye Namah*", is a humble submission of the true circumstance of oneself before the might of God's glory. Who can open one's eyes before God? Who can utter one word before Him? Who can boast of one's learning, greatness, etc., before Him? We would be ashamed even to present ourselves before Him. Consider the might of the Creator, the magnitude of His power, the depth of His Wisdom, His Knowledge and His Omniscience, and our present condition! Compare it and contrast it. What Sadhana, what meditation, what Yoga can we do? The moment we begin to take one step in the direction of this holy movement towards God, the world pounces upon us with all its army, because the world is quantitatively larger. We live in a world of quantities. We require quantitative food, quantitative drink, quantitative physical appurtenances, and everything we require and ask for in life is only a quantity rather than a quality. The quantity of the world being larger than the quantity of our physical personality, we cannot face it. So there is this humble acceptance of submission and a prayer to the great Almighty as manifest in Ganapati.

There is another story as to why He is worshipped first on all occasions. It appears Parvati, the consort of Lord Siva, went for a bath, maybe in the Ganga. She scrubbed her body, and out of the dirt of her body she made a small image of a boy, gave life to it by her touch, and ordained him not to allow entry to any person while she is bathing in the river. Accordingly, that boy stood guarding. At that moment, the great Lord Siva Himself came and the boy prevented His entry, because he could not recognise Lord Siva, whom he had not seen. He had only the order of his Mother that nobody should enter. He immediately objected to the entry of Lord Siva into the vicinity where Parvati was bathing. We can imagine the feeling of Lord Siva. "What is this? The little chap is standing and preventing me from seeing my own consort!" He immediately chopped off Ganapati's head, and he fell down dead. When Parvati came up, she was aghast and said, "Oh Lord, You have killed my boy. He is my own child, and I am deeply hurt. What have you done! Oh, my Lord!" She bet her breast and would not speak. She started weeping. The Lord Siva said, "Do not weep. I shall give life to him." But ironically enough, He would not put the same head back. We do not know the reason why He did this. He said, "Bring the head of someone who is sleeping with his head towards the north." This is why it is said that we should not sleep with our heads towards the north. Otherwise, Siva will search for us! And they found nobody except an elephant lying with its head towards the north. Its head was severed and brought. The elephant's head was attached to the trunk of this boy and life was given by the great Siva. He became alive and was named as Ganapati, which designation was bestowed upon him by Lord Siva Himself, maybe to pacify

Parvati or to bring about a peaceful atmosphere around. Lord Siva not only gave him life, but also made him the leader of His hosts. Ganapati is, therefore, the leader of the hosts of Lord Siva Himself. There is a large audience before Lord Siva, consisting of varieties of Ganas. Ganas are demigods; they are neither human nor superhuman, but are a peculiar type. Sometimes they look like astral beings. These Ganas are ruled by Ganapati under the order of Siva. So Ganapati means the generalissimo, as it were, of the hosts who always live in Kailasa. Apart from making Ganapati the Leader of his hosts, Lord Siva bestowed another blessing on Him, saying, “You shall be the first one to be worshipped on all occasions.” So this is the order or the ordinance of Lord Siva. The ordinance stands forever. It is a permanent ordinance from the Great Master: “No one will be worshipped before you—not even me. After you are worshipped alone, anybody else will be worshipped.” We will not worship Lord Siva or Lord Narayana without first worshipping Ganapati. “*Om Gam Ganapataye Namah*”, is a Mantra to propitiate Ganapati.

The human mind is elated and enthused by hearing stories. Images, paintings, music, idols, dance—any kind of picturesque presentation of religion and spirituality or philosophy—is generally more appealing than cut and dry logic, as we know very well. The Puranas and the epics bring home to us the idea of the necessity to accept the power of God as the only medium by which obstacles can be removed. So, He is called Vighnesvara, the God who is not merely the Ganapati or the ruler of the hosts or Ganas, but also a Remover of all impediments on all paths.

When I was a small boy, I heard a story told by a neighbour. There was a person who never believed in the gods, and when his daughter's marriage was to be performed, someone said, "First of all you must worship Ganesa. Do not be in a hurry." He replied, "Let him be Ganesa or his grandfather; I do not care for anybody." He took the Murti of Ganesa and threw it into the tank. And suddenly, they say, there was a fire and the whole marriage Pandal was aflame. People bet their breasts, cried, ran to the tank and brought back the image. And then, it is said, there was rain after Ganesa was worshipped. These are all stories, and we have to take them for what they are worth.

But there is something mysterious about things. Everything is not clear to the minds of men. There are great secrets. And as I began by saying, the spiritual path is itself a great secret. The little Japa that we do, the scriptures that we read, the audience that we hold and whatever we appear to be doing, is only an outer crust of the mystery of life. The mystery is finally in ourselves. We ourselves do not know who is goading us to think in this manner. That goading principle is the mystery. If we recognise this mystery within us which mystifies even our intelligence and our efforts, we will be humble, simple and small before God, because spiritual Sadhana is an art of becoming smaller and smaller. It is not to become bigger and bigger. A person becomes smaller and smaller as he approaches God, just as a candle flame becomes dimmer and dimmer as it goes nearer and nearer to the sun; and just before the sun, it is not there. We cannot even see its existence. It vanishes. Likewise, when we approach God we become smaller and smaller, humbler and humbler, littler and littler, until we

become nothing. In this nothingness, we will find God Himself filling us. When there is total emptiness created by an abolition of ourselves, in this emptiness or vacuum created, God fills it Himself. “Empty thyself and I shall fill thee,” said Jesus Christ. The Mahaganapati Purana, the Ganapati Atharvasirsha Upanishad, the Ganesa Gita and several anecdotes occurring in the Mahabharata and the other Puranas glorify this aspect of the Supreme Almighty which requires our submission at His feet and expects us to recognise Him as the sole power that can remove all obstacles on the path of the spiritual seeker towards the attainment of Godhead. This seems to be a part of the meaning hidden behind the holy worship of Bhagavan Ganapati or Sri Ganesa or Mahaganapati. A dread enters our minds when we think of His Name on account of the feeling that any displeasure on His part may be doom to us. People are even afraid to forget taking the holy Prasada of Sri Satyanarayana Puja because of the story behind it. Do you know what will happen to you if you do not take the Prasada? It is mentioned in the story that the whole thing will be finished—all your wealth, property, wife, children, etc., will go to the dogs in one second. The fear of it makes us bow down and wait for the Prasada, even if it is late in the night. These stories are not meaningless narrations of cock and bull incidents. They instil into our minds a divine urge and a fear of the Divine Presence. After all, we are human beings who are ruled more by sentiments and feelings than by our reason or our so-called understanding. This psychology of the human being is taken advantage of by the writers of the epics and the Puranas to instil faith in our hearts through these stories. This is a little tribute to the glory of Maha Ganapati.

SRI RADHA—THE DIVINE MYSTERY *

Sri Radhashtami is a joyous occasion observed throughout the country, especially in the North, bringing to one's hallowed memory the advent of Radha, a name familiar to every religious historian and devotee. But, there is nothing in religious history which is so little understood as the particular spiritual significance which is the theme of the observance of this sacred day, the eighth day in this bright half of the month of Bhadrapada (August-September), the birthday of Radha. The word 'Radhakrishna' is a reputed compound name, and devotees generally run into mystical contemplation and even fly into ecstasies in their moods in an attempt to understand the relationship between Sri Krishna and Radha. But, as is the case with almost everything in the world, this relationship, which is deeply spiritual and mystical, is hard for the human mind to understand because God, and everything that is connected with God, cannot become an object of human understanding. The human mind is not expected to understand God, and to 'understand' Him would be a blasphemy on the part of the human reason. As a straw would try to carry fire on its body, the intellect of man tries to apprehend the divine mysteries in creation. Devotees of Sri Krishna narrate a lot about Radha, the Divine Mystery. I can call her only a Divine Mystery, and there is no other designation suitable. Even today it is a mystery, and it has

* A discourse delivered on Sri Radha-Ashtami Day, the 6th of September, 1981.

remained ever a mystery, because God's relation to the world, His relation to devotees, His relation to human beings, His relation to anything, is a Divine Mystery in itself.

But the specific significance that is attached to the relationship between Sri Krishna and Radha is the supernal love that operates in this mysterious relation between God and the world. The world is ruled by love, which is the quintessence of God. The basic stuff of God's Being may be said to be Love, Joy, Delight, Bliss, Ananda. But man, being what he is, can interpret this joy or delight, this satisfaction or love, this affection or pull, only in terms of his experiences. There are only men and women in this human world, and we do not see a third gender. Therefore, when men and women contemplate the mystery of God, they cannot think in any other way except in terms of men and women. This is a travesty of religious mystery and a demonstration of the human incapacity to equal the requirement of the Law of God. One may read any Purana or any epic, still one will never be able to understand the relation between Krishna and Radha. On the one hand, it has been a theme for a divine upsurge and ecstasy of devotion in the case of pure minds and devotees, while, on the other hand, it has become a theme for sarcastic interpretations of the mysterious relation between the Supreme Male we call God, and the Supreme Female we name Sakti.

Two extremes meet in the concept of God's Glory, and in the mediocre approaches of devotees on the path of divine love, these extremes are not felt. Most of us—may we say all of us—are mediocre followers of the path of

God. The extreme steps are not intended for fragile minds, weak bodies, impure emotions and tarnished intellects or prejudiced reasons. The vehicle that can contain the divine mystery has to have the capacity to bear the fire which is God's Glory. Many times it is said that the embrace of God is an embrace of fire, and no man has lived as man after having seen and embraced God. These are some of the statements we hear from the adepts on the path. The Radhakrishna mystery is a secret, even as God Himself is a secret. What can be a greater secret than God's Existence! We cannot know where God is, or what God is doing, or why God has created the world. We cannot say what His relation is to us, or what our relation is to Him. We cannot say anything about Him; and the less said the better. Thus it is that when we read the Srimad Bhagavata Purana, the Brahma-Vaivarta Purana and certain other texts where such extreme forms of divine relation are expounded, we retrace our steps and turn back dumbfounded. "*Yato vacho nivartante aprapya manasa saha*": Speech and mind turn back from that which they are not supposed to express or understand or think. The reason behind this difficulty is that we are, as human beings, not prepared to shed the human way of thinking. We have a reservation always, secretly maintained in our own minds, a secret which we wish to hide even from God's eyes. There is a fear in the human individual; a fear, on the one hand, of losing the meaning that one attaches to the laws operating in human society and, on the other hand, the fear of losing oneself in what devotees call Love of God.

The term 'Love of God' may mean either love that a devotee evinces in regard to God, or the love that God has for a devotee. We can take this term, 'Love of God', either

way. There is no half-hearted and mediocre attitude in respect of God. Either it is a whole-souled dedication or it is a nothing. There is no partitive or reserved attitude towards God. It is a completion and a fulfilment which also requires on our side a fulfilled and a complete approach. But we are, as I told you, always men and we can think only as men. We are women, and we can think only as women. These prejudices do not leave us and they cannot leave us. Apart from the idea of male and female, there are other shackles by which we are bound to this earth, all of which are, as it were, steel chains with which we are bound to our own personalities and prejudices, which have to melt into a liquefied form before God, the all-encompassing, super-legalistic Existence, super-relational Being. The very thought of it will melt the human individual. This melting of the human individuality is called Love of God.

Even in ordinary intense forms of worldly love, our individuality tends towards a melting, though it does not actually melt. We rarely experience intense love in our lives. Often we are like broken glass pieces with no worth or value in us. We are empty shells parading, with no substance in ourselves. This is human life today. But this will not work before the realities of life. We can never entertain true affection and true love in regard to anything in this world, because we are mostly hypocrites. We are never true to ourselves and, therefore, we can never be true to others. This predicament is a tremendous danger before man's future. And this illness has come upon man right from the very beginning of his birth itself, and attaches itself to him wherever he goes in every incarnation. Perhaps this is the original sin that people speak of in theological

circles. Unless we shed this completely and stand naked before the glory and fire of God as pure Spirit and not as men and women, we cannot understand, appreciate and feel what divine love is. This is why we cannot understand the relationship between Radha and Krishna, in the Radhakrishna compound. We go on reading about it but understand nothing. The attempt on the part of the soul to understand this mystery is an attempt to dissolve one's personality, and no one is ever prepared for it. Such a sacrifice we cannot do. We have always a reservation, as I mentioned to you, and we approach God with a tremendous fear and a hidden purpose behind our own personal existence. We are not supposed to understand this mystery of Radhakrishna. We are unfit. Man today is unfit for this sacrifice.

The other aspect of this mystery is what is called the Rasalila, very magnificently, gloriously and touchingly described in the Rasa Panchadhyayi of the Srimad Bhagavata, odious to impure minds but glorious to pure minds. Man himself is an odious existence. Nothing can be worse than his own individuality. He carries this impurity before God and refuses to understand superhuman operations in this divine world, the Kingdom of God which is this very earth. I do not know whether you are able to make any sense out of what I am saying, because it is difficult to express in language what is not supposed to be expressed. My humble obeisance to the Almighty Lord whose mystery is this creation. Our blessedness and well-being consist in realising that we cannot understand Him and in expecting His divine grace for our upliftment.

GURUDEV SIVANANDA—PHYSICIAN OF THE SOUL *

To the humble followers of Gurudev Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj, the 8th of September is a momentous occasion, every year. This is not merely a celebration of the birthday anniversary of the great Master, but an eternally significant event of the advent of the Spirit in this world in a new dimension and with a reoriented perspective. This birthday anniversary celebration, as relevant to the great Master, Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj, is a rejoicing of the spirit for all his disciples and its meaning cannot be anything but spiritual. I may take this opportunity of pointing out to you and reminding you all that the coming into incarnation of Gurudev Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj had a special meaning to this world of the modern age.

This is the twentieth century and history has taken a leap, as it were, by means of an advance into what we may call an industrial revolution, and a gigantic technological step in the direction of a complete transformation of human values. Mankind's vision of things has changed, right from the beginning of the twentieth century, on account of innumerable constructive changes that have taken place in various fields of life—in every field of life, we should say. The beginning of the twentieth century was an occasion for the starting of a scientific revolution, with the advent of masters like Albert Einstein. It was also the time for a

* Message given on the 8th of September, 1975, the 88th birthday anniversary of H.H. Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj.

revolution from the point of view of international relationship, when nations began to come closer and closer in their internal comity. The significance of the United Nations began to be realised more and more in its real connotation and connection with the different nations. The twentieth century has also been very eventful in many other aspects. Man has conceived the meaning of political unity, national unity and international understanding, in their true significance. This century has seen the coming into activity of many great masters like Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Swami Vivekananda, Swami Ramatirtha, Sri Aurobindo, Sri Ramana Maharshi, Mahatma Gandhi, Dr. Radhakrishnan, and many others. All these giants in the field of mind and spirit have given a magical touch to the total perspective of human values. So in many respects we should say this twentieth century has been, perhaps, a type of crowning edifice in the historical evolution of the ages.

In this very context was born another great master, H.H. Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj. I shall tell you the special significance of his coming into the midst of mankind that it is today. What is that special significance? A few of us have had the blessed opportunity of living physically in contact with this Master for many, many years. So, we may confidently say, in all humility, that we have some sort of a personal knowledge of his own practical life and the meaning of the message that he intended to convey to mankind. I should say that we have to regard ourselves as thrice blessed for having been given this opportunity by God, the Almighty, to live physically in his presence for years and years. And to live in the physical presence of such masters is to bask in the sunshine of the

Spirit. You know what it is to bask in the sun. It is to infuse your personality with health-giving rays of a dynamic storehouse of energy. As they say, the company that you keep, the books that you read and the way in which you conduct yourself in your daily life, are supposed to be the insignia of your inner substance, real worth and intrinsic validity. And to keep company with giants of the Spirit like Gurudev Sivanandaji is to be within a very powerful energising influence which brings together into a focus through its own manifestation of personality the aspirations of all mankind.

I may say here that the aspirations of mankind may be said to have found an articulation, to a very pronounced degree, in the personality and the mission of Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj. He gave voice and fluent expression to the inner urges of the human being. Every one of us has an urge within us, a desire, an aspiration, a longing and a hope, all of which we cannot adequately express on account of the weaknesses of our own personalities. Why do we elect a person as a representative of a constituency, in an election, for example? That person is made a member of the Legislative Assembly or the Legislative Council in the Parliament, because we ourselves cannot express our ideas properly. We are unable to speak our deeper feelings in a proper language and place them before the Parliament in an adequate context. So, we elect a proper person. And the person whom we elect as a Member of the Parliament, or for the matter of that, any kind of representation, is supposed to be capable of articulating our inner aspirations and our inner feelings. In other words, he expresses the total spirit of the people who have elected him. Likewise,

these great spiritual masters can be regarded as the total representation of the aspirations and the inexpressible feelings of all mankind. We know that Jesus the Christ was called the Son of Man, apart from the fact that he was called the Son of God. Why was he called the Son of Man? Everybody is a son of man. What was the speciality in Christ being called the Son of Man? The meaning is that he was a Son of Man, i.e., the son of the *total mankind* and not a son of Joseph or Mr. So-and-so, as we all are in the ordinary sense of the term. When we say Christ was the Son of Man, we mean that He was the expression of the total feeling of humanity. And in the culture of Bharatavarsha, we have the tradition that the Avatara or the incarnation of God is the summoning of the Almighty by the total aspiration of mankind. God does not incarnate Himself by the call of one man merely, unless, of course, that one man is capable of drawing into his personality the powers of all other people also due to his peculiar relationship with God. Ordinarily, a single individual cannot call the total power of God, just as a drop cannot summon the power of the whole ocean.

But, the personality of Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj was unique as far as his relationship with God is concerned. There were many, as I mentioned to you earlier, of his calibre and category who could summon into activity, into implementation, into a forceful manifestation, the deeper feelings of man and the crying aspirations of the soul which were neglected, unfortunately, notwithstanding the fact that the beginning of the twentieth century has seen the revolutions of science and industry, business and commerce, and international nearness of approach. While

everything was achieved, one thing alone was ignored. That is why we are grieved even today. Everybody has a sorrow in his heart. We have radios and televisions; we have planes and cars; we have the best food to eat and most attractive clothes to put on; we have got social status and position; we have got money to spend and to burn. There is nothing that we lack, materially speaking. But we are unhappy, we are sorrow-stricken, and we have a grief at the bottom of our hearts. This is the essence of the whole matter. This grief is present in every human being—you, me and everyone—in spite of the fact that we have all comforts conceivable that can be bestowed upon us by science and industry. The purpose of the incarnation of these Masters is to point out where the crux of the whole problem lies. They are the physicians of the soul and they come to diagnose the illness of the spirit in man. Though for all practical purposes a person may be looking healthy and handsome, he may be secretly sick, not knowing the reason behind the sickness, and an expert doctor alone can find out what is wrong with him. Similarly, though we seem to be happy and smiling outwardly in social and public life, there is a peculiar lacuna in our approach to things in general on account of which we are sorrow-stricken in our hearts, and this can be diagnosed and cured only by spiritual adepts. Masters and geniuses of the type of Gurudev Sivanandaji, whose birthday we observe on the 8th of September every year, have pointed out where the illness of man actually lies. This illness is a common illness of all people. It is a secret disease which is infecting every human being.

Though desires vary from person to person, and though predilections and idiosyncrasies of each are

different from those of other people, there is a peculiar trait in every individual which is common with everybody else. And that is the one cementing element which can bring all people together on a common platform. But for that element, there is nothing similar amongst us. We are dissimilar in every respect. We speak different languages and we have different ideals in social life. We eat different kinds of food and we have differences in every respect. But, there is one thing which keeps us together, and that is what we call the soul of man. Bodies are different, languages are different, houses are different—everything may be different, but the soul cannot be different. My soul and your soul are the same, and they speak the same language. Though verbally I may be speaking a vernacular of India or the English language, and somebody else may be speaking in French or German, the soul in all speaks in a single language. The language of the soul in the West is the same as the language of the soul in the East. The language of the soul of a man is the same as the language of the soul of a woman or that of a child, for the matter of that, because the soul is indistinguishable in its characteristic. While the characteristics of personalities may differ, the characteristics of the structure of the soul do not differ. So, here is a common ground for a real unity among all people.

A few days back, a person came from All India Radio, Delhi, and asked me for a message, to be broadcast in All India Radio, concerning ‘the relevance of religion to national integration’. I was trying to tell him, in that short message which I gave him on tape, that it is very strange that he should speak of relevance of religion to national integration, as if there can be any other relevance, because

that would be like speaking of the relevance of the soul to the body of an individual. What is the relevance of the soul to the body? There cannot be any other relevance. The soul is the only relevance conceivable. Minus the soul, what is the body? You remove your soul from your personality, and let us see what you are. You will simply disintegrate into smithereens the moment the soul is withdrawn from your personality. You may wonder why it should happen. The soul is not a spark of light or a centre of gravity that is situated in a location of your personality, as ordinarily you may conceive wrongly. The soul is not any such thing as you may imagine. It is a peculiar 'something' which is difficult to explain in language. It is like electric energy. You cannot say where electricity is. Is it inside the body or outside the body? Is it inside the powerhouse? It is in every speck of creation. In every atom of the world is electricity present. Likewise, the soul is present in every nook and corner of this creation. It is not sitting inside the body like a small insect or a flame of a candle inside a pot. To conceive it as being located somewhere would be a very peculiar and childish notion. The soul is that integrating 'something' which brings the cells of the body together into a bodily form. It is the force which brings together the various thoughts of your mind and enables the harmonious functioning of anything that you can call as yourself. If, therefore, the soul is to be withdrawn, you will not exist any more. That which you call the 'you' or the 'I' is the soul. It is not something different from what you are. What you yourself are, that is the soul. And if the soul is removed, you yourself are removed. So what is left there? Nothing.

You do not *have* a soul. You yourself *are* the soul. So, do not say, “I have a soul inside me.” As I just mentioned, this is a peculiar baby’s idea of the soul. What you yourself are, that is the soul. So, minus you, what is the soul; and minus the soul, what are you? They are identical. You are the soul; the soul is you.

Now, to ignore the existence and the operation of the soul in human conduct and activity would be to ignore yourself completely. What would happen to you, if you ignore yourself in the programme of life? The question is very strange. If everybody starts ignoring one’s own self—I ignore myself totally, you ignore yourself totally, everybody ignores himself or herself totally in the meaning of life—then what remains in life? There would be no such thing as life itself.

So, to remove religion is to remove the soul. That is what I was trying to tell our friend who came to me from All India Radio the other day. Religion is the science of the soul. It is not Hinduism, Christianity, Buddhism, Islam, etc. These are not religions. These are only the shapes that religion has taken in social relationship. Religion is the character of the soul made manifest in outward conduct and activity. And if the soul is what you are, then religion is your conduct, and you cannot say that your conduct can be other than the religious. Your conduct and activity have to be religious because you are the soul, and religion is the conduct and activity and expression of the soul. So, to live a kind of life minus religion is to think the unthinkable and the impossible. There is no such thing as a life without religion. That would be like your living without a soul. That

would be again to live without your own self. That is an absurdity of the first water.

This is a very difficult thing to conceive in the mind. People had a very wrong notion of spirituality, of religion, of God even, of creation, of social relationship, etc. To set right these errors of thought in mankind in general and to show a path to the whole of humanity, Masters like Swami Sivanandaji were born. The philosophy and the religion of Swami Sivanandaji is the philosophy and the religion of mankind. He did not come to preach Hinduism. He did not belong to any particular religion. He did not even act as a human being. He acted as a super-personality and as a representative of God, the Almighty, who cannot be regarded as a prerogative of any particular creed or cult. God is an impersonal existence, whose representation was this Master and Masters of his kind.

THE ESOTERIC SIGNIFICANCE OF THE DEVI-MAHATMYA*

Our longings are fundamentally very deep and cannot be easily satisfied by temporary makeshift or a day-to-day adjustment of outer circumstances. Our desires are profound; our yearnings are very unintelligible to the outer atmosphere of our daily life. We seem to have a root which is deeper than what can be comprehended by our normal understanding of the world. We grow from all sides, and when we long for, or desire, or yearn, or aspire, we do so in a very comprehensive manner. This aspiration of the human being is really the soul's longing for freedom. All our desires are desires of the soul, ultimately. Though they look like sensory desires, mental desires, intellectual desires, social desires, etc., they are, at the bottom, the longing of the soul of the human being, which ramifies itself into various distracted rays through the operations of the mind and the activities of the senses. Our longings are, therefore, capable of being collected into a single essential power, an inward urge, which we may call the longing for freedom. It is freedom that we ask for and it is freedom that anyone asks for. Varieties of longings and multitudes of enterprises in the world can be collected into a single focus of the soul's aspiration for liberation. And this aspiration for liberation is not merely the longing of the human being, but of all that is created anywhere on earth or in heaven. Whether it is the plant or the animal, whether it is a man or

* A talk given on the 13th of October, 1972, during the Navaratri worship.

a celestial, the aspiration is this much. All longings can be boiled down into the quintessence of the longing for liberation, freedom from all sides and an ultimate supremacy over one's own self in the realisation of this freedom.

The Devi-Mahatmya which, in a majestic poetry in Sanskrit, describes to us the epic of the march of the human soul to its destination—the realisation of this freedom—is the dramatic aspect of the great worship of the Divine Mother during these nine days of Navaratri, or Dassehra as we call it. The march of the soul is dramatic. It is not a lagging or a crawling but a beautiful, sonorous, musical advent, we may say. This is the beauty of the Devi-Mahatmya. All epics have this particular character of grandeur, uplifting the emotions, and chastening the intellect of the devotee who goes through them.

The Devi-Mahatmya, which is a part of the Markandeya Purana, contains thirteen chapters which are grouped into three sections known as the Prathama Charitra, Madhyama Charitra and the Uttama Charitra. As in the Bhagavadgita sometimes we are told that the eighteen chapters can be grouped into three sections of teaching, consisting of six chapters in each, the Devi-Mahatmya also, which is an epic counterpart of the methods of the Bhagavadgita in its practical implementations, is capable of a division into three sections. The march of the soul is graduated into three major steps, though there are many minor steps involved in these three major ones. While we have to rise through various rungs of the ladder of evolution, we come to three points or halting places, we may call them, where there is a complete transformation of

outlook, attitude and constitution of our being. These threefold transformations of the spiritual being of the aspiring soul are dominated or presided over by three deities known as Maha-Kali, Maha-Lakshmi and Maha-Sarasvati. These three presiding forces are representative of the powers of the spirit within manifesting themselves in an upward ascent towards freedom ultimate, so that in this march of the soul to its freedom, it carries with it everything that is connected with it. The difference between the spiritual march and your march along the road or a highway is this: that while in your march on a roadway, you alone walk and nobody need accompany you, nothing need be connected with you, and you can have a free walk independently, in the spiritual march, it is not such an isolated march because you carry with you everything that is connected with you.

Now, what are the things connected with you that you carry? There are four stages of this relationship. Consciously we are related in a particular manner and subconsciously we are related in another manner altogether. Consciously, we people seated in this hall for example, have a particular sort of relationship among ourselves, but subconsciously our relationships are of a different kind altogether and they need not tally with our conscious relationship. And deeper still, we have a layer where our relationship is more akin to a unity of life than to a diversity of personality. There is a fourth stage which is incapable of any description at all. We do not know whether we are to call it a unity or a diversity, or oneness or otherness. This is the goal towards which the soul is marching. So, in the description of the Devi-Mahatmya, we are carried forward

psychologically and spiritually to our destination of the ultimate realisation.

There are three stages of transformation described in the three sections of the Devi-Mahatmya. The first one is where Adi-Sakti awakens Maha-Vishnu who was asleep, so that He may destroy or overcome the original demoniacal forces, Madhu and Kaitabha. The second stage is where the same Sakti manifests Herself as Maha-Lakshmi and overcomes Mahishasura and Raktabija. The third one is where Sumbha and Nisumbha are destroyed by Maha-Sarasvati. And the nine days of worship, which are referred to as Navaratri, comprehend these three stages adored in three days of worship, each. The final victory is called Vijaya-Dasami, the tenth day. That is the day of Victory, where you master the forces of Nature completely and your goal is reached. When you step over nine, you enter into Infinity. Numbers are only nine; you do not have ten numbers. All the arithmetic is within nine numbers only. The whole cosmos is within nine. But when you transcend the nine, you have gone to Infinity, which is beyond cosmic relationship. The lower powers of Nature are like dirt. We call them Mala. "*Vishnukarnamalodbhuto hantum brahmanamudyato,*" says the Devi-Mahatmya. The Madhu and Kaitabha, two Rakshasas (demons) are supposed to have come out of the dirt of the ear of Vishnu. The lowest category of opposition is of the nature of dirt, Mala; and psychologically, from the point of view of the seeking soul, this dirt is in the form of Kama, Krodha and Lobha. "*Kama esha krodha esha rajo-guna samudbhavah*", "*Kamah krodhastatha lobhah tasmad etat trayam tyajet*": It is desire and anger born of Rajas; desire,

anger and greed—these three therefore should be abandoned, says the Bhagavadgita. These three are the gates to hell. These three are regarded as dirt, because they cover the consciousness in such a way that it appears to be not there at all. It is like painting a thin glass with coal tar. You cannot see the glass. It is all pitch-dark like clouds. This has to be rubbed off with great effort. When this Mala or dirt is removed, you get into another trouble. Do not think that when you are tentatively a master of Kama, Krodha and Lobha, you are a real master of yourself. “There are more things in heaven and earth than your philosophy dreams of, O Horatio,” said Hamlet. So do not think that your philosophy is exhaustive. There are many more things that philosophy cannot comprehend. Kama, Krodha and Lobha are not the only enemies. There are subtler ones, more formidable than these visible foes. As a matter of fact, the subtle invisible enemies are more difficult to overcome than the visible ones. Sometimes an angry man is better than a smiling person. A smiling person is more dangerous than an angry one, because he can have a knife under his armpit. This is what we will face.

When we manage somehow to overcome this Madhu and Kaitabha, Kama and Krodha, we get into the clutches of Mahishasura and Raktabija. They represent the Vikshepa Sakti, the tossing of the mind. Every minute the mind changes its forms which multiply in millions. You read in the Devi-Mahatmya, how Mahishasura changed his form. Now he is an elephant, now he is a buffalo, now he is something else. If you hit him in one form, he comes in another form. And this is your inexhaustible opponent. His energies are incapable of being exhausted. However much

you may try to oppose the Vikshepa Sakti, it will manifest in some form or other. This is described in the form of the demon Raktabija, whose drops of blood were seeds of hundreds and thousands of demons like him coming up. When the Devi severed the head of one Rakshasa, the blood fell on the ground profusely and from that blood, millions cropped up. And when She killed them, again another million cropped up. So there was no end to it. If you cut off one or two desires, the desire is not over. The root is still there. The branches are only severed. Unless the root is dug out, there is no use of merely severing the branches of the tree. So what did the Devi do? She asked Kali to spread her tongue throughout the earth, so that there is no ground at all for the Rakshasas to walk over. They had to walk over the tongue of Kali. So huge it was. And now the Goddess started cutting their heads and when the blood fell, it fell not on the ground but on the tongue of Kali. So she sucked everything. Chariots and horses and demons and everybody entered her mouth. She chewed all chariots into powder. Likewise, we have to adopt a technique of sucking the very root of desires and not merely chop off its branches. Otherwise, desires will take various forms like Mahishasura. When we think that Mahishasura has been killed, he comes as a buffalo, and when the buffalo is attacked, he again comes as an elephant, and if Devi attacks the elephant, he comes as a bull and attacks Her. So, there is no way of overcoming these desires by merely dealing with them from outside by a frontal attack. Their very essence has to be sucked, because a desire is not an outward form or an action; it is a tendency within. You may do nothing, and yet you will have desires, because desire is not necessarily an activity. A desireful person need not be very

active. He can be sitting quiet, doing nothing, saying nothing, and yet be full of desires because it is a tendency of the mind, an inclination of consciousness, that we call a desire. That can be inside, even if there is outwardly nothing. This is the Vikshepa Sakti—distraction, tossing and the chameleon-attitude of desire—which attacks us, when, with Herculean efforts, we try to destroy or gain control over Kama and Krodha, Madhu and Kaitabha. After Madhu and Kaitabha, we get Mahishasura and Raktabija. Thus Mala and Vikshepa are the primary oppositions in our spiritual pursuit.

Ancient masters have told us that while Mala or dirt of the psychological structure can be removed by Karma Yoga, by unselfish and dedicated service, Vikshepa or distraction of the mind can be removed only by worship of God, by Upasana. While Karma removes Mala, Upasana removes Vikshepa. But even now, we are not fully safe. While Mala might have gone and Vikshepa is not there, we may have a third trouble, namely, a complete oblivion of consciousness. We will have no knowledge of anything as to what is happening. Ajnana or ignorance is an opposing power subtler than its effects in the form of Mala and Vikshepa. Distraction and direct sensual desires are the outer expressions of a subtle ignorance of Truth—Avidya or Ajnana. Why do we desire things? Because, we do not know the nature of Truth. Why does a strong wind blow? Because, the sun is covered over with clouds. The sun is covered by the clouds first, then there is darkness, and then a gale or cyclone starts blowing from the north, breaking our umbrellas and uprooting trees. All these happen because the sun does not shine. Even so, when the Atman is

covered over by ignorance of its nature, the winds of desire begin to blow, and they come like violent storms. Impetuous is the force of desire. You cannot stand against it, because the whole of Nature gets concentrated in a desire. That is why it is impetuous and uncontrollable. All the powers of Nature get focussed in a desire when it manifests itself, whatever be that desire. So the whole of Nature has to be subdued. You are not to subdue only your individual nature, but the cosmic Nature itself is to be subdued. This is what is depicted in the epic of the Devi-Mahatmya. It is the subdual, overcoming, transformation of the cosmic Nature in the form of Tamas, Rajas and Sattva. While Mala represents Tamas, Vikshepa represents Rajas.

Sattva is also a Guna, unfortunately. We always praise Sattva and regard it as a very desirable thing. But it is like a transparent glass that is placed between us and the Truth. You can see through it, but you cannot go beyond it because though the glass is transparent, it can obstruct your movement. It is not like a brick wall, completely preventing your vision, as Tamas does; it is not like a blowing wind which simply tosses you here and there, as Rajas does; it is a plain glass, through which you can have vision of Reality, but you cannot contact Reality nevertheless. How can you contact a thing when there is a glass between you and the thing? Yet you can see it. So they say even Sattva is an obstacle, though it is better than the other two forces in the sense that through it you can have a vision or an insight into the nature of Reality which transcends even Sattva. There is a glass pane and you can see a mango fruit on the other side of it. You can see it very well, but cannot get it; you cannot

grab it. You know the reason. Even Sattva is a subtle medium of obstruction, which acts in a double form—as complacency or satisfaction with what has been achieved, and an ignorance of what is beyond. These two aspects of Sattva are indicated by the two personalities of Sumbha and Nisumbha. They have to be dispelled by the power of higher wisdom, which is Maha-Sarasvati.

Action, contemplation and knowledge are the three stages through which we have to pierce through the veil of Prakriti, or the three Gunas. And as I mentioned earlier, we are not individual pedestrians on the path. There is no individual movement here. It is all a total movement of everything connected with us, and no item in the world is really disconnected from us. Every thread in a cloth is connected with every other thread. When you lift one thread of a cloth, the whole cloth comes up, because of the interconnection of the warp and the woof of the cloth. Likewise, there is an internal interconnection of beings, which prevents any kind of individual effort for the sake of salvation. That is why salvation is universal, it is not individual. When you attain to the Supreme Being, you become the Universal Being. You do not go there as a Mr. So-and-so or as a Mrs. So-and-so. The path of Sadhana also is a cosmic effort of the soul, a subtle secret which most Sadhakas are likely to forget. It is not a small, simple, private effort of yours in the closet of your room, but a dynamic activity of your essential personality, internally connected by unforeseen relationships with everything in the cosmos. When you enter the path of the spirit you have also, at the same time, entered the path of cosmic relationship. A Sadhaka is, therefore, a cosmic person. A

spiritual seeker, an aspirant is a representative of cosmic situation. He is not an individual, though he looks like a person; and his Sadhana is not an individual effort. It is much more than what it appears to be on the surface. It is, as it were, the conversation between Nara and Narayana—Krishna-Arjuna-Samvada, as they call it. You and your God are face to face with each other. In Sadhana, in spiritual effort, you are face to face with your Maker. And the face of the Maker is universal. He is not in one spot, hiding himself in one corner.

So, the dance of the cosmic spirit, in its supernal effort at self-transcendence, is majestically described in the beautifully worded sonorous songs of the Devi-Mahatmya, where we are given a stirring account, a stimulating description of what Maha-Kali did, what Maha-Lakshmi did and what Maha-Sarasvati did in bringing about this evolution, transformation of the whole range of Prakriti from Tamas to Rajas, from Rajas to Sattva and from Sattva to Supreme Vijaya, mastery in the Absolute, God-realisation. All our scriptures, Puranas and epics, all our ceremonies and celebrations, all our festivals and Jayantis—whatever be the occasion for a religious performance—all this is charged with a spiritual connotation, a significance which is far transcendent to the outer rituals which is involved in their performance. Every thought, every aspiration, every ritual and every duty of ours, every action that we perform automatically becomes a spiritual dedication of the Soul, for the sake of this one single aspiration which it has been enshrining in itself from eternity to eternity. This significance is brought out in all our epics and Puranas. Whether in the Mahabharata or

the Ramayana, whether in the Bhagavadgita or the Devi-Mahatmya, they tell us the same account in different terminologies and with different emphases. It is always a song of the soul. The Bhagavadgita is a song of the soul, the Over-soul speaking to the lower soul. Here again, we have a similar account of the actual Sadhana involved in the realisation of this ultimate harmony of the soul with the Over-soul.

The spiritual practice of a Sadhaka is, therefore, a confronting of the three forces of Tamas, Rajas and Sattva, gradually, stage by stage, in their cosmic significance, forgetting not for a moment that we are not 'islands'. No man is an island. You must have heard the poet's saying: "No man is an island unto himself." That means he is not surrounded simply by oceans and cut off from things. He is connected with everything. This is the significance we have to read in our practical lives. This is the meaning we have to see and visualise in our personal Sadhana. And when we learn to see the significance of the presence of divinity or the universality of God even in our private actions, we are taken care of by universal forces. We need not bother about even the smallest problem of our life. Even the littlest of our difficulty will be taken care of in a proper manner by the forces that are in the world, provided, of course, that we are able to read the significance of universality even in the most private of our actions, even in the smallest and littlest of our actions. There is no such thing as a little action in the world. Everything is important. Even the most insignificant event is a very important event, ultimately, because hidden behind it is the ocean. This significance we have to learn to read. This is, in my humble opinion, what Gurudev Swami

Sivanandaji Maharaj meant whenever he said that God-realisation is the goal of life. He was not tired of saying this throughout his life. We can see, in his earlier books especially, that they commence with the sentence: “The goal of life is God-realisation.” Whatever he had to say in those books, he said afterwards. So, the first thing is to remember that the goal of life is God-realisation. Do not forget this. The little petty tensions and turmoils and annoyances and worries and vexations are not the goal of life. They are the obstacles that come on our way, which we have to carefully obviate and go with caution—like a pilgrim who has lost his way in this wilderness of life—and yet confident at the same time that the warmth of the spiritual sun is always energising our personality and that we are never, at any time, any moment of our practice, completely cut off from that source of energy.

So, through the worship of Maha-Kali, Maha-Lakshmi and Maha-Sarasvati, we worship Mula-Prakriti, Adi-Sakti in her cosmic dance-form of transformation, prosperity and illumination. In the beginning, what happens to a Sadhaka? There is a necessity of self-transformation. It is all hardship, rubbing and cleaning, washing, sweeping, etc. That is the first stage through the worship of Maha-Kali, who brings about a destruction of all barriers. Then what happens? There is tremendous prosperity. You become a master and a progressive soul commanding all powers, getting everything that you want. This is the second stage. In the first stage, it looked as if you were a poor person, having nothing, very weak. But, when you overcome this weakness by removing the barrier of Tamas, you become prosperous. Nobody can be as rich as a Yogi. He can command all the

powers. By a thought he can invoke all things, and this is Goddess Maha-Lakshmi working. When Maha-Kali has finished her work of destruction of opposition, Maha-Lakshmi comes as prosperity. A great Yogi is also like a royal personality, because of his internal invocations, though unconsciously done, of cosmic powers. When prosperity dawns, it looks as if the whole universe is heaven. In the first stage, it looked like hell. Afterwards, in the second stage, it looks like heaven, when Maha-Lakshmi begins to work. But this also is not sufficient. Knowledge should dawn. It is not heaven that you are asking for. You want the realisation of Truth. Maha-Sarasvati will come to help and a flood of light of Truth will be thrown, and you will see things as they are. There is no enjoyment, prosperity, richness, wealth, or any such thing. It is Truth unconnected with yourself in the beginning, but later on inseparable from yourself. Thus, from opposition to prosperity, from prosperity to enlightenment, and from enlightenment to Self-realisation do we proceed. So, these are the truths esoterically conveyed to us in the Mantras of the Devi-Mahatmya.

This Devi-Mahatmya is not merely an esoteric epic. It is not only a great spiritual text in the form of occult lessons, occult teachings of which I have given you an outline. But, it is also a great Mantra-Sastra. Every Sloka, every verse of the Devi-Mahatmya is a Mantra by itself. I will tell you how it is a Mantra, by giving only one instance, that is the first Sloka itself. “*Savarnih suryatanayo yo manuh kathyate-shtamah.*” This is the first Sloka—“*Savarnih surya-tanayah.*” It is all a Tantric interpretation and a very difficult thing to understand. But I am giving

you only an idea as to what it is like. Surya represents fire, the fire-principle. Surya-tanaya means that which is born of the fire-principle. What is it that is born of the fire-principle? It is the seed 'Ra'. According to Tantric esoteric psychology, 'Ram' is the Bija Mantra of Agni. In the word 'Savarnih', 'Varni' means a hook; so add one hook to 'Ram'. "*Yo manuh kathyate, ashtamah.*" Eighth letter—What is Manu? It is a letter in Sanskrit. Eight letters are Ya, Ra, La, Va, Sya, Sha, Sa, Ha. The eighth is Ha. Add Ha to it. Ha, Ra and one hook, make 'Hreem'. "*Savarnih suryo-tanayo yo manuh kathyateshtamah, nisamaya tadutpattim.*" "You hear the glory of that," the sage says. So, the first verse means: "Now, I shall describe to you the glory of 'Hreem'." This Hreem is the Bija of Devi. But, outwardly it means, "Listen to the story of the king so-and-so, who is the eighth Manu," and all that. Thus in addition to the outer meaning, there is an inner significance of the Mantra. I am giving you only the case of one Mantra. Like this, every Mantra is full of inner significance. And every Mantra is repeated by devotees for some purpose or the other. The Devi-Mahatmya is especially recited for averting calamities in life. Catastrophes, calamities and tensions—personal or outward, whatever they be—all these are averted by a regular daily recital of the Devi-Mahatmya. When there is war threatening a country, for example, or pestilence or epidemic spreading everywhere, or any internal tension or anxiety of any kind, the Devi-Mahatmya is to be studied. And it is a very potent remedy prescribed by seers of yore—not only for temporal terrestrial prosperity, but also for the glory of the hereafter, for illumination, for the destruction of Avidya or Ajnana, for overcoming Mala, Vikshepa and Avarana, and to be a fit

recipient of the grace of the Almighty. Thus is the outer significance and the inner significance of the Devi-Mahatmya, and the special meaning that it has in the life of spiritual seekers or Sadhakas. Glory to God! Glory to Sadhana! Glory to the integral character of spiritual practice! May we be blessed with this illumination, with this wisdom, with the strength to tread the path of the Spirit, to our ultimate Freedom!

THE SPORT OF THE INFINITE*

There has always been a perpetual, unceasing emanation of light, heat and warmth from the sun, ever since ages. So is God's manifestation in the world as the Incarnations. We use the term 'Incarnation' to denote the manner in which spiritual forces work in the temporal world. The spiritual forces are the messengers of God, the arms of God moving in the world of space and time, the eyes of God operating in the empirical process of perception, the majesty of God proclaiming itself in all its grandeur, whether invisibly manifest or visibly demonstrated before our physical eyes. Such are the Incarnations or Avatars. This divine manifestation is not limited to places, times and persons. As God is all-pervading, His action is also all-pervading. It is an omnipresent, incomprehensible abundance of God's kindness, goodness, knowledge and power which occasionally enters into the world of space and time and makes itself felt in palpable form.

Though God's revelations are perennial, perpetual, endless and beginningless, though it is a ceaseless activity like the flow of the Ganga or the radiance of the sun, yet these manifestations are sometimes too subtle to be capable of being perceived by human eyes. We have various gradations of frequency in light rays and sound waves, but the higher frequencies are not capable of being perceived by the eyes or heard by the ears. We have what we call

* Rasa-Lila message given on the 22nd of October, 1972.

cosmic rays, x-rays, beta-rays, gamma-rays, alpha-rays and many other rays, which are not perceptible forms of light rays although they are more powerful than the visible, gross light rays such as those emanating from the sun, moon, a candle or a torch light. They are more penetrating in their action, more pervasive in their nature and more effective in the results they produce, and yet they are invisible to the physical eyes and the physical senses of man, inasmuch as our senses work under a low frequency of operation while these light rays are of a higher frequency. There cannot be any physical communion between the lower frequency and the higher frequency. We know very well radio waves do not clash with one another if the frequencies are different. But if all the broadcasting stations are to send messages in sound waves of the same frequency, there will be collision and confusion, and nothing will be known or understood. Different frequencies do not collide with each other and, therefore, we have no such conflict among the broadcasting stations in the world. Likewise, different frequencies of energy in the cosmos work in different realms for different purposes. And this is one of the reasons why we are unable to come in contact with super-physical forces that operate even now under our very nose. Hell and heaven, the seven worlds, the Svargaloka, the Satyaloka and such other supernormal levels of existence which we hear from the scriptures, are existent even here and now. But we cannot contact them, just as we cannot see with our physical eyes the x-rays and the cosmic rays. They are just here and not far off, physically speaking. But for our purposes they are almost non-existent, because simultaneous contact with different frequencies of force is impossible.

Hence, often, manifestations of God and supernormal Avataras, which take place nevertheless, remain incomprehensible to human perceptions. But, sometimes, those invisible rays get grossened into visible forms, such as the sun's rays—then we begin to see them. We can feel their presence and then be benefited by the power of these rays, physically speaking. We do not know how we are influenced by the cosmic rays, for example. We neither know them, nor see them, nor can understand them. But we can see visibly how we are benefited by the rays of the sun. We feel the sun is indispensable. The sun is our life, our breath and our existence. This is because the frequencies of the light rays of the sun are co-extensive and uniform with the frequencies in which our senses operate. We see a physical world before us because the physical particles of nature that we see with our eyes are of a similar frequency as the constitution of our own sense-organs. That is why we can see Bhuloka, but not Bhuhvarloka, Svarloka, Maharloka, Janaloka, Tapoloka or Satyaloka. Similarly, we cannot see Patala and the other nether worlds, as they range beyond our sense-capacity.

The physical world is not the only world that exists in the cosmos. It is only one level of frequency of power, energy and force, on account of which we can see only one world at a time, and not two worlds. Neither can we see anything above us nor can we see anything below us. We see only horizontally, and that is the physical world of the five elements—earth, water, fire, air and ether. So we know why we see only one world, though scriptures speak of many worlds. We also know why we see only human beings and not the Devas, gods and celestials. We cannot

see them, because they are in a higher level of frequency of consciousness, even as we cannot hear radio waves through our physical ears. We want a transistor for that, because the physical eardrum is gross compared to the subtle, ethereal waves sent by the broadcasting stations in the different parts of the world. So all this is to explain scientifically and understand logically the reason why we are bound to the physical level of perception and experience and why we are completely oblivious of the existence of supernormal powers and divine manifestations of God.

But God's manifestations are perpetual, endless and beginningless, whether we know them, see them or not, even as the other frequencies of energy like light and sound do exist whether we are able to contact them physically or not. As I have already mentioned, when these frequencies become more and more gross, for reasons we cannot understand, we begin to see the world and feel the forces of nature. Likewise, God sometimes can take incarnations of a type which we can physically observe and sensorily cognise, enjoy and be benefited by. Then, the frequency comes down to the level of our cognitions and perceptions. Such was the case of the series of Incarnations we hear of in the scriptures—Matsya, Kurma, Varaha, Narasimha, Rama, Krishna and so on. But these are not the only Avatars of God. Akhanda and Ananta, continuous and endless are the Avatars of God, says the Srimad Bhagavata Mahapurana. Like the infinite rays of the sun, like the infinite drops of the ocean and like the infinite particles of space, are the infinite manifestations of God. Notwithstanding the fact that they are infinite in their essence, they are limited in their operations and

manifestations when they come to a specific frequency of revelation. These are the visible incarnations like Christ, Buddha and Krishna and such supernormal beings, whom we call supermen, Atimanavas or Avataras.

We have, today, a very auspicious occasion which we call the Rasa Purnima, the full moon day in the month of Asvini, which is associated with the Lilas of Bhagavan Sri Krishna, who is Shodasa Kala Murti, Purna-Avatara, Divinity condescending to come down to the level of our physical perception. Here the glory of the Infinite is condensed or pressed into and focussed through the finitude of human perception. That was Bhagavan Sri Krishna's Avatara in which we have a very fantastic and inscrutable phenomenon of what they call the Rasa-Lila, a sport which He is supposed to have played on the banks of the Yamuna, in Madhuvana, in the sylvan retreat of the holy Vrindavana, on the night of this particular full-moon day. This is not merely a historical or an epic event that we are narrating, contemplating and reciting, but a spiritual phenomenon, because God cannot but be spiritual. If at all God is anything, He is spiritual. And if He can do anything, it is only spiritual activity. If there is any purpose behind His operations, it is spiritual alone. In and out, through the length and breadth of His creation, it is spirituality that is operating. Materiality is unknown in the world of God. It is a thing that does not exist. So it is a spiritual history that we recite and read in the Srimad Bhagavata and the Mahabharata in connection with the life of Bhagavan Sri Krishna. It is not a mortal biography that we read, because in the realm of God mortality does not exist. Mortality, vicissitude, transience, materiality, externality, pain and

death are all limitations of consciousness brought about by an error of perception, and they do not exist by themselves. They have no existence as such, but they are only processes tending towards this Supernal Being.

So, in this wondrous phenomenon called the Rasa dance, the Spirit is dancing with its own manifestations. The Srimad Bhagavata beautifully and significantly puts it, “*Reme rameso vrajasundaribhih yatharbhakah svapratibimba-vibhramah*”: As a child plays with its own reflection seen in a mirror, so did the Lord play with the eternal devotees of Vrindavana. He did not play with personalities, even as a child does not play with anybody when it looks at its own self through the mirror. This is the interpretation given in the Srimad Bhagavata itself in the Dasama Skandha. So it is God playing with God, like a child playing with itself or the Original dancing with its own reflections, connoting the spiritual dance of the cosmos, the attraction of the part towards the Whole, man’s inseparability from God, and the soul’s agony on account of its bereavement from the Supreme. The restless adventure of the soul in respect of its Original, of which it is an integral part, nay is It Itself, is the quintessence of the dance called the Rasa Dance. ‘Rasa’ means quintessence. “*Raso vai sah; rasam hyevayam labdhva anandi bhavati*,” says the Taittiriya Upanishad. It is Ananda that is manifest everywhere in the world. It is Bliss and not pain that we see in the world. Pain is only a refusal on the part of our consciousness to recognise the bliss of God’s creation. Ananda is the reality. Pain is not the truth of existence. So it is the Ananda, the Supernal Beatitude, Beauty, magnificence and the lustre of God that has

revealed itself in this historical epic movement of the Supreme into the temporal realms as Bhagavan Sri Krishna. Impossible it is for the human mind to understand what the Rasa means, because it is not meant for man to understand. It was God dancing to His own tune. This is the eternal Tandava or cosmic dance which is connotative of all the manifestations—personal, social, political and spiritual. It is the remedy that is administered to the soul of man to cure him of the illness of Samsara. As Sage Suka puts it towards the end of the description of the Rasa Panchadhyayi, “This is the remedy prescribed for the ‘illnesses of the heart’.” ‘Hridroga’ is the word used, which means illness of the heart, which has only one remedy, viz., the love of God. Our heart disease is our central illness. It does not necessarily mean physical illness of the heart which we call blood pressure, heart attack, etc., but the Samsara-consciousness, the bondage of the soul. Kama, Krodha and Lobha are the heart attacks, primarily speaking. And these are the essential bondages of the soul. The cure of Samsara is supposed to be contained in this hidden import of the Sport of Divinity in the mortal realm. God dances eternally. It may be Siva’s dance, Rudra’s dance or Krishna’s dance. We may call it by any name or appellation we like. It is the Spirit persisting through matter and interfering with every step of the process of evolution in the work of transforming matter into Spirit, converting externality into the universal Beauty of God and insisting that the mortal should become Immortal, because the birthright of man is Divinity.

Such is the magnitude of the meaning contained in the Rasa-Sport of Bhagavan Sri Krishna, the irresistible surge of the soul for its Maker, that it is not comparable even with

the running of the iron filings to the magnet or the movement of rivers towards the ocean. These comparisons are inadequate in this respect. It is the irresistible surge and urge of the soul. 'Irresistible' is, of course, a poor word that we use for want of a better term. It is humanly impossible of description, because it was not the human power that was working. God's call is not like man calling. It is not like a boss calling a subordinate or the mother calling the child. It is not even the lover calling the beloved. Much more than all the illustrations we can think of, is the meaning, significance, import and the stringency of the call of God to the soul of man.

When God calls the human soul, what happens to it? This, the soul itself cannot understand, let alone the human tongue which is feeble in its expression. The great Veda Vyasa, in his majestic language, and his son, Sage Suka, in his brilliant exposition, try to give us a sort of intimation as to what it could have been. But poor is human understanding to understand its import, and poorer still is the human tongue. Who can understand the Spirit but the Spirit itself! This was the pithy and the short answer given by Sage Suka to King Parikshit when he put a human question in respect of this transcendental matter. "Oh what is this!" exclaimed Parikshit. "How can I grasp this? How can I stomach this? What do you mean by this description which is not capable of being easily appreciated by the human mind?" To this, Suka gave a divine answer in a divine manner, saying that divinity is different from humanity, and that man is not supposed to understand God through human faculties. "*Na tu mam sakyase drashtum anenaiva svachakshusha, divyam dadami te chakshuh.*"

“You cannot see Me with your fleshy eyes; I will give you divine vision!” This was Bhagavan Sri Krishna’s cosmic reply to the individual encounter of Arjuna with the Visvarupa. If the Visvarupa could not be beheld by a mortal eye, the Rasa Lila cannot be understood by a mortal intellect. It is not a temporal activity that took place but, as the Bhagavata tells us, it is a spiritual drama that was enacted by the Master of all powers. Time ceased to be and the stellar system could not move, says the scripture. It was not a night’s dance. It was a long, long-drawn play which hushed the movement of time itself. The stars began to gaze at it, as it were, and the celestials were looking at it with wonderment, not conscious of time, space and personality. All particularity-consciousness was completely obliterated. The consciousness of the personality itself was not there. It was not mortality, not humanity, not individuality, but Spirit dancing to the tune of the Universal Spirit.

Again to reiterate, impossible it is to describe it. Yet it gives us an idea as to what God is and how God works and what the goal of our life is. The goal of the soul is unity with God, and restless is the soul until it has a vision of God. Though it is true that it is incapable of being understood, it is not impossible of attainment, because that is the only attainment which the soul is craving for. The insatiable longings and the endless desires of the human mind are demonstration enough of the fact that God cannot be contained in the human mind. What the soul asks for is God and not the tinsels of the earth. We are not asking for food, clothing, shelter, warmth or protection. The soul is asking for nothing short of God. But this longing of the soul for the Eternal manifests itself as distorted asking and

demands for temporal objects, which are the cravings of the soul in its incompetence to comprehend its own longings and aspirations. The soul has gone crazy, as it were. It has gone mad in its pursuit of God who cannot be seen through the senses. To carry fire with a piece of straw is impossible. But the soul tries to contain Infinity in its finite mind. The impossible attempt of the soul to limit the universality of God into the finitude of the mind is Samsaric activity and the pleasures of sense, the titillations of the nerves and the itching of consciousness. But these cannot satisfy us, because we will not be satisfied until we get what we are asking for. And the 'we', the real 'I', is the *soul* within which asks for the Soul without. The soul in the human being asks for the Oversoul, the Infinite. We are asking for the Oversoul. The finite is asking for the Infinite, because the finite cannot be satisfied with any number of finite objects. The riches of the whole earth cannot satisfy a single soul, because the soul is an expression of the Infinite which is One, and the objects are finite though they are many in number.

This implication was brought home to the minds of people, the devotees, through the description of this enrapturing, maddening and intoxicating Love of God which the Gopis of Vrindavana exhibited in a historical period of time, in a most superhuman fashion. The eternal import hidden behind this Sport is the immortalising of all attempts at devotion. Of all the incidents in the life of Sri Krishna, this is the one which man cannot understand, and man is not supposed to understand. Because, here, in the five chapters of the Srimad Bhagavata describing the Rasa-Lila, the great author has pressed into service

infinite of wisdom and fullness of feeling and understanding. The style of Sanskrit used there is of a superior kind. Suddenly there is a shift of emphasis and rhetoric in the Srimad Bhagavata when the Rasa chapter begins. And we begin to feel a pulsation within our nerves, as it were, when these supernormal experiences are given to us in the language of mankind.

Such was the occasion, the Rasa Purnima, when God entered into the lower frequency of human consciousness and became visible, though He has infinitude in His bosom in higher frequencies of supernormal existence and is incapable of perception. The conclusion is that God is All and nothing but God can be. The human soul has only one desire—unity with God. It has not got many desires. All our economic longings and necessities, physical needs, intellectual aspirations, social necessity and what not—all these are distorted forms of the desire of the soul for God. They are erroneous movements of the soul's aspiration for Divinity. Samsara is nothing but the writhing of the soul, the struggling of the soul and the agony of the soul on account of its bereavement from God. All this weeping and crying of the soul is called Samsara. That is what we are experiencing. Restless is our life, and pitiable is the existence of man as long as he has not understood the meaning of his asking and what he asks for. Our life has become wretched merely because of the fact that we have not understood even the meaning of our own asking. We ask for something, but we have understood it to be something else! To rectify this error of man's distorted perception, Bhagavan Veda Vyasa gave us this scripture in the form of the immortal biography of the Immortal Man,

the Super-Man of the East, whose eternal Sport we observe and celebrate on the most auspicious Rasa Purnima. Blessed be this day! Blessed be the devotees, seekers of Truth and aspirants who search for God and rest not until He is attained. May the infinite grace of the Almighty be upon us all!

YAGNA—QUINTESSENCE OF THE CULTURE OF INDIA *

*Yajnarthat-karmano-nyatra lokoyam karmabandhanah;
tadartham karma kaunteya muktasangah samachara.*

“The world is bound by actions other than those performed for the sake of sacrifice; do thou, therefore, O son of Kunti (Arjuna), perform action for that sake (for sacrifice alone), free from attachment.” (Gita III-9)

When we are born into a particular setup of circumstances which we call a family, all the conditioning factors of the family are also born together with us. The tradition of the family grows when we grow. The pattern of our character and conduct is entirely determined by the ideological background that is at the very basis of the structure of that particular family. We are born not merely in a family but also in wider circumstances called the community, nation, world, universe, etc., to all which we owe obligations. Our obligation to a condition into which we are born is sacrifice or Yajna, and that is what Bhagavan Sri Krishna speaks of in the above verse.

When we are born, we are born with certain obligations. What are these obligations? They are the allegiance that we perforce owe to those factors that are responsible for our birth and maintenance. That is the sacrifice which we are called upon to do. In the Vedas, which are antecedent even to the Mahabharata and the

* Dipavali message given on the 25th of October, 1973.

Bhagavadgita, we are given the first primeval concept of sacrifice. Supreme sacrifice is extolled in the Veda, according to which the Absolute itself is the first performer of the Yajna, and not a Pandit. The Absolute did the first Yajna and then the others followed. They are only imitating what the Absolute did, originally.

What was the sacrifice that the Absolute did and who was the performer of that sacrifice? Where was the Vedi or the Yajna-kunda for that sacrifice and what was the material that was offered in that sacrifice? “*Yajnena yajnamayajanta devah,*” says the Purusha-Sukta. Yajna was the sacrifice, Yajna was offered in Yajna by Yajna for the sake of Yajna. Sacrifice was offered in the sacrifice, through the sacrifice, for the sake of sacrifice. What do we understand from this? We understand nothing except a jumble of words. Similar to this enigmatic statement of the Veda, we have another statement in the Bhagavadgita also: “*Brahmarpanam brahmahavir-brahmagnou brahmana hutam, brahmaiva tena gantavyam brahmakarma samadhina.*” Brahman is offering Brahman through Brahman for the sake of Brahman. What does it mean? It seems as confusing as that Vedic Mantra. But let us remember that this is what ‘sacrifice’ precisely means. It is a universal involvement of factors wherein and whereby we become the property of the whole creation. Can we imagine this situation where we become the property of everyone in the world? Anyone can demand anything from us, and we must give it! We have an obligation to everything in this world. That obligation is the sacrifice that we are called upon to do. That is the Yajna.

Our obligation is not merely to our parents, brothers and sisters, not merely to the government of our country that protects us, not merely to the planet earth on which we live, not merely to the solar system which gives us light, heat and energy. Oh God! We have got larger demands upon us and if we can think for a moment about the obligations that we really owe to this wonderful creation of God, we will not be able to breathe for a moment! Because we are not able to fulfil all these obligations in a short span of life, we are reborn. Otherwise we need not be reborn. If we have fulfilled or discharged all our duties in this very life itself, why should we take a next birth? But, life is short, and also we have not got the least concept of what obligations we bear or owe to the universe outside. Even when we are ninety years old, this knowledge will not come to us. So, naturally we die with ignorance. And because of this ignorance we are not able to discharge our duties properly. Because of the non-discharge of our duties and obligations properly, we are hurled into transmigration. And so long as we do not understand the meaning of the sacrifice that we are expected to perform and fulfil the obligations that we owe to the conditions of our existence, we cannot avoid undergoing this process of births and deaths.

What are the conditions of our existence? Parents are a conditioning factor. They have given birth to us; they feed us, take care of us and educate us. Society is another conditioning factor. We know how much we owe to society. Though it may not be visible outwardly, invisibly society protects us, takes care of us and helps us in many ways. The nation and the international system help us. The

stellar systems also help us. In short, the whole cosmos helps us. Therefore, we owe a universal obligation to all things in the universe. When we go for a walk in the jungle, sometimes a part of our cloth gets caught in a thorny bush and when we try to remove the thorn and move forward, we will find that another thorn is pricking us from behind. When we try to remove that, it pricks here again, so that we find ourselves unable to get out of it. When we are freed from one side, we are caught from another side. Similarly, when we discharge one obligation, we will find that another obligation has not been discharged. We cannot have an integral vision of things. We are partial, short-sighted people. We have a very narrow vision of things, and it is this narrow vision that is responsible for our birth and death.

This mysterious law, the law of Yajna, operates in the world. “*Yajno vai Vishnuh*”: Supreme Narayana Himself is called Yajna. The term ‘Yajna’ signifies the whole of the culture of Bharatavarsha. If we want one word which can give us the quintessence of the whole of the culture of India, ‘Yajna’ is that word. How meaningful it is, we can imagine. Every cultural pattern and every presupposition of human existence is contained in this pregnant term ‘Yajna’, which means the universal sacrifice that the soul performs. The performer of the sacrifice is the soul. It is not an Acharya or a Pandit.

In the Anugita of the Mahabharata, which is a sequel to the Bhagavadgita, this Yajna is described in a very beautiful form. It states what Yajna actually is. This Yajna is going on daily in this body and it is going on everywhere in the world, outside and inside. It is sacrifice into the fire

of the knowledge of the Absolute of all those factors which tend to tether the soul to the bodily tabernacle. This is called Jnana Yajna, which means the offering of knowledge into the fire of Knowledge. Which knowledge is offered into which knowledge? The knowledge of our individual existence in all its aspects is offered in the knowledge of the Supreme Being. The concept of this mysterious Dharma before us cannot be contained in our minds. Our heads will burst if we start thinking deeply about these implications of our life.

Knowledge is too vast. Our life is not long enough to have all the knowledge necessary. The ancient masters, the Seers saw with their premonition, intuition or foresight that people cannot contain the Vedic knowledge in their heads. "*Ananta vai vedah*": Vedas are endless or infinite, which means to say, knowledge has no limit. People in this Kali Yuga, especially, are so feeble physically, morally and intellectually that this truth has to be instilled into their minds through some other manner. This is why Vyasa wrote the great epic Mahabharata. He found out that the Vedas are of no use to poor human beings in this Kali Yuga. Whatever the Vedas say would not enter our heads, because they contain impersonal scientific knowledge. How many of us are scientific? We are all ignorant, rustic villagers in our way of thinking. Crude thinking is our habit. Subtle, universal, scientific thinking as is contained in the Vedas is far from us.

When I say the Vedas are scientific, I am not making a joke. Masters like Swami Dayananda Sarasvati, who founded the Arya Samaj; Sayana, the great commentator of the Vedas; Aurobindo, of our own times; the Puri

Sankaracharya; the late Bharati Krishna Tirtha—they all have struggled to point out that every science is contained in the Vedas. Even subjects such as aeronautics, shipbuilding, mathematics of the highest type in differential calculus, infinite calculus—everything is in the Vedas. Sri Bharati Krishna Tirtha has written a book called *Vedic Mathematics*, and it has been published by the Benares Hindu University. The Veda Samhitas contain the highest reaches of mathematics. Many think that the Vedas are only some foolish chants of the cowherds of Punjab, as British historians tell us. The Aryans were regarded as cowherds grazing their cows in Punjab and blabbering something and that became the Vedas. This is the British interpretation of our culture, which has gone into our heads! The Vedas are not any kind of blabbering. They are intuitional revelations of ecstatic souls who had the vision of the Absolute. And, therefore, this vision-integral contains every type of knowledge—physics, chemistry, biology, sociology, mathematics, astronomy, alchemy, Ayurveda, military science and what not. How can we contain all these things? We, therefore, bid good-bye to Vedas. So the master Vyasa, Krishna Dvaipayana Vyasa, wrote the Mahabharata and the Puranas to explain these very impersonal scientific truths of the Vedas in personal epic style.

In villages, some ladies have a peculiar habit. Suppose a lady wants a sari. She cannot tell her husband directly, “I want a sari.” So, she will say, “The neighbour’s wife has purchased a new sari today. It is very good, very nice. I saw it myself.” Her husband understands her intentions. He will say, “Why do you describe all these things? All right, I will purchase one for you.” And the poor man purchases a sari.

The epics and Puranas follow a similar indirect way of instructing the truths. But the Vedas directly tell the truth, openly: “You must do this; it is like this.” This is scientific. Science always plainly tells the truth as it is, without any camouflage. The epics and the Puranas do not say directly that you must be a good man. They say, “Yudhishtira was a good man. His virtue was so immense. He shared everything that he had. His conduct was so adventurous that as a result he got so many things.” One who hears this feels, “Oh, I see. Then I must also do like that.” These texts are called *Suhrit-Samhitas*, while the Vedas are known as *Prabhu-Samhitas*. The latter command, like a master. Science always commands on principles. The Puranas and epics give stories, ancient history and make us think scientifically in an indirect manner, as though with a sugar-coated pill. That is why it is said: “*Bharatam panchamo vedah.*” While the Vedas are supposed to be four, the Mahabharata is the fifth Veda. It is as important as the Vedas. Sometimes they say it is even more important than the Vedas.

Whatever it is, when knowledge gets adulterated through intense sensory activity, weakness of will and lack of moral force, the understanding of Dharma also falls. So we must have a whip to goad us to the path of Dharma, spirituality and God-consciousness. The tradition of India, Bharatavarsha, is full of such goading whips. While the Vedas, the Puranas and the epics may be said to be direct teachers in an institution or an academy, the culture of India has also instituted many occasions for bringing home to our minds the facts of our eternal glory and our duties to God, the world and mankind. We owe three kinds of duties

which are mentioned in the eighteenth chapter of the Bhagavadgita: “*Yajno danam tapas-chaiva pavanani manishinam.*” They are Yajna, Dana and Tapas. Yajna itself contains in its meaning all possible knowledge and the mandate on ethics. Still we are told Yajna, Dana and Tapas constitute the highest necessity of religion. While Tapas is the duty that we owe to our own selves, Dana is that which we owe to others, and Yajna is that we owe to God. Tapas is austerity. We must be austere. We must live a very restrained life. Dana is charitable feeling, charitable nature and charitable act in respect of others, while Yajna is the self-dedication we make of our own self, wholly and totally, to the Supreme Being.

We have various occasions throughout the year to remind us of the threefold duty. They are called Vratas, some of which are annual, some monthly, and some daily. The Dipavali Vrata is observed every year on the fourteenth day (Chaturdasi) of the dark fortnight in the month of Kartika (October-November). People take a holy oil bath, put on new clothes, and eat delicious dishes. Crackers are burst, and lines of light are lit everywhere. There is an atmosphere of gaiety and sanctity. Goddess Lakshmi is worshipped and Divine grace is invoked. Though there are many stories associated with this celebration of Dipavali, the prominent one is the killing of the demon Narakasura by Lord Sri Krishna while returning to Dwaraka from Indraloka, from where he brought the Parijata plant to fulfil the wishes of Satyabhama, his consort.

The Dipavali festival is regarded as an occasion particularly associated with an ancient event of Sri Krishna overcoming the demoniacal force known as Narakasura, as

recorded in the epics and Puranas. After the great victory over Narakasura in a battle, which appears to have lasted for long, long days, Sri Krishna, with his consort Satyabhama, returned to his abode in Dwaraka. The residents of Dwaraka were very anxious about the delay caused of Sri Krishna's returning and it is said that they were worshipping Bhagavati Lakshmi for the prosperity and welfare of everyone and the quick returning of Bhagavan Sri Krishna and Satyabhama. And, after Sri Krishna returned, the story goes that he took a bath after applying oil over his body to cleanse himself subsequent to the very hectic work he had to do in the war that ensued earlier. This oil-bath connected with Sri Krishna's ritual is also one of the reasons for people necessarily remembering to take an oil-bath on the day known as Naraka Chaturdasi, prior to the Amavasya, when Lakshmi Puja is conducted. Everyone in India remembers to take an oil-bath on Naraka Chaturdasi in memory of, in honour of, Bhagavan Sri Krishna's doing that after the demise of Narakasura. Having taken the bath, they all joined together in great delight in the grand worship of Maha-Lakshmi for general prosperity of everyone in Dwaraka. This is the traditional background, as is told to us, of the rites and the worships connected with Naraka Chaturdasi and Dipavali Amavasya.

There is a third aspect of it which is called Bali Padya, the day following Amavasya. It does not look that the Bali Padya festival is directly connected with Lakshmi Puja or Naraka Chaturdasi. But it has another background altogether, namely, the blessing Narayana, in His incarnation as Vamana, bestowed upon the demon-king Bali Chakravarti, whom He subdued when He took a

Cosmic Form in the Yajnasala of Bali, the details of which we can read in the Srimad Bhagavata Mahapurana.

Bali Chakravarti was himself a great devotee, an ideal king and ruler, and having submitted himself to being thrown into the nether regions by the pressure of the foot of Narayana in the Cosmic Form, it appears he begged of Him to have some occasion to come up to the surface of the earth and then be recognised as a devotee of Bhagavan Narayana Himself. This recognition, this hallowed memory of Bali Chakravarti, is celebrated on the first day of the bright fortnight following the Amavasya. Bali Puja and Bali Padya are two of the terms used to designate this occasion, the day following Amavasya.

So, the sum and substance of the message connected with Dipavali is that it is a three-day festival beginning with Naraka Chaturdasi, a day prior to Amavasya; then the main Lakshmi worship day, which is Amavasya itself; and the third day which is Bali Padya, connected with the honour bestowed upon Bali Chakravarti as a devotee of Bhagavan Narayana. It is also an occasion for spiritual exhilaration, a lighting-up of all darkness, socially as well as personally, outwardly and inwardly, for the purpose of allowing an entry of the Supreme Light of God into the hearts of all people.

Dipavali means the line of lights. 'Dipa' is light, and 'Avali' means line. So, Dipavali, or the festival of the line of lights, is the celebration of the rise of Knowledge. It is also the celebration of the victory of the Sattvic or divine elements in us over the Rajasic and Tamasic or baser elements which are the real Asuras, the Rakshasas—Narakasura and others. The whole world is within us. The

whole cosmos can be found in a microscopic form in our own body. Rama-Ravana-Yuddha and Tarakasura-Vadha, and all such epic wars—everything is going on inside us. This Dipavali is thus also a psychological context, wherein we contemplate in our own selves the holy occasion of self-mastery, self-subjugation and self-abnegation, leading to the rise of all spiritual virtues which are regarded as lustre or radiance emanating from Self-Knowledge. Bhagavati Mahalakshmi, the Goddess of prosperity, does not merely mean the Goddess of wealth in a material sense. Lakshmi does not mean only gold and silver. Lakshmi means prosperity in general, positive growth in the right direction, a rise into the higher stages of evolution. This is the advent of Lakshmi. Progress and prosperity are Lakshmi. In the Vishnu Purana we are told if Narayana is like the sun, Lakshmi is like the radiance of the sun. They are inseparable. Wherever Narayana is, there is Lakshmi. Wherever is divinity, there is prosperity. So on this day of Dipavali we worship the Supreme God who is the source of all conceivable virtues, goodness and prosperity, which is symbolised in illumination—lighting and worship in the form of Arati—and gay joyous attitude and feeling in every respect. So, in short, this is a day of rejoicing at the victory of Sattva over the lower Gunas, the victory of God Himself over the binding fetters of the soul.

LORD SKANDA—THE CONCENTRATED DIVINE ENERGY *

In the history of language and literature, the most outstanding works are the epics of the various nations. The superb literary productions of Greece are the writings of Homer—the *Illiad* and the *Odyssey*. In Italy, similar epics were produced by Dante and Virgil—Dante’s *Divine Comedy* and Virgil’s *Aeneid*. In English literature, the best epic examples are Milton’s poems and Shakespeare’s plays. In India, we have the Itihasas and also the Puranas. Here, in this type of poetry and expression, the soul rises to the maximum of its virility and portrays in the most majestic manner the picture of creation. The intention of these poets, whether of the West or of the East, is to describe in soulful language and in picturesque style, the processes of creation, the comedy and the tragedy of evolution and involution, the story of the life of man which is painted sometimes with the optimistic colours of comedy and sometimes with the pessimistic ones of tragedy. Life is both, and it can be pictured from two different angles of vision. The central motif of all the epics of the world hinges upon a conflict which gets resolved in the end. Somehow, the feature of a clash between forces seems to have caught the vision of the poets and the adepts as the pivotal point of their observations.

When a careful attention is paid to the processes of nature and the history of human life, one observes that

* Skanda-Shashthi message given on the 9th of November, 1980.

nature outwardly and man inwardly have to confront situations which can be best described as a series of conflicts. Every day is a conflict before us, an opposition, a confrontation and a question which demands an answer. Our struggles throughout the days and the nights of our life are our attempts to answer the question of life which is the great enigma or mystery. Life poses a problem which man has not succeeded in solving with all his intellectual endowments. The deeper vision of life, which one may call philosophical or mystical, spiritual or religious, has revealed the basic or the foundational features of creation as a movement towards and a movement away from a Centre. This seems to be the secret behind and an answer to all the questions of life. There is a Centre somewhere towards which everything seems to be gravitating and which at the same time seems to be repelling everything. This simultaneous feeling of the pull and the repulsion is the conflict. This is at the basis of all problems.

The epic language describes this dual warfare of the pull and the repulsion as the battle between the divine and the un-divine powers. The divine forces are those factors, impulses and aspirations which urge everything towards the Centre, and the un-divine ones are the opposite ones which compel everything to be driven away from the Centre. There is this double urge in man, in everything and in all Nature, nay in the whole of creation. Everything seems to be moving in two directions at the same time, an impossibility to understand and explain. How can one thing move in two directions at the same time? This exactly is the mystery of life. We are 'impulsive' towards two different directions. 'Impulsive' is the only word, because it is an

irresistible urge or desire that we feel within ourselves to do two things at the same time. Nothing can be worse than this situation, because it is an impulsion towards an impossibility. No one can do two contrary things at the same time, and one cannot have a conflicting desire operating at the same time in one's own mind. But this is what is happening. If this did not happen, we would not have been what we are today. Man exists because of the existence of this conflict in his own mind pulling him in two different ways—one urge moving in one direction and another in another direction. So man is divine and also un-divine at the same time. We have a divine aspiration beckoning us towards the Centre, though it is invisible to our eyes. There is also in us an equally powerful urge, perhaps, which drives us outward towards the objects of senses, in the direction of the activities of life, forcing us to entangle ourselves in the social norms and the calls of life. Which is unimportant—the calls of life, or the aspirations which we regard as religious and uplifting? Actually, it is the expression of a single impulse in two different directions. This is a cosmical impulse and also a psychological one. The whole of Nature feels this impulse, the whole universe is filled with it and each one of us is also full with it.

The epics and the Puranas, the great heroic poems, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata and the Puranas, or for that matter, Milton's *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*, whatever be the name that we give to these epic approaches, all these are enrapturing, poetic exclamations of moments of rapture, when there was a flash of insight from the bottom of the soul of the poet concerned. These

are the poems which we call the epics, and this is why we are moved when we read them. Our hair stands on end, our emotions begin to be in a state of turmoil and we begin to tremble and shake, and we are forced to assume the role of the personalities portrayed in the epics. We begin to move with those specimens of individuality which the epic poems describe. That is the power of the poet. The greater is the force of poetry, the more also we feel impelled to move with the individualities described therein, and we become those individuals for the time being. We laugh and weep, we feel happy and we are sunk in grief, as we move with the heroes and the heroines of these majestic epics.

We have in India two great epics, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, and also eighteen Puranas, each one touching upon one aspect of this universal activity going on in the form of evolution and involution, the warfare between the divine and the un-divine forces. There is a perpetual conflict between god and devil, as the theologians sometimes tell us. The ruling divinity of the universe and the forces of darkness fight with each other. A noble and sublime instance of this epic event that is supposed to have taken place aeons back in the history of the cosmos, is the Skanda Shashthi Festival, which is observed for six days and which concludes and consummates on the sixth day, dedicated to Lord Skanda. The great hero of this cosmic drama which is described in the Skanda Purana, and in certain other scriptures like the Mahabharata, is Skanda, the great War-god of India. Oftentimes, westerners compare Him with Mars, the generalissimo of the celestials, the angels in heaven. In the Bhagavadgita, Lord Krishna, the

spokesman of the great poem, identifies Himself with Skanda among the generals: “*Senaninam-aham Skandah.*”

The religious history of this event commences with a magnificent portrayal of the great God Siva absorbed in meditation and deeply immersed in Samadhi, oblivious of what we may call darkness, evil or the centrifugal forces. God’s absorption in Himself in the ‘I am that I am’ is the total cosmic opposition to the multifarious dark activities of the urges in the direction of the senses whose leader is the ego and whose colleagues are desire and anger. The greatest forms which this impulse of externality can take in us are these three. The ego is the centrality of the urge, the central dynamo, as it were, which pumps the energy necessary for the movement of this impulse outwardly. And, desire and anger are like the two arms of this adamantine centrality of individuals. So, in a way, we may say that there are only two forces, and we may not be wrong when sometimes we say that there are three forces. We have the Supreme Creator and the Satan in the *Paradise Lost* of Milton. We have the description of the Inferno, the Purgatorio and the Paradiso in the comedy of Dante. We have Ravana and Kumbhakarna in the Ramayana, Duryodhana and Duhsasana in the Mahabharata. Mostly they are forms of a dual force, like Sumbha and Nisumbha in the Devi-Mahatmya, and Sunda and Upasunda in the Mahabharata. They are invincible for all practical purposes.

There cannot be so forceful an energy as desire, anywhere. Desire is the greatest power in the world. Of all the powers, desire is the strongest, because nothing can move without desire. Hence desire should be regarded as the impulse for any kind of movement, in any direction.

The nature of desire is so complex that in a poem called the Kama Gita, in the Mahabharata, we are told that desire laughs at people who are trying to conquer it. Because, the attempt to conquer desire itself is a desire. This is the reason why it laughs. Sri Krishna sings this Kama Gita to illustrate the difficulty of conquering desire of any kind, unless proper means are employed.

The gods were startled, and they were in a state of consternation when the demoniacal forces attacked them. The gods too had their own strength, no doubt. Virtue is supposed to have power to overcome vice. But often we feel that the virtues of the world are incapable of confronting the vices of nature. It is not enough if we are virtuous. The vices are too strong for us. We have seen with our own eyes human history, these days. Virtue does not seem to succeed. The gods were virtuous and the demons were vicious. But, the gods could not face them, just as the virtuous ones in this world are unable to defeat the vicious. The virtuous people are suffering and the evil ones are thriving.

What is this mystery? The mystery is not known to many. The truth is that while virtue is generally understood as the opposite of vice, we forget the fact that it is also the counter-correlative of vice. So, it has not got the strength to confront the vice. Vice or evil can be overcome by a power which is transcendent and not merely ethical and moral. The evils of the world are not afraid of mere morality and ethics. Mere goodness will not do. There should be Divinity in our personality, and Divinity is far superior to mere goodness in the form of an ethical behaviour and a moral conduct. Divinity is an integrating force, while virtue is

only a counter-correlative of vice. There cannot be virtue unless there is vice. Because, if there is no evil at all, there cannot be any such thing called goodness. But Divinity is a different thing altogether because it transcends both the good and the evil.

So, when the forces of darkness began to assault the angels, the Purana tells us that the forces were threefold. They are named, in the Skanda Purana, as Surapadma, Simhamukha and Taraka; and in the Mahabharata as Duryodhana, Kama and Duhsasana. No one, however virtuous and good he may be, could stand these forces. These demoniacal forces were too much for all the angels put together. The gods were trembling in fear, just as virtuous men in this world tremble in the presence of the evil dacoits and the unscrupulous thugs, who attack people inwardly as well as outwardly. Virtue seems to have no place in this world. Angels were driven out, the gods ran away from heaven and evil reigned supreme. What is the solution? Not mere goodness, not mere virtue, not a little charity, not a little sweet speech—none of these can stand their onslaught. These things will not cut ice in this evil world. Angels are good enough and they are far superior to humans in virtue, in goodness, in knowledge and in everything conceivable. But they could not stand this vicious force. They had to invoke God Himself. And I may tell you that the solution for all the evils of the world today is God only and not anything that man can do. Not I, not you, not anyone can solve the mystery of the evils of the world. Unless God is invoked, there is no hope. Lord Siva, the great Master of Yoga who was immersed in Samadhi, the abysmal universality of experience, was the only

succour and the source of hope to the gods and angels, in the war depicted in the Skanda Purana. When this triple force, Surapadma, Simhamukha and Tarakasura, attacked the celestials from all sides, they did not know whom to appeal for help. They ran to Brahma, the Creator. He said, "There is only one solution, which is difficult to conceive, but there is no other alternative. The force, the energy, the militant expression of Lord Siva is the only answer to this problem of yours." When God becomes militant, nobody can stand before Him. When the lion stands up, you know that there can be none who can face it. God always keeps quiet. He is always in a state of Samadhi, as it were. He gives a long rope to everyone and never interferes with anybody's affairs. You may do anything that you like, you can hang yourself if you like and God is not bothered about it. But, when things become too bad and intolerable, when the whole world begins to cry, these great incarnations take place. If you or I cry individually in a corner, that may not be sufficient to bring down the Incarnations. God tolerates when one man cries or two people cry, because many others are happy. But when everyone starts crying, He cannot bear it anymore. This was the condition before the birth of Skanda. The whole world was in a state of travail, turmoil and agitation. The birth of the War-god Kumarasambhava, as Kalidasa puts it, is the story behind this religious festival called Skanda Shashthi.

Without going into the details of the whole story here, I would like to pinpoint only the significance of the occasion, viz., the impossibility to confront evil without the help of God, the power of Divinity. No one can face the world except with the help of God. Armaments, military

and police are nothing before the evil of the world. No one can overcome it, and it shall continue. So, the Skanda Purana says that the War-god was born from the universal contemplation of the great Creator Himself. The Samadhi-Bhuta Sakti or the energy born out of the great Samadhi of Lord Siva, whom we call Skanda, is the answer for all the evils of the world. The force of cosmic desire became a cumulative focussing weapon, as it were, and with a sixfold face the divine energy began to confront the multifaceted dark forces. We have a sixfold psyche within us. The central, pivotal feature of it is the ego, as I called it, or we can say the mind, which expresses itself as the five senses. The five senses energised by the mind drive us outward in the direction of the objects of the world. You would have heard it said that the occasion for the birth of Skanda or the War-god was the stimulation by the god of Love, who darted his weapons towards the great Siva, who was then in a state of deep absorption, in Samadhi. These mysteries are difficult to understand. Ordinary minds are not made in such a way as to probe into these intricacies of Divine action. The energies that are required to face the evil of creation are potentially present inside us and they have to be worked up by a particular means. Desire is neither good nor bad. But, it can become bad or good according to the circumstances and the way in which it operates, under given conditions, in the history of creation. The birth of Skanda had to be occasioned by the activity of desire personified as Kama or Cupid, for the sake of overcoming the evils, one of which is desire itself, whose comrades are anger and other manifestations of egoism. The Bhagavadgita says, "*Dharmaviruddho bhuteshu kamosmi.*" Here God refers to Himself as desire, bereft of or free from

any contravention of Dharma. Here is a clue to the mystery of how it became necessary for the gods to employ Cupid as an instrument to rouse the divine desire in Siva for confronting the evil desire of the demons. Desire is like a diamond which cuts itself.

Religious adventure becomes more and more complicated as we proceed along with it further and further. In the earlier stages religion seems to be very simple, because it appears to be merely a question of going to the church or sitting before a deity in a temple or following a system of routine, a ritual, etc. But, when we enter into the heart of religion, it ceases to be any kind of routine. It becomes an inward adventure of the spirit. It is not a doing of something, but a complete reshuffling of one's personality and a transformation of oneself through a transvaluation of values, by a process in which we may have to submit to conscription the very same forces in the world which appear as our opponents at present. The world is an enemy and also a friend. The Bhagavadgita, again, gives an answer to this interesting question, how the same thing can be a friend and also an enemy. In the sixth chapter, we are told that the Self is the friend and the Self is also the enemy. Desire is a friend and also an enemy. The world is a friend and also an enemy. By means of the instrumentality of Kamadeva, the Divine Force of Siva was roused up into action, which is otherwise Omnipresent. In the Vedanta philosophy, a distinction is drawn between two types of consciousness, known as Sahaja-Jnana and Vritti-Jnana, which can be translated as a universally present impersonal, featureless consciousness and a directly operative consciousness acting in some given way,

respectively. Or, to give a grosser example, the impersonal fire which is present in all the five elements around us, is to be distinguished from the concrete fire with which we cook our meal and light our lamp. Energy in action is the fire that is burning through the cooking stove, and the energy that is merely existing in an impersonal manner is like the fire present in all the five elements. So, the force of Siva was impersonal in the Samadhi state and it had no concern with good or bad, or anything that is taking place anywhere; but when it had to be employed as a weapon to counteract the evils of creation, it had to manifest itself and could not merely remain as an impersonal featureless Samadhi consciousness. So, the energy burst forth from Siva's third eye which is the power of Knowledge or Chit-Sakti. It is not a manipulated energy created through machines or through the energies of any kind of physical body or substance. Only the energy of Wisdom can counteract the evil of creation and not any other power, not anything that we do in the form of charity, goodness or our so-called religiosity.

So we have in this great epic of Skanda's incarnation, the 'Kumara Sambhava', the mighty portrayal of the adventure of the Spirit through the processes of Sadhana, spiritual practice, wherein we commune ourselves with the highest power that is conceivable, the energy of God Himself. We have to draw that energy forward and harness it to face this world. Then the power of externality gets transformed into the peace of universality. What happened to the Rakshasas—Surapadma, Simhamukha and Taraka? Those forces which were externalised and which were the desires impelling themselves outwardly in the direction of

sense-objects, were transformed into the universal peace of creation. Peace reigned supreme. There is nothing called destruction anywhere. These demons were not destroyed in the ordinary sense of the term. You know the law of conservation of energy. Energy is never increasing or decreasing in creation. It is only concentrated in different forms and at different places. The concentrated form of it is what we call evil. So the very same energy which was in the form of these demoniacal elements was transformed by the Divine energy, which means to say, all that was impulsive in the direction of externality, space, time, causality and objectivity and desire of every kind, got withdrawn into the peace of the Absolute, and the Goal of life was reached. This is, in my humble opinion, the great spiritual significance behind the religious festival called the Skanda Shashthi, which falls on the sixth day of the bright fortnight in the month of Kartika (October-November). There are other meanings which are manifold and interesting. Out of all this variety, I have placed before you one feature for your contemplation.

THE GOSPEL OF THE BHAGAVADGITA *

RESOLUTION OF THE FOURFOLD CONFLICT

I shall endeavour to touch upon a few salient points in the gospel of the Bhagavadgita, which will be of some meaning and utility in our day-to-day life. To apply a knowledge to life is the most difficult aspect of knowledge. We have always been accustomed to bifurcate life from knowledge, and vice versa, so that a learned man is not necessarily a happy man, nor even a rich man. The reason is that learning or knowledge has been isolated from the facts of life. This is one of the conflicts that we observe in life. As they say humorously, Sarasvati and Lakshmi never live in the same house, meaning thereby that learning and wealth do not go together. There are many such conflicts, all which are supposed to be resolved, in one way or the other, by means of the great teachings known as the Bhagavadgita.

Bhagavan Sri Krishna, when He spoke the Bhagavadgita, intended to resolve a conflict. What is a conflict, may be a question that raises itself in our minds. There are, actually, four types of conflict, within which every other type, kind, or variation of disharmony can be subsumed. The occasion for the delivery of this Gospel was the battle of Mahabharata, which represents a field of conflict with other people. This is what is known as a battle.

* Gita Jayanti message given in the year 1976. Gita Jayanti falls on Ekadasi, or the eleventh day of the bright half of the month of Margasirsha (November-December).

The first problem one encounters in life is conflict with other people. “You do not like me” and “I do not like you”. When we wake up in the morning and look at the world, we are faced with a conflict with other people. This is a difficulty which saps the vitality of many in the world. We have to see faces with whom we cannot reconcile ourselves. It may be a boss, a subordinate or an equal—it makes no difference. When we cannot reconcile ourselves with another face, there is a conflict; and we see nothing but faces when we get up in the morning and look at the world outside. The battle of Mahabharata is a large epic, describing this primary conflict of human nature—conflict of one person with another person, in which can be included conflicts of groups, communities and nations, because all these are nothing but personalities and individualities associating and clashing in certain manners and patterns. What you call a society, or a family, or a nation, or a community is nothing but human beings grouping themselves into patterns. So, conflict with other people includes every kind of conflict in the world. Thus, we have the Mahabharata epic, in the middle of which the Bhagavadgita occurs.

Where is the Bhagavadgita located? In the middle of the battle of the Mahabharata. What is this epic battle? A conflict between the Pandavas and the Kauravas, brothers in a unitary family. It was a family feud. We may say it was a conflict between Yudhishtira and Duryodhana, which amounts to the same essential situation. So, again, to reiterate, the conflict which Bhagavan Sri Krishna tries to resolve has as its background the conflict enumerated in the long epic poem of the Mahabharata. What is this

background? The conflict of personalities! That was the occasion for the war. Huge armies were arrayed on both sides. Thousands were about to fly at the throats of each other. That was the occasion for the giving of this Gospel. The Gospel was not given in a school, a college, or a university, a temple, a church, or an auditorium—nothing of the kind. This most interesting and indispensable Gospel which we try to enshrine in our hearts, in our memories, was given on that momentous occasion of a war that was about to break between large contending armies. Nobody would like to seek wisdom on that tense occasion. That is not the time to speak at all; it is the time to act and do something immediately. Who would speak philosophy when there are large numbers of men emotionally worked up into such a heightened pitch of anxiety and wrath that they will hear no words spoken by anyone, and are bent upon a severe type of action! On that occasion, who would speak a sublime gospel or a scripture! But that was the occasion, and there could not be a better occasion.

Now, the very purpose of this war was primarily to resolve a social conflict. Well, it was agreed that the war was indispensable. The purpose behind the war was not to destroy people but to resolve a social conflict or a political tension. It was impossible to mend people, and so they thought it was necessary to end people. And they concluded that by the ending of the people the conflict would automatically vanish. If you cannot untie a knot, you cut the knot.

For memory's sake I may mention a few names who were involved in this conflict—the leaders, the generalissimos of the war. There were powerful veterans on

the side of the Kauravas, almost invincible in battle, three of whom, the most prominent ones, were Bhishma, Drona and Karna. Nobody could face them with immunity to their lives. On the other side, that of the Pandavas, we have leaders like Bhima and Arjuna, the brothers of king Yudhishtira, the eldest of the Pandavas. While the most powerful from the Kauravas side was Bhishma, the most invincible on the side of the Pandavas was Arjuna. They knew every tactic of war, and people would shudder in their hearts by merely hearing their names.

On mutual acceptance, it was agreed that the war had to be waged to end a social conflict. But, when the hour of crisis came, when the iron was hot and it had to be hit, when that moment came, what happened? A most unexpected conflict arose within the mind of Arjuna. It was not a conflict with other people, but a conflict within his own self. I told you that there are four types of conflict. The first one is conflict with other people, and to end it they embarked upon this perilous adventure of war. But before it broke out or started, the most important of the leaders, the hero of one party, the most renowned warrior, had to pass through a muddle of conflict within himself—his own thoughts, feelings, emotions, and the various tantrums of his psychological organ. We know the situation. All action emanates from the individual, and to do or not to do is to be decided by the individual himself. A decision can be taken only when there is no conflict in one's mind. Either we do a thing or we do not do the thing. We want a thing or we do not want the thing. These are decisions that the mind takes. But if one begins to waver between the two horns of the dilemma, and one does not know which side to take and

what steps to put forward due to a conflict within one's own mind, there would be no solution at all. A most surprising attitude did Arjuna take, to the wonder and marvel of everyone there. The most heroic of persons began to speak words of pusillanimity, feelings of pity which would be completely unexpected from a warrior girt up on the brink of a war. Instead of attempting to solve the social conflict for the sake of which the war was to be engaged in, another conflict was added on to it. So instead of one conflict, we have two conflicts here. Arjuna, the leader, the great warrior, advanced specious arguments before Krishna, his colleague, his friend and guide, who was seated on the very same chariot, and clinched the whole matter by saying, "I am not for this." It was a very difficult thing to swallow, and only a personality like Krishna could take it in the true spirit in which it arose.

When a person is truly friendly with us, he knows how to take our moods. That is wisdom of life. Krishna was not pleased; nor was he displeased. A doctor is neither pleased nor displeased with a patient. An emotion will not rise in the mind of a physician. Krishna was not distressed at the agonising condition of the mind of Arjuna. He did not weep, cry or beat his breast. He spoke words of wisdom laden with the profundity of the experience of life which, incidentally, opened up the gates for a solution to all conflicts in life. Not merely Arjuna's conflict but your conflict, my conflict and anyone's conflict at any time found a solution therein. All problems, all conflicts, all disharmonies, in everyone's mind, in every pattern of society, and for all times, were dealt with effectively. Thus it is that the Bhagavadgita became a scripture of universal

significance. Though it arose on account of a historical context, it gradually bordered upon timeless questions and the eternal problems of mankind, of humanity as a whole. The Bhagavadgita teaches not the Hindu religion, but religion *as such*. It is not my religion, or your religion, but the religion of the human soul that is spoken in the words of the Bhagavadgita. It is an answer to the questions of mankind, not merely the themes of some religion, cult or creed. It is 'man' putting a question to God. It is not any particular person or a particular faith or association or affiliation raising a problem, but 'man' signifying humanity, raising a problem before the Maker of all things. And to it, the answer came from all sides. The answer came from all the mouths of the Cosmic Person, not merely from one individual called Krishna. There was no Krishna then, when this answer came. The query was not raised by Arjuna as a historical person. It was not Arjuna that kicked up the problem; it was the humanity present in Arjuna that raised the question. There is a character of humanity in every one of us, which is neither male nor female, neither eastern nor western. That human element puts the eternal question. Hence, the answer has to be all-comprehensive. The human complexity raised the question; and who will answer the question? Not another man. One man's problem cannot be solved by another person, because another person is also a human being like this person. You cannot solve my problem, nor can I solve your problem, because both of us stand on the same pedestal of humanity. And here was the problem of humanity as a whole, not of one individual; and who will answer this question? Not Krishna, because to utter the name Krishna in this context would be to raise the question

of an individual. It was not the historical Krishna that spoke to Arjuna, but it was Narayana who spoke to Nara. This is also known as Nara-Narayana-Samvada, not merely Krishna-Arjuna-Samvada. God spoke to man, not Krishna to Arjuna. The Universal spoke to the particular. The All-comprehensive began to speak words of wisdom to that which is localised in space and time. Humanity was face to face with the Absolute. With this background of understanding, we shall be able to realise the importance of this scripture.

Thus, on the background of the necessity to solve a social conflict, an individual conflict arose in the mind of a symbol of humanity, known as Arjuna. As already pointed out, I cannot answer this question, and you cannot answer this question either, because we are all persons, human beings, individuals, and it is the individual that raises the question. Then, who is to give the answer? Not anyone in the world. The answer has to come from That which is beyond the world. And hence the personality of Krishna began to expand gradually into the All-inclusive Consciousness which covers the entire gamut of the evolution of mankind and the world as a whole. This apocalypse of consciousness is what is known as Virat, or the Visvarupa. It expanded not merely quantitatively in space and time; it is not the swelling of a body that is called Virat or Visvarupa, but a humanly unimaginable expansion of Consciousness, which alone can solve the questions of mankind's conflict.

And what is mankind's conflict? One person set against another person. This is the first phase of the problem. Then, each one is at loggerheads with one's own

self. This is another phase of the conflict. You do not know what you will think tomorrow. You do not agree today with what you thought yesterday. Your understanding cannot go hand in hand with your feeling. Your feelings cannot go hand in hand with your will. Your emotions will not agree with your logical argument. Your logic goes against the facts of human society outside. All this is a description of internal conflict. "I can neither fully agree with you nor fully reject you." This is also a personal conflict. If I can fully agree with you, there can be no conflict. If I can fully reject you, then also there is no conflict. But, unfortunately, I cannot fully reject you for certain reasons, and cannot also wholly accept you for certain other reasons. This is individual conflict. And there are also non-alignment of the layers of the personality itself. I am proceeding from the posterior to the prior, from the gross to the subtle, from the visible to the invisible, from the outer to the inner, for the purpose of explanation. The outer conflict of society is an outcome of the internal conflict of human nature. Why has this conflict come? Is there any solution for this? Arjuna fell at the feet of Krishna, saying, "I am confused, and I do not know what I am supposed to do. Bewildered is the condition of my mind. It is true that I have come here for battle, as a general of the army, but now something is happening within my own mind. I do not know, Krishna, what is happening! I am sunk in grief. I am swallowed by sorrow. I cannot lift my finger. I cannot raise my hand. My nerves are getting paralysed. I cannot even stand up. I am falling down." This is what happens when internal conflict reaches its climax. And here the real Bhagavadgita starts, which is God speaking. Up to this time man was speaking. "I shall wage a war. I shall end these people, crush them

and pound them to powder.” That was the boast of man before the war was entered upon. Then comes the sinking down of the personality: “This is impossible. I shall withdraw because I do not think that I am fit to adjust myself to this complex that has arisen now in the form of a social conflict which I hold, which is raised by us due to ignorance, greed and callousness towards the consequences of war.”

The answer of Bhagavan Sri Krishna, representing the Unity of the cosmos, is simple and precise, though it is apparently a long gospel of many chapters. Arjuna was thoroughly mistaken in assessing the values of life. Lord Krishna tells: “Your understanding is turbid; it is not clear enough to grasp the vitality of life. Nobody asked you to start the war. It is you who started this, and I merely said nothing against it. If you want it, have it and be done with it. After having started it of your own accord, relying on the strength of your own army, listening to nobody else’s advice, what makes you now sing a different tune altogether, as if you are another person having nothing to do with the previous person that you were, who decided to wage the war?” The answer of Arjuna was: “I do not know what to do. Tell me what is my duty.” The answer is the Bhagavadgita which is supposed to be a gospel on duty.

What is the duty of man? I began by speaking of the four conflicts, which the Bhagavadgita endeavours to resolve. To solve the first conflict Arjuna thought that battle is the only way. But before the war took place outside, a war broke out inside him. There was a psychological war which fumed up like wildfire within the mind of the hero, even before the outer social war took place. Lord Krishna

asks: “Do you know why this happens? Do you know why any war takes place at all? Why conflicts should arise at all? The ultimate cause of all conflicts—do you know what this is, Arjuna?” Sri Krishna himself replies: “You do not know anything. You do not know that you have a higher conflict pushing you forward into a further external conflict. Behind the social conflict is the individual conflict. Behind the individual conflict, there is another conflict which is not apparent to the mind of any person!” But Krishna knew what it was.

It is the conflict between the individual and the world as a whole in the form of this vast creation. Man has estranged himself from Nature. This is the third conflict—the conflict between man and Nature. The world seems to be outside us, and we seem to be strangers in this world. We are not sure whether we are really wanted in this world. Sometimes it looks that we are not wanted at all, and yet we, somehow, reconcile ourselves with the hardships of this mysterious creation and pull on in life, “get on”, as we say. The world is not going to be reconciled if we are not going to obey its laws. Because of a conflict of our individuality with the universal Nature, we suffer various pains—hunger and thirst, heat and cold, and, finally, death. All these catastrophes of human life, and life in general, are the outcome of an isolation of the individual from the cosmic Nature. Nature does not die; it is the individual that dies. Nature has no hunger and thirst; it is the individual that has hunger and thirst. Nature does not feel cold, Nature does not want a blanket or a sweater; it is the individual that feels heat and cold. The bodily limitations, the vital limitations, the mental limitations and the intellectual

limitations are the outcome of this bifurcation of personality or individuality from cosmic Nature. If we are to be tuned to Nature, then we are to become an integral, vital, universal part of Nature. Then we will have no hunger and thirst, no heat and cold, no death. But why should this difficulty arise? No one wanted to isolate oneself from Nature. Nobody would purchase trouble deliberately. Then why has this happened? Who is responsible for this banishment of the individual from Universal Nature?

This third conflict is due to another conflict altogether, viz., the fourth conflict—the conflict between the Universe and the Absolute, between man and God. We are estranged from God Himself. That is why every other conflict has cropped up. Social conflict or political conflict is due to individual conflict. The individual conflict is due to the conflict of natural forces in respect of the individual. This, again, is due to a higher conflict between the Universal Soul and the individual soul, man and God waging a war with each other. Then it is that God has released this huge army called Nature, with all its terrific armament.

The war seen before you is nothing but the array of forces which God has unleashed to teach you a lesson. The whole world is up in arms against you, because you have set yourself against God. Can you expect to have peace and happiness here when you wage a battle with God Himself? But this is the secret that man does not know because of an original sin of man, the fall of man, the fall of the soul from its Divine Status of Universality. Unless you reconcile yourself with God, you are not going to reconcile yourself with Nature. Nature is nothing but the army of forces let

loose by God against you, as a reaction to your rebellion against Him.

When there is a war between two countries, you cannot speak to the soldiers, “My dear friends, please do not fight,” for they are not responsible for the battle. They are released by some other force behind them. You must tackle that force which is the cause of the release of these forces. Why do you talk to the soldiers, poor fellows? They know nothing except that they have been ordered, and they act. Thus, there is no use of speaking to the world: “My dear friend, wind, do not bite me; O water, do not drown me; O fire, do not burn me.” They will say: “We do not know; we are only ordered to act and we shall do according to the order. You speak to the Person, the Force who has ordered thus. Otherwise, we shall burn you down, cut you, blow you up, drown you and kill you.” So, there is no use trying to get rid of the troubles of life, because these are forces released by a higher Nature. Unless you reconcile yourself with God, you are not going to be friendly with Nature. And unless you reconcile yourself with the Nature, the cosmos as a whole, your internal conflicts are not going to cease. And until the internal conflicts are solved, the external wars are not going to end. The social peace which you are clamouring for, the national peace, the world peace, the Ramarajya as you call it—all these wonderful things that you are aspiring for in life—cannot be had on earth until you solve the causative conflict that is between you, Nature and God.

This is the essence of the themes described in the chapters of the Bhagavadgita. You are face to face with the Supreme Being in the eleventh chapter; and whatever I

have told you so far is the inner significance of the contents of the first eleven chapters. The chapters that follow from the eleventh onwards describe methods of practically applying this knowledge in specific contexts of life. Before doing anything, understand well. Think well logically, dispassionately, taking into consideration all aspects of the question that arises in your mind. Cast your glance around you, and recognise where you really stand in this world, what your difficulties are, and tap the difficulties in their roots. Then it is that you will be blessed, and mankind at large will reach supreme beatitude.

Social collaboration, individual self-control, universal interrelatedness, and Absolute Oneness—these are the standpoints from which the Bhagavadgita exhorts us at different levels of its teaching. The highest Reality is Aksharam Brahma (The Imperishable Absolute). It is the Supreme Person, or Adhiyajna, from the standpoint of creation. It is manifest as Adhibhuta (the external universe as the object) on the one side, and as Adhyatma (the individual experiencer as the subject) on the other side. The Divine Principle organising the relations between subjects and objects is Adhidaiva (superintending deity). The movement of the cosmic cycle, the inexorable impulse to action, the universal urge of creativity, is Karma-Visarga (the complex of activity determined by interconnected universal factors). No one can escape this duty of 'All-Life', and none can afford to be ignorant of this secret of existence. Here is the Bhagavadgita in a nutshell.

LORD DATTATREYA—MASTER PAR EXCELLENCE *

Lord Dattatreya is regarded as the visible incarnation of the Supreme Being himself in his aspects as Creator, Preserver and Destroyer, which we know as Brahma, Vishnu and Siva, respectively. The creative, the preservative and the disintegrating powers of God are supposed to be manifest in the personality of Lord Dattatreya. The name or word 'Dattatreya' is constituted of two terms, Datta and Atreya. In Sanskrit, Datta means one who is bestowed as a gift, and Atreya is an honorific which is derived from the name of a great sage called Atri. The son of Atri is Atreya. A descendent of Atri also is Atreya. One who is bestowed as a divine child on the great Sage Atri, by the Gods Brahma, Vishnu and Siva themselves, is Dattatreya. Tradition holds that he was the divine child of Sage Atri, born to his famous consort, Anasuya. He is also, therefore, known as Anasuyanandana, the darling of the great queen of chastity, Anasuya Devi. The name of Dattatreya, the great sage, is a by-word in all religious circles in India. In certain parts of Gujarat and in Maharashtra, the worship of Dattatreya is pre-eminent. It is believed by the followers of the tradition that Dattatreya is in flesh and blood even today. He is not merely a dead-and-gone saint and sage of ancient, pre-historic times. Devotees believe honestly that he is physically alive even

* Dattatreya Jayanti message given in the year 1973. Dattatreya Jayanti falls on the full moon day in the month of Margasirsha (November-December).

today and he is supposed to be having his abode in those holy places in the western part of India such as Gangapur in Maharashtra. There is a famous hill in Saurashtra, Mount Girnar, which is dedicated to the adoration and worship of Lord Dattatreya.

Lord Dattatreya is not merely a divine incarnation like Bhagavan Sri Krishna and Sri Rama, but, unlike them, He is held in high esteem as a visible personality, physically available to us for our Darshan, if only we would have the honesty of belief and devotion at his sacred feet. There are wonderful sidelights given to us of the personality Bhagavan Dattatreya.

One of the symbolic and very significant features of his life is depicted in certain painted portraits which many of you might have seen. In such portraits you will see Dattatreya with a bag hung on his shoulder, leaning, almost, against a cow behind him, with four dogs following him wherever he goes. Four dogs and a cow you will see always with Dattatreya in all portraits and paintings. What are these dogs? Why does he take the dogs with him, wherever he goes? What is this cow and what is this bag? The tradition is this: Dattatreya is perhaps the most powerful of conceivable sages, almost identical with God himself. For all practical purposes we may say that he has all the powers of God, viz., creation, preservation and destruction, being an embodiment of Brahma, Vishnu and Siva themselves. But, he lives as a fakir. The term 'fakir' means a beggar owning nothing, except a bag (a Jhola, as you call it), and a stick in his hand, which is sometimes identified with the trident. He goes for Bhiksha or alms, for he lives on alms. The master of all the forces of Nature at whose command

are the sun and the moon and the stars, goes begging for his Bhiksha! The spiritual reading of this Bhiksha or alms-begging by Lord Dattatreya is that he is asking us: "Give me all your sins." He does not beg for rice, wheat and Dal from us. He asks for the sins of our past lives and of our present life, and this is the Bhiksha that he wants. He will collect the sins of all people. How many sins have we committed in our earlier lives and up to this time in this life! He can swallow and digest all the sins of all the people. So he goes from door to door asking for alms. We can imagine the power of the man who asks for the sins of all people. He does not want our virtues and good conduct. We always ask for good things, merits, Punyam. But, he asks for our sins, Papam only, and not the merits or Punyam. He wants only all the evil propensities that are in us. He puts them in his Jhola or bag and walks off and digests the whole thing. These sages are terrible and their powers are inconceivable.

Incidentally, I will tell you a humorous story, to give you an idea of the power of sages. There was a time when the demons were a terror to people. There were two demon brothers. They were carnivorous. Their only profession was to eat human beings. They used to kill them, cook them and eat. But how to get human beings every day? You cannot get people to eat every day. So these demon brothers hatched out a plan. They pretended to be very humble devotees of Brahmins, and every day they invited a Brahmin for lunch. The younger brother was a pastmaster in black magic. He would allow himself to be cut into pieces and cooked. He had the power to regain his life afterwards. The elder brother would cut and cook his

younger brother and feed the invited Brahmin, who would not know what he had eaten. After the eating was over, the elder brother would call out his younger brother saying, “O Vatapi, please come.” Vatapi was the younger brother’s name. That man, through the power of his black magic, would regain life, burst the stomach of the Brahmin and come out. And the poor Brahmin would then be the meal for both. Every day this used to happen. Most of the Brahmins were finished, one by one. One day, it so happened, they had a very bad bargain. There was a very powerful sage by name Agastya Rishi. He was a Brahmin. He was invited for lunch. He was like Lord Dattatreya. He was not, therefore, an ordinary Brahmin as the two brothers took him to be. As usual, the younger brother was cooked and given to Agastya for his lunch. Agastya knew this. He thought: “These demons want to kill me and eat me! I will teach them a lesson today.” He ate the meal. As soon as he finished his meal, the elder brother said, “O Vatapi, please come.” Agastya, the sage, rubbed his belly, muttering, “*Vatapi jirno bhava*”: Let Vatapi be digested. Turning to the elder brother, the sage said, “Sir, your brother has been digested; he cannot come out and he will not come out.” Oh! The elder brother was shocked. He thought there was some special power with this Brahmin and he ran for his life. But Agastya would not let him escape. He simply uttered ‘Hum’ (a mystical sound) which reduced that elder brother to ashes. I am giving this instance to throw some sidelight on the power of spiritual masters.

Lord Dattatreya was the greatest among such sages. His power to protect was such that Mother Earth herself took the form of a cow and pleaded for succor. She said, “O

great sage, thou art the only refuge.” And she, in the form of a cow, is supposed to be under the protection of Lord Dattatreya. The four dogs which we see around him are the forms taken by the four Vedas—Rig Veda, Yajur Veda, Sama Veda and Atharva Veda. The Vedas knew the predicament that is going to come upon them in Kali Yuga; they knew that they would be disregarded, insulted and cast aside by people. They, therefore, took the form of dogs, and went to this Sage-Protector for protection from destruction. To Mother Earth and the four Vedas, who thus took shelter under him, Lord Dattatreya gave Abhayam; he bestowed fearlessness upon them. When we go to Lord Dattatreya for protection, not all the three worlds can shake a hair of our body. This is the spiritual meaning of this beautiful symbol that we see portrayed in the pictures of Lord Dattatreya with a cow and four dogs.

It is also given in a famous scripture of our land, the Srimad Bhagavata, that one day Lord Dattatreya was walking along a street like a mendicant, very happy in his mood and lustrous in his face. His joy was such that he seemed to be bursting with happiness. But he had nothing with him except a bag and a staff. The king of that land, known as Yadu, met him on the way. The king did not know that it was Sage Dattatreya. He took him to be a beggar and wondered within himself: “How is this person so happy, even though he has nothing with him! I am an emperor of this vast kingdom, but I have got so much grief on my head. What is this mystery? How it is that, being a king, I am so unhappy, and this beggar is so happy?” He went and humbly prostrated himself before Dattatreya and asked him, “Sir, may I know how is it that you seem to be

so happy? What is the source of your happiness, though you seem to be a beggar? Who are you? May I know your whereabouts and a little of your history?” Dattatreya did not say who he was. He merely said, “I am happy because of what I am, not because of what I have.”

Here is the secret of happiness. We are happy in proportion to what we are and not in proportion to what we have. While the king had many things, he was an empty shell inside; on the other hand, Dattatreya had nothing to possess and call his own, but he was everything himself.

The long conversation which Dattatreya and the King Yadu had is recorded in the eleventh book of the Srimad Bhagavata Mahapurana. Dattatreya, such a great master, humbly said, “I am a student of Nature.” He did not say that he is a Guru. Nowadays, nobody says he is a student; everybody says he is a Yoga-teacher! You never find a Yoga student anywhere, for all are Yoga teachers! But such a great master as Dattatreya says that he is a student of the forces of Nature.

If he is a student, who are his Gurus? Oh wonderful! You must read this particular chapter in the Srimad Bhagavata. You will find that he was a student of everything. He says, “I am a student of Mother Earth; I am a student of the waters of the ocean; I am a student of the air that blows; I am a student of the sun that shines; I am a student of the moon that is luminous in the sky; I am a student of the honey bees that collect the pollen-nectar from various flowers; I am a student of the fish; I am a student of the vulture.” The king was astonished and said, “O God! You are a student of all these things! What does it mean? How are you a student of all these? What lessons did you

learn from them?” Dattatreya then gives surprising answers to King Yadu, as follows:

“Earth is my Guru, because I learn the lesson of immense, unlimited and unsurpassed patience from the earth. You may spit on the earth, you may defecate or micturate, you may walk with shoes over her or you may kick her. Still, Mother Earth does not complain. How patient is this earth! All the dirt we throw on her face, but still Mother Earth does not complain. How stable she is! I have learnt patience and stability from earth. So earth is my Guru and I am her student.

“Now hear what I have learnt from the waters of the ocean. Whatever be the quantity of water that is poured into or removed from the ocean, neither does it increase nor decrease. The ocean maintains its dignity, fixity and content. Likewise whether people praise me or censure me, whether they talk for me or against me, whatever it be, it makes no difference to me. And, further, I maintain purity of character like the water which is a symbol of purity.

“Fire also is my Guru. Fire burns anything that you may offer. If you offer ghee, it burns; if you offer milk, that also it burns; if you offer dirt, that too it burns. When it burns anything, that burnt stuff becomes pure. Dung becomes pure when it is burnt by fire. It may be a pure or an impure thing that is offered, it makes no difference to the fire; it turns that thing pure. Likewise, whatever enters me through the sense organs is converted by me into the residue which remains after it is burnt by the fire of knowledge.

“I will tell you what I have learnt from air. I roam about wherever I like, like air. Freedom is my nature. Air cannot be controlled by anybody. You cannot tell the air to stop here or to stop there. Further, purity is the character of air. Wherever air blows, it purifies everything there. Pavana is a Sanskrit word which means ‘one who purifies’. Pavana is also the term used for air. All infection in the atmosphere is removed by the movement of air. Stuffiness, insanitation and impurity of every kind are removed and the whole atmosphere is turned pure by the movement of air. Similarly, wherever I go I spread the atmosphere of purity, goodness, compassion and mercy, and I am free like air in motion and I do not stick to a particular place. I am not bound by the atmosphere around me.

“I will now tell you what I have learnt from space, which is one of my Gurus. Vast is my kingdom like space. Everything is mine and everything is not mine also. Everything is contained in space and yet space cannot be contained by anybody. I do not depend on anything, even as space does not depend on anything. Everything depends upon space for its existence.

“I learnt a lesson from the honey bee. The bee moves from place to place and from flower to flower, collects sweet pollen from flowers and mixes them into a jelly, then blends all these beautiful essences into what is called honey. Likewise I go from place to place, meet different persons and things, get what is good in them, collect the knowledge that is in them and blend all of them into the wisdom of my life.

“A bird also is my Guru. Do you know how that bird is my Guru? It so happened that I saw a bird carrying a piece

of flesh in its beak. It was flying, high up in the sky, and a vulture pursued it. Why did the vulture pursue this small bird? Because there was some eatable in its mouth. Oh, the bird went here and there in search of some place of safety, but the vulture pursued the bird wherever it went. At last the bird dropped the piece of meat, and went away free, because the vulture left pursuing it. The vulture was interested only in the flesh. This bird taught me the lesson that possession is the cause of bondage and suffering. So I do not possess anything. If you possess anything, you are always pursued by someone. I have nothing with me and I go free.

“I learnt a lesson from a poor girl, in a village. Please hear what lesson I learnt from that girl. That girl belonged to a very poor family. They had barely something to eat for a single meal a day. She was to be betrothed to some gentleman. That gentleman, with his father and mother, came to the house of this poor girl to see her. They wanted to know how she looked and what she was like, and all that. People do not settle a marriage without properly investigating into the background of the girl. So they were talking to the girl’s parents. And the hospitality of the country is such that whenever guests come they have to be fed first. And there was nothing to feed them with, except a little unhusked paddy grain which had to be husked for obtaining rice. They were too poor to have any servant in the house. So, she herself started pounding the paddy inside the house, for the sake of getting rice which had to be cooked for feeding the guests. You know, these ladies wear bangles. This girl also was wearing a number of bangles on both the wrists, of course all cheap glass bangles. So when

she started pounding the paddy with a pestle, the bangles started making sound—kanu, kunu. She thought: “Now what will the guests think? They will think that since I am myself doing the work, our family must be very poor and therefore I am not a suitable match for them. Oh, these bangles are causing the trouble! I will remove them.” So she removed all the bangles, leaving only two bangles on each wrist. And still they made a sound—tung, tung, tung. Then she removed one more and kept only one. Then there was no sound. So, I have learnt from this girl that I must be alone. Even two persons are not good. There is a saying: “*Ek niranjan; do ghad-bad; theen lath-path*”: If one person is there, he is happy; if two are there, there is quarrel; and three means fighting. And in the Narada Parivrajaka Upanishad also it is said, “*Ekah sadhu suprayuktah, dvitiyam gramamuchyate, tritiyam nagaram smritam.*” This means that one person is good, two persons make a village and three make a city. I have learnt this lesson from that poor girl, who is therefore one of my Gurus.”

Likewise, Dattatreya gives a list of twenty-four Gurus, regarding himself as a humble student of the whole of creation. He also teaches us the lesson that the higher is one’s knowledge, the humbler is that person. The larger is our wisdom, the smaller we look in the eyes of people. The nearer we are to God, the farther we appear from people’s eyes. So Lord Dattatreya is here before us as a spiritual magnet and a magnificent embodiment of divine power—the powers even of creation, preservation and destruction. This three-faced God, Lord Dattatreya, is regarded as an embodiment of Brahma, Vishnu and Siva. He is regarded as the Guru of Gurus and he is specially

worshipped on Brihaspativara or Guruvara, which is the sacred Thursday. Thursday is supposed to be the Guru's day and we worship the great Guru Lord Dattatreya on every Thursday. May we all become fit instruments for the reception of the unbounded grace of Lord Dattatreya by following his example.

CHRIST-CONSCIOUSNESS *

“Empty thyself and I shall fill thee.” This is a wondrous single sentence message of Jesus the Christ. The Spirit is not a quantity, and it is opposed to all quantitative measurements and conceptions. “Blessed are the poor in spirit,” is another suggestive statement of the Christ. We cannot understand what is meant to be poor. For us, to be poor is not to have money, grains and gold, not to have a field, a house and friends, and not to be recognised in society. That would be poverty, economically. We cannot think of poverty except in an economic, material and social sense. Likewise, the idea of emptying oneself—as far as our minds can understand—is a physical displacement of content, which is far from the idea of the Spirit which is implied in the above single-sentence message. The Christ-consciousness, and not the personality of Christ, is what is to be taken into account here in our understanding of this statement. There is a difference between Christ and Christ-consciousness. This fact was repeatedly emphasised by the Christ himself in many of his declarations as recorded in the New Testament. He never regarded himself as a person, nor did he ever indicate that it was a person who was speaking when he spoke. He always referred to “Him that sent me”. He was very much fond of referring to “Him that sent me”. He said, “I am here to proclaim the Law of Him who sent me here. It is not my law that I am

* Message given on Christmas Eve, the 24th of December, 1973.

demonstrating or proclaiming to the world.” The Spirit that spoke through him was not a creature of time.

There is a very humorous and most significant statement of his. “Before Abraham was, I am.” What does it mean? “Before Abraham was, I am” is a contradiction, grammatically. It conveys no sense. It is a blunder of grammar to say “I am before Abraham was”. But that is the real Christ that spoke. And it is from the standpoint of that reality of Christ that the ‘present’ was precedent even to the ‘past’. The present precedes the past. How could it be? And that is what is implied in saying, “Before Abraham was, I am.” The Spirit is a *present* and not an event or a content or a creature in the passage of time which is usually dissected into the past, present and future. The Spirit has no past, no present and no future. And this is the Christ-consciousness.

From the above point of view, what would it mean to empty oneself and what would it mean to be filled by It? This is the great philosophy of the Spirit. We are heading towards real Yoga when we speak about these things. Christ was a great Yogin, a Master Yogin, one of the greatest Yogins the world has produced, a Yogin in the true sense of the term. He was perpetually in unison with the Spirit, drew sustenance from the Spirit and operated upon the Law of the Spirit in the world or the realm of matter. Mathematics was not his way of thinking. Otherwise how could a single loaf become a basketful, overflowing, flooding and capable of feeding thousands and yet remaining full after the feeding was over. It was not arithmetic that worked there, because one cannot become many and many are not the same as the one. Our consciousness has grown upon it several accretions or

layers of material concrescence. The philosophical way of thinking is slightly different from the ordinary way of thinking of the man in the street.

I do not mean that we should be philosophers. But we should know the techniques of philosophical thinking, i.e., the art of thinking in a peculiar manner which differs entirely from the give-and-take, economic or commercial attitude of thinking which man usually entertains in his mind. All our thinking is commercial. We cannot think in any other way. But the Spirit is non-commercial, because it is non-material. Anything that we speak of in regard to the Spirit has to be metempirical, and we have to shed the prejudice of earthly ways of thinking even before we take the first step in the practice of the way of the Spirit. All prejudices have to be shed. This is one of the conditions of emptying ourselves. It does not mean that we have to vomit what we have eaten. We have to vomit the prejudices of the mind. Hard it is to overcome a prejudice. And prejudice has grown like a fungus or a mushroom on our very consciousness itself. We take for granted many things. Unproved hypotheses are taken for granted; and they become the byword of the street, of the home, of society, of administration and of even international understanding. Everything is based on certain prejudices. But the Spirit does not care for either the nation or the international setup. It is something superior in its value and content. To be spiritual is hard even to think and conceive; more difficult it is to practise the way of the Spirit. Personal and logical attempts and the so-called scientific attitudes do not help us here. Science itself has become a dogma, though it parades its knowledge of non-dogmatism. Logic is based again on a

dogma, of certain presupposed values which themselves cannot be proved by logic itself. There is no such thing as non-dogmatic thinking as far as the ordinary man is concerned. Everything is a dogma. You take for granted that the world is. Who told you that the world is? It is something taken for granted. It is a hypothesis. You cannot prove it by logic, except by saying that you see it. And that you see it, is not a great proof, for you can see even a phantasmagoria if your head is reeling. That the world is, that the body is a content thereof, and that the world is ruled by the quantitative measurements of arithmetic and commercial laws, are hypotheses on which we base our arguments, even in law courts.

But the Christ didn't come to rule the world of Caesar. As he put it, "Give unto Caesar what is Caesar's and unto God what is God's." Don't mix up the two elements. The Christ has nothing to do with what is Caesar's, which is a quantitative measurement like that of silver and gold, of give and take, of commerce and trade, of the quantitative mathematics of the feeble mind caught up in the network of space and time. The Christ-consciousness stands far above this common way of give-and-take thinking. It is from this superior and sublime point of view that we have to understand what it is to empty oneself and to be filled by the Spirit. When He says, "Empty thyself and I shall fill thee," it is not that the Christ as Jesus, the personality, is going to sit on your head. He cannot fill you, as a person. How can one person fill another person? It is unthinkable and meaningless. It was the consciousness that was meant as being capable of filling the emptied vessel of human personality. How can Spirit fill you? The Spirit is not a

content, because the very idea of a content is again quantitative, and the Spirit is not a quantitative measure. It is not like water or any other liquid that can fill a vessel. It has no weight. It has no length and breadth. It is not here or there. It is the quintessential value that is immanently present as the very constitutive stuff, the very fibre, pith and being of anything that can be or anything that ever is. The Spirit cannot be thought of, because the Spirit is the very pre-supposition of thought. Even before you start thinking, the Spirit is there behind it impelling your thought. So there is no such thing as thinking the Spirit, and, therefore, there is no such thing also as measuring the Spirit with the yardstick of human thought. How can the Spirit fill you, unless you have the capacity to receive It or contain It! Where is the container for the Spirit!

This wonderful gospel, "Empty thyself and I shall fill thee", is complemented by another equally wonder-statement of his, "The kingdom of heaven is within you." How can the kingdom of heaven be within you? You are such a small frail personality, a little body, occupying one or two feet of width of the earth. How can the kingdom of heaven be contained inside you? All his statements seem to be marvellously conspicuous and significant of something that the human mind has not been habituated to think or understand. Have you ever seen a kingdom being contained within the personality of a human being? Yet, it is said by the Christ. It is something like saying that the ocean is in a drop, which is unthinkable. All these statements of the Christ appear to be inscrutable because we cannot understand what the Spirit is from the point of view of

which he spoke always. The very standpoint was quite different.

You know that today people say we have a kind of arithmetic where two and two need not necessarily make four as in the Euclidean way of thinking in geometry and arithmetic. Plane geometry is different from spherical geometry, for example. Ordinary geometry of the triangle is different from trigonometry. The values, the measuring and the calculating rules of geometry on a surface do not apply to geometry in a sphere. It is on account of this that they say that under certain given conditions of the physical bodies of the cosmos, the three angles of a triangle need not necessarily make two right angles, though usually this is the rule, according to Euclid. The three angles of a triangle always make two right angles; but this is not true always. There are conditions of existence even in the physical world, in the macro-cosmos for example, or in the micro-cosmos, the subatomic layer as they call it, where this geometry does not hold good. Two and two need not make four. It can be less or it can be more. You think the man has gone crazy because he blabbers something which makes no sense. But, these people say that it is not they who are crazy, but those who hold on to the prejudice that two and two make four only and not more or not less. The world is wider than we can think of. If even humanly conceivable arithmetic and mathematics can elude the grasp of ordinary understanding, as pointed out by these discoveries of modern day, what to talk of the Spirit! The Spirit is non-mathematical and non-measurable, because of its being non-material. And our minds are used to thinking only in terms of measurements and calculations. Therefore,

a kingdom cannot be conceived to be contained within a person. The Kingdom of heaven cannot be contained by you. A vast realm or a huge empire cannot be inside the personality of a human being. Yet, this is possible, under certain other given conditions. The part can contain the whole. Is it possible? Have you ever seen a part containing the whole? You have heard of the whole including the part. How can a part include the whole? It is impossible, because the whole is superior to the part quantitatively, again. We again think only in terms of quantity. Because many parts make the whole, the whole cannot be any one part. This is our quantitative way of thinking. But the whole need not necessarily be a quantitative totality. There are wholes which are not necessarily totals of the parts in a material sense.

I shall give you one small example of this kind of peculiar totality, which is not merely the sum of the parts of which it is constituted. The wholeness of the personality of your own body is an example. You have a sense of wholeness of your being. You have ten fingers, ten toes, two eyes and several other limbs of the body. And you have a sense of togetherness and wholeness, compactness and totality in your being. You never think that you are made up of members. You do not go on thinking: "I have ten fingers, ten toes, two eyes." Who thinks like that? You never think of the limbs of your body and never for a moment calculate in terms of the discrete parts of which your body is formed. But you always imagine yourself to be a total—"I", "I am here", "I have come", "look at me". When you talk of 'I' or 'my' or 'me', you do not refer to any limb of the body, nor do you also refer to a totality of the limbs of your body.

You refer to another significant wholeness that is present in each and every part of the body, which gives you the confidence of your being a single *indivisible* something. This indivisibility that you are, which is not a mathematical or a physical totality of the limbs of your body, is wholly present in each one of the parts. This is a very difficult idea to imagine. Every part of your body is a wholeness as far as it is concerned.

On account of this mystery of living organisms, the great philosophical thinker called General Smutts evolved a philosophy called 'Wholism' which means that everything in the world is a whole. According to him, every cell of the body is a whole and every atom is a whole, by itself. It has a completeness of structure. There is no part in this world; everything is a whole. Every protoplasmic cell in the leaf of a tree is a whole by itself struggling to maintain its individuality and harmony with other cells of the leaf of the tree. Every cell of our body—the living organism of which we are constituted—is a whole by itself, and it struggles to live by itself, and wants to maintain and sustain itself, because it is a whole by itself. The wholeness that is significantly present in an organic completeness of structure is different from the totality of the rupee coins or dollar coins or stone heaps, brick heaps, etc. That totality which we are thinking in our minds is different from the totality that we have to conceive spiritually, or at least non-materially. It is from this standpoint that the kingdom of heaven can be within you. Just as the wholeness of your personality is immanent or present in each cell of your body, the entire kingdom of heaven is within you. The Kingdom of heaven is not a country. It is not a physical

empire. It is a significance, a meaning, a connotation and a value. We call it the Spirit, and the Spirit can be contained everywhere. It does not require space to exist. Therefore, it can be wholly present even in the smallest of atoms. Thus, is the kingdom of heaven within you.

All this is not philosophically expounded in the Bible. Great spiritual masters—the Christ, Krishna or the Buddha—do not go on commenting on their statements. They make suggestive statements which have to be expounded by lesser minds later on, for the sake of understanding by ordinary minds.

So, from this point of view of the capacity of the Spirit to be contained even within a cell of the body, what would it be to empty oneself and to be filled by It. The accretions, as I have already mentioned, that have grown upon consciousness have to be gradually shed and wiped out. They have to be scrubbed off. The objective accumulations over the Spirit have to be cast asunder in order that the Spirit may blossom forth in its full sublimity and loftiness of stature. To empty oneself, therefore, cannot mean anything else. It means to stand by the Spirit and not to swear by any material value.

If you give something, you will lose that thing. This is our mathematics. The more you give, the more you lose. It is very clear. But, “Give and it shall be given,” says the Christ. How can it be possible? Have you ever seen somebody giving you merely because you give? He takes away everything you give and goes away. But, what the Christ says is that you will not merely be given back what you give, but overflowing, pressed and shaken will it be given back to you. If you give one, you will get back

hundreds, thousands and millions, says the Christ. This, again, is a non-mathematical calculation. How can you get hundreds and thousands, if you give only one? "Give and it shall be given," is what the Christ says. And He adds one adjective to it which is stunning, astonishing, awe-inspiring. It shall be given back to you, not merely in the measure that you have given, but overflowing and pressed. In a measure, the contents are pressed so that it may contain more and more, and then when it is overflowing abundantly, in that abundant form will it be given back to you. So, do not be afraid that you will lose by giving. Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj was a standing monumental example of this spiritual philosophy of giving. I have never seen a person like that, nor do I hope to see another, perhaps. We believe that by giving we lose. But, the Spirit says that by giving we gain. So, everywhere you find that the law of the Spirit is different from the law of matter. The law of the Christ is different from the law of Caesar. The law of God is different from the law of man. This is wonderful!

Now, to empty oneself, therefore, would be the tendency to stand by the Spirit, and this tendency to stand by the Spirit is to recognise the character of the Spirit in the world of matter. We have lost consciousness of the Spirit itself. We are conscious only of matter. To be aware of the Spirit is to be aware of its characteristics simultaneously. You cannot think of fire without thinking of light and heat. The idea of fire is automatically associated with the idea of heat and light. Likewise, the idea of the Spirit is automatically associated with omnipresence and a capacity to permeate and penetrate through everything.

To include and transcend all things is another characteristic of the Spirit. What does it mean by the phrase 'to include and transcend'? This again can be explained by an analogy. All this cannot be explained logically. The consciousness of your waking state includes and transcends all the contents of your dream. In dream, you saw wealth, you became a big officer, you drew a large salary, you had a sumptuous meal or you were an emperor. But when you wake up, you have lost everything! Have you really lost anything? The very consciousness of having woken up is transcendent to the consciousness of all the wealth and other things that you appeared to possess in dream. Would you rather be a king in dream, or an ordinary man in waking? You would like to be an ordinary person in the waking state rather than be a king in dream, because the value of the king in dream is inferior to the value of the ordinary man in waking. It is the difference in the consciousness that matters and not the beggarhood or the kingdom. The difference lies in the state of consciousness, and not in what one is conscious of. Even as the contents of dream are subsumed, included and transcended in the waking consciousness, all the values of the world are included and transcended in the consciousness of the Spirit Supreme. We are not going to lose the world when we gain the Spirit. Many people are afraid of going to the Spirit or God, because they think that they may lose the world. There are many who think: "What about our friends? What will happen to them, if I go to God? Oh, my dear children are all here suffering; I do not want to go to God." This is foolish way of thinking because this is, again, a material way of thinking, mathematically construed and

commercially understood. We are still businessmen. We cannot go beyond this idea.

My dear friends, when you go to God, your friends will be seen there. Why are you crying about the friends? You will see them in a better way, with a better eye, than you are able to see now. And if you are intending to help them, well, you will be able to help them in a better way than now. Your strength will be much more and your capacity to help will get enhanced. All that is in the world is included in that realm of God, and nothing is excluded. We are not going *from* the world *to* God. Again, we have an idea of quantitative running. Look at this prejudice! We are not moving from the world to God, as if going from one planet to another in a rocket. It is not a spatial movement. It is a transfiguration of consciousness, like that which happens on waking up from dream. When you wake up from dream, do you lose anything? Have you lost your dream friends, kingdom and the wealth? You are only happy that the devil has gone. "What a nightmare I had in dream! It has gone and I am happy now." This is your feeling when you wake up. Do you say, "Oh, my kingdom has gone. I was a king. I have lost everything"? Do you go on beating your breast? Similarly, nothing untoward will happen to you when you reach God. The Spirit includes all things that are valuable in the material world.

It is because of this fact that the Christ was not understood by the people. How can matter understand the Spirit! And so He was crucified. We are crucifying God every day in our life, in some form or the other. We are killing Him by our affirmation of the ego, the assertion of material values and an adamant adherence to this

quantitative way of thinking that ‘by giving we lose’, ‘by going to God we have to lose the world,’ and so on and so forth. All these are false assumptions, contrary to Truth.

So, once again I say that to empty oneself is to empty oneself of the materialised accretions that have apparently grown over the universality of the Spirit. And then, you are filled with a flood of the oceanic abundance of God-consciousness. When you rise to the level of God, you are filled with an ocean, as it were, inundating you from all sides with a nectarine taste, beauty, grandeur and magnificence. When God comes, He does not come like a man coming from one direction. He comes from all directions, because He is everywhere. He does not come only from the East or the West. He is not a human being. He is the universal Spirit that enters your personality. Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa used to say that God entering man is like a mad elephant entering a thatched hut. Another mystic said that it is like an ocean entering a drop or flooding the rivers. All these are only images to give an idea as to what the supreme magnificence of Spirit is. They all think alike, because they stand on the same pedestal of realisation. The more we succeed in thinking along these lines, the more are we spiritual, the more are we Yogins. Yoga is not becoming something in the social sense. It is not also doing something with your hands and feet. It is a transformation of your inner stuff of thinking and feeling, willing and understanding, in a completeness that surpasses your present physical personality. That is where the Christ is born. We say that Christ and Krishna were born at midnight. They are never born when the sun is bright, which means to say, when it is daylight to the senses. “*Ya*

nisa sarvabhutanam tasyam jagarti samyami, yasyam jagrati bhutani sa nisa pasyato muneh,” says the Bhagavadgita. What you see, the sages do not see; and what the sages see, you cannot see. What is day to you, is night to them; and what is day to them, is night to you. For you, God-consciousness is like darkness, a night of ignorance, and God does not exist at all. Therefore many people go to the extent of even denying God—they cannot see Him—whereas the sages see only God and nothing else. They do not see the world as the world. A person who has been cured of his cataract in the eyes does not see two moons. He does not say, “There were two moons and now one moon is lost.” There were no two moons, and there was only one moon. This is the truth. Likewise when the spiritual medicine is administered to the sick soul of the human being, it assumes the spiritual health which enables one to think in a new reoriented manner altogether, and man becomes a superman. A man who thinks in this way is a superman. He is not an ordinary man. He cannot be called a man at all. A superman is a temple enshrining the superhuman Spirit. When God thinks through man, we call him a superman. Such was Christ, Buddha and Krishna. But all the great wonderful masters of mankind were thoroughly misunderstood; their teachings were never understood, but misrepresented, misapplied and abused to the doom of man, towards which we seem to be heading today, unfortunately.

But God is great, and everything shall be well in the realm of God whose Omniscient eyes see everything. The recognition of the Spirit is, therefore, the recognition of God’s omnipresent existence. And to be filled with God is the same as to be filled with the Spirit. For that, we have to

empty ourselves of all the externalised prejudice of objective thinking. We should not hang on objects for our sustenance. Man does not live on bread alone, which means to say you do not live merely by the quantitative stuff of the world. You have something in you which is more than quantitative, which is superior to even the entire quantity of the cosmos. The Spirit is larger than the universe itself. The universe is after all a quantity. And Spirit is larger than that. “*Atyatishtad-dasan-gulam*”: The Spirit is above the universe, says the Purusha Sukta.

With this background of spiritual refreshment of our thoughts we have to contemplate daily the mystery of creation, the majesty of God, the greatness of spiritual life, the stupendousness of Yoga and the glorious consummation that is ahead of us which is supreme Liberation, Christ-consciousness or God-realisation.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF EKADASI *

Ekadasi is a Sanskrit word, which means ‘the eleventh’. It refers to the eleventh day of a fortnight in a lunar month. There are two fortnights in a lunar month—the bright and the dark. So, Ekadasi occurs twice in a month, in the bright fortnight and the dark fortnight. The special feature of Ekadasi, as most people know it, is a fast—abstinence from diet. This is how it is usually understood. “We do not eat on Ekadasi,” is what people understand. In this country (India) it has become a routine to be abstemious, if not observe a complete fast on this day. The significance of this particular observance is not merely constituted of a fast, physically, though it is also an essential element; it has other deeper aspects. In fact, the fast is only a practical expression and a symbol of something else that we are expected to do, which is of special significance to our personality.

Those who know astronomy as something which tells about the interrelation of the planetary system, the stellar world, would be aware that we form a part of this planetary or solar system. By a ‘system’ we mean an organism or organisation which is methodically arranged. When we know that we belong to the system of planetary motions, we understand thereby that we are an inseparable part of the system. We are not unrelated bodies on the surface of the earth, like a cart on the road which has no organic link. We belong to the solar system—a huge family of which the sun

* A talk given on the 17th of January, 1970, on the request of devotees.

is the head and the planets are the members. The sun guides the activities of this family and we, being contents of this system, cannot be out of the influence of the sun. We are involved in the laws operating in this system. This has led to the discovery of astrology. Astronomy studies the movements of planets and stars, and astrology the effects they produce on the contents of the system. The Ekadasi observance is an astrological phenomenon and it is observed due to this relation we have with some of the planets in the system. The entire personality of ours is tremendously influenced by the movement of planets. There is no use imagining that the planets are above our heads. They are everywhere. There is a relative movement of planets, among which the earth is one. The movement of one thing in relation to another is a relative movement. There is no planet which is static. Even the sun is not ultimately static. The whole solar system is moving and rushing towards some huge star which is eighty million times larger and brighter than the sun and whose light has not yet reached us, as astronomers tell us. We have to understand that there is relative motion amongst planets and we are relatively influenced by the planets. Each planet tells upon our system and we cannot get rid of their influence as long as we are on this planet, of which we are a part. The gravitational pull of planets has an influence on us.

The sun is said to influence the centre of our personality; hence the sun is called Atmakaraka. He is the soul-influencer of the human body. In the Rig-Veda, the sun is identified with the soul of the universe as well as the soul of the individual. The different limbs of our body and different parts of our system are supposed to be influenced

by different planets. The sun is capable of influencing the entire being. He is, thus, the Atmakaraka. Karaka is doer, manipulator, director. If there is no sun, we know what difference it makes for us; our digestion becomes sluggish on days when there is no sun. So important is the sun.

The moon is supposed to influence the mind. The mind is also made up of material substance. The mind is not spiritual, but material. How is mind matter? This can be known if we know how, in Homeopathy, the medicine is manufactured. In Allopathy, they give the crude base of a medicine, which Homeopathy calls mother tincture. In Homeopathy, one drop of mother tincture is mixed with a hundred drops of rectified spirit and shaken with a tremendous force. That mixture is one potency of medicine. One drop of that is mixed in hundred drops of spirit again. It becomes two potency medicine. Likewise, they have larger potencies. You can imagine what happens to the medicine when it reaches the higher potency. There is no medicine at all. So, Homeopathy says that they give no medicine, but a vibration—a vibration of the original base material. It is a subtle aromatic vibration, aromatic in the sense of the subtle residuum of the original medicine; and what will create a circumstance in Allopathy will remove that very circumstance in Homeopathy. Nevertheless this potency is material in the sense that it is formed of matter. So is the mind. It is the subtle portion of the material substance of our food. The subtle essence of the food, not only directly taken through the mouth but through all senses, contributes to the make-up of the mind or the mind-stuff. Mind is material in a subtle sense, like a mirror which is made of earth material only, though it shines. Only

the mirror is able to reflect light, and not the brick, though it is also made of the earth material. Mind is material in this sense. It is very, very subtle and is made up of everything that we take. So, matter influences matter. Planets are not spiritual bodies, and yet they influence the mind. The mind's presiding deity is the moon. Ekadasi is particularly relevant to this relation of moon and mind. You will find that, when you go deep into the study of astronomy, you have nothing in your body except some planetary influences! We are made up of planetary forces and there is nothing independent to call our own. One part belongs to one planet and another part to another planet. If each planet claims its part, you will disintegrate. The moon influences the mind in its orbital relative movement with reference to other planets and us.

How is Ekadasi related to the movement of moon and mind? We have certain centres, called Chakras, in the body. The Chakras are nothing but energy-centres which whirl in some direction, as water whirls in a river. Chakra is a wheel or circular motion. They form in a spiral shape. They are not physical, but are psychophysical and psychological. These Chakras are neither in the mind nor in the body; they are in the astral body. The moon's influence physically on the body has an influence on the Chakras, which tells upon the mind ultimately. The mind moves through these Chakras. The passage of the mind is through these Chakras, up and down. When this operation takes place consciously, it is called Yoga. When done unconsciously by the mind, it is just influence. When the moon waxes or wanes, the mind is vehemently influenced. So people who are not normal in their minds become very disturbed on the full moon and

new moon days. You cannot see the moon's influence on the earth because it is solid, but it can be seen on the ocean which is liquid. The moon influences the whole earth, and its influence is visible on the large body of waters in the sea. This happens due to the twofold pressure of the relation of the earth and moon. The sun influences the moon and the moon influences the earth. When the influence occurs automatically, we are instruments in the hands of Nature. When it is done consciously, we are said to practise Yoga. We can be involuntarily dragged from place to place, or we can walk voluntarily. The difference is obvious. The moon's movement tells upon the movement of the mind through the Chakras.

Another important aspect is the seat of the mind, which is also twofold. You may be living in many houses, of which one or two are your own. Svasthana means 'one's own place'. The mind has several abodes or centres of energy called Chakras, of which two are its own. The seats of the mind in this personality of ours are: 1. the subtle spot in the astral body corresponding to the centre of the two eyebrows, in waking, and 2. the heart, in the state of deep sleep. If it is in the brain, it is active and you, then, do not get sleep, because it refuses to go down. If the mind is midway between the centre of the eyebrows and the heart, it is the dream state. So, there is a twofold centre of the mind—the Ajna Chakra, or the centre between the eyebrows, and the Anahata Chakra, or the heart. In both these centres, the mind feels at home and is at ease, because it is *nearer to itself*. In other centres it is extrovert. In the Ajna and the Anahata Chakras it finds itself at home. In the two fortnights, in its movement, it finds itself at the Ajna

Chakra and the Anahata Chakra on the eleventh day. Since these two Chakras are its own abode, the mind is at home here, i.e., it gets concentrated and collected easily. This has been the experience given out by our ancients, and this has to be taken advantage of by Sadhakas. You are capable of concentration when the mind is naturally in its home. The mind cannot be concentrated when it is out of tune, but when it is in its location it is easy of contemplation. So, the Ekadasi day in both fortnights is the occasion when the mind finds itself in its place—in the bright fortnight in the Ajna Chakra, and in dark fortnight in the Anahata Chakra. Seekers and Yogis take advantage of these two days and try to practise deep meditation. Vaishnavas treat Ekadasi as a very holy day and also observe a fast on that day.

Fast and meditation! What connection have they? There is really no intrinsic connection between fast and meditation, but there is some advantage in keeping the body light and the stomach free from excessive metabolic function. When the stomach is given the duty of digestion, doctors will tell you that blood circulation is accelerated towards the digestive organs, on account of which blood circulation to the head gets decreased after food is taken and so you feel sleepy and the thinking faculty practically ceases to function. Hence, there is no advantage in giving the physical system work on days you want to do Yogic practice. Thus, Ekadasi has also a spiritual significance.

The energy of the whole system gets distributed equally if a particular limb is not given any inordinate work. If any part is given heavy work, there is a dislocation of the working of the body. So, in fasting the energy is equally distributed as the digestive function is not there.

But, there should be no overdoing in fast. Fast is supposed to cause buoyancy of feeling, and not fatigue. So people who are sick and cannot observe a total fast take milk and fruits, etc. People who are perfectly healthy and are confident, observe a complete fast. This helps in control of mind and will.

Apart from all these, there is a necessity to give the physiological system some rest once in a while. It may be overworked due to a little overeating or indiscrimination in diet. These irregularities unconsciously done during the fourteen days get rectified in one day. Thus the observance of Ekadasi has many advantages, physical, astral and spiritual, and because this day has connection with the relation of the mind with its abode together with the moon, you feel mysteriously helped in your meditation and contemplation—mysteriously because you cannot know this consciously. But you can feel this for yourself by observing it. In India everything is interpreted spiritually. Every river is a deity. Every mountain is a god. Everything is holy, dedicated to the Divine. Everything is presided over by a particular god—Gramadevata, Grihadevata, etc. Everywhere is God. The idea behind all this is that we have to feel the presence of God in everything and everywhere. In space and in time, in everything, there is God. Time is God. Directions are God. Thus the very objects become embodiments of God. This is India's religious sidelight, which is profoundly meaningful in life.

APPENDIX

THE AWAKENING MESSAGE *

It would not be easy for many of you to envisage the purpose of a Divine Life Conference. At the outset I may take the liberty of pointing out that this is not a religious conference, in the sense religion is interpreted and understood by the popular mind. It is not the intention of this conference to tell you something stereotyped or to give you a diversion from the boredom of your daily life. With the benign blessings of most worshipful Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj and the grace of the Almighty, this conference has been inaugurated and conceived to point out to the human mind in general a way of extricating itself from the meshes in which it seems to be involved. Man has to become man in order that he may accelerate his progress to a state which is superhuman.

Mankind today may be said to be in a state of complacency, in a kind of slumber, which is mistaken for a consciousness of progress and cultural advancement. Nothing can be worse for man than to mistake the false for the true, and vice versa. Ignorance is bliss, is an old adage with which we are familiar. We have to be cautious to see if we are in this condition. Are we in a fool's paradise imagining that we are well off, not knowing what will happen to us in the future? The greatest threat to the enlightenment of the mind of mankind, I may point out, is

* The inaugural message given at the 24th All India Divine Life Conference held at the Convention Hall of the Ashoka Hotel, New Delhi, on 29th of December, 1973.

what may be designated as the material glamour. The world is before us as a thick screen through which it may be difficult to penetrate into the truth that is behind it. Today, our world prides itself over its achievements which it calls science. And, on a careful scrutiny and an investigation into the true situation and affairs in which we are, we would discover that the very forte of science shall be its own refutation. It requires a little thought to realise that the structure of science on which the material values of life are based is really fixed on a shaky foundation. It requires courage of an uncanny nature and a novel type of boldness to plumb the depths of this false system of values that is presented before us as the majesty of matter, the glory of earthly paradise.

Today the eyes of science are themselves slowly getting opened up to the truth of the matter. It is becoming self-conscious. Generally, we are conscious of others, but we are rarely conscious of our own selves. In the consciousness of the world of objects, of persons and things, and human relations and what not, we first forget ourselves. We cut the ground from under our own feet and then go headlong into that arena where even the angels fear to tread, as they say. We are really in a pitiable situation. We are not so secure as we might be made to imagine. The future is not in our hands because we are rid of the knowledge of the future. We are dispossessed of that real worth of man's existence and seem to be possessed of straw and dust and the husk that we call the material values of life. May I put a question—what do you mean by matter, over which you pride yourself so much and whose knowledge has given you a sense of confidence and a sense

of security, though it is baseless and foundationless? How do you know what matter is made of and what the true values of life are? The very force behind the argument of the materialist is the reality of matter, the stability of the world as it is perceived by the senses, the realism of sensory perception. But, is this true? Can we take for granted the presentation of the world in terms of the senses? The very notion of the existence of material values, the material stuff or substance with which the world seems to be made—this very concept should be subjected to further analysis and investigation. It cannot be taken for granted on its surface value. The notion of the existence of the material substances and material values of life is conditioned by higher values of which we have at present no knowledge adequately. Who knows the existence of matter? Matter is unconscious. A great thinker of the modern times, who is known as a top scientist, has himself come to the conclusion that today we are heading towards the dematerialisation of matter itself. But, a counter argument to this conclusion was brought forth by another thinker saying that rarified matter does not cease to be matter, thereby pointing out that the world is still material and we are materially constituted in our own personalities. But, this argument and counter argument are both, again, liable to a further investigation.

There is a very subtle, silken thread which connects our perception of values with the reality of things. The cause of the very observation of the material values of life cannot itself be material. To state the whole position simply and precisely, matter cannot know matter. If the whole world is only material, then the very knowledge of the

existence and operation of material forces will itself be a work of matter. It would be a self-contradiction of the whole position to argue that matter can be conscious of matter. As you know, the constitution of matter is not inclusive of that principle we call awareness. There must be someone to know that the world is. And who knows that the world exists? Does the world itself know it? Is it the world that knows that the world exists? What do we mean by the world? Our definitions have to be polished a little more. We have to become a little more subtle. And we should not follow the logic of the man of straw or the man in the street who takes for granted whatever is presented before his senses. We have to become very courageous in this matter. Today, the time has come for us when we have to meet materialist doctrines with the very logic of materialism. The argument of materialism has to be combated by the very same argument, because it is based and built on quicksand. It has no moral courage. It appears gaudy, picturesque, magnificent to the unwary senses of man. But it has no inner toughness or moral strength. It can be blown by a wisp of wind. This truth is not known to us.

You must have heard of the magnificence of a person called Ravana in ancient times. He shook the whole earth. He terrified even the gods, as they say. But his glamour was materialist glamour. It was the glory of the senses which had mistaken falsehood for truth. And the austere, barefooted, single person called Rama could face this immensity of material power called Ravana. Ravana had no moral strength. He had only the material force with him, the power of quantity. He had no qualitative worth in his personality. There was no substance. It was essenceless.

That was the life that Ravana lived, Hiranyakasipu lived, and the materialists live. They appear to be powerful, but they have no strength. So, in the name of God and in the hallowed name of Gurudev Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj, may I call upon you all to develop this inner strength in you which is not material but which is the controller of material forces. It is the discoverer of the element of matter. And you are superior to the entire quantitative power of the material world. The single spark that shines and glories within your heart is more strong, more powerful and capable of working greater wonders than the magic of science that is today blindfolding your eyes.

The purpose of this conference is, therefore, to awaken our consciousness to a state of its own self-consciousness. We are not here to preach religion which people generally define as a kind of opium. It is to call a dog a bad name and hang it, as they say. We do not know what religion is, and then we call it opium. We do not know what the world is, and we call it a reality. And we do not know who we ourselves are! We are in a world of total ignorance, darkness and misconception. We have no idea of our own selves; we do not know what we are made of; we do not know what our relationship is with the world and human society; we do not know what is beneath our own skin! This is the life that we live today. And yet we are great, gloried! We do not know what will happen to us tomorrow, or the next moment. We are controlled by forces over which we have absolutely no power or restrictive capacity. Our greatness is our simple ignorance! If today we appear to be great, it is because we are fools! This would be the predicament in which we are and which we will certainly

discover, if we go deeply into the matter honestly and dispassionately, dispossessing ourselves of the apparent vestures of borrowed glory.

The world shall desert us one day. The friends of the world are not going to be with us always. Today's things are not seen tomorrow. The things of this moment may not be there the next moment. We do not know how many minutes more we have to breathe in this world. We do not know how long the heart will beat indefatigably. All these are mysteries beyond our control. Are we not Homo sapiens? Are we not human beings who are supposed to be superior to animals? And should we continue the animal state of life and existence, of breathing, eating, sleeping and procreating? We have the same fear as the animals have. We have the same insecurity as the animals have. And we are subject to the same propensities as the animals are. What is the superiority of man, except that he can fight better and kill other people more ferociously than animals can do! Are we not here to utilise that rare endowment which is the prerogative of the so-called *humanity* in man? Material possession and material comfort do not distinguish man from animal. The electricity that we have, the power over matter that we seem to possess, the planes and the jets, the physical comforts and the good dishes, the tables and chairs, all these do not make man. This is a foolishness in which we seem to be involved. Man is a character, an attitude, a conduct, a system of values and a state of consciousness. That is man. And, if this achievement is far from us, are we human beings? Can we call ourselves men and women? Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj gave this message of universal awakening. He came to the world to

shake up man from the sleep of ignorance. Now our eyes have been opened and we can see things as they really are.

Man, beware of your own self much more than anything else in this world. You are your strength and also your weakness. Man can stand or fall. He has the rationality which can be used or abused. Therefore, let us not be afraid of material forces. Let us not be afraid of materialists or atheists. They will not stand before us. They are nothing. They have no energy. And if today Bharatavarsha, India, stands fearless and powerful in the comity of nations, it is because of an eternal value that she has been nurturing within her bosom from centuries. If repeated onslaughts and attacks could not deter her from her position and daunt her, if today Indian culture, Bharatiyan culture is as glorious and powerful as it was, it is because of a rare value that our country, our nation has been embosoming in herself. We need not be afraid of anything—not of atom bombs, not of any material force, not of any opposition. India is powerful. Our country has its own glory, a glory which is identical with her very existence and structure. Our country, our culture, our nation is inseparable from its own citizens. And it is the citizen of India who can say that he is a citizen of the world. It is only the citizen of Bharatavarsha that can confidently and scientifically prove to the mankind of this world that mankind is one. It is the citizen of Bharatavarsha who has no enemies, really speaking. He is the friend of all. He declares, “*Vasudhaiva kutumbakam*: My family is the whole world, nay the entire universe; I do not belong to India only, I belong to the cosmos. The glory of the earth is mankind’s glory. This earth is one of the planets of the solar system. I belong to the solar system, nay to the Milky

Way itself and the cosmos, the universe.” And within this structural pattern of the environment of the universe of which we are the real citizens, there is a light that shines perennially without shedding a shadow. That is the Intelligence which is reflected faintly, though in a distorted manner, in the intellect of each one of us here. The Intelligence of the cosmos is far superior to the reflected intelligence of the human beings. And our evolution up to the stage of the human being is not the end of the matter. The great glorious scriptures of our country tell us that we have come only half the way. We are still to journey. The evolution is not complete. Man is to become a superman, as he has already become man from the lower state of animal. We are told that from matter there is evolution up to the vegetative level, then up to the animals, and from animal we have come to man. But man is not the end or the destination of the process of evolution. Man has to become a superman. He has to become a divine being. He has to become a god, and he has to finally attune himself with that one God of the whole universe. There are not many gods. The term ‘God’ is not a concoction of the theological brain; it is a scientific fact. It is the principle that sustains all the values of the world, of which we are all integral parts. So to contemplate the Reality of the universe, to contemplate God or Isvara is to contemplate the very stuff of our own being. So, science and religion are inseparable, if they are dispassionately looked at and studied.

The world is one, knowledge is one, the aim of humanity is one, and we need not dub ourselves as religionists, creedists, philosophers, spiritualists, Mahatmas, Sadhakas, etc. Let us call ourselves pure human beings who

aspire for the glory of mankind as a whole. And this glorious destination of mankind is single. As rivers enter the single ocean, all values of life shall commingle in the ocean of that Eternity, that Infinity, that Supreme Repository of absolute value. This is, in my own humble way, to give you an outline of what is ahead of us, the task before us and the duty that we are supposed to execute in a dispassionate manner, realising honestly, logically and scientifically that we are one whole. The whole of mankind is a single whole. We are not divided among ourselves as we appear to be. We are one and we can face any force that is un-divine. Let us be courageous, let us be bold and let us invoke the blessing of the Almighty who is the only Reality before us and who is the glorious destination, the magnificent Goal of mankind, of the whole universe.

THE PURPOSE OF PHILOSOPHY *

On this auspicious occasion of holy Vasanta Panchami, I have the honour to welcome to this holy Ashram all the learned delegates of the Akhila Bharatiya Darsana Parishad. At this august moment, I invoke the grace of the Almighty upon you all for your health and long life, so that you may be blessed by the Divine Being for a more energetic endeavour in the direction of true pursuit of the Goal of all existence, which is the central theme of philosophical endeavour.

By way of a few inaugural words I have the privilege to present in a short outline what I feel from the bottom of my heart at the present moment.

This is a session, an Adhivesana, of the Akhila Bharatiya Darsana Parishad—An All-India Philosophical Congress—constituted by highly elevated spirits whose total being may be expected to be tuned to the great ideal of philosophy. We have philosophies of different kinds. We have a philosophy of physics, a philosophy of mathematics, and a philosophy of any art or science. When we speak of philosophy in this sense, we are referring to the rationale behind any particular technique of approach, art, or science or any branch of learning. But, as you would all appreciate, philosophy, in its true connotation, has been used in a special significance and not in the general sense of the

* A talk given on the 1st of February, 1979, while inaugurating the 24th Conference of the All-India Philosophical Congress, at the Sivananda Ashram.

rationale behind the arts and the sciences taken in an isolated manner. If we may endeavour to put the whole matter in one sentence, in our attempt to define philosophy, it may safely be said that philosophy is the reaction of the whole being of man to the whole of Reality. It is not merely an intellectual function. It is not mere ratiocination. It is not an activity of any particular aspect of the psychological organ. It is the whole being of man that is worked up into an activity which is set in tune with the entire structure of Reality. This, in my opinion, is the function of philosophy. It investigates into the nature of phenomena by reference to ultimate causes and not merely to secondary causes or immediate causes.

The ultimate cause of any particular phenomenon has to be grasped in the context of its relevance to other phenomena as well. To appreciate the significance of any phenomenon in this world, one may have to give a definition, philosophically, of that particular phenomenon. Every logician or philosopher who is intent upon giving a definition to any event or phenomenon would have to face the situation of referring to other factors outside the particular phenomenon that is to be defined, just as you cannot define a red object unless you make reference to things other than red. The non-red automatically comes in, when we think of the red. 'A' cannot be defined unless you refer it to 'B'. Every definition has a relative significance. Definitions carry us beyond the area that we try to define. There is a transcendent element present in every particular phenomenon. This element is the urge or, in our academic language, we may say the *nisus* of that particular phenomenon. There is a root-essence present in every

relative which urges it to transcend itself, outgrow its limitation, expand its dimensions and reach beyond itself, so that it craves to come in contact with other aspects of reality and other phenomena of nature, forcing us to come to a conclusion that there is a relativity of references in every event or every phenomenon. No definition is ultimate. We would find that we cannot give a final satisfactory definition of any concept or any given event or phenomenon. There is a reference of everything to everything else. Logic takes us beyond itself into a superlogical situation, where the inter-connection of phenomena compels us to widen our perspective or vision and grasp. We are confronted by the whole universe in its completeness, as it were, finally—a situation to which we are driven gradually, even if we are to understand a grain of sand merely. The particle of sand will take us beyond itself into the whole world itself, if we are consistent in our logical approach. Everything hangs on everything else, so that to understand anything independently would be a futile attempt.

I am reminded here of the few verses from the eighteenth chapter of the Bhagavadgita where Bhagavan Sri Krishna defines three types of knowledge. The lowest kind of knowledge is that which takes a particular finite entity as if it is everything. To consider any isolated object as the whole reality would be the lowest kind of knowledge. The higher knowledge is that which regards every finite as related to every other finite in this world. There is an inter-penetration of things, inter-relation of things, inter-connection of everything with everything else. This is a higher viewpoint, which is larger than the limited

viewpoint which takes one finite object only as if it is everything, by which we cling to things by attachment. Attachment is due to the misconstruing of any particular object in this world, wresting it out of its relations with other things in the world, abstracting only certain characters foisted upon it relatively and the shutting off of all connections of that finite entity with other things in the world. This is the essence of attachment, where one is blind to the total relevance of that object to other things in the world and one is immersed in the form of the object and not the reality behind the object. But, when you go deeper a little bit into the substance of things, the structure or the components of a particular object, we are driven to the relationship of this object with other objects as is what has happened to modern science today. From the five elements—earth, water, fire, air and ether—we went to molecules, and from molecules we went to atoms. From atoms we now go deeper to structural elements which carry us further deep down into the abyss of the ocean of Universal Force.

Now, this is the tremendous object of philosophy. It is not this object or that object, this man or that man, this nation or that nation, this art or that science. But, it is the general judging principle behind all arts and sciences which synthesises every branch of learning. It is in this sense, perhaps, that it is called the Adhyatma Vidya—“*Adhyatma vidya vidyanam*”. It is not one of the branches of learning, not one art among other arts, and not one science among other sciences. It is not even ‘a philosophy’ as people generally speak about it today. It is the basic determining factor behind the appearance of all values in the world, whether sociological, aesthetic or logical. Thus there is a

necessity today to go deeper than the mere empirical definition of philosophy and take it in the true sense of the term as an art of life itself, the science of existence as a whole.

The question would arise, how philosophy can be related to life. My feeling is that philosophy is not going to be related to life. Philosophy is the name that we give to the way of living itself. They are not two different things. The system of living correctly in terms of our relationship to the ultimate Reality is philosophy. This is Jnana or wisdom and this is Darsana or true vision. We are not supposed merely to love philosophy as the etymology of the word would suggest. We have also to possess it. You may love many things but not possess the things. That does no good. And it is not merely a possession in the sense of grabbing of things external. It is an imbibition of a value into the very blood and veins of your personality, so that you become a living vehicle of philosophy itself. You are not a teacher of philosophy or a student of philosophy or a person endowed with a particular learning in a linguistic sense. The whole wisdom is throbbing through the bloodstream of your being. You live it, which means to say, knowledge has become Being. When knowledge is outside Being, when knowledge has no relevance to Reality, it becomes a mere profession, and there will be the mercenary attitude of a teacher who is dependent on mere empirical existence and not on Reality itself. Mostly, today we find that there is a gulf between Reality and knowledge. Sat and Chit are cut off one from the other. The great concluding message of Bharatiya Darsana is that Reality is Satchidananda. “*Sattaiva bodhah, bodha eva satt*”: Existence is

Consciousness; Consciousness is Existence. Knowledge is Being and, vice versa, Being is Knowledge. If I have a knowledge of a being which has no connection with that knowledge, it cannot be called real knowledge. Knowledge of Being is inseparable from Being itself. This is to draw a distinction between mere professing a knowledge and possessing it. The hour has come today when we have to live our Knowledge, and spread an aura among people, an aura that is shed by our own selves, like the light of the sun. Your being is your teaching. The way you live in this world, the adjustment that you make with the reality outside in your practical existence, is a greater teaching than the words that you speak. The integration of your personality is the test of the wisdom that you possess. If your personality is disintegrated within, if your psychological being is not in a state of alignment, if one is a psychopathic individual to speak in a psychoanalytic language, if the mind is diseased in a philosophical sense, though not medically, such a person cannot be called a philosopher. A philosopher is psychologically healthy. He is healthy because he is possessed of Reality within himself. The whole universal Reality is planted in himself, a significance which is brought out beautifully in a great teaching in the Chhandogya Upanishad which goes by the name of Vaisvanara Vidya. 'Vaisvanara' is called 'Atman' at the same time. The two words are really very significant and they are not used merely casually. The word 'Vaisvanara' signifies the universal aspect of Reality. Reality is not confined to any particular object. It is ubiquitous, present everywhere. But it is not present everywhere as the physical space outside, of which you are cognisant as an individual subject, as a percipient. The Vaisvanara definition of

Reality as the omnipresent Being is not to be construed in the sense of a universal object to be perceived, cognised or known by an individual subject. To remove this misconception, the Upanishad also calls this Vaisvanara as the Atman, as the Knower also. So, this universal Being is also the Knower of that being. It is not X, Y, Z or A, B, C knowing that universal Vaisvanara. But the Atman-hood or the Selfhood, which is the characteristic of any percipient or knower, is not to be separated from this reality of the Vaisvanara, so that Vaisvanara is also the Atman and the Atman is Vaisvanara. In order that you may not mistake Reality for an object outside, the word Atman is used to signify its Subjectivity. Again, in order that you may not mistake this subjectivity for an individualistic existence, you are also told at the same time that it is not merely the Atman, but it is also Vaisvanara. It is the farthestmost dimension of objective reality; at the same time it is the deepest subjectivity. So when you combine in a beautiful blend, in an integration, the deepest subjectivity of consciousness with the largest dimension of universality, you get what you call God or the Absolute. The attunement of your personality with this Reality is the wisdom that you possess. And philosophy is the art of directing our mind or reason towards the achievement of this great ideal which is what we usually call Moksha or the salvation of all mankind, of all creation. This is the glorious vision of philosophy. You are philosophers, you are blessed souls, divinities walking on earth. It is in this sense that great thinkers like Plato define philosophy. You are not merely teaching philosophy to students. You are communicating the wisdom of God. You are radiating the light of Reality, Truth or Satya, for the peace, well-being and solidarity of

all beings in the world. You are, in a sense, makers of mankind. You are not merely teachers confined to classrooms, but, in a sense I may say, the destinies of mankind are in your hands, because of your dedication to Truth, which alone will succeed—“*Satyameva jayate nanritam*”.

May I once again invoke the grace of the Almighty upon you all, so that your enlightened being may shed this light of Truth throughout mankind, and lead it along the right path of the pursuit of Reality for the blessedness not merely of one individual but of the whole humanity.

TO THINE OWN SELF BE TRUE *

The Divine Life Society, with the large heart of Swami Sivananda at its back and its roots, extends to you all a cordial welcome at this moment of a session of spirits which may be regarded as gathered for a common purpose.

I was delighted to listen to the definition of ‘Ashrama’ given by our earlier speaker, as a place where a *purposeful life* is being led. I think this is *the correct* definition of an Ashrama—a place where people live a purposeful life—which would suggest that most people do not live a purposeful life.

I do not know if I can say that religion is just this much, i.e., living of a purposeful life. There is, perhaps, no necessity to give any label to our various facets of treading this path, though people are usually accustomed to names and forms which they regard as necessary aids in living their lives. I mentioned the name of Swami Sivananda as a large heart, under whose banner and within the ambit of whose vast protection we had the opportunity of living here for several years. A few of us lived with him physically and we are witnesses to the superhuman gamut which, we can confidently say, he has traversed in the life of utter practicality, which he demonstrated before the public of the world. We, the humble followers of this great Master, have

* An extempore reply given to the Inter-Religious Dialogue Group held under the auspices of the Vatican, that conducted its sessions at Raipur (Dehradun), and visited and held a day’s proceeding at the Sivananda Ashram on the 3rd of June, 1981.

been taught to live a kind of life which has given us a deep satisfaction within ourselves. And, at least, some of us can vouchsafe this satisfaction which keeps us alive even with a life that can be materially regarded as one of non-possession. The religion, if you would like to call this way of life by this designation, which the great master Swami Sivananda taught us and endeavoured to teach to the world, is not a classified cult or a faith, segregated to a section of humanity or a geographical area. It was a comprehensive outlook which, in a togetherness of consciousness, envisaged the whole of humanity as a family. To repeat, once again, the same phrase quoted by our earlier speaker, it is “Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam” and religion was regarded as the way to God, perhaps life *in* God.

Now, we come to an interesting sidelight of this matter when we try to go a little deeper into this question of religion. Has religion failed, as some people would tell us today? Is religion being threatened, as we often hear it said in many quarters? May I confidently say that religion has not failed and it cannot fail. It cannot also be threatened. Because, if you would agree with me that religion is an outlook of consciousness, and not a coming together of social units for an empirical purpose, no one can threaten religion, because no one can threaten consciousness. One’s social, physical and political existence can be threatened. But religion cannot be threatened, because it is not an empirical or phenomenal demonstration of externalised relationships. It is an *attitude* of what we are, and not an expression necessarily of what we do in our outward lives. So, if we can convince ourselves that religion is an attitude

of consciousness, it automatically follows that it cannot be threatened by political forces or the vicissitudes through which the whole of society passes or even the changes which the individual undergoes. This is one aspect of the question which occurred to my mind. Religion cannot be threatened, and we need not be afraid of this possibility. Even if the physical existence of an individual or a social phenomenon may be threatened under certain given conditions, religious spirit cannot be threatened.

The other aspect which occurred to my mind is the way in which we have to entertain the concept of religion in our minds. How would you enshrine the spirit of religion in the mind of man? It has been told that religion is connected to God in some way. It is an outlook which roots itself in a law or a righteousness of the Kingdom of Heaven, a Rita or a Satya to speak in terms of the Veda. If religion is somehow or other vitally and organically related to the presence of God, certain other very interesting consequences will follow which may require our considerate attention. Every religion accepts that God is omnipresent, all-pervading and occupying all space and all time. The omnipresence of God would, therefore, at the same time suggest the omnipresence of the religious outlook, for religion is vitally connected to the presence of God. Now we, perhaps, tread a dangerous zone when we come to conclusions of this nature. When the omnipresence of God thus entails the omnipresence of the religious outlook, it would mean that the life of man is the life of religion, and the only purposeful or meaningful life can be no other than the life of religion.

But, we are here likely to be stimulated by another emotion or sentiment. What about our secular obligations and our social duties or political affiliations? Our affiliation to the world which is material demands our immediate attention, an attention which cannot easily be identified with a religious attitude. Man's mind seems to be made in such a way that it has determined to strike a gulf or even an imbalance between the life in God and the life of the world. Asceticism, in the form in which it has presented itself in religious circles, is an instance on hand. Ascetics are dubbed as otherworldly, antisocial individuals. Can religion be regarded as an anti-social phenomenon? If we are not going to define religion with our tongue in our cheeks, if we are to be consistent in our concept of religion and sincere in our approach to the call of religion, and not hypocrites, if we are logical in our thinking and would not like to bypass any particular stage of thought in this logical process of deduction of values, there is nothing to fear in life. The fear that God may not protect us in times of danger would produce the consequence of our dependence on social values as quite different from religious values, and here, we may perhaps see the seed of the notion that religion is an otherworldly affair and it is not a matter concerning this world.

Many religions, rightly or wrongly, knowingly or unknowingly, have given the impression that they are teaching an otherworldly gospel, which has roused the wrath of many socially-oriented thinkers who do not feel that the world of nature is an unreality to the extent that it demands a religious abnegation. I do not think that the prophets of religion, whether it is a Krishna or a Christ or a

Mohammed, were responsible for creating this difficulty in our religious thinking. Most followers, whether of the gospel of Krishna or Christ or Mohammed or any other prophet, seem to be expressing the weakness that is characteristic of human nature and demonstrating that they cannot be up to the mark or the level of the prophet. While humility is a great virtue and it is quite obvious that no follower of the great prophet or the founder of a religion can be equal to that prophet, it would be unbecoming on the part of the followers of these prophets to interpret their teachings in a manner which could be tantamount to a reading of a quite different meaning of their original teachings. If religion is the way of life that is commensurate with the existence of the omnipresent God, religious wars are unthinkable and should be regarded as an unimaginable tragedy in the psychological life of man. How would you reconcile the inner impulse in man to move towards the omnipresent Almighty with the need he feels, simultaneously, to keep a knife under his armpit to guard himself against his own brother? How would a truly religious spirit try to reconcile this ambivalent attitude of the human being who guards himself against his own brother whom he is expected to love with all his heart, with all his soul! How would this reconciliation be effected?

Man cries hoarse that man should serve man, and humanity should work for humanity. Social service is the slogan of the modern day. But, it is man who is the source of fear for man. While we live apparently only to serve our brethren, as a necessary outcome of the true religious life, we seem to be working, at the same time, to be cautious of our brethren. We look at our neighbour with a wary eye and

we are secretly prepared for any encounter with the very same humanity whom we are trying to serve as our own brothers. There is a psychological conflict in man's mind. There is a double dealing in the so-called religious man. And we may say, perhaps, he is not true to his own self. "To thine own Self be true," perhaps sums up the gospel of religion. It is no use preaching and it is no use trying the implementation of a project which can succumb finally to a small weakness in man's mind, which he has been guarding from the eye of observation, lest it should spoil his career. An open-mindedness, which is hundred per cent in its expression, is a hard thing to find in the world.

How many of us can touch our hearts and confidently say that we do believe in the power of God? Do we also not believe in that which is not God? Are there not non-Gods in this world, or do you say there is only God everywhere? Is it possible for us to assert that there is no other thing in this world than God? And, if a secret aspect of our psychic nature is not prepared to so openly proclaim that God only is and nothing else can be, is it true that we are also not secretly hanging on to something else which is anti-God, the anti-Christ, the non-spiritual? Or, are we in a position to declare again that there is no such thing as the unspiritual? Can religion say that even the worst evil is only a face of spirituality? We are hard-pressed even here. Our mouths will not open, the tongue will not move when it is asked to proclaim that even the worst evil is a manifestation of God. There is a Satan before us. How would you say that he is an expression of God? There is untruth, which is the opposite of truth; there is ugliness which is the opposite of beauty; there is vice which is the opposite of virtue; and there is

unrighteousness or wickedness which is the opposite of righteousness. Can you say they are identical in their nature? If they are not identical, have you got two Gods in this world? These are problems before us. I am not trying to solve any problem, which I do not regard as my vocation or within my capacity, but I am only trying to think aloud in respect of the difficulties that man is facing and which he is not prepared to solve honestly, because of a certain axe that he has to grind in a very secret manner.

One may be a religious man, another may be a person with a vocation of religion in an official manner, but all that will not cut ice before the hard realities of the world. The world before us is not so simple as to be neglected by our religious attitude. It has its own say, and it is a very hard substance before us. And we must be prepared, in a reasonable way, to pay our debts to this world; we may say the debt to the world of material forces. We often say that materialism is opposed to spirituality. Yes, here we are declaring a permanent existence of a dichotomy between God and anti-God. The old gulf between Purusha and Prakriti of the Sankhya comes in always. No religious savant has been able to get over this difficulty of not being able to answer this question whether there is something other than God. An academic answer is not a solution. Metaphysics is no help to us. Theory has not been able to appease the hunger of a starving stomach. We find that the world of matter has managed to assert its reality whatever be our intellectual affirmation of God's existence as a supreme Idealistic Being.

Very unfortunately, I have been placing only problems before the minds of people here. But unless we know what

the diseases are, we cannot find a remedy. To diagnose deeply the depths of the illness of man, is not an unnecessary adventure. It is the purpose of a medical man. And we should not give a pill of religion and think that the malady is over. The pill-religion will not work and it has not worked. We cannot swallow one tablet and think that God has come. It is a serious question before mankind as a whole. And we are happy at this hour that serious thinkers in this direction are gathered here to muster in forces of God, I should say, not merely social forces, because God alone can solve the problems of life. No man can succeed in this superhuman difficulty. God alone can save us. Man cannot save us. Arms, ammunitions, police and army are no help to us when we are in danger, because these are all human forces and contrivances. If we have any friend, it is God. If we have any support, it is God. And if there is anyone who can teach us or give a lesson, it is God. If our questions can be answered, God alone can answer them. A human friend cannot be competent to answer these questions. So, a secret surrender of the human spirit to the Almighty Presence is the vital need of the hour, as I can think at this moment. We are afraid. We are afraid of everything today. Even the movement of a dry leaf frightens us. We do not know what it is aiming at. Fear is around us. We cannot sleep one peaceful night. And, guns and swords cannot help us here. It is the Spirit of God that can save us, and the implementation of the Spirit of God in our daily behaviour may be regarded as religion. I do not know what you call it—Christianity, Hinduism, Islam or Zen. I do not know what name you would like to give it. I conclude with these few words that it is high time not to slumber or woolgather or imagine that milk and honey flow

in this world. It cannot flow always. It is high time that we are honest to the *true* God. When our deepest spirit, the basic being of ours is en rapport with the Being of the cosmos, perhaps the millennium, Rama Rajya or the Golden Age of Kritayuga descends. God reigning the world is not an impossibility. This is my humble conviction.

PHILOSOPHER AND ADMINISTRATOR *

The message which has been so eloquently and powerfully expressed by our honoured guest His Excellency may be regarded as perhaps the spirit behind the voice of India. It has been an awakening message not only for the reorientation that is necessary in the envisagement of spiritual values, but also in the effort to rectify any erroneous approach in the public life of man in the outer world. The message, in its quintessence, conveyed the great truth that is operating invisibly behind all human functions in the world; and that is the need of the hour. What is this need? The need is to see things as God would see things and, as His Excellency put it beautifully, to do what God would expect us to do. This is something very difficult for the human mind to conceive—what God expects us to do. Well, to put it plainly, God would expect us to follow the principles of His constitution. And what are the principles behind His law, His Satya or Rita—Dharma, as the Vedas have put it? This also has been impliedly pointed out in the message of His Excellency when he said that God has been present in every one of His Avataras, which signifies that perfection is immanent in every stage of evolution. And he has also beautifully said that God blessed not merely Prahlada but also Hiranyakasipu. It is not merely an analogy that he has given but a great secret of human action

* An address given on the 22nd of October, 1975 in reply to the message of H.E. Dr. Channa Reddy, the then Governor of U.P., when he visited the Ashram.

in the world in the light of what God would expect us to do in this world.

It is difficult for the human mind to conceive the law of God because, in one word, the principle of God is also the principle of integration—the integration of existence in the various levels of its manifestation. This is very important to remember. While God is the Supreme Integration, it does not mean that He is merely a transcendental integration minus the world of values and actions. The word ‘integration’ means inclusiveness of every conceivable value and type of existence. And in this blend of the totality of values to be envisaged in the light of God’s vision, in this reoriented vision, we would see the world as a field of duty, not imposed upon us by external power or force, but as a mandate that comes voluntarily from our own inner core which is commensurate with the principle of God.

I am very glad that His Excellency has pointedly put his finger on the knob that there is no gulf between spirituality and secularity; or, rather, we have to give a new and correct definition of what religion is and what secularity is. Religion has been wrongly interpreted as love of God to the exclusion of the world; and secularism was wrongly interpreted as love of the world minus God. Not so is the message. And he has told us that our vision has to be a Godly vision and it is only from the point of view of this Godly vision that we can work in this world as God would expect us to work. There is no secularity for God; there is no religion for God. We cannot say God is a spiritual person or a secular person. He is not even a human being. Though we talk of humanity, mankind, etc., God rises

above this concept of the species to which we are likely to be wedded in an emotionalism of our attitude for a particular group or category of creation.

As I mentioned, it is almost impossible for the human mind to conceive what God is and, therefore, equally impossible to conceive what human duty can be in this world which is God's creation. The message of Lord Sri Krishna in the Bhagavadgita purports to be this integral message of God to mankind. It was not Bhagavan Sri Krishna that spoke to Arjuna; it was the Absolute that gave Its message to the entire world of manifestation. And what was that message? It is the message of the blend of knowledge and action—Krishna and Arjuna sitting in a single chariot. While it is possible for us to regard knowledge and action as perhaps the right hand and the left hand of the single body of human existence, I may say it is much more than that. It is something like the two facets of the crystal of human aspiration for ultimate perfection. While the right hand and the left hand may appear to be two different projections, spatially isolated from each other, knowledge and action are not so isolated. Here is the glory of the culture of Bharatavarsha. The philosopher and the administrator are identical. Knowledge and action are one. Arjuna and Krishna work together for a common cause, viz., the redemption of humanity from all evil and establishment of Dharma, which means the revival of the consciousness of the structural pattern of the universe as a whole, on the basis of which every temporal law has to be framed in the world for success of mankind.

We have an erroneous notion of the very meaning of life, the concept of life, as something different from the

divine element hidden in man. It is very essential, as His Excellency beautifully put it, that we have a total vision which is requisite if it is essential that we have to work on the command of God, as God would expect us to work. How does God work? He works with infinite hands, with total impartiality, and without any consciousness of the difference between Himself and His creation. We are likely, wrongly perhaps, to make a distinction between God and the world. We say the world is of matter and God is Spirit. God is neither matter nor Spirit. He is transcendent, which is an inconceivable something which cannot be designated either as Spirit or matter. And whatever definitions are applied to God by human beings, even in the utmost heights of philosophy, they are only the counterparts of the deficiencies of human thought. It is impossible to define God, and, therefore, it is impossible to lead a perfect life. We are all imperfect beings merely because we are not in a position to be in consonance with the law of God. But that is imperative. And if this law is not fulfilled, if this principle is not to be the guiding light of our daily activity, even in the minutest of our actions, success is certainly far to seek. And the message of India, the message of our culture, the message of Bharatavarsha, the message of all saints and sages is the message of Perfection. And Perfection is not merely God minus the world, or world minus God, or any such thing, but a totality of vision which it is very difficult for ordinary people to envisage and enshrine in their hearts. But it is essential that people have to be trained in this art and science of integral vision, so that there may be integral action which is called Karma Yoga, not only for the benefit of an individual or a society, but for the fulfilment of the unselfish purpose of mankind,

which is the realisation of the values dear to the universe as a whole. There is no private interest for anybody in this world. Private life is a misnomer. And, therefore, it is necessary that we gradually outgrow notions of private life, individual life, selfishness, parochialism of various sorts and rise into the concept of Universality by degrees until we reach this Totality or Universality of God, which is that which we see within the purview of our own senses in the presence of our own eyes. That which the physical eye sees is also God. And to recognise the divine presence in things, what is needed is merely a re-interpretation of values, by a shift in our consciousness, like a dreaming man waking into consciousness, without moving from place to place. He has only brought about a revolution in the total attitude of his personality and life, so that he is in a higher degree of reality. The highest degree of Reality, which is God, is not transcendent, i.e., rising above the world of action and duty, but, other than being merely transcendent and immanent, it is a combination of the two principles, two values. Nay, Reality is not merely a combination of the transcendent and the immanent even; words are inadequate to express this possibility and necessity. It is a blend like honey, wherein we cannot find different types of pollen independently existing. It is like cow's milk which is a blend in which we cannot find the different ingredients which the cow has taken as its diet. Such a blend is Godly vision and such a blend is the call of the hour.

ABOUT SWAMI KRISHNANANDA

Swami Krishnananda was born on the 25th of April, 1922 into a highly religious and orthodox Brahmin family, and was given the name Subbaraya. At an early age, he had become very well-versed in the Sanskrit language and its sacred texts. Through the study of scriptures such as the Bhagavadgita and the Upanishads, he was drawn more and more to the Advaita philosophy of Sri Shankaracharya.

The longing for seclusion and the unknown call from the Master pulled him to Rishikesh, where he arrived in the summer of 1944. When he met Swami Sivananda and fell prostrate before him, the saint said, “Stay here till death; I will make kings and ministers fall at your feet.” The young man wondered how this could ever be possible, but the prediction would eventually prove true. Swami Sivananda initiated the young Subbaraya into Sannyasa on the sacred day of Makara Sankranti, the 14th of January, 1946, and gave him the name Swami Krishnananda.

Gurudev Swami Sivananda found that the young disciple, Swami Krishnananda, was well-suited to general writing tasks, the compiling and editing of books, and other sorts of literary work. In the beginning Swami Krishnananda confined himself mostly to his work and study and did not have much contact with visitors, so that many visitors to the Ashram did not know of his existence. Eventually Gurudev asked him to do more serious scholarly work. His first book, *The Realisation of the Absolute*, was

written in a matter of weeks when he was still only a young man in his early twenties.

Swami Sivananda nominated him as General Secretary of the Divine Life Society in 1959, and which position he held until his resignation in 2001 due to poor health. Swami Krishnananda handled this demanding position with great skill, and at the same time was able to serve as a teacher and guide to the thousands of people who came to him over the course of many years. He was a master of the scriptures, and he gave inspired lectures in the Yoga-Vedanta Forest Academy as well as extensive talks in the Ashram itself. Swamiji is the author of over forty works, and these books cover a wide variety of subjects—primarily in the areas of Sadhana, philosophy and yoga. Only a genius of the highest calibre would be able to accomplish this intellectual feat, given the enormous volume of work which came to him as General Secretary of a large institution.

Swamiji was a rare blend of Karma yoga and Jnana yoga and a living example of the teachings of the Gita. He was a master of practically every system of Indian thought and Western philosophy. “Many Sankaras are rolled into one Krishnananda,” Swami Sivananda would say of him. Swamiji continued his service to the Ashram for forty years as it grew from a relatively small organisation into a spiritual institution widely known and respected throughout the world. Despite failing health in his later years, he continued to devote himself to Ashram administration and to providing spiritual guidance to the many devotees who flocked to him. Swami Krishnananda attained Mahasamadhi on the 23rd of November, 2001.