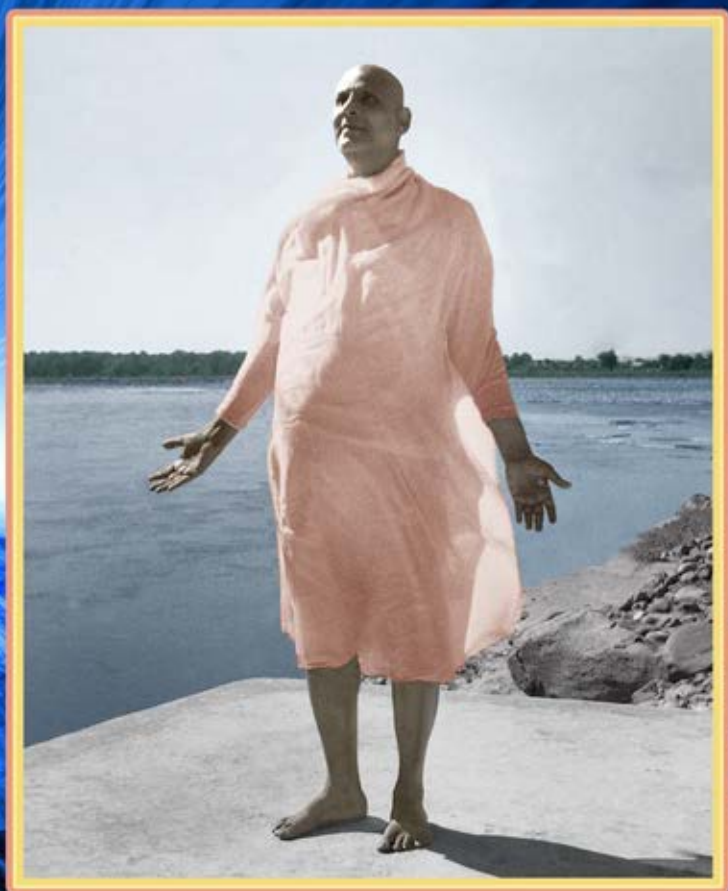


# THE MIGHTY GODMAN OF OUR AGE



SWAMI KRISHNANANDA

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Swami Krishnananda



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## **The Purpose of the Advent of Swami Sivananda**

The coming of Sri Gurudev on this planet, this Earth—the entry of this divine soul into this world—may sometimes be compared to a shooting star which shines its light on all the dark corners of the planet and illumines every side of it, every part of it, every aspect of it and every phase of it, as if life enters a lifeless body.

The whole Earth may be compared to a living organism which, during the course of human history, demonstrated a tendency to get devitalised in slow paces, for reasons galore. It looked as if, latterly, the whole of humanity appeared to be moving in the direction of a devitalisation of its own inner constitution—a dehydration and a diminution of vitality which went, simultaneously, with a blinding of its vision, a sidetracking of its general outlook, and a signal of an entry into a darkness which it began to mistake for a kind of extroverted intelligence. I am particularly making reference to the tendency to industrialisation, economisation, and an overemphasis on what today generally goes by the name of a scientific outlook of life. All this is summed up by this objectification of the human mind in its general vision of life, and

its dedication to the phenomena presenting itself as this vast physical nature outside us.

Human nature became a part, an insignificant aspect of nature, studied in natural science in the field of physics and chemistry, so that the visibility of the world got highlighted and the human personality got identified with what became the visible panorama of this world. If the world is a visible phenomenon and if man is also involved in this phenomenon, nature manifests itself as human nature. If this is to be the case and it is to be accepted that through the process of natural evolution human consciousness evolved out of incipient powers which were sleeping and which were material in their content, if the evolution doctrine concludes that man is a latecomer in this process of the coming of the species into intelligent existence, if it is also accepted, at the same time, that the world is nature, nature is the world, that the world is the visible structure of physical nature—the world is visibility and vice versa, visibility is the world, to see is to believe and to believe one must be able to see—then that which is not seen is also not an object of belief, trust or faith. The externality, the sensory objectivity, the visibility, so called, of the world involved a simultaneous subjection of the entire humanity to the phenomenon of this visibility, so that man became an object like any other object in the world.

As we have things of nature, man also became one of the things of nature. Man is not a human being isolated from or distinguishable from natural forces, but man became a conglomeration, a pressure point of natural forces, a material phenomenon himself. If world is externality, man is also externality. This is to be entirely scientific to the core, with

a vengeance, we may say. The later part of the nineteenth century and the commencement of the twentieth century went headlong into a deification and an adoration of nature as the be-all and end-all of life. Natural phenomena were the final reality. The evolutionary doctrine of Darwin, Lamarck and others confirmed to the hilt that nature is all and nature is everything. And all created beings, living beings, including human nature, got submerged into the natural processes. Materiality, to say the least, became the god of the universe. It was only a little distance for man to get lost completely in dead matter. He had not died completely, but he was heading towards death.

The mind and consciousness, which actually distinguish human nature from other created things, began to lose their stability and stature, their independence. Man became dependent. The whole scientific outlook, especially from the point of view of physical science, is an embarkment on the adventure in life in the direction of calculation, mathematical measurement, and an overemphasis of the observability of anything that can be called real. It is not the rational that is the real, but the visible that is the real. All that is of the character of reality has to be capable of subjection to visible observation through scientific methodology. Does anything else prevail in life which can explain the aspirations of human nature, the longings of the heart, the ideals of ethics and morality, and the urge from within everyone to appreciate aesthetic beauty and to appreciate a tendency to achievement in the future by what is called a teleological movement of the present towards a future attainment?

Science got identified with industry. Theoretical physics became applied physics, and the comforts of the physical aspect of life practically became the sum and substance of human aspiration and the desire of anything that is alive. To be comfortable, to be physically secure, and to be assured a sensorial happy life was regarded as the only possible finality of all life.

While nature is an external manifestation of an internal aspiration, its externality does not permit the total extinguishing of the flame of its internal surge for a self-realisation of itself. Even if nature is to be considered as the whole of reality visible to us through our sense organs, there is a necessity to appreciate the fact that nature has to recognise itself. An unrecognised nature is no nature. If nature is to be there as the final reality of things, it has to be recognised. Nature has to be recognised, if not by someone else, at least by itself. There is no one to recognise nature as existent, because everyone is included within the purview of nature. Neither you nor I can know nature, because we are parts of nature. It becomes difficult to know how nature can know that it exists at all, how science can stand on its own legs and become explicable in intelligent terms, if a self-recognition of the very existence of nature is to be denied in the light of there being nobody to know that nature exists at all—unless, of course, a capacity to self-recognition is attributed to nature.

Nature got roused into its own potentialities. Actually, the process of evolution is the working of nature within itself. All life rises to the surface of its immense capacity, as the rumbling in the bosom of the ocean rises to the surface in the

form of its waves, and the potentiality at the root becomes manifest as the visible phenomena we call nature from the point of view of science, physics, etc. It became necessary for nature to realise that it has to recognise itself. Nature cannot be sleeping always. None of us can be eternally sleeping, though sleep is also an essential part of life. Awakening into a consciousness of one's own existence became necessary.

Nature evolves, but evolves for a purpose. A purposeless evolution is a chaotic interpretation based on a totally unintelligible system of things. Such a thing is not permissible because even to accept that there is a kind of chaos prevailing finally in nature, there should be, at the back of this phenomenon of chaos, something which is not in a state of chaos. Chaos cannot know chaos. An intelligent, systematic operation should be accepted to be present at the back of even natural evolution, which otherwise would be a march of death towards its own self-annihilation.

The coming of great saints and sages, the incarnation of Masters, the entry into this world of divine powers—in this instance, the birth of a soul like the great Master Swami Sivananda—should be regarded as one of the operations of nature to find a way of coming to a knowledge of consciousness of its own existence. The more we know ourselves, the stronger we become. The more we lose ourselves in what we see with our eyes and become things and objects rather than our own selves, the weaker we become. The greater is the emphasis that we lay on what we see with our eyes, the lesser is the requirement of nature from our own selves. Gain in nature is loss in self. The more do we feel the necessity to depend on external nature for our safety, security and

satisfaction, the less do we become important in the scheme of things; and if all nature is only reality as a material phenomenon, we cease to exist at once. The existence of nature is the death of all humanity as a living principle. Nature has to live in its total inclusiveness and an overmastering phenomenon of materiality only if the death of the soul takes place.

The soul cannot die, for the simple reason that it is a principle of self-recognition of any phenomenon. Whatever be the outcome, whatever be the procedure, whatever be the intention, and whatever be the shape or the form taken by a process, it requires to be recognised. This is a point that has to be accepted, first and foremost. The recognition of a phenomenon is the placing of a soul into it. Either we recognise the presence of a particular vision, phenomenon or process of history, or it recognises itself. A non-recognised phenomenon is a non-existent phenomenon. It has to be recognised either by us or by its own self. If we recognise it, we transfer a particular kind of soul to it from our own side. If it recognises itself, it has a soul in itself; it is self-conscious.

The natural evolution, the process of the coming of newer and newer types of species from the bosom of nature, is a simultaneous manifestation from within nature itself, the potentialities for greater and greater forms of self-recognition. If this were not to be the case, there would be no intelligent purpose in the process of evolution. Why should there be evolution? Why should something come from something else? Why should an effect follow from a cause? Why should anything be there at all if there is no intelligible, conceivable aim behind this purpose? The consciousness of a purpose is at once the recognition of a continuity

of intelligence throughout the flux and formations of the process of evolution, right from the most incipient of stages we call unconscious matter, until recognition becomes self-complete, totally inclusive and self-sufficient.

The coming of great Masters such as Gurudev Swami Sivananda is actually the rising into Self-consciousness of a potentiality of a soul in nature. Great saints and sages are not physical bodies; they are not material formations. When we adore geniuses, saints, sages and incarnations we are not worshipping material formations but the soul content that animates them, the intensity of higher aspirations that enlivens them. We know very well what it is that we adore in the great Master Swami Sivananda. It is not the six-foot-tall physical frame of flesh and blood and bone that is the object of worship or appreciation of values. 'Value' is the word to be highlighted. A meaning, a significance and aspiration, a light or an enlightenment—in short, a soul—is what is behind this vision of ours presently in the form of this great Master.

Spirituality was the high-water mark of the message of Sri Gurudev. There is a continuity and an unending, never-ceasing permeation of a value behind dying principles and discontinuous movements of nature. An unknown content pervades and permeates all known things in the world, and this unknown masquerading of an eternal value seems to be the explanation for endless longing in the hearts of people—an eternal quest that seems to be pressing forward any form whatsoever that is created, and the impossibility to be satisfied with anything in this world at any time, even if one is the possessor of the whole Earth and the king of the whole world. The peculiar, eluding something that compels us



to remain unsatisfied with anything and everything in the world, causing an unending asking for an endless continuity of our life, a pressure from within our own selves to be all and everything, if possible—not to be limited in any manner whatsoever, to defy every kind of finitude, physical, social, political or otherwise, to dominate everything and to gain suzerainty over all things—this aspiration, this longing, this potentiality of asking within everyone, is the explanation of all creation.

The purpose of Sri Gurudev's coming into this world, and the intention behind the coming of any sage and saint, is the waking of the slumbering soul of mankind. Fast asleep was humanity in embrace and contentment with its union and attunement with sources of material satisfaction. The otherness of life got emphasised, and the selfhood of things got slowly delimited into a point of self-annihilation. Death began to stalk the Earth in the form of a materialistic civilisation.

The God of creation, the thing from which everything originated, the source of all aspiration, longing and meaning in life, shook its shoulders, as it were, and recovered itself. As we know, when a thing goes to its extreme, its other extreme begins to act. In order that you may gain everything, you have to lose everything. This is how extremes act in this world. When everything is lost, everything shall be found. When you are a 'nobody' in this world, you shall become an 'everybody'. When nobody wants you, you will see that everybody will want you one day or the other. When everything goes, everything comes.

In a similar manner, through the process of a materialistic movement of nature, when it tended to the extreme of a total dependence on its externality alone, minus internality—which propelled it in its movement in this direction—suddenly the balance tilted in the other direction to maintain a stability of its existence. We may safely say that at the beginning of this century there was a worldwide movement of the revival of the higher values of life in the East, in the West, and everywhere. Values got emphasised, and interpretations of phenomena became more important than phenomena itself. The capacity to know became more important than that which is known. The scientist was a greater value than the findings of science. Mathematics ruled physics, which means to say, mind began to rule over matter. The subjectivity of the element of life began to gain an upper hand over the objectivity of phenomena, and the Universal started peeping through the apertures of all particular things and individualities. God felt a necessity, as it were, to move consciously in His own creation, and spirituality became, and had to become, the rule, the order and the principle of all life.

Gurudev Swami Sivananda highlights this great principle of spirituality becoming the working order of creation, the methodology of living in this world, the very way in which we breathe, live, work and transform our daily activity, our performance, our work and our very movement in this world into a regular worship of God Almighty. The world becomes a veritable manifestation of God before us, and our daily duties become a waving of the holy light before this great Master of creation present in all living beings,

beaming through all eyes, nodding through all heads, speaking through every tongue, and working through all hands—*sahasra shirsha purushah*. This great message of the Purusha Sukta was the final message of Gurudev Swami Sivananda. He stood for the message of the Vedas, the Upanishads and the Bhagavadgita which, we may safely say, highlight the farthest reach that mankind could achieve in its slow movement from the lower order of creation until it reached the human stage, wherein it was not content. Humanity became a pointer to the presence of a superhuman possibility. Life emerged from the lower species to the higher order of creation until it reached human nature. It is only at the human level that it could visualise the presence of a future which is more inclusive and wider in its dimension. It is only at the stage of humanity that one could visualise the presence of divinity.

Gurudev Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj was an incarnation of this unending, incessant, eternal human aspiration for perfection. His teaching is usually summed up in a pithy statement: “God first, world next, yourself last.” This statement, this little message, this one-sentence teaching perhaps sums up the great gospel of life which brings God to the Earth, into our kitchen, into the very room in which we live, into this vestment of our physical personality, and transmutes the materiality of creation into a scintillating divinity through which we live, move, and have our being.



## **Swami Sivananda and the Spiritual Renaissance**

### **The Problem Stated**

The world we live in is observed to be a solid mass of matter. Even our own bodies are seen to be parts of physical nature governed by mechanistic laws, which alone appears to be all that is real. It has become commonplace today, especially in the universe of science, that life is strictly determined by the law of causality which rules over the entire scheme of the world. We are told that distinctions that are supposed to obtain between such realms of being as matter, life and mind are only superficial and are accounted for by the grades of subtlety in the manifestation and spreading of particles of matter. Even the organism of the human body, which appears to defy the laws of the universal machine that modern science envisages, is explained away as only one of the many forms of the workings of the brute force of matter, which is the ultimate stuff of all things. The natural consequence of such a theory as this is the astonishing conclusion that human life, like every other material substance in the world, is completely determined by blind causal laws, and the so-called free will of man is subservient to them, if not

a mere chimera. When we protest that man is not merely matter but also mind, it is explained that mind is nothing but a subtle and ethereal exudation of forces of matter. Man is reduced to an insignificant speck in the gigantic machinery of the cosmos which works ruthlessly with its own laws, unconcerned with the weal and woe of man.

This naturalistic interpretation of life, that is fast threatening to become rampant in this modern scientific and atomic age, seems to be really the philosophy of the common credulous man, and even of the intelligent public who have neither the patience and the leisure nor the equipment of understanding to fathom the greater depths of human experience. Hand in hand with this theory of crass materialism there is a craze for more comfort and pleasure by lessening effort and movement of every kind, and an inherent feeling that material progress conceived at its zenith should be the ultimate purpose of existence. Due to an irrational faith in the efficacy and correctness of this doctrine, the man of the world seems to have forgotten the corruption of moral values today, the fall in the mental life and the standard of present-day education, and a sense of monotony and restlessness of spirit brought about by such a view of life, in spite of his riches and material possessions.

The fact that man is not merely a humble cogwheel in the deterministic machine of a relentless universe, and that the essence of man is a spiritual principle co-extensive and co-eternal with the universal Spirit, was easily felt by many as a reaction to the very unsatisfactory and humdrum propaganda carried on by the materialists. The balance swung from the extreme of materialism holding that man is merged

in physical nature to the other extreme of the idealism which propounded that man is perforce dragged on by the impetus of a cosmic spiritual Substance. The difference between these materialistic and idealistic theories is found finally to be in the conception of the ultimate stuff and constitution of the universe—the one advocating that it is matter, motion and force, and the other affirming that it is pure Mind or Spirit. But both agree in holding that man has no real choice and freedom of his own, he being inextricably involved, merged and lost in the ultimate reality of the universe, be it material, mental or spiritual.

Unfortunate man discovered that it was hard for him, under such circumstances, to live a normal life of the enjoyment of aesthetic, religious and moral values and at the same time feel his feet well planted on Mother Earth, with her richness and grandeur, promises and mysteries, who manages in dexterous and wondrous ways to attract his attention and give him a hint that life is reality, beauty and joy, in spite of the ostensible struggle, adventure and hazard to be faced constantly; and yet that life is not all, that there is some awe-inspiring and terrible truth continuously pointed out by the phenomena of suffering, pain and death, by the restlessness of the world and the vicissitudes of life, the endless desires of man and the moral aspirations surging from within. The man of the world required a loving and sympathetic, reasonable and satisfying teaching to enable him to live as an individual, fulfilling his daily duties in life and yet aspiring for that marvellous and magnificent Beyond, which ever seems to beckon him through the tantalising veils of nature.

The beguiled minds of the growing Indian youth educated under the artful scheme chalked out by the shrewd Lord Macaulay could be easily led astray, and, as it would be natural to expect, the sublimity and the wisdom of the lives of the ancient predecessors of these young men, come through posterity, were slowly lost, and people began to move along the ruts of a so-called modernism of thinking, a rationality of approach and a scientific attitude to life, so much spoken of in these days and raised to an almost exaggerated height of apotheosis. There were many who delighted in doubting spiritual laws, in denying the superphysical, and went even to the extent of decrying soul and God. The method employed by the alien rulers worked, indeed, like magic, and surprising was the way in which warm-blooded youth succumbed to the glamour of applied science and the utility of an industrial revolution placed before their unsuspecting eyes. People gradually shed the spiritual legacy of their forefathers and started to strut proudly under the unseen yoke of a civilisation wedded to a secret achievement of suzerainty over them—the simple sons of a hierarchy of intensely religious and spiritual heroes who had the great privilege of having declared to their brethren the deepest truths of immortal life.

Side by side, the world as a whole showed tendencies of a sceptical outlook, especially after the stress of the First World War and the revolutions brought about by the discoveries of twentieth century physics and biology, hand in hand with an insisting demand for reason in everything, and hinted that they would deal a fatal blow at all goodness, faith, morality, religion and spirituality, whatever be the conservative attitude to these time-honoured values. The situation

called for a revaluation of all values and for the building of man's inner life upon a stronger foundation. There emerged, promptly and vigilantly, several powerful and authentic voices of the irresistible inner justice in the prominent fields of life's activity—politics, sociology, religion, yoga and spirituality—to correct erring minds and give articulation to the requirements of truth, law and morality. Swami Sivananda figures prominently among such leaders who brought about a thorough inner transformation in modern India, and placed the grand spiritual values on a firmer footing and in a proper setting.

### **The Mission of the Philosopher-Saint**

This significant want, this lacuna in the entire structure of life, this error in the aspiring spirit of man was carefully observed by the acute vision of Swami Sivananda, who made it his mission to give to the world a comprehensive philosophical theory, striking a balance between and reconciling and blending together the demands of an obstinate empiricism, and the principles and teachings of the lofty idealism that the eternal Spirit alone is real, and to design comprehensively a practice of certain synthesised techniques of inner and outer discipline to achieve perfection.

While being fully convinced of and persuaded to accept the doctrines of the metaphysic of a spiritualistic non-dualism that nought else than God can have any ultimate value, and having entered personally into the stupendous reality of experiencing this, Swami Sivananda felt the need to intelligently tackle the situations in which the human mind is involved, without disturbing or upsetting the beliefs of the ignorant, taking into consideration every aspect of man's life.



We cannot teach that life in the sense-sphere is all, that the physical body and the external material world constitute the only reality; for the thoughtful nature raises the pertinent question that mind cannot be equated with matter, that love and joy refuse to be reduced to movements of electrons and protons, that the never-ending cry of the mystics and the religious men, from time immemorial, who professed to know and proclaimed the existence of an unknown region and an unexplored reality of spiritual values, and of the clear possibility of such a thing as immortality—these cannot be set aside as mere distorted voices of morbid spirits or abnormal natures.

Nor is pretentious man, being what he is, to be satisfied by the extraordinary teaching that the world is not at all there, that what he enjoys and suffers are mere phantasms, that life is a delirium of consciousness, that precious values which are so eagerly and anxiously treasured with zealous care are but the busy activities of a confused mind engaged in a long dream in the sorrow of life's disease; for the searching senses and the understanding that enquires vehemently complain that they see a world as hard, concrete and real as anything can be, that the body has its pains and pleasures, that life has its duties, its burdens, its grief, wonders and patent meanings which cannot be brushed aside by any effort of logic, that the experience is real and cannot be abrogated as worthless by any stretch of imagination, that the visible is real and is valued, as amply testified by everyday experience. We cannot say that God created the world, for God has no desire to prompt Him to create. We cannot say that the world is God's play, for a perfect Being needs no play. We

also cannot say that the world has no ultimate basis at all, for the changing phases of the physical nature and the moral urges of the inner spirit in man assert that God ought to be.

### **Life—A Sadhana**

Swami Sivananda addresses himself to the difficult but important task of taking man as he is, a growing organism of a psychophysical character, neither wholly restricted naturalistically by the mechanism of the material world, nor fully absorbed spiritualistically in the supermundane aim of divine existence. Man is not merely a body, a mind or a spirit, but a curious mixture of all these in a manner not comprehensible to ordinary intelligence. The Katha Upanishad says that the true 'enjoyer' or the empirical agent of knowledge and action is a composite structure of the Atman, the mind and the senses, together. Life is not merely a process of swirling masses of matter, groups of molecules, aggregates of atoms or vortices of electrical forces, occasions for the study of psychology or even metaphysics, and an idealistic soaring into the empyrean of logical thought, mental phenomena or mere psychic experience. Not even an exclusively spiritualistic consideration or an occultist interpretation can explain the mystery of life, which proves to be a superhuman work of the combination of certain characteristic elements of all these stages and strata of being at one and the same time. Man is at once a physical embodiment, a mental phenomenon and a spiritual entity. He has to appease not only the hunger of the body and the thirst of his vital forces, but has to pay equal, if not greater, attention to the demands of his psychic nature, his moral tendencies and spiritual aspirations.

Life is a synthesis of the forces manifesting in different orders and in a graduated scale the evolutionary structure of nature. In this sense, the whole of one's life is a sadhana, an integral endeavour for fullness on the part of mysterious man whose constitution, compelling attention and training, ranges at once from the lowest matter to the highest Spirit. As a body he is a creature of natural forces, subjected to the suffering and the mortality attending upon all composite structures in the physical world. He is one with inanimate matter when taken purely as a material structure. But man's tale does not end here. He grows like a plant, feels and reacts like an animal; and insofar as the craving for food, sleep and sex is concerned, he is indistinguishable from the inhabitants of the mute kingdom. But conspicuously enough, man struggles to reach above the realm of the brute, exercises a moral consciousness totally absent in animals, and displays a marvellous understanding power and reasoning capacity in distinguishing between the true and the false, the right and the wrong, the good and the bad, the beautiful and the ugly, thus making it amply clear that while partaking of the natures of matter, life and mind—observable also in the inanimate world, the vegetable kingdom and the subhuman beings—he is also more than all these, and while including these in his individual make-up he also transcends them in an astonishing degree. The life of man is thus very complex, embracing variegated elements, exhibiting diverse characteristics and manifesting different grades of reality. If life is a sadhana, a continuous journey and movement and a story of adjusting oneself to and adapting oneself with the vast universe of a similar nature, it is not enough if we merely

look at one side of the picture, but have to consider every aspect of the revelation of reality in man. This is precisely the mission of Swami Sivananda, to whom all life is yoga, and whose writings are an elaborate dissertation on integral living.

### **The Education of Man**

The human self is constituted of a consciousness which is not pure existence but a dynamic process, being interfused, as it were, with the nature of the circumstances in which it finds itself in the world, with an environment of social elements, political restraints, moral commands, physical needs, vital urges, intellectual situations, and the like. In other words, man discovers, in his activities and in the problems he has to encounter every day, that his life is related to others' lives and undergoes growth and change as the world appears to change. We have to remember that human life is involved in the time process and hence bound by temporal laws. The human self is in the world, though not of the world.

Thus, a study of man is nothing but a reflection on the totality of situations that are comprised within the range of human knowledge, whether explicit as in the usual everyday experiences and in the themes of the physical and the psychological sciences, or implied as in philosophy, or revealed as in religion. Such a study has to include in its gamut the whole of life's problems, insofar as they affect the human self which is the aspiring individual. Man thinks, feels and wills, and does not merely exist. Hence his approach to the religious value of God, the ethical value of duty and the logical value of truth should proceed from and contain elements in the

structure of his own central reality as far as he experiences them in his daily life.

Human life is conceived by Swami Sivananda as a school of education for the *jiva*, or empirical self, caught up in the meshes of ignorance, desire and activity. This education has to be physical, intellectual, emotional, moral, active and spiritual, all at once, in a way beautifully fitted to the conditions in which one is placed. The actual technique of this education differs in its details in different individuals in accordance with their age, health, avocation, stage of evolution, social relations, etc., all of which call the attention of the soul to a variegated world. Essentially, any scheme of education should consist of methods for bringing about and effecting (1) the development of personality, (2) a knowledge of the world, (3) an adjustment of self with society, and (4) a realisation of the permanent values. By 'development of personality' what is meant is the wholesome building up of the individual, not only with reference to the internal states of body, mind and consciousness, but also in relation to the external world reaching up to it through the different levels of society. In this sense, true education is both a diving inward and a spreading outward.

Knowledge of the world is not merely a collection of facts or gathering information regarding the contents of the physical world, but forms a specific insight into its inner workings as well, at least insofar as man's inner and outer life is inextricably bound up with them. When this knowledge of one's own individuality and personality as it is involved in a world of picturesque colours and varying depths is acquired through intensive training by study, reflection and

service of one's preceptor, it becomes easy for one to discover the art of adjusting oneself with society. Truly speaking, this adjustment is not possible for one who has no knowledge of the deeper spiritual nature of humanity, which constitutes society in man's practical affairs. The aim of the individual as well as society is the realisation of the values personal, social, political and even universal—all mutually related and determined by a common goal to which all these are directed, consciously or unconsciously. Ignorant man may not be fully aware that the eternal values of life are summed up in the all-comprehensive terms 'God', 'Freedom', 'Immortality', and that all his daily struggles are nothing but the groping of his mind in the darkness of his ignorance to recognise these and participate in these by way of all that he sees, hears or understands.

To awaken the human spirit to this tremendous fact was the primary mission of Swami Sivananda, and his voluminous works cater variegatedly to the hungry souls who are in search of food but cannot find it for want of knowledge.

### **Characteristics of His Works**

The writings of Swami Sivananda cover a vast range of subjects, in accordance with his plan of approaching man from every side and every aspect. These works treat, in detail, such diverse topics as anatomy and physiology; health, hygiene and sanitation; physical exercise, first aid and treatment of diseases; the discipline of the physical body through the technical Hatha Yoga processes of asanas or bodily postures, pranayama or the regulation of the vital force and of breathing, *bhandhas*, *mudras* and *kriyas*—all intricate methods of the perfection of the body to prepare it for withstanding the

onslaughts of nature's pairs of opposites such as heat and cold, hunger and thirst; an exhaustive psychological analysis of the composition, working and behaviours of the inner man—the mental, volitional, effective, moral and rational natures, which so much influence and decide the values of life as a whole; the duties of man, his relations to family, community and nation; his position in the world and the universe; his national, international and world relations; the social, ethical and political structure of individuals; the assessment of the values, both religious and spiritual; and a comprehensive and penetrating discussion of the characteristics of the ultimate goal of human life, as well as an intensive treatment of the nature of the way leading to this goal.

In his expositions of these subjects, so very widely spread in apparently isolated universes of discourse, Swami Sivananda appeals not merely to the rational and the scientific man or the intelligentsia of society, but also to the devout, the faithful and the believing, to the common masses ignorant of higher laws, to spiritual aspirants, Sannyasins, householders, recluses, businessmen, women and children, alike. It will be observed, on a careful study of his writings, that his appeal is more to the heart and the feelings, and his admonitions are mostly of a practical nature adapted for an immediate application in the day-to-day life of man in every class of society.

His works are, strictly speaking, lengthy gospels on the different yogas: such as, (1) Jnana Yoga or the philosophical technique of the rational and the scientific intellect in unravelling the secrets of nature and living a life of the wisdom, truth and justice of the law of the Absolute; (2) Raja Yoga or the psychic and mystical way of analysing, dissecting and

inhibiting the constituents and modifications of the mind-stuff, thus enabling man to overcome its tyrannies and come to a comprehension of his position in a universality of the Spirit or the Purusha; (3) Bhakti Yoga or the way of spiritual love and devotion directed to the majestic Sovereign of the universe, the merciful and compassionate Father of all creation, by which emotions, such as those fastening man to relations with his parents, his children, his masters, his friends and his partner in life, are sublimated and ennobled by being centred in the universal nature of God who promises man, when he has surrendered his self completely to Him, with the hope of salvation; (4) Karma Yoga or the science and the art of spiritual activity, a splendid manner of converting every action and every duty in life—physical, mental, moral or spiritual—into a Yoga of the Divine, by linking it up with a ceaseless consciousness of the omnipresence of the Absolute, of the surrender of one's personality to God, or of one's standing as an unaffected witness of the movements of the internal and the external nature; (5) Hatha Yoga or the disciplining of the physical body, the nervous system and the vital forces with a view to preparing the individual for the practice of the higher yoga of inner discipline and meditation; (6) Kundalini Yoga or the bringing into activity of a highly occult force dominant and latent in the individual, by a rousing of which through a training of the prana and the mind the illimitable resources of nature are spontaneously placed at the disposal of man, and he becomes possessed of a consciousness of his true at-one-ment with the universe; (7) Mantra, Yantra and Tantra Yogas or the ways of certain purely mystic processes of generating spiritual forces and vibrations



within, as also of relating these to the without, through the symbology of specific sounds, formulas, diagrams and rituals intended to free man from confinement to the lower nature and raise him to the regions of the higher nature; (8) Japa Yoga or the spiritual practice of the chanting of the Divine Name or certain significant letters, words, phrases or sentences in order to bring about a condition of harmony and illumination in the inner nature of man; (9) Laya Yoga or the method of the dissolution of the mind in the Spirit by the recession of effects into causes, the merging of the grosser in the subtler, and the raising of one's consciousness and force from the lower to the higher. Swami Sivananda displays a great mastery in the synthesis of these various Yogas for the benefit of men of weak will, and assures the aspirant-world that success is bound to come when practice is backed up by sincerity, firmness and patience.

### **His Method of Approach**

It is said that a sage of Self-realisation is like a pure crystal which has, by itself, no colour, but appears to assume the tint of any object that may be brought near it. Such a sage is supposed to behave, speak and act like a child with a child, an adult with an adult, an old man with an old man, a scholar with a scholar, and an ignorant one with an ignoramus. The idea behind this spontaneous self-expression, uninitiated by any particularised motive, intention, effort or will, is a close following of one's true nature with the Divine Will, which is immanent and active in all beings, and which has neither partiality nor prejudice, neither preference nor ill will with regard to anyone.

Swami Sivananda, in his personal life and example, as well as in his writings and speeches, reflected spontaneously, as it were, the nature manifested and exhibited by the environment around him, and acted in close keeping with a purely impersonal life. His works are not so much enunciations of principles for the guidance of the intellect and the reason—as is the case with several rationalistic works of metaphysicians—as practical instructions on the methods of the life spiritual, meant to go straight into the hearts of aspiring individuals, whether or not they have carefully thought out beforehand the conditions and the inner circumstances under which they have been prompted to take to the spiritual way of living by the inner call to discover what seems to be hidden in and is above nature. There is no circumlocution, no periphrasis, no superficial statements or throwing of unnecessary sidelights in his writings, but a clear-cut, well-defined and open path free from all mystifications and ambiguities is laid before the seeker with an intention not merely to give information but to enlighten and guide him at every step of his sadhana. His style and expression are remarkably simple, surging from the heart and the feeling of one who has had not only a vision of the perfection and the delight of God-Being but who possesses an insight into the sufferings of man, the depth of his ignorance which is hard to circumvent, and the need for illumination in the human world to lead a normal life—not only physical, mental and moral, but also spiritual, extended outward in the society, the nation and the world. The entire mass of his teachings is powerfully charged with the dominant spiritual note that all forms of life in society, whether individual or collective, have

ultimately to be based on and derive meaning and inspiration from the recognition of a boundless existence deeper than all the visible and the conceivable orders of nature. Fired with a deep anxiety to relieve the world of ignorance and pain, Swami Sivananda girt up his loins to face the situation in the best possible manner open to him, and spared no pains in harnessing all his energy for the noble divine purpose which he set before himself. His works are illustrative of almost every way of contacting man through literature—metaphysics, ethics, religion, mysticism, psychology, parables, stories, catechism, yoga, prayer, and ritual.

The student qualified to approach his spiritual literature is, as with the Yoga Vasishtha, neither one who is totally ignorant of spiritual values nor one who has attained to the apex of spiritual life. The aspirant endowed with the ethical and the moral qualifications of *yama*, *niyama* and *sadhana-chatushtaya*, who has, by his purity of mind, received monitions as to the existence of a higher life and is stirred with the zeal to grasp it and realise it in his own life, but is at the same time troubled by incapacities, doubts and lack of knowledge in regard to the proper method of approaching it and the spiritual way of conducting himself, should turn to the works of Swami Sivananda. As is usually the case with eminent spiritual philosophies and yoga techniques, most of his writings begin with a vivid and clear portrayal of the presence and the nature of suffering in the world, the detection of which is the first prerequisite and the fundamental stage of a spiritual way of life. Like Sankara, the philosopher, Swami Sivananda boldly affirms the existence of a Supreme Absolute, second to which there can be none; and like the

Buddha, he gives a colourful picture of the character of pain in life, makes a careful diagnosis of the cause of this pain, a detailed analysis of human psychical conditions, and delineates the laying out of the path running up to the ultimate perfection and peace of man, together with a dignified description of the characteristics of his final destiny.

### **The Philosophic Life**

Swami Sivananda emphasises that life is the working out of a philosophy, and philosophy is the unravelling of the mystery of existence, an all-round consideration of the deeper implications of experience and not merely an arising of the mansions of logical systems. Philosophy is more a digging deep into the abyss of life than a flying into the air of abstract speculation. Swami Sivananda recognises that any philosophy divested of human concerns is, in the end, doomed to failure and can never appeal to the restless and inquisitive spirit of man. Philosophy, religion and life mean to him one and the same thing, and they signify not any unworldly or otherworldly concepts, but move in close association with man's demands for hunger and love, fame and power, value for life, concern for others and regard for oneself, and his ultimate aspiration for immortality in Brahman. The ringing tone of Swami Sivananda's life and teachings is that of a supernal love based on proper understanding, a love in which the obstructing barrier between man and man is broken open, and in which one easily discovers a happy way of participating in the life of others in the world.

Endless hope, which seems to be the only foundation of all human enterprises, bespeaks the remote possibility, if not the immediate fact, of a union of the personal will with

the Universal Law of God. It is this love and this meaning of hope and aspiration that can assure a world brotherhood, a world government based on universal sympathy and altruistic considerations. It is this principle of humanitarianism, this relevance to the ultimate good of the human individual, and an acute perception of the necessity of rousing mankind to the presence of an Absolute, an Almighty God, that characterise the life and teachings of Swami Sivananda.

It is said that the Vedas are infinite, a statement which conveys the idea that knowledge is endless and the wonder of creation impenetrable. The scripture declares that there is no limit to God's glories and there is no cessation of man's endeavour to comprehend His nature and the path leading to Him. Swami Sivananda caught the significance of this great truth and so never felt that spiritual teachings can have an end, that one can ever be tired of teaching the spiritual way of life or of listening to spiritual instructions, or that there could be a limit to the carefulness with which the Guru has to look after the welfare of his disciples at every stage. The whole of life is teeming with spiritual import, and hence every moment is an opportunity for sadhana, an occasion to exercise unlimited caution in regard to one's spiritual practices and the chances of temptations, the thwarting, sidetracking and stagnation of mind and spirit in one's life. The philosophic life is not a strange way of deportment, but the normal flow of a well-adjusted and perfected activity in the healthy maturity of seasoned knowledge and profound insight into Truth.

### **The Secret of World Peace**

The inspiring teachings of Swami Sivananda constitute one long song of liberation—the liberation of the individual, the society, the community, the nation and the world—physically, intellectually, morally and spiritually. The central burden of this eternal song of all-round freedom is peace—peace to all, peace everywhere, by learning and imbibing the lesson that Life is One. Every breath that flows from man, every movement of his limbs, every turn of his behaviour, is a direct or indirect effort towards the reconstruction of his personality to suit a better purpose, to bring about an easier and happier condition of life, with liberty and peace as its emblems.

Man represents a microscopic specimen of what happens in the gigantic cosmos on a colossal scale. The aspirations, the changes in the forms of consciousness, the attempt to reach unity, freedom and happiness, which are seen to be vigorously active in man, can also be seen to be busy in the fulfilment of the purpose of the cosmos. In one's own personal life, in society and in the state, man struggles to manifest a regular system and order, abolishing chaos and confusion, an intense passion for the firm establishment of which seems to be innate in the very structure of all beings, especially in self-conscious beings in whom the development of intelligence has come to the stage of displaying the ability to know the difference between right and wrong, true and false. The universe does the same thing, with this difference that, while man strives with insufficient knowledge, the universe moves freely with an unrestricted expression of this

tendency to realise the highest truth, goodness and freedom in its own bosom.

The changes that take place in the parts are felt in the constitution of the whole. As every cell in the human body organises itself to live in accordance with the law that regulates the whole body, and as every error on the part of a cell in the execution of its meaning brings about a reaction from the entire body with the purpose of setting right the wrong that has entered into its being, so does the cosmic law correct the errors committed by the individuals constituting the cosmos. Small errors cause mild reactions, and great wrongs lead to tremendous upheavals. Even the so-called unobserved acts in the grosser world produce mighty vibrations in the subtler regions.

The entire teaching and activity of Swami Sivananda centres round an untiring stress on the possibility of individual and world peace on the basis of a knowledge and practice of this dharma, this law eternal, this rule of unity in every level of existence, in every grade of society, in every individual, every man, woman and child. This is his clarion call—the ceaseless warning to humanity that peace cannot be had by warfare, by exploitation, by domination or competition, for these bursting waves on the surface are raised by the storms of desire and greed, and that there can be no rest for man until these violent commotions cease through understanding and cooperation. Man's concept of pleasure is nothing but an outcome of his erroneous judgment of a present good, his desire is the result of a wrong idea of a future good, his pain is the consequence of a false notion of a present evil, and his fear is the corollary of a mistaken evaluation

of the nature of a future evil. All passions and their several variations are veritable diseases brought on by erroneous thinking. These are to be eradicated, for they are irrational and founded on ignorance. Man needs proper education of his faculties in the direction of the real and the good in the highest sense. The unfailing working of the classes of society and the stages of life, according to their dharma, is essential for manifesting in everyday life the peace which is at the bottom of man, the law of God which sustains all things, and for bringing Heaven itself here on Earth. For Swami Sivananda, every form of life can be transformed into a Yoga of the Divine, provided the requisite knowledge is acquired by study, contemplation and service.

The revered Mahatma Gandhi did a signal service not only in the field of politics but also in religion, philosophy and ethics, when he emphasised the aspect of Truth as God. In the assertion commonly made, viz., God is Truth, the judgment involved is likely to become questionable, for the predicate 'Truth' is referred to 'God' whose existence is presupposed or taken for granted. Naturally, those to whom the existence of God has not become an article of faith and whose rational attitude has not been convinced of it will take the assertion 'God is Truth' as not a demonstrated fact but a hypothetical proposition. But in the asseveration 'Truth is God' no such sublime inconsequence is involved, for none can deny that there is such a thing as Truth. And this Truth is identified with what we have to understand by God. Truth is the law of the universe. This law is not blind, but is intelligence itself operating everywhere. Law and law-giver in this case are one. And likewise, to Swami Sivananda, Truth is



not merely speaking the truth but 'That which is'. It is the unchanging, infinite and eternal Substance, which is at once the law and the love governing and guiding man, society, nation and world. The true significance of this Truth and of this Love is not properly assimilated in ordinary man's life, but is fully realised in the life of the superman who is not only a world ruler but also a Self ruler. It is not Nietzsche's egoistic elevation of man to power but the Self-realised sage, a veritable embodiment of the Divine, that is the ideal superman, a being who is at one and the same time a man of the world and a representative of the Absolute.

True knowledge is a knowledge of things in their essences, in their relation to the universe, in the relation of Truth. This Truth, this Law, when it is supported and protected, supports and protects everyone. "*Dharmo rakshati rakshitah.*" It is only when we realise that joy is in the fulfilment of the Law of God that we become truly free and liberated from all bondage. Dharma is the innermost nature and truth of man and of the universe, for it is the body of the Divine Will. This is real duty, and here is the secret of world peace. Swami Sivananda has been living and preaching this deathless truth, this law and order of nature, for the solidarity of the world, for all mankind to emulate and follow, and his divine mission shall be fulfilled when even a modicum of this knowledge shall succeed in throwing light into the dark corners of man's mortal nature.

### **Unity—The Home of Peace**

Here is the essence of the law and the love that unites the world. This is the rationale behind all the gospels of world peace and the doctrines of universal love and brotherhood.

Broadcasting the ancient wisdom of India, the wisdom that discovered the true relation of man to his environment, Swami Sivananda ceaselessly urges humanity to muster in forces for bringing about real peace in the world. All his teachings and messages are lessons in the attainment of unity by the integration of personality in the consciousness of the Absolute. The aim of life is the practical realisation of the eternal spiritual essence which finds itself in man in a very limited and obscure form. Every individual tries to stretch beyond himself by desiring, aspiring, longing. Desire of any kind is a disclosure, in one's conscious states, that there is something wanting, something lacking, something inadequate. Give the whole world to man; he will not be satisfied. Why? Because there is that something, beyond the world, lying outside the possession of any Earthly individual. Give him the whole of the heavens; he will still be dissatisfied because there is yet an unfulfilled want. This grievous mishap is the direct result of man's ignorance of his unity with creation. "For the magnanimous, the whole world is one family," says the scripture. There can be no peace for man unless he begins to recognise, live and serve his vast surroundings as his own Self, until he does his best at least to approximate his conduct in daily life to this sublime ideal. Peace is only in God, and the peace which we can hope to enjoy in this world depends upon the extent to which we have succeeded in reading and manifesting this infinitude of the Spirit in our social, national and world relations. This achievement is not only a consequence of the knowledge and experience of Truth by man, but also a necessary condition of his attaining any success in his endless struggle for perfection. This is the teaching, the religion, the ethics, the

philosophy and the gospel of Swami Sivananda to every son and daughter of this Earth, of every station in society. This is the hope of humanity.

Towards this end, Swami Sivananda has urged the philosophers of the world to join hands and work together as a confederation of higher rational and spiritual forces. He sends his message: "If a major world catastrophe is to be prevented in time, the foremost philosophers of the world must come forward. Theirs is this sacred duty; for the Light of Divine Knowledge, the radiance of the Universal Power that holds all beings together, that supports the whole universe and sustains it, shines through them." "It is not enough today if His Message is delivered on a battlefield, or on a Mount, or in a holy place, and allowed to take its own time to spread far and wide. Simultaneously, all over the world, everybody should hear the Word of God, and take to the right path. This is possible only through the agency of a united body of world philosophers, and therefore Divine intervention might well take that form." "Without in any way altering the fundamentals of religion, they will be able to bring about a synthesis of all religions, each religion taking what is the best from the others. Thus will a World Order emerge, through a world religion." "This World Philosophical Congress will provide the correct base for scientists, economists and politicians to build their mansions on. Thus guided by philosophers, scientists will work for the happiness and welfare of humanity; economists will plan for the commonwealth; politicians will discover ways and means of living at peace and maintaining the peace of the world."



## Remembering Swami Sivananda

This is the blessed occasion of the coming of Sri Gurudev Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj. In one's usual occupations of life, engrossed as one usually is in several things from morning till evening, one is not likely to find time to keep in mind the memory of a presence of this kind, a force that operated in this world and moved like a mighty colossus of the Spirit for such a long period of time, to the visibility of all people.

The human mind is short of memory many a time. It cannot remember even great things, what to speak of other things. But this is not a thing about which we can have the liberty to remember or not remember. It is an influence whose impact and impression upon the world as a whole cannot easily be erased from the atmosphere of this Earth. The world will remember him; this very Earth will stand as a witness to that great advent. Millions who have been transformed in their inner spirit and outlook of life will cherish his memory. Countless people in this world who have made a right-about turn in their life, who have started looking forward with an inner eye and a vision of perfection, cannot afford to forget him; much less can those who had

the blessing of physically living with him, rubbing shoulders with him, as it were—beholding him every day, receiving his commands, orders and instructions, bathing in the glory of his presence, and enjoying the security that he provided—afford to forget him.

Sri Gurudev Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj came like a single power, lived a life of aloneness, and went alone, as a pervading meteor that shot through the sky, as it were, inundating the world with a radiance that the world has rarely seen. We say he was a spiritual force, casually knowing the literal meaning of this word but not knowing what it actually implies. The world is not aware of the meaning of the words ‘spirit’ and ‘spirituality’; it knows only the surface skin of their meaning. If the in-depth profundity of this significance had actually entered the feelings of people, the world would not be what it is today with tension and anxiety. A word does not protect; it is its meaning that gives us security. Language has no meaning if its significance is not capable of appreciation. If I cannot understand what you speak, and if you do not know what I am saying, the sounds do not carry significance. So is the case with words like ‘God’, ‘spirit’, ‘spirituality’, ‘yoga’, ‘meditation’, ‘moksha’. They fly like empty shells in the firmament of human studies and performances, but life does not change. It is like eating food without digesting and absorbing it. Our studies, our business of life, our activities, our occupations, are not even skin deep, to say the least. Perhaps they do not touch even our skin, yet they seem to be everywhere in the world as the only meaning of life. And what is this ‘only meaning’—the meaning that has not even touched our skin?

That is why we come as we came, we live as we came, and perhaps we go as we came and we lived. This is the fate of many a creature-like existence that treads this Earth as humanity. To reorient this vision and to awaken humanity to the consciousness of a higher value of life—to ‘awaken’ is the proper word—this great, mighty Master incarnated under the command of God Himself.

When Sri Gurudev came to this world, materialism was rampant everywhere. It was the end of the nineteenth century, when a technological industrial revolution was making headway in this world. The wrong side of Western education was emphasised. Logic, argument of an empirical nature, sensorily oriented, intellectually conditioned, was the educational procedure. Unfortunately, that outlook continues even today.

However, even a little of a good thing is great. The Bhagavadgita, the word of Bhagavan Sri Krishna, tells us that even if we do an iota of good work in this world, it will remain as the goodness of our gesture. Here it is the goodness that counts, and not the quantum of it. Our goodness need not be like an ocean, for the visibility of people’s eyes. It is a quality that is called goodness; it is not a quantity, like a mountain.

So with this great vision, the first step was taken by mighty Masters such as Sri Swami Sivananda, right from the time of the coming of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa and his disciples. Then many a great genius of a rational, philosophical and intellectual type arose in this world. That was the beginning of the twentieth century when there was, as people say, the renaissance outlook in the history of India. It

was the culture of the West that preponderated everywhere. There is nothing wrong with it; but everything has a right side and a wrong side, as we all know. We can emphasise only the left, only the right, or both sides in an integrated whole. There was a tilting of the balance on the exterior, materialistic, outwardly oriented side of things. This had to be set in order.

Life is an integration of the outlook of consciousness. It is not a performance or an activity like a job. Life is not a job. It is not a doing of something; it is a being of some quality and characteristic. What kind of being is it that characterises our usual existence in this world? Usually we never speak of this aspect of our life. What kind of person are you? Do not tell me what you are doing—what your achievement in this world, in your career, as a person doing many a job is—but tell me what you are by yourself. What kind of person is this? This question is not appreciated, because that would be touching the vital spot of a person. The vitality is the very essence and the very existence of the meaning of a person. What kind of life are you leading? Apart from the fact that you are doing many a wonderful thing in the world, are you also a wonderful person, as wonderful as the wonder of your activities and performances? Are you a wonderful person? Put a question to your own self.

Great deeds have been performed by people, historically speaking. Are these people also great in themselves? Is your 'being' as great and grand as the grandeur and greatness of your 'becoming' the performance? You have something, and you are something. These two aspects of the matter are to be considered in the case of every person: "I have something,

and I am something. I have something, and everyone knows what it is I have, and I also know what I have. But is it also known what I am?” Spirituality begins here. It is not a performance of mere physical exercises or some breathing techniques. It is not a doing of anything. Underline this matter very clearly. You can do anything—you can lift this mountain—and yet you may not be spiritual, because spirituality is the efflorescence of what you are, and not what you are doing. The world is enamoured of the doings of people. This is how human history goes, society goes, technology goes.

Man has to become superman. Man may do many things, but he will die as a man only. Man cannot die as a god. It is necessary to depart from this world as an angel that incarnated as a human tabernacle. We should not go as the very thing that came from the mother’s womb; otherwise, there would be no evolution, no progress, no advantage taken of this blessed career of life as a whole which has been granted to us by God Almighty for carrying on His mission as an ambassador—a representative, as it were—in this world. We are sent by God to this world not to run factories, open shops and run about to marketplaces, but to obey the order of that Being under whose command it is that we came to this world for a purpose that He knows, and we are also supposed to know.

When we go, we do not carry our factories and shops. What do we carry with us? *“Namutra hi sahayartham pita mata ca tisthatah, na putradarah na jnatih dharmas tisthati kevalah; ekah prajayate jantur eka eva praliyate, eko’nubhunkte sukrtam eka eva tu duskrtam”* is a mastermind saying in the



Manu Smriti. Alone you come, and alone you go. And do you know that you are also living alone, without any friends? If you believe, wrongly, that you have appurtenances around you and you are really not alone in this world, so much the worse for you. Nobody is your friend here. Friends are only up to the cremation ground. Every friendship is conditional, with ifs and buts, and provisos. Nobody is an unconditional friend. *Ekah prajayate jantur*: Alone you come, without any belongings, and alone you go. And, therefore, when you are living in this world, you have nothing with you. You are a pauper, materially speaking, even when you are living, and no one comes with you—neither father, mother, nor anyone from your family circumstance, nor anything that you thought belonged to you. Not a broken needle, not a piece of straw can come with you. What comes? You come with you; that is all.

Is it not a terrible message? When you go, you carry you only. What does it mean? “Am I going carrying only myself, nothing except myself?” Here again the inundation of the meaning of the word ‘spirituality’ comes in. You carry yourself with you—which means to say, your spirituality comes with you. That is the meaning of the words *dharmas tisthati kevalah*. Dharma comes with you. Dharma is the impression created in the mind by following the law of God. It is also something connected with your being, and not with what you have done outwardly. What you have done will not come with you; what you have been, that will come. That is dharma. Dharma is the quality of your existence, the characteristic of what you are. That will come.

This was the message of these great Masters who rose up like shining stars in the firmament of Indian history in the beginning of the twentieth century, and some of them continue even today. Gurudev Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj was with us with this message, with this instruction, with this sacrifice of the spirit that he had throughout his life—great sacrifice, physically, mentally, vitally, intellectually, socially, politically, spiritually. We lived with him, and we remember him with tears in our eyes. He was our father and mother, our friend and relation, our security and our wealth. He was our daily meal and our very breath. With him we lived, and him do we remember. May his blessings be upon you all!



## **A Friend, Philosopher and Guide**

Spirit, which is veritably the power of God set in motion, keeps itself ever vigilant to maintain the purpose of creation, and it never sleeps even for a moment. It is always active in working to maintain the equilibrium and order necessary for the fulfilment of the aim of creation. It is always intolerant about excesses and extremes of any kind. Whenever and wherever there is an intolerable excess or extreme, an overstepping of boundaries and limits, the Spirit begins to work forcefully and brings back the powers to move in the direction of the desirable, and sets things in tune with the purposes or aims which it has in view.

At the time when Sri Gurudev Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj came into the limelight in this world, sometime in the earlier part of this twentieth century, it could be observed that there were certain movements in human history which required rectification. History is nothing but the march of the intentions of the Time Spirit which vigorously adjusts and adapts itself to the ultimate aim and goal towards which the entire universe is moving. At the beginning of the twentieth century there were two trends in social movement which went to excess, and they had to be checked. There was, on

the one side, an excess of traditional orthodoxy, while, on the other side, there was an extreme in the materialistic and economic outlook of life. Both these things were visible not only in India but all over the world. There were two sections of mankind thinking in two departments of life, one going to the one extreme and the other to the other extreme. The religious orthodoxy tended to isolate itself from the realities of life and set up an almost impossible set of ideals of religiosity, a type of religion which made it almost an other-worldly affair, perhaps, having nothing to do with the present life, as also bordering upon social disparities and stratifications of human society in a manner which could not have been regarded as healthy from the point of view of the aims of the Time Spirit.

On the other hand, there was the other side, viz., science, physics, technological developments and industrial revolution, all of which gripped the minds of the modern Indian youth, who gradually lost contact with the vital springs of Indian culture and began to feel enamoured of the demonstrations of modern achievements in the fields of applied science and technology. So, there was a section of people, youngsters included, which moved in the direction of the exterior world of sense contacts, social amusement and physical comfort, making it the be-all and end-all of life, as it were, ignoring the spiritual value of life altogether, on account of the glamour of Western civilisation which had its impact upon Indian culture due to the peculiar circumstances of history in which India found itself at the beginning of this century. As mentioned, there was religious orthodoxy, even untouchability of various types, which was definitely

not in consonance with the aims of the Time Spirit or the Will of God. The balance of life was swinging between the devil and the deep sea.

Whenever such a gulf of difference arises in the lives of the people, whenever there is intolerable movement of any kind, the Spirit of Time takes the rod in its hand, and it does its work in two ways. Sometimes it is harsh with people and punishes them with a tremendous revolution, an earthquake, cataclysm or massacre; it can do even that when it is angry. But, if its intentions are of a different kind, it can bring about an inward revolution of a cultural and spiritual nature, leading to the same aim, of course, and it is this act of the Time Spirit that was responsible, we may say, for the birth of great spiritual Masters such as Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa and Swami Vivekananda. In a sense, we may say that the activities of the Time Spirit began with Raja Ram Mohan Roy himself, which marks the beginning of the revival of ancient Indian culture in the modern period.

This kind of activity of invisible forces concretised itself in various ways, and these manifestations were of various types, some visible and some invisible. The visible came in the form of stalwarts, geniuses and Masters—stalwarts such as Tilak and Gokhale, geniuses such as Swami Dayananda, Mahatma Gandhi and Aurobindo, and Masters such as Ramana Maharshi and Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj. These great personages of modern times were the spirits of an inward revolution which was nothing but the hands of the Time Spirit working for a cosmic purpose. Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj was an embodiment of the intentions of the Cosmic Spirit. It may safely be stated that he was Vedanta in daily

life, Yoga in daily life, philosophy in action, sage and saint combined, the highest idealism shaking hands with a down-to-earth realism. That was the peculiar touch which Swami Sivananda gave to the spiritual value of mankind.

Spirituality was then confined to monasteries, mahatmas and yogis in sylvan areas and sequestered places. It had not become a part and parcel of day-to-day life. That was one aspect of the excesses. As mentioned earlier, there was the other side of it, a complete oblivion in respect of spiritual values—a thorough Westernisation, taking in only the comfort-and-satisfaction aspect of Western civilisation and ignoring the logical, ethical and other valuable principles involved in that civilisation. This dichotomy or gulf between the two excesses had to be bridged by a personality who could act as a liaison between these two aspects of human nature and activity. Persons such as Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj and Sri Aurobindo acted this role of bringing together the principles of ancient tradition and wisdom in consonance with present-day requirements of logic and scientific approach. So there was once again the success of the Time Spirit in its real form, not cutting itself off from the world, unapproachable and inaccessible to people, nor going to the other excess of downright crass materialism.

Sri Gurudev's approach was therefore very comprehensive, and his life was his teaching. Some, at least, of his disciples regard themselves as thrice blessed for having had the rare privilege of living in the physical vicinity of this great Master. Living with him for years and observing him was a greater lesson imbibed by his disciples and followers than a study of books. This is a fact, and it is a great truth. A few

of the disciples who had the opportunity and good fortune to be with him for many years of their lifetime had this wonderful experience of living under the shade of a father, mother and divinity manifest in human form, goodness and compassion blended in one. This is why the life of Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj cannot be fully written from all its aspects. There were so many characteristics of his life, and his close associates such as Swami Atmanandaji Maharaj say that Gurudev had several of the characteristics of Lord Krishna Himself—the multifaceted manifestation of God, a personality inclusive of everything and anything valuable in life. Sri Gurudev possessed a goodness that reached the stature of the most magnificent divinity and spirituality, at the same time coming down to the level of children in primary school and the man in the street. He was also like Lord Rama in some respects. Sri Rama was said to be *purva-bhashi*. Valmiki says, “*Purva-bhashi tu raghavah.*” Many people assume a dignity and a sense of prestige of their own which they maintain, on account of which they will not speak first; they want to be spoken to first. But Sri Rama was not like that. He would be the first to ask, “How are you?” “If you do not speak, I will speak!” That was Sri Rama’s attitude. Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj was like that. He would be the first to do *namaskara* to you. It is not easy to recount all the many things his lifelong disciples personally observed in his thoroughgoing technique of self-effacement and obliteration of the ego.

A Sannyasin, a Paramahansa of the Sri Sankaracharya Order, inwardly nothing short of a Jivanmukta but outwardly behaving like anyone and everyone, Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj was a surprise to many of the orthodox Sannyasins

living in the same area. Many of them could not understand what his attitude meant. And they could not reconcile his behaviour with the traditions which Sannyasins had to follow. A Sannyasin cannot touch the feet of a Grihastha, for instance. A Sannyasin cannot prostrate himself before a householder. It was all forbidden and regarded as heresy. Swamiji was just the opposite of it. He brought down the spirit of spirituality from its confines of fanatic orthodoxy in which many of the traditional Sannyasins got caught up, and made it a part and parcel of the kitchen, the bathroom and the latrine, the street and the shop, so that the aroma of the spirit spread in day-to-day life, in the office and the factories, not making any distinction between the boss and the subordinate, the worker and the employer. All this was a surprise and wonder indeed to people used to thinking in other ways. Gurudev Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj came to overstep all barriers which separated man from man, barriers which cut off man from God Himself. Thus was his great message to people demonstrated and manifested in his own life. God should not remain separated from man. God cannot be in Vaikuntha or Heaven. He has to be with us, He has to be here and walk with us on the road when we stroll, and He must be our friend *now*. He must be a *sakha* so that we are not to aspire for a remote God but to live in God—*here* and *now*. Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj's coming was to completely revolutionise spiritual aspiration and practice by making it an affair of the daily life of every human being. To conclude, he was Vedanta in daily life.





## **Message on Swami Sivananda's 108<sup>th</sup> Birthday**

Today we are at the commencement of the 108th birthday anniversary of Worshipful Guru Bhagavan, Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj. What are we going to think in our mind at this moment? What would we like to think? Naturally we would like to think him, conceive him, and make him our own. But who was he? What was he? If these ideas about him are not clear to us, we may not be able to think him.

He was a super-person, not an ordinary person; a super-individual, not an ordinary individual; a superman, not an ordinary man. These persons of this characteristic, quality and category cannot be regarded as human beings. That is why we say they are superhuman. If that is so, their vision of life also is not human. They do not see things as we see them. They do not behave as we behave. They do not feel as we feel. They do not work as we work. And, their evaluation of things is quite different from our way of evaluating things. They are, to put it in the language of a great scripture, Mahakartas, Mahatyagis and Mahabhoktas. Their actions are great actions, not mere actions that produce some reaction. An action that does not produce any reaction is

a Mahakarma. But an action that produces a reaction, as in the case of all people, is ordinary karma that binds and causes suffering.

They are also not merely Mahakartas, but Mahatyagis. Their renunciation is not a renunciation of something, as in the case of people who imagine that they have done this kind of *tyaga*, this renunciation or that renunciation. Someone might have renounced salt or chilli, or a family or a pension, and so on. These kinds of *tyagas* also are known as renunciations, but Mahatyaga is a renunciation of everything. That is to say, it is a total renunciation of whatever we consider to be existing. The word Sannyasa implies a renunciation, but the word does not tell us what it is that is to be renounced. Without knowing what is the object that is to be renounced, people imagine that they have to renounce their family, their land and property, their bank balance, their relationship with friends, and this and that. But, this Mahatyaga does not mean this kind of small renunciation that we have in our minds.

It is the renunciation of the very idea of there being a world outside the sense organs. Who can have such a renunciation? Does the world exist before us? Even to renunciate, the world exists in front of the eyes. But, in Mahatyaga, it does not exist in front of oneself. Where does it exist then? It has merged into the very perceiver's universal vision of life. This is impossible to conceive, because if the renunciation still maintains the consciousness of there being a world outside, there is a likelihood of, one day or the other, reverting to the belief that the world is worthwhile and it would not be improper to maintain some kind of personal

relationship with it. This Mahatyagi has no necessity to maintain a relationship with the world, because he himself has become one with it. So, when he beholds the world, we do not know whether he is beholding the world outside or seeing himself as the world.

How many people in the world can think in this manner? And, it is also worth knowing whether there is any benefit in maintaining an awareness of this kind, or if this is only a scriptural dictum. If we have a little common sense and a little capacity to think impartially, we will know what a grand benefit it would be for us to make the world our own rather than keep it as a segregated object to be dealt with by our sense organs.

The world is to be renounced by being the world itself. We need to know what kind of renunciation this is. Is it a renunciation at all? Yes. No renunciation can be equal to this, and nothing beyond this can be conceived. By being the world, one has renounced the world.

Such a person was this mighty being whose birthday anniversary we are observing today. They are Mahakartas, great doers of things, not little doers like people of the world. We do some good things here and there, a little bit of it, but they do a total good in the performance of their total action. This is the reason why we call them supermen. Total action is inconceivable; and, what could it be? We have some hint as to what it could be in the fourth and fifth chapters of the Bhagavadgita. Every being is All-being at the same time, because of the fact there is only one doer everywhere. The identification of the great Mahakarta with the Great Doer of all things is the reason why his actions also become

all-actions. They are also Mahabhoktas. As everything is theirs, it can be said that they are also the possessors of all things—possessors of all things in the sense that the things are inseparable from themselves. To that extent, we may say they are the greatest enjoyers of things. They are enjoyers of all things because they themselves are the things. There is a difference between enjoying a thing while it is outside you and enjoying it when it is your own self. Do you enjoy yourself? Do you eat yourself? If that could be possible, that is the concept of the wonderful, inconceivable, all-inclusive enjoyment of these great Masters.

Hence, Gurudev Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj, and many others of his category, have been designated as Mahakartas, Mahatyagis and Mahabhoktas. We call them Godmen, or sometimes we say Mangods. All the gods are within them, so we call them Mangods, because they look like man with all the gods inside them. So, they are Mangods; or, they are Godmen because God has entered them.

This super-individual, this divine mentor of humanity, we remember today at this moment of the observance of his 108th birth anniversary. He is the life of every one of us. He is the being of every one of us. He is the breath of every one of us who are his followers, who are his devotees, who are his admirers, who endeavour to follow his footsteps in the way he lived in this world.

He used to tell some of us that his teaching consists in his behaviour. He did not speak much, and if anyone, any *chela*, asked him, “Gurudev, please instruct us,” he would say, “See what I do.” Their being is a teaching, their behaviour is an instruction, and their doing is a path-maker to lead every one

of the disciples along that direction of doing—which ought to be a comprehensive doing, and not a binding doing. It is necessary to work, but it is not necessary to work in such a way that work binds. It is necessary to do service in as many ways as possible, but not service that will affect one's welfare.

The great, masterly teaching of Sri Gurudev to all of us, which we have to remember at this moment, is: Keep God, the Creator of the universe, first in your mind, and everything shall follow you, because when the great universal comprehensiveness is in your heart of hearts, all that has been created by that Mighty Being also will follow you spontaneously. With this deep feeling of a mood of meditation may you spend your day today, for the benefit of you all.



## **The Rising Stars of the Twentieth Century**

Human nature, in its present state of achievement, is in a struggle through which it is passing. It is being pulled at the lower end by the instincts of the brute nature from where it has arisen through ages of evolutionary process; and simultaneously with the anguish and uncertainty characterising its involvement in lower nature, it is being pulled up by its great destiny through certain indications of that possibility planted in itself.

Every stage of the earlier levels is present in the human being. There is appetite, like the vegetable and plant kingdom. There is lethargy and inertia, like a stone or a mineral; there is rapacity, cruelty and violence characterising animal nature, and selfishness which is the hallmark of undeveloped human consciousness. Even when the lower levels are transcended, in the earlier stages human nature remains semi-animal, semi-vegetable and semi-stonelike, and these historical evidences are available in the lives of prehistoric cavemen. It is half-conscious of its own self, and semi-conscious of the outer world. Then there is self-consciousness of an intensely assertive, selfish nature—each for oneself and the rest takes

care of itself. Then there is a further development by the rise of ages in the process of time, when community life becomes a necessity and it is felt that even individual existence is not comfortably possible if social life is absent.

The rejection of the presence of others will so interfere with one's own self that every need that is felt by a person can be jeopardised by the similar reactive rejecting process exercised by other people. So, the consciousness of community life arises. This also is a kind of selfish life only. Society is not an unselfish existence, because each one has to survive, but this survival is not possible without the cooperation of others. Higher up still is the consciousness of doing good for good, and bad for bad—tit for tat. Whatever you do to me, I shall do to you. That consciousness rises further, and it realises that this is not true human nature. To be human is to be humane at the same time. Goodness arises, which is a semblance of the reflection of a higher realm of existence; or rather, a beam of light arises from the soul within itself, until which time it was sleeping. It is waking up gradually in the good person who aspires to become a holy person, whom we call a saintly person.

It is not enough if we are good. That is also inadequate in the spiritual evolutionary process. We have to be sanctified in our spirit. The presence of God has to be adequately reflected in human nature in order that it may be saintly or holy. Holiness is the name we give to a quality of behaviour and existence which can be seen only in the most holy—the holy of holies.

God does not make Himself felt in individual life until a very advanced stage of human evolution. Men and women always consider themselves as men and women only. The human being considers himself or herself only as a human being. In this stage, the presence of divinity is not felt. People who are engrossed in social work, and erroneously consider a rule that they take upon themselves as the goal of life, get into the mess of involvement in sufferings from which they wish to redeem people, and enter into it themselves. Often many die when they cross the feelings of people in their eagerness to reform them. Those social workers who went beyond the limit of understanding of people outside suffered themselves while they worked for the relief of the suffering of others.

It is not enough if we have enthusiasm. We have also to develop understanding. It is only at the level of the manifestation of understanding and superior reason that we can say that God has descended into us. Social life is not necessarily spiritual life. God is not a social being. He is not a leader of a house or a parliament. He is not a community leader. He is not one among the many; He is One Alone. The need for another does not arise here.

I mentioned that in the earlier stages there is great confusion in the development of consciousness. Warfare, rather, takes place within itself because of not knowing where it is moving, with several progressions and retrogressions, ups and downs, almost simultaneously. After aeons and aeons and ages of development through the evolutionary process, the presence of God is felt by a pull upward against the gravitational downward pull of lower animal instincts. Here, such a presence is felt in our purified reason. The reason can



also go wrong by justifying the acts of the sense organs and emotional upheavals.

Often, it so happens that the reason acts only as a justifying medium of emotional deeds and sensory inclinations. But we have two kinds of reason: the lower reason and the higher reason. The lower reason, which we generally call the mind, is just a logician confirming the validity and system adopted by the working of the sense organs and the emotions; but the higher mind is an ambassador to God. It reflects the light from above. The sun shines in this level of consciousness.

Spiritual seekers will find themselves in great difficulty when the Earth pulls them down on the one hand, and Heaven pulls them up from another side. Who wins victory is for anyone to say. This is the battle, the war of the gods and the asuras—Heaven and Earth pulling an individual in different directions. It is at this juncture of human history that great Masters are born, saints and sages who practically inundated the twentieth century with their meteoric birth and life. Such a great Master is our Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj. The process of time is so long that the life of a human individual, though it appears long, is really short. That is why I use the word ‘meteoric’—it just flashes forth and afterwards disappears, but during this short time of the flash, it sheds light. It brightens the whole atmosphere, the whole firmament, and leaves; and it is for anyone to know what it was.

Thus, Swami Sivananda came to this world. He came, not as a seeking human individual struggling against heavy odds, but as a potential Godman himself. His sadhana must have been over in his previous incarnation; otherwise,

a person cannot suddenly reach such heights of spiritual power in one incarnation. Any amount of sadhana, japa and worship cannot make people so great, powerful, majestic and divine like Master Swami Sivananda. This greatness and glory should be attributed to their spiritual practices in earlier incarnations, as we may say in the case of Buddha. The individual who was to become Buddha had already passed through hundreds of lives, until he became the matured great being called Gautama Buddha.

Saints mature from within, and their maturity is seen only when they manifest it outside. The work that Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj has done in this world of human history may be a perpetual record, a great chapter in the story of civilisation and human development. He realised the deepest truths of life, and broadcast that knowledge through every means possible. He is one of the spiritual Masters who adopted every available means of spreading knowledge. His main purpose was not to prepare an incarnation or a great disciple; that was not his mission. His mission was to wake up slumbering humanity, to shake it up from its lethargy and to leave it at that, so that when we wake up, we will know what is to be done by ourselves.

Such a great Master some of us have seen with our eyes, to our own blessedness that God has bestowed upon us through our past karmas of whatever nature. And today we remember him again. It is no use merely remembering him once in a year. He has to be remembered perpetually. He has created an atmosphere of a powerful resuscitation of values. Today there is no country in the world which has not heard the name of Swami Sivananda. Though he never

travelled abroad, his power of thought was such that it reverberates in the hearts of people everywhere. He never moved anywhere. He had no house. He had no bungalow. He had no physical comforts. He had the Ashram, of course, but he was contented living in a cave-like, hovel-like residence on the bank of the Ganga. He wanted the Ganga and nothing more.

This is the great Master whom we are remembering now—a Godman, a saint and a sage, a mastermind, and a great exemplar for everyone who has eyes to see and ears to hear. May you all remember him, not as a person who has written books, who has given you *prasadam* when you saw him. This is not the way in which you have to remember him. You have to remember him as your leading light, who has shown you the path along which you have to move—the path of ascent, and not digressive descent.

Like him, there were many other great Masters born in the twentieth century. Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa Deva, Sri Aurobindo, Ramana Maharshi, Baba Ram Das, Mahatma Gandhi and many others who we can recount came like sudden rising stars in the heavens, and they vanished almost at the same time. They came together, almost, and went together, really. It appeared as if the twentieth century was intended to have the blessing of these great veritable giants of the Spirit, who came all together, shook the Earth, and then left us. Verily, they shook the Earth, and left this Earth. Our hearts were shaken, remoulded, refurbished, and made to rise to a capability to receive the call of the higher nature.

As I mentioned, we are living in a state of struggle. We do not know who is pulling us. Are the lion and the tiger

pulling us, or is God pulling us? There is a dubious feeling, oftentimes. Sometimes we are lions and tigers. Sometimes we feel, “No, it is not like that. God is calling me.” At this crucial juncture of cross purposes, as it were, in human life, one has to be very cautious. One cannot be one’s own leader; otherwise, the lion will come instead of God coming, and we will not know who is coming. One thing will look like another thing. Guidance of a great Master is necessary. Have the company of sages and saints. Live with good people—or at least not with obstructing people. If nobody is available, be alone to yourself. Thus, build up your personality for the great coming.

Physical life is very short. We should not imagine that we can live in this body for ages together: “What does it matter? Slowly, I will do it.” There is no question of doing it slowly. By that time, *kala* will come and catch our throat.

A bee was engaged with great avidity in drinking the nectar from the filaments of a lotus flower. It drank nectar and got intoxicated. It went on sucking from morning to evening. When evening came, the lotus closed, and the bee could not come out. “What does it matter?” it said. “Let me drink the nectar throughout the night, and in the morning the sun will rise and I will fly with my joy.” During the night it was drinking the nectar with these feelings, but the sun did not rise. Wild elephants trampled the pond where the lotuses were growing and crushed everything, together with the bee, and its salvation was over in one minute.

So, we should not imagine that life is a comfortable dinner party of honey, milk, and everything pleasant: “I will do sadhana tomorrow; let me eat today.” Tomorrow will not

come, because the wild elephant may come before we wake up the next morning. A caution should be exercised by every one of us. "Heedlessness is veritable death," says Sanatkumara in a great admonition to Dhritarashtra in a wonderful scripture called Sanatsujatiya. There is no such thing called death. Heedlessness is death; foolishness is death; carelessness is death, especially regarding one's own self.

To rouse people from this predicament of unfortunate sluggishness and carelessness, Swami Sivananda, the great Master, came and made us what we are, pulled us to this Ashram, and made us all sit here the whole day from morning to evening. It is a blessing that has come from him. May it come to you for ever and ever.



## 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 Swargashram, which is an ancient institution. A few sadhus and Sannyasins were put up there, living on alms and practising their meditations. Perhaps the Swargashram *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 Saraswati, 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 Saraswati. This was on the 1st of June. This Swami Visvananda Saraswati 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. 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 other. He had seen Swamiji in those days—1924 and onwards. He gave us an idea as to what Swamiji looked like, in what esteem he was held by people in Swargashram, 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 in Swargashram.

The only two centres in Rishikesh which had a little population then were the Swargashram 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 wild animals used to roam in these areas. When the land was dug up for some construction, they even discovered bones and skulls. No one knew exactly what the situation or condition of this area was. It was completely deserted, uninhabited by human beings. Such were the days when Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj entered the life of austerity in the Swargashram.

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*, which had no ghee or oil) and *dhal* which also had no fat, neither ghee nor oil. People say that Swamiji did even not take the *dhal*; 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 that 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 *dhal*, 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 the Darshana 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 Swargashram, 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 will you 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 a modern iron bridge. 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 them. 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 he would come to the Swargashram 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 Swargashram. There was neither The Divine Life Society nor the Sivananda Ashram, even to dream of. He was familiarly known as the great saint of Swargashram—the Virakta Mahatma of Swargashram.

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 Saraswati, and 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 Saraswatiji—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 anything soothing to the walls of the stomach and intestines. 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 in Laxmanjhula called Satya Sevasrama. 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, the 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 Saraswati 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 forever be the teaching of this saint. 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 so on. 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 these days, i.e., it is accepted only by the intellect as a logical conviction and a rational acceptance of spiritual values but has 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. Only that which is Real can 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 the 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 Kuppaswamy, 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? It is 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 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, the 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!



## **Gurudev's Mission in this World**

This is the most auspicious occasion, presenting itself before us annually so that we may contemplate a little on the nature of the great mission with which Gurudev Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj can be said to have veritably incarnated himself as a ray of divinity on this Earth.

The great significance of his mission in this world is to be the object of our contemplation. This would be perhaps the greatest service that his humble followers and disciples would offer at his holy feet as their *seva* because no service to the Guru can be regarded as perfect, as complete, as to attune the inner being of oneself with the intention of the Guru. Physical service and the external forms of service are there; but when there is no inner attunement with the purpose, the intention and the meaning of the vision of the Guru, physical service becomes inadequate and does not serve its purpose. So together with the ardour, fervour and devotion to the outer forms which his great mission has taken as this Divine Life Society—service to humanity through cultural revival, etc.—we would do well to focus our attention on the central point of his mission, which is the be-all and end-all,

we may say, of his entire life and the whole gamut of his activities and works in this world.

That mission for which he came is the reconstruction of the concept of spiritual life. The concept of spiritual life is as old as creation itself. Spirituality is not the new innovation of any saint. But every saint and sage comes with a peculiar purpose: to accentuate, emphasise or floodlight certain aspects of this concept which, through the passage of time, gets diluted into the ordinary life of the individual, and spirituality becomes one of the aspects of human activity rather than the vital centrality of the very existence of people.

We may simply say that Gurudev Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj was one of the greatest spiritual personalities of our times, a stalwart of the spirit whose main teaching was the lesson that he imparted concerning the goal of life. All other functions, all other works, duties and activities contribute to the fulfilment of this spiritual purpose which is struggling to gradually unfold itself through the personality of man. This is a very important point which he came to emphasise in our lives, lest we should forget its meaning, its importance, lest we should mistake it for one of the several functions and duties of our life. It is not one of the functions of life. It is the only function of life as a whole, of which other functions are auxiliaries, accessories, preparations and contributory values.

As I mentioned, he came to reconstruct the concept of spirituality itself—which mainly lies in the fact that the spiritual is the background and the rock bottom of the entire evolutionary process of all beings in the world. Life is an onward movement towards God. Life is a Godward movement; and the mystique of life does not necessarily

mean human life. Life is larger than what can be included merely in the species of humanity. The whole life of the universe, the entire function of creation, is an irresistible tendency towards God-realisation. In this sense it is that people say that the universe is a process. It is not a static mass of matter before us, lying as if it were dead. Matter and life, mind and intellect, are all stages of the unfoldment of life towards spiritual realisation. The work that you do in your offices, the duties that you perform in the various vocations of your life, your very existence itself, the breath that you breathe, the thoughts that you think, the words that you utter—everything is a manifold form of spirituality.

*Vairagya* and *sannyasa*, renunciation and spirituality, were the very stuff and fibre of the personality of Gurudev. He was a fire of renunciation and a fire of the spirit, a flaming spiritual personality before us, the like of which it is difficult to see. This personality of Gurudev is clinging to us in another language even today, even now at this moment, even though his physical personality may be said to have withdrawn itself into its causal elements.

The relation between the Guru and the disciple is not a physical one. It is not a connection temporarily established between two bodies or individuals, ending with the end of the body. Not so! Far from it be the truth. The initiation which the disciple receives from the Guru is the contact that is established between the Guru and the disciple inwardly, spiritually. It is a relationship between two souls, not two bodies.

In this sense, the Guru never dies, nor is the Guru ever born. God Himself, Paramatman, the Supreme Ishvara

comes as the great teacher to mankind through the vehicle of these personalities of the Gurus. While the personalities may oftentimes be human, and the vehicles or means through which this great message is conveyed to mankind may be visible forms, the message itself is eternal. It is the light of the spirit which cannot be extinguished by the winds of the world. Such light was shining in the personality of Gurudev Swami Sivananda. Should we not regard ourselves as thrice blessed that most of us had the blessing and the opportunity of visibly seeing him, living with him, and physically coming in contact with him every day—to see God moving among us, as it were?

Well, he is yet alive. No one but he, nothing but his invisible hands could be responsible for the increasing rapidity of the movement and work of The Divine Life mission. It is continuing in leaps and bounds, we may say. He has withdrawn himself from one form and entered into another form. Change of form is not destruction of personality; it is only a difference introduced into the mode of working of the very same power and force. Immanence is his form at present.

In this immanent form of his spiritual personality, he works through us, speaks through us, drives us, sustains us. The Divine Life Society itself is a wonder. It is a miracle. Many disciples, many admirers of this Society have asked: “Did Swamiji work miracles? Did he work wonders in this world, as we hear of in connection with the lives of great Masters?” What could be a greater wonder, a greater miracle than the existence of this Society itself—the way in which it works and the effect which it has produced upon the mind

of mankind, the transformation that it has brought about in the hearts of people, and the emphasis that it has laid on the importance of the life of the spirit? What can be a greater wonder than the incarnation of the Spirit itself in the heart of man? This miracle he has worked, and he is working. We are indeed happy. We are blessed.

We are thrice blessed and most fortunate. There is absolutely no doubt that God has been immensely gracious upon us. Gurudev has been kind to us; and I for one can confidently say that I see God is definitely pleased with us. Though we may be moving with faltering steps, yet it is honestly and sincerely towards the reception of this Divine Grace.

May this central point of the great mission of Gurudev Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj—the focal point of the life of the Spirit in this universe—be the object of our contemplation on this auspicious day. God bless you all.



## The Founding of The Divine Life Society

This is Tapobhumi, holiest of all holy places. The name Rishikesh occurs in the epics and the Puranas as Devabhumi or Brahmabhumi, a land where gods took their abode and saints and sages lived. Such great spiritual stalwarts as Rama and Krishna, Vasishtha and Vyasa trod the sands of this holiest of holies, Rishikesh, where long ago there were no roads and no facilities whatsoever, and there was not this population that we now see around us. We hear that pilgrims walking to holy Badrinath used to carry fire on their heads from Haridwar onwards. Perhaps in those days, due to certain geographical conditions, cold was more intense than it is now. There was no facility of any kind. And such a far-off place at the foothills of the Himalayas was chosen by the great Masters for their penance, for their *tapasya*, for their abode.

It was this place that was chosen by Worshipful Gurudev Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj. He belongs to the lineage of one of these great Masters. He came to this holy place many years back, sometime around the year 1922, and took his abode on the other side of Ganga, living a life of rigorous

*tapas*, austerity. Alone, unbefriended, unknown, uncared for, he lived the life of intense self-restraint and meditation for twelve years. On the sacred sands of the Ganga he used to sit and meditate, bathe in the Ganga, and move out to the present Lakshmanjhula and a little beyond, which was the area of his *tapas* and activity.

It was later that Sri Gurudev saw people coming to him. When his name spread everywhere as a Mahavairagyi, Mahatapasvi, Mahajnani, Mahayogi, people gathered around him. I will not try to recount the names of all those Swamijis and sadhakas who were associated with him. Swamiji moved from this area and travelled through the whole of this state, which is now known as Uttar Pradesh—previously known as United Provinces of Agra and Oudh, Madhya Pradesh, Punjab—and carried on a vigorous Sankirtan movement. Many veterans followed him in this Sankirtan movement. One of his close associates was Ronald Nixon, who was later on Krishna Prem of Uttar Brindavan, a Vaishnava-bhakta himself; and many others joined. His movement spread like wildfire, especially in the areas of Punjab. He was known as Sankirtan Samrat.

When this wonderful rejuvenating, reviving, resuscitating spiritual movement took momentum, those associated with him—devotees, admirers, *bhaktas*—suggested to Sri Gurudev that he should strengthen this movement by the establishment of a strong organisation, which is a necessity because unorganised activity, though it may go on for some time, may not continue for a long time. Let this wonderful work be done through a centralised structure of an organisation. Gurudev agreed, and a legally recognised trust was



formed at a place called Ambala, which was in Punjab in those days and is now in Haryana, on the 13th of January, 1936. This is now the Diamond Jubilee occasion of this holy and sacred Samsthapana of this esteemed organisation, The Divine Life Society. It is a trust.

This institution was started by a stalwart *tapasvin*, and it is continuing through the *tapasya* of its followers—by the devotion and unselfishness that his followers have been taking as their guide in their divine activities. ‘Unselfishness’ and ‘*tapas*’ are the watchwords.

The Society has survived for sixty years. This is a hallmark, to complete an entire cycle of the period of the rotation of the time process. It is a wonderful achievement for anyone, any person, any organisation.

Swamiji followed the doctrine of what he called DIN: Do it now. When an idea arises in the mind, whatever that idea is, it must be implemented then and there. It may be any place—it may be on a street, on a road, in a jungle—it does not matter. Start! The idea has come, now start. It happened that he was in Ambala at that time, and the idea was allowed to take root, and it was registered as a trust there, with many ardent, venerable followers—some Swamis, some householders, some Brahmacharis, many admirers, and so on. How it happened, how he did it, and what was the strength of the will that was the back of the foundation of this great institution—the divine will of this stalwart Master—is for anyone to imagine and contemplate.

Here we are at this moment, the 13th of January. It was Makar Sankranti. This occasion of Makar Sankranti sometimes falls on the 13th, sometimes on the 14th, and

this year it is the 14th. But that day it was the 13th, so it was registered officially as The Divine Life Society Trust on holy Makar Sankranti, the 13th of January, 1936.

Our hearts well up with deep devotion to the feet of this spiritual hero who strode this Earth like a colossus, shook the world, changed the hearts of people, and did what many cannot do—left his name as an immortal trail of the glorious life that he lived. May his blessings be upon us all!



## **Swami Sivananda and The Divine Life Society**

We are here in the Sivananda Ashram, officially known as The Divine Life Society. From Haridwar onwards, even up to Lakshmanjhula, people know this centre as Sivananda Ashram; they never use the words ‘Divine Life Society’. Everywhere—the bus stand, railway station—they know this place as Sivananda Ashram, to the glory Swami Sivananda, the great spiritual Master who lives in the minds of all people throughout the world even today. Glory to his name, glory to his power, glory to his compassion, glory to his wisdom!

The Divine Life Society is the official designation of the institutional aspect of this centre. The Sivananda Ashram connotes more properly the religious and spiritual side of the people who live here, and to where people come from outside. In some other religious organisations they completely separate the buildings and the organisation; they do not mix up the two things. Here we have one location, one set of buildings, everything looking one only, though there is the religious and spiritual side of the Sivananda Ashram and the service aspect, which is connoted by the words ‘Divine Life

Society'. The Divine Life Society works for the welfare of all people. It is a service wing of The Divine Life Society Trust.

Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj was a combination, a blending, an integration of inward contemplation and outward service. He was not two institutions. He was himself the inner glory and the outer service and work. A question arises in the minds of people, especially those living here: What is this inwardness and the outer side of our daily activity?

We are busy. With what are we busy, actually? Usually the novitiate, the Brahmacharin or even the Sannyasin who is not accustomed to go deep into things in daily life is likely to think he is working in some department. "I am in the Publication League", "I am in the Post Office", and so on. But you are also in your own self. You are not always in the Publication League, Post Office, Annekshetra, or some other department. That we are also in our own selves at the same time is to be known very clearly.

When we work for the people of the world—work in departments—are we going out of ourselves and placing ourselves entirely in the context of the dust on the table? Do we cease to be in our own selves at that time? This is a question which each one should raise to one's own self. "I am very busy. I have no time." This is the usual plea of people for anything and everything. We are very busy, we are hardworking persons, and we have no time. Have we no time even to be in our own selves? Have we gone out of ourselves to such an extent—to the desk or the table—that we are not existing inside ourselves?

This is the old, refuted conflict between the cloister and the church, as they call it. Even in European history we hear

about the conflict between the cloister and the church, the church and the kingdom. The kings and the pope were not reconcilable. The pope represented the kingdom of Heaven, the church represented a replica of God in Heaven, and the king represented the power of the Earth. There was a perpetual clash between the two.

Here we do not have kingdoms, churches or kings. What we are in our own selves represents the spiritual side of our existence—very important to note. What we are in our own selves is one thing; and we are also doing many things outside, which seems to be another thing altogether. Humanly it may be impossible to reconcile these two aspects of life—the so-called outer and the inner. The push of the external phenomena is so vehement that it often seems that like a wild gale, our inner personality is thrown out of gear and cast into the winds of the propelling force of the workaday world. Everybody is busy. There is no time to sit. This is like being drifted by a whirlwind and moving in any direction it moves.

The spirit which Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj worked for, for which he established this Sivananda Ashram, was the spiritual side of our existence, which he never forgot to emphasise in every book that he wrote, wherein mostly the first sentence is, “God-realisation is the goal of life.” In all his writings, especially his early books, we will find the first sentence is, “God-realisation is the goal of life.” It is not that work is irrelevant. Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj was one of the most hardworking of persons. Anybody who had the occasion to live with him would know how hardworking he was. He was a disciplinarian on the one side and a *tapasvin*

on the other side. He was not blending two conflicting sides of nature in his spiritual depths and outward activity; it was one and the same thing.

In an analogy we may ask, “What is the difference between the existence of the Sun and the activity of radiation emanating from the Sun?” The existence of the Sun and the process of the radiation of the heat and light of the Sun cannot be distinguished one from the other. The light that is shed by the Sun is not a work that is done by the Sun every day. His existence itself is activity. This is something difficult to understand. Our existence itself is activity. But, what kind of existence? As a little worker, as a servant, as a boss, as a *pujari*, as a cook—is it that kind of existence we are referring to when we speak of existence being the source of the emanation of the activity that we perform? Can anybody imagine that activity is an emanation from our being? It is not arising from the desk and pen and paper—nothing of the kind.

Those who are accustomed to read the Bhagavadgita and probe into its deeper significant aspects would have found time to note that Sri Krishna, who speaks the Bhagavadgita and embodies in himself what he taught, was himself existence as well as action. He was not a person. In the Bhagavadgita, personality is not emphasised anywhere. The impersonality of the person is insistent throughout the Gita. “*Mattah parataram nasti*” is the oft-quoted verse in the Bhagavadgita: Outside me nothing is. If outside me nothing is, activity also is not outside me.

Any activity which is outside us is binding—*karma bandhana*, as it is called. The work that we do as an outward

phenomenon will react upon us as a rope to bind us for rebirth. But if the work that we do is not a phenomenon, it is a noumenon itself, it is our soul itself flooding itself out, as it were, in the so-called outer world, then it becomes spirit dancing within itself in the form of activity. When God creates the world, He does not have desks, tables, typewriters, servants, etc. That overflowing of the abundance of the power of God is the active world that we are seeing before us. If we are also evolutes from God Himself, we are miniscule divinities embodying in ourselves all the potentials and comprehensiveness of God Himself. We are not topsy-turvy emanations from God but veritable sparks of the conflagration of God Himself.

Why did Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj start this Ashram? Is it just because he wanted us to keep busy and run about? He wanted to build up our personalities along the path of God. Did he not emphasise again and again that God-realisation is the goal of life?

Does anyone here find time to think along these lines, the lines chalked out for us by Swami Sivananda himself? Are we doing work which we resent, without which we would be very happy? We would like to take leave of work. Holidays are blessed days. Don't we think like that? "Oh, three holidays have come. Let us be free." Work is an evil. This is generally what we are made to think. Yes, work is evil in one sense of the term. In another sense, it is unavoidable. Did not Lord Krishna tell us, "*Na hi kascit ksanam api jatu tisthaty akarmakrt*"? Do not call it evil and then dub it in dark colours. Not even for a second can a person sit without doing something. The physical personality with all

its cellular activity inside is throbbing with agitation. This agitation of the psychophysical personality is also work. Do you think it is sitting stone-like when we are not doing any work? Our personality is not made up of granite or steel that it does not act and react to any circumstance. The components of our psychophysical personality are part and parcel of the evolutionary process of the cosmos. *Prakriti* is the cosmic evolutionary process. It will compel us to take part in its activity. We may close our eyes and keep quiet, but we are still active. The forces of nature will drag our whole being towards it either by apparently sitting quiet in a *tamasic* mood, or *rajasically* running about in the form of work that we seem to be doing for others, or *sattvic* activity which is contemplation.

There are many teachers of the Bhagavadgita everywhere. We have schools of the Gita and the Upanishads. What is the use of all these schools, finally? What is the meaning that we make out from the Upanishads and the Gita? There is some Sanskrit, some words, some grammar, some recitation, some holy attitude towards the book. Many people only worship the Gita; they do not even read it. They keep it on their heads and walk about. What does it mean? It is a guidance for our day-to-day life. It is meant for living, and not merely reading and reciting.

God exists, and the world exists, and we exist. Existence is the primary meaning of everything. The primary essence of God is called existence. There is no other way we can describe God. Since everything is created by God, is an emanation of God, everything is existence as meaningful as the existence of God Himself. If God has not performed an



outward activity by way of creating the world, we, as part and parcel of God, also cannot do any outward activity. If God has nothing outside Him, we too have nothing outside us, as we are replicas of God. That we seem to be having many things outside us in which we are sunk, which we dislike, is the consequence of sensory activity which is the peculiarity in human individuals and other living beings, contradistinguishing us from God.

God has no sense organs. His organs are everywhere. "*Sarvatah panipadam tat sarvato'kshi siromukham, sarvatah srutimal loke sarvam avrtya tishthati*": God's feet are everywhere, God's eyes are everywhere, His ears are everywhere. This is to be noted carefully. How could the legs be everywhere and the eyes only in one place? Have you heard of such a thing? Where the legs are, the eyes are also there. The legs can see, the eyes can walk, and the ears can eat in the case of God. But we cannot do that. We are sense-ridden individuals. The particular occupation of the sense organ is to project us as a phenomenon rather than a reality in ourselves. What does it do? The Upanishads tell us that it is perhaps God Himself who is responsible for plunging the sense organs outwardly in the world of space-time, making one forget one's own existence.

We are involved in sensory activity. Even when we do mental activity and intellectual work, still it is conditioned by the operations of the sense organs. We sometimes think intellectual activity is superior to sensory work. It may look like that. But the intellect only analyses, purifies the judgment part of the mind in respect of the reports received by the sense organs. They supply evidence and reports, as in

a court, which are brought together into a focus of concentration by the mind, and judgment is passed by the intellect, with evidence as the beginning of all judicial activity. So whatever the intellect be, however intelligent we are—philosophers, etc.—we are incapable of freeing ourselves completely from the tinge of externalisation communicated to us by the senses. We judge everything as an outward thing. “I do not like this.” “Why should I do this?” This particular thing we call ‘this’ is outside us.

There are no things outside us, really speaking. It is the evil nature of the sense organs that becomes responsible for throwing certain things as outside phenomenon and keeping ourselves intact. If the world is a phenomenon, we should not forget that we are involved in it. The world is a phenomenon, philosophers tell us. It is a transient fluxation, a movement. This is the world, this is all creation. But we are involved in it. We are moving together with what moves in the form of the world. But because of the eternity which is also lighted up in our inner personality, we have a double consciousness. We seem to be afraid of destruction such as death, etc. Because of the involvement in the phenomenal side of our nature, we hate death at the same time. We know that we are going to die, but we dislike it intensely because of the eternal voice that is telling us we will not die. On one side we are a phenomenon, on the other side we are a nomenon. A deathless being is within us, and a thing which is completely subject to death is also present within us. So we are dying and not dying at the same time. If it is clear that death is inevitable and unavoidable, why is it that we are

trying to avoid it? Because eternity, which is inside us also, says that we shall not perish like that.

The relation between the phenomenal side and the eternal side is actually the meaning of life. This also explains the relation between work and meditation. Actually, we should not use the word 'and' between the words 'work' and 'meditation'. Work *is* meditation; meditation *is* work. There were great mystics in the West who said, "If you want to meditate more, do more work. If you want to do more work, meditate more." You will find it intriguing. What kind of thing is being told to us? Greater work is impossible without greater concentration, and greater concentration is not possible without greater participation in the cosmic substance. Meditation is an inwardisation of cosmic activity.

We are all friends, devotees, disciples of Gurudev Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj. We should learn the art of thinking like him and working like him. Nobody worked as he did, but nobody was so free as he was. Where comes the complaint? It is because we are mixing up values. We do not know whether we belong to this world or to the other world. Where are we actually sitting at this moment? We cannot answer this question, really speaking. Are we on the Earth? Are we in the Solar System? Are we in the Milky Way? Are we in the space-time complex? Where are we sitting at this moment? That is a frightening question indeed. Are we sitting on the Earth? Where is the Earth sitting? It is revolving around the Sun, which is what we call the solar orb, the centre of the Solar System. The Solar System is in the Milky Way, people tell us. It is a little piece of cosmic matter floating in space and time. Where are we sitting now? We

are sitting in the vast spread-out space and time. The Earth is like a spaceship. It is not a solid, stable thing as we are imagining. Every moment it is moving like a spaceship. We are actually in mid space just now. Can you imagine that you are in mid space? Why do you say you are on the Earth? "Oh, I am in mid space. Oh, I am in a ship. It is moving fast in space." You are wonderstruck by thinking like this. You will never say that you are sitting on the Earth at that time. You are in a cosmic setup. To which place do you belong? "I do not belong to India. I do not belong to America. I belong to no place. I belong to space." You are a denizen of the spatial and temporal system. Who will guard you? Whoever guards the world will guard you also. The substance of the world is the substance of your personality. The purpose of evolution in the world is the purpose of your existence also.

Again I revert to the Bhagavadgita. What does Bhagavan Sri Krishna say? It is difficult to understand what the Gita says, really speaking. The Cosmic Person is giving a cosmic gospel; that is the Bhagavadgita. It is not one man speaking to another person in some remote historical time, as we are likely to think about the Bhagavadgita. It is an eternal message given by an eternal cosmic essence. We do not know how to describe it, so we call it Visvarupa in a childlike manner. Such a stupendous message which comprehends the whole work of the cosmos is spoken by God Himself. And it is spoken to us. God speaks to man. It is not Krishna speaking to Arjuna. Eternity speaks to the phenomenal. Deathlessness, immortality speaks to the passing fluxation of the world. We are sitting in it.

Are we friends among ourselves? Are we happy to see each other? Do we dislike one another? These questions can be answered easily by such a kind of analysis. Where is the question of mine, yours, his, her, its, and so on? Does the Bhagavadgita tell us all these things? “My property—who are you to take it?” Don’t we speak like that? All right, say that. But you will be carried away by the very thing which will carry your property also.

If we are true disciples of Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj, we have to follow his footsteps, of course; but we have to live as he lived. When we came to the Ashram, we were like small boys. We used to ask him, “Swamiji, give us lessons.” He would say, “Hey, what kind of lesson do you want? See how I am working, how I am behaving. In different contexts and different circumstances, how do I behave, what do I say, how do I act? Observe me. That is my lesson, my teaching to you.”

Some of us had the blessing of living with him personally, as if we were rubbing shoulders with God Himself. We have been blessed immensely by contact with him. If we are happy today, it is because the happiness of Swami Sivananda is implanted in us. He disciplined us. Disciplining does not mean imposing some pain upon somebody else. It is the art of adjusting our total personality in the context of our position in the whole universe. It is very difficult to understand. We cannot think anything without bringing the universe into our feelings. We cannot say, “I am living in a little building here.” There are no buildings, really speaking. There is only a world, and all the space-time complex. So we have no reason to get attracted to anything, no reason to be repulsed

by anything, no reason to show a wry face against any other person. There are no other persons here, really speaking. I have mentioned this again and again on earlier occasions. There are no such things called other persons, because you are also an 'other person' to other people.

Here again we are caught by the phenomenon of sense activity. When I look at you, you are the other. When you look at me, I am the other. Now, who are the others in the world, really speaking? If everyone is other, to whom are the people other? Is it not a chaos that we create when we say, "I am serving other people"? Who are the other people except yourself? Are you not one of the other people? Social workers also make mistakes. They think they are apart from the people whom they are serving. Unless they are involved in the very structure of humanity itself, social welfare work will not succeed. They should not consider it as an other activity that they are doing. If it is an other activity, their soul will not be present in it. Soulless activity is not worthwhile in any sense. Afterwards they feel frustrated and give up all that they thought was worthwhile.

Can you imagine that it is possible to think like this? The otherness of things is a fallacy. The tree is not an other to itself. A river is not an other to itself. I am not an other to myself. None of us, no one, is an other to himself or herself. Now, who is the other about which we are talking? This is a very shrewd, cunning idea introduced into us by the activity of the propelling sense organs. The otherness of things is the world; the inwardness of things is yourself. But you are also other, so the inwardness becomes a cosmic inwardness. In this case you may have to look at things with a different eye

altogether. You can see the whole world by closing your eyes. You will be throbbing with happiness and joy.

God is very kind. Swami Sivananda has been very kind. Here in this Ashram, The Divine Life Society, we have a world of facility of every kind. We have the facility to rise to heaven, or we have the facility to bury ourselves under the earth. Swami Sivanandaji has given us all the facilities. But the sense organs, which are so vicious in their nature—egoism being the propelling factor behind the sense organs—will not allow us to think. In order that we may refresh ourselves and have the power to think correctly, we have to live with saintly souls.

I have been tirelessly saying that *satsanga* is the most important thing. By *satsanga* I do not necessarily mean a huge gathering; it can be a friendly relation with a good person, even if it is only one person. If we go to a great saint and sit with him, this is *satsanga*. *Santaha, sangaha, satsanga*: Contact with a *sant* is *satsanga*. It may be a large group or it may be only one or two persons, still it is *satsanga*. If two people sit together and discuss the nature of God and salvation, it is *satsanga*, though there are only two persons.

“*Tat chintanam tat kathanam anyonyam tatprabodhanam, etadekapatvam cha brahmabhyasam vidur budhah.*” Thinking only that—as when we lose a valuable treasure we will wholly be thinking, “I have lost my treasure. It is very valuable, and I have lost it.” *Tat chintanam*: thinking that only. *Tat kathanam*: talking to people on that subject only. If we lose something, we will go on saying, “I have lost, I have lost.” Everywhere we will go on telling it. *Anyonyam tatprabodhanam*: awakening people among ourselves. If we

ask anything or we speak, we must speak elevating words. “May I be of some service to you?” What do we lose by saying these words? “Are you well?” “Anything from me?” Actually you don’t want anything from me, but these words act like a balm. “How are you? Are you feeling well? Do you need anything, any service from me?” Are we poor even in words? We cannot utter even these words.

It is difficult to go on speaking much about Swami Sivananda, except by those people who lived with him. His life itself was a spiritual biography. So we have a monthly gathering here. We are always speaking of management matters, and so on. That is very wonderful; management is necessary. We have to look to the working of The Divine Life Society, Sivananda Ashram, and everybody has to be taken care of. That is perfectly right. But we should also be happy. We should not be grumblingly living in the Ashram. Many times we are tired of our own selves. Even to exist is often a fatigue, because the existence is not utilised for a proper purpose. There is a difference between existence and drudgery. We can drudge, and not actually do any work. We can be sitting quiet for days and months, and we will be not really existing at all. It is called vegetating, rather. Vegetating is different from living. We know the difference. What is vegetating? It is simply getting on. “How are you?” “Getting on. Getting on.”

Life is meant to be utilised for the purpose for which we were born, and it is necessary to know what that is. We have no time to think about that. What are we here for? Any day the wind of fluxation of the world will come and catch hold of our throats, and we will leave this world. All our clinging



will vanish. Do not cling to anything. You should not keep even a wristwatch if it is a question of clinging. One of the principles of saints is, you should not keep anything with you by the loss of which you will be sorry. Think over: “Is there anything with me by the loss of which I will be grieved?” Then you should not keep it at all because any moment you will go, together with the grief. God will give you anything that you want, but you should not go on clinging. Asking from God is different from clinging to things.

We remember Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj always. I cannot forget his existence even for one moment. Everything is a miracle here, if we think of it. The way in which a large number of people are fed in this kitchen—we allow people to go into the kitchen and take food without any kind of disciplinary restriction, the like of which we will not see in any other place. The way in which we give books free to people, we will never hear anywhere people giving away *lakhs* of rupees worth of books like that. Give, give, give, give, give, give—this is the only thing Swami Sivananda liked. This is a phenomenon. The Sivananda Ashram is a phenomenon. We have blessings from all sides. Great souls have blessed us, God has blessed us, Swami Sivananda has blessed us, all the saints and sages have blessed us. We have everything here. There is no cause for complaint. Whatever we want, comes. From where does it come? Who is the force behind it? I don't know whether it is Gurudev Swami Sivananda or God Almighty Himself.

So, all be happy. May peace prevail everywhere!



## **The Branches of The Divine Life Society**

The branches of The Divine Life Society are actually the ramifications of the spiritual, cultural and social aims and objectives of the headquarters, for which the venerable founder, Revered Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj, stood and lived his life as a great example before us of the practical implementation of the ideal. Whatever the headquarters stands for, that the branches also stand for. The ideals of The Divine Life Society are pervasive, and they apply equally to the headquarters as well as the branches, as also to the members and whoever is associated with The Divine Life Society in any manner whatsoever.

It has to be mentioned at the very outset that the objective of divine life is not any kind of activity for the sake of activity, but activity for a higher purpose, towards which it has to be directed. All work is a means to an end and not an end in itself, though work can become an end in itself when it gets divinised and universalised. Then it reaches the status of God, which is a far-off ideal; and as far as we as human beings are concerned, it is a means to an end. This is the great goal that is ahead of us.

Therefore, the programme of The Divine Life Society branches should be such that it should include, to the extent practicable, humanitarian ideals which comprise all that human nature requires. What man needs essentially is not easy to explain. We require food, clothing and shelter; it is true. But it is not true that we require only this much. There are other things, perhaps more important things, than food, clothing and shelter, notwithstanding the fact that these are essentials. So, while it is true that members of The Divine Life Society and the branches of the Society should work in the direction of the amelioration of poverty, disease and ignorance in their various aspects, they have also to work for the great ideal for which the Society ultimately stands.

We work for existence in this world. Finally, we will realise that all activity tends towards an assurance that we should exist in the world, that our life should not be cut off or abolished. But we do not wish to exist as trees or stones. We ask for an existence with a quality, and not merely an existence without any meaning or significance. Our activities tend towards helping people in the direction of fulfilling this aim of existence, not merely in a comfortable way from the physical or material point of view, but in a valuable way from the point of view of the ideals for which humanity exists and which humanity seeks.

We have hunger and thirst, we feel heat and cold, and naturally we have to work for protecting ourselves against these odds of nature. But we have also secret aspirations from within us, which cannot be stifled in the name of a mere physical satisfaction. We have physical needs, we have vital needs, we have psychological needs, we have rational

needs, we have social needs, we have political needs, we have spiritual needs. What is it that we do not need? Our aspiration is all-comprehensive and engulfs everything that one can think of, and in the effort towards the fulfilment of these requirements of human nature, we must always give preference to the more pressing needs first and the general ones may be taken care of later on. We may say that hunger is the most pressing need. Remedying disease is a pressing need no doubt, but there is a conditioning factor behind all these so-called empirical needs. We do not wish to die of hunger. Yes, it is perfectly true; but we also do not wish to live as idiots knowing nothing. There is a necessity to get enlightenment, together with the needs we feel for physical existence by means of fulfilment of hunger and thirst, etc. The cause is more important than the effect, though, while we are engaged in the effect, it appears to be important enough, and it attracts our attention as an all-in-all. When we are in the midst of a particular environment or circumstance, that appears to be the immediate reality and, perhaps, the only reality. But there is a cause behind it, a foundation on which it is rooted, which should be regarded as more important because it conditions this appearance of the immediate environment. The physical needs are the least important things from the point of view of a larger comprehensive approach to human nature in general. More important than the physical needs are the vital, the psychological, the rational, and the spiritual.

The word 'spiritual' is a hard nut to crack. One cannot easily understand what it actually means. 'Spirituality' is the most abused term anywhere and the most misunderstood,

and it is difficult to believe that many people understand its true significance. We suddenly get thrown into a fit of emotion the moment we hear the word. Most youngsters, in their juvenile enthusiasm, go out of gear when they hear the words 'God' or 'spirituality', and they get into a mood of renunciation, a throwing off of responsibilities and cutting themselves off from duties, services, etc., in the name of the God that they have in their minds and in the fulfilment of the idea of spirituality that they are entertaining.

Every level of life is important in its own way. God, the Ultimate Spirit, reveals Himself in various degrees, and every degree is equally important as a necessary stage in one's progress. The importance of a particular experience can be judged only when we take into consideration the atmosphere in which it is generated. There is a relationship between the subject and the object, as we know very well. The subject is yourself or myself—any experiencing unit. The object is the atmosphere, the environment. It may consist of human beings, it may consist of physical nature, or it may be anything, for the matter of that. That which is immediately present around us and has some impact upon our personal life is a degree of reality which we cannot ignore—it may be social, it may be natural. To imagine that God will take care of us and to reject the immediate reality would be a folly, because God is not merely a transcendent reality but He is also an immediate reality. That which is present under our nose is also God's manifestation. And so we should not be under the erroneous notion that God is above and not below.

With this comprehensive approach of realism blended with idealism we have to live, and the life of Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj was a practical demonstration of this

coming together of realism and idealism. He was not merely a dreamer in the idealistic sense, though he was the foremost among contemporary geniuses who held God-realisation as the goal of life. In that we may say that he was the topmost idealist of modern times. But he was not merely an idealist, he was aware of the present realism of the physical circumstances and the social life in which man is placed. And no one could be more realistic than Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj. He would take care of even the smallest things. The littlest needs of man were his concern, and not merely the realisation of the Absolute. There was nothing unimportant before his eyes, nothing that he disliked, nothing that he condemned, nothing that he regarded as not his own. He lived a life of fraternity with all and he followed in letter, not only in spirit, the great gospel that we have in the Bhagavadgita, *sarva bhuta-hite-ratah*: one who is intent upon the welfare of all beings, not merely human beings, but even beings other than human.

The great man that he was, it is difficult to know what he was thinking in his mind, and it is even more difficult to know the significance of the kind of life that he lived as an example before us. Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj's life was a commentary on the principles of divine life, as we often say that the life of Bhagavan Sri Krishna is the best commentary on the Bhagavadgita. Our life is a commentary on our principles, our ideologies and our aspirations. Divine life, truly speaking, is a practical living of the ideal that one holds as supreme in one's life, and is at the same time a torchbearer to others in their higher evolution.



## The Message of Swami Sivananda

At this moment we contemplate the basic fact of the great system of this universe of which we are inhabitants, citizens, in whose great purposive activity we are participants. We may characterise the structure of the universe as one of immense peace and internal coordination, stability and integrality. It is well known that man is a microcosmic symbol of the whole universe. The peace that we generally conceive in our minds is what we experience within ourselves, and the coordinated activity of the internal mechanism of the human personality is well known to be at the back of all experience of internal peace.

Generally, when we speak of peace in the world—peace of mankind—we very easily forget that it is an experience, and every experience is attended with a sober mental operation. It is an inward acceptance of the operation of a great law and justice which we may call peace. As far as the human being is concerned, the peace that is longed for, aspired for, while it is an internal experience, it is to a large extent conditioned by outer circumstances so that the events outside, the conditions prevailing in the world, act upon the human individual; and here we have an obvious indication that

though peace is an internal experience of every person, it is not totally isolated from outer circumstance.

The immediate vicinity of a human individual is the family. The family circumstance—the situation of the members within a single group we call the family—conditions the peace, happiness and security of each member of the family. So while the experience of peace in a family is an individual affair because each one experiences it within himself or herself, it is a total operation taking place because the peace of each individual in the family is an organic part of the total action called the peace of the whole family. Hence, we may say that the peace of an individual member in a family group is related to the total structure of the peace of the entire family in the same way as an integral part is related to the whole to which it belongs.

The peace of the family is not a conglomeration of little bits of individual peace. The peace of mind of many people put together is not to be considered as the total peace of the family. The family is more than a group of persons; it is a wholeness of purposiveness and a totality of intention. This analogy of the relation of the individual to the family can be extended further to the larger atmosphere of human existence which, in a similar manner, conditions all lower levels. The larger community in which a family lives is the conditioning factor of the peace, solidarity and security of the family. It is well known that a single family in the midst of others cannot have peace if the others are not in peace. And we know, in a similar way, a community of people is, again, a part of a wider, still larger atmosphere called the nation. The country, the nation to which each individual



belongs, stands above each individual. We may say that the national spirit is a transcendent operation; it is not merely an external or outward atmosphere. The nation is a spirit of obedience and internal coordination and cooperation. It is an awareness that arises in a total mind of what we may call the nation or the country; and it far surpasses in character, in quality, the geographical shape the country may take. The country is not a piece of land. It is a spirit operating in the minds of the people. Thus, the peace of the country is the peace of the community. It is also the peace of the family and the peace of every individual.

While we strive for world peace and the well being of humanity as a whole, it must be clear to our minds as to what we are actually seeking. The conditioning factors cannot be totally segregated from the aspiring centre. The world is, today, far wider than it appears to the naked eye. This little Earth which enshrines all humanity and all living beings is one of the members in a larger family in the Solar System. Any sufficiently educated intellect would be able to appreciate the fact that the Earth can have no peace if the whole Solar System is not in order. This appreciation does not require much of deep thinking. This system of living, which is superintended by the great energy-centre Suryanarayana, the Sun in the sky—this belonging of ourselves to this great operation in the firmament, this Solar System to which I made reference—is not outside us. The Sun is not above our head; it is the centre of our life.

It has to be borne in mind that the factors that determine our security, existence and peace are not external, but transcendent. In this sense we may say that the soul

of a particular structure is neither inside nor outside, but above—not above physically, but in a logical sense. Scientists sometimes tell us that the Solar System is something like the working of an atom, or conversely, the atom is working in the same way as the Solar System operates. That means to say, the central nucleus of this cosmic atom, the Solar System, is the Sun, comparable to the soul of man; and in Indian tradition, the Sun—Suryanarayana—is regarded as the superintending principle over the Atman, or the soul of man. This Solar System, therefore, is transcendent to each one and not outside. It is a part of the large universe, which also should be considered as a transcendent inclusiveness rather than an externality.

The idea of the external is what limits us. The universe is not outside us, and we are not outside it. The operation of the whole of creation is a single act, as is the case with the operation of the physiological organism of a human individual. The working of any organ of the body is the working of the whole system. If the finger moves or if the legs walk, it is the entire organism that acts at one stroke, simultaneously. Thus is the manner in which we may awaken ourselves to the facts of creation. The world is one whole; and the peace of the world, which is so much needed at this moment of human history today, is not a matter that concerns merely this physical Earth, but it is a grace that has to descend on the Earth from above, which is the larger family to which the Earth belongs. This intelligence, this centrality of the cosmos which is the governing principle behind every historical operation, natural or human, is the great God of the universe. The vision of man has to be integral in order

that it may be successful, which means to say that it is necessary for every thinking person to be able to conceive facts in a total fashion and not piecemeal, segmented or in little bits, as if they are disconnected one from the other. This is a hard job. This kind of concentration of mind in an unselfish manner—namely, the way of a sense of belonging of each one to a larger purpose and duty, an organisation or a great goal—is really a great education.

In this world we have many a Master come as ambassadors from the centre of the universe, as it were, to proclaim this message of the great Reality of the universe. These are the Incarnations, the Avatars, the sages and the saints, and while throughout its history the world has been fortunate enough to be blessed with the coming of these lights from above, India was indeed thrice blessed that it had throughout its history a continuous line of these comings—Avatars, rishis, *munis*, sages and saints. They are sustaining the whole country even today and, in the language of the great scriptures of this land, the freedom of the country is called *atma swaraja*, or the freedom of the spirit. The spirit is that which enlivens every part of the organisation of which it is the centre.

The analogy that I mentioned just now by way of illustration—the individual, the family, the community, the nation and the universe—is only to bring out the fact that the centre of every system of action, operation or life is everything that matters here. We may call it the soul of the organisation. In the lowest sense it is the physical body; and then we have the larger dimensions of the very same soulfulness of the different degrees and levels of organisation reaching up to

the greatest generality we call all creation, of which there is the final spirit that enlivens every cell. It is in this sense that we say that there is only one soul in the whole universe—the unlimited absolute Godhead. To visualise life in this fashion would be to entertain a spiritual outlook of life. The sages and the saints, the Masters and the Incarnations, come as representatives of this great fact of the universe that the Atman of the cosmos, the Godhead of the universe, is our sustenance.

At this moment I am face to face with a most glorious incident in the history of this country and the chronicle of this world, namely, the message that was spread by a super-human Master recently before our own eyes, a veritable Universal pressed into action through and in the form of a visible personality—the great Master Swami Sivananda, who stood for God and man at the same time. It is now nearing one hundred years since this great soul incarnated itself on this Earth. And some of us had the blessing of living, almost rubbing shoulders with him, and imbibing this universal message of world solidarity and peace directly by personal communication. At this hour of the coming of his great Centenary, which culminates in the year 1987, all blessed souls who received his grace, who knew him and know him as he was, as he is, and as he worked, are girding up their loins to hoist the flag of this universality of world peace by an inwardness and togetherness of cooperation among themselves, with which they wish to gather the spirit of all people in the world and broadcast in their own personal lives, through their messages and in their deeds, this veritable gospel of world peace, universal solidarity and the final

blessedness of man. This message, this life, was embodied in the very person of this great Master, Swami Sivananda. His personality was his action, his very life was his teaching, and to see him was for every one of us to see before our own eyes a physical form of what unselfishness actually means. He did not live for himself, because he never was. He was fixed in that which was more than what appeared through his person.

A little analogy, here again, will make the matter clear. An official in the government stands for more than what he appears to be physically. A representative of a large administrative system called the government is not a physical person. It is an operative force which is as large as the jurisdiction over which he holds sway. In a similar manner this great person, Swami Sivananda, stood above the visible personality of himself, above the physical limitations of his body, beyond the normal limitations of human thought, and comprehended the entire gamut of the spiritual unification of mankind. Utter givingness, dedication, and working for the cause of people in the name of the Almighty who sent us here for His own great purpose was what he lived for and what he stood for. His writings, which run to more than three hundred texts, touch upon almost every theme in the different branches of learning. His themes were medical science, astronomy, ethics, aesthetics, history, philosophy, religion, mysticism, and all those subjects which relate to the welfare of humanity. And I should not forget to reiterate that his writing, his message, was embodied in his actual life. He lived his thought, and he spoke what he thought. A coordination of the inward comprehensiveness of the spirit of this

great Master with his thought, speech and action stood for the welfare of our country and for all mankind. 'Godman' is the word we may use to designate such great personalities.

At this hour we also remember Swami Sivananda for his service towards the unification of the religions of the world. He considered every religious faith, creed or cult as a very necessary pedestal in the ascent of the spirit to its universal, immortal goal. The facets of human approach to the fulfilment of purposes were actually the facets of a single crystal of the total life of creation as a whole. To this great Master, every living being—not merely human beings, but everything that lived and breathed on this Earth—was a friend, not merely in a social sense, but a veritable replica of one's own self. Thus, love was the law of his life. The law that operates in this world is love. Where love is absent, law is a carcass. It is a mechanism without vitality in it. Such is the law, the *satya* and the *rita* which the Vedas, the great scriptures of the country, speak of.

What is our duty at this moment in the context of the coming of the great Centenary? It is to endeavour in our own humble way from whatever be our placement in this world, in society, to be what Sri Gurudev was in our own individual lives so that we may emanate as the Sun emanates rays from itself. As rays project from the Sun, in a similar way we may emanate from our own purified integrated soulful personality the strength of the world. The whole world is operating through every person. This is a great solacing message indeed. As the whole body is operating through every limb of the body, the whole creation of God is active in every

cell of every living being and in every atom. This is a great message which will keep us in peace for ever and ever.

In this organism of the universe, how could there be competition? Do limbs of the body fight among themselves? Is there not a coordination which is most beautiful and astounding among the limbs of the body—the eyes, the ears, the nose, the lungs, the heart, the hands, the feet, and what not? Has anyone seen one limb contending with another? And if man is the replica of the cosmos, the universe, the world, then mankind is to be considered as a similar organism in which competition has to be ruled out. The law of life is not contention, not competition, not strife, not battle, not war, not exploitation, not subjection or putting another thing for the utilisation of one's own self, but to visualise every person, every living being, every object, everything everywhere as an end in itself, as we consider every part of our body as an end in itself and not as a means to somebody else.

This is a great vision of what we may call the soulfulness or the *atmatva* of things, in which vision, we may call it spirituality, is included every other kind of vision. It is only this vision that can bring peace to this world; else, human individuals will belong to contending parties who work for their own mutual destruction. Is the world going to ruin, or is it to work for its own survival? The survival of an organism is, in its internal capacity, to coordinate the parts of itself into a singleness of the soul. I am again coming to the point of the soul being there in this whole world. And there is a single soul which is reflected in every little individual soul.

Thus, where the soul does not determine thought, action and speech, life becomes a dead mechanism, a lifeless movement.

To infuse this kind of cosmic life, a spirit of cooperation, love and affection, charitableness and unselfishness—the spirit of giving rather than taking—is the law of life, which is the expression of the love of life. All great saints and Masters stood for a perfect obedience to law, which is the law of internal affection in the light of the souls which enliven all living beings everywhere.

Such a large vision Swami Sivananda had before our own eyes. His physical presence vanished out of sight in the year 1963; and some of us, like myself, should be considered as indeed blessed for having physically served him and visibly having received concrete emblems of grace and blessing from him. I for one can say that whatever I am today, or whatever those like me are today, is because of what he was.

May this message spread everywhere throughout the world today when there is anxiety and anguish in the heart of every person even in regard to the morrow. The political atmosphere and the social conditions prevailing in the world at this hour have created such difficulties in the psyche of man that one cannot say what will happen to the mentality of people. There is no saying what will happen tomorrow. Have we come to this world to live in this state of anxiety? Are we actually living, or are we dying? This anguish-born, anxiety-ridden, tension-torn life is veritable death indeed; and to infuse the real life into this impending deathlike existence, these great Masters have come to us. We contemplate this great Master today who silently, without adumbration, without announcement, proclamation, or without even



being known much to the public, worked for the solidarity, integration and the welfare of the whole country, and blessed the whole Earth.

Today there is possibly no country in the world which has not heard his name, though he himself physically did not go outside India. Every nation in the world knows who Swami Sivananda was, as very few can there be in this world who do not know the name of Mahatma Gandhi. Such a great personality lived with us, and I take this opportunity of communicating my heartfelt feelings to all, not merely in India but the world over—my feelings that we have an obligation to these great servants of humanity, which obligation we can fulfil only by our becoming servants. May we be the servants of this great servant of God Almighty. We shall be blessed. Unless we invoke this great spirit of final blessing and peace to the world, we shall not see the light of peace anywhere.

To reiterate, again, it was the message of immense cooperation with everything and every person, a spirit of sharing what one has with others, to see humanity in human beings as one sees humanity in one's own self, and to keep in mind that to be human is to rise above the animal level of competition and the law of the jungle. The saint lives for others. The animal lives for itself. The animal cares not for the world; it cares only for itself. The saint cares not for himself; he cares for the whole world. Here is the difference between a saint and an animal. And even for a human being, who is just a stepping stone to the sainthood and the sagehood of humanity, the superhuman ideal of humanity is to be expected as something above the animal. The animal considers another

animal as an object to be exploited; it can be even a diet which it can gobble up. But man cannot eat another man. Humanity—human quality—is represented by the capacity to see in others what oneself is. Another person cannot be my diet, which means to say, we cannot convert any person into a utilitarian, exploited object. No man is a servant in this world. Everyone has an independent status and a selfhood in himself. If I would not like to be exploited, I would not like to be a servant, and I would not wish to be utilised as a tool under the pressure of somebody's thumb, how would anyone else like that? What I am, that others are. To be able to feel like this in this expected charitableness of vision is to be human; and the human alone can become the divine. From matter there is evolution to the kingdom of life in vegetables, plants and trees. Above is the animal, which works on instinct. Still above is man who works on reason; and beyond man is the superman, the Godman, the sage who represents the Ultimate Reality.

Evolution has brought humanity today to this level of rationality and an ability to think and form judgments systematically with consideration of the pros and cons. And evolution has not stopped. The impulse in man, the urge within us to be better, to expand more and to become more perfect, is an indication that human life or the state of humanity is not the end of evolution. We have to rise to Godhead, which is to embrace all space and time in a blend of eternity.

Swami Sivananda—the great Master, I should say from the bottom of my heart—stood, lived, and worked for the great God of the cosmos. We owe a duty to him, and what is

the manner in which we can express our dutifulness, obedience, affection and gratitude except by living in the manner that he lived and to communicate his message, din this knowledge into the ears of all people so that mankind may be in peace, the world may be blessed, and the kingdom of God may descend on this Earth for the immortal glory of this whole creation. This is the message of Swami Sivananda and this is the message of peace of mankind. This is God's message for the well-being of all. May peace be to the whole world.



## The Mission of Swami Sivananda

The Divine Life Society has been a veritable embodied form of the spirit of worshipful Gurudev Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj. It is impossible to conceive of or to work for The Divine Life Society without contemplating at the same time the ensouling principle of this institution—Gurudev Swami Sivananda. It is his Viratsvarupa, his visible form that is before our eyes as a network of spiritual and cultural forces that is The Divine Life Society.

We are likely to think that an institution is a piece of land or a set of buildings or a few persons hectically doing something from morning to evening. The empirical concept of an institution in its material form needs a reorientation and has to receive a more sublime touch, in the same way as we cannot define a human being merely as a bodily personality or an individuality.

A human being is not merely a body. A human being is a set of values. Merely because we see a shape of a human body, we do not call it a human being. Human nature is what is implied in the concept of a human being. This nature is what characterises humanity and differentiates it from animality, and where the values or the characters or

the natures are absent, we do not call it a human being. The human being is a spot, a locality, a pinpointed individual wherein powers, forces, values, meanings and significances are manifest. When these significances are not manifest, we do not see human nature, and we do not see a human being. When the characters of the human being are absent, we may see a cannibal, or a tiger without a tail.

Likewise, an institution is a collective embodied form of the best values in human nature, which are grouped in various categories, on account of which we have various institutions. We have educational institutions, we have cultural institutions, we have industrial institutions. We have organisations of various types in the world, all which are dedicated to the manifestation, expression, nurturing, tilling and culturing of certain values which a set of people or a group of persons have held or are holding as their ideal or goal. The Divine Life Society is, thus, not a set of buildings or a piece of land or a few persons. It is something invisible. And it is this invisible significance that gives value and status to its visible form which we generally call a society or an organisation. As I mentioned earlier, it is a value, a culture and a significance that gives meaning to what we call the human personality. This was the interpretation, definition and concept held by Gurudev Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj about this organisation, The Divine Life Society.

A value which subsumes every other value is a divine value. This is the difference between a divine characteristic and other characteristics. As they say, an elephant's footprint includes the footprints of all other animals; even so, the divine characteristic or value includes within itself all other

conceivable characteristics and values in the world. So divinity is not a transcendent miracle eluding the grasp of our understanding, but is an immanent force which vitalises and gives significance to even the material values of life. God is not, as erroneous religions may hold, an otherworldly super-human creator inaccessible to the yearning heart of man, but a here-and-now, an eternity and an infinity fused and blended into a single mass of immanence, capable of being invoked at any moment. We have the historical and magnificent illustration of Narasimha-avatara, God bursting forth through a brick pillar. He did not come from Vaikuntha or Kailasa, or from Seventh Heaven. He came from a pillar, most unthinkable indeed, and he can come from any place because of the immanence characteristic of God, apart from His transcendence.

Swami Sivananda's mission, in the form of The Divine Life Society, was precisely to inculcate in the minds of people the values that have been misrepresented by outdated religions and religious philosophies, and to give a transforming touch to the concept of philosophy, spirituality and religion, by which religion becomes a living force and not a dead mechanism of temples and churches. Religion is a vitalising principle and power in our own personal lives so that it is impossible for a person to live or exist without accepting and adoring religious and spiritual values in the true sense of the term.

Religion became an outmoded routine of incapacitated persons, on account of which today erroneous doctrines think that religion is a kind of opium which drugs the intellect of man and makes him cease to think in a correct fashion. This

is because religion has been defined and taught in a wrong way. Religion is a state of mind and consciousness, and an attitude. It does not belong to temples, mosques or churches, nor to monks, nuns or monasteries—nothing of the kind. Wherever God is, there religion also is. The religious value is, in the hands of saints such as Swami Sivananda, an instrument of world transformation. We may call it religion, spirituality, culture, or philosophy; it makes no difference. All these nomenclatures point to a single *necessity* of life in its generality. We can underline the word ‘necessity’. What we call the ultimate necessity of the human soul is religion.

Religion is not a gospel from books or a cult formed by a group of preachers or prophets which we can accept or dispense with. It is not up to us to accept or dispense with religion, because it is a necessity, and it is the ultimate necessity, not merely the slipshod variety of necessities that we have in our immediate day-to-day existence. The ultimate need of the human soul is called religion. This was to be taught to mankind. It was fading into the background and receding into the limbo of human consciousness. It was dying.

Many saints and sages were projected by the Almighty Himself, right from the time of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, when empirical, material values began to gain an upper hand and bodily needs, economic necessities and public relationships were given greater importance than the cries of the human soul. It was a time when India was in turmoil, culturally speaking. It was then that personalities such as Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa cropped up to set the forces in balance and hit the nail on the head once again; and then we had a galaxy of saints and sages. Read the history of

the movement of the spiritual renaissance in India, particularly the saints, right from the time of Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Swami Vivekananda, and Swami Rama Tirtha. Then we had Sri Aurobindo, who accentuated these masterly strokes that the Masters had already given, Ramana Maharshi, Ramadas, and Mahatma Gandhi. God will not keep quiet. When He is ignored, He will assert Himself in every field of activity. He asserted Himself even in politics, in the form of Mahatma Gandhi.

Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj brought into high relief this need for answering the call of the spirit of man, and projected forth The Divine Life Society—not a set of buildings, but a surge of values. Wakening the mind of man, or shaking human nature from its slumber of ignorance, was the primary mission of Gurudev. It is very necessary that we, in our enthusiasm and hurry, do not forget this concept of The Divine Life Society as a spiritual organisation, which is a man-making concept and not a house-building scheme. It is a methodology of creating humanity out of animality so that it may rise to divinity.

We are told that we rose from the mineral level, passed through the vegetable and animal levels, and have come to man's nature. We are *Homo sapiens*. We are human beings, which means to say that we have transcended animal nature. We do not call ourselves human beings if animal nature is still present in us. What is animal nature? If we can sting like a scorpion or bite like a snake, show teeth like a tiger or pounce on another like a lion, we are not human beings. But, we can do that. At times we can bite like a snake and sting like a scorpion. This means to say, while we have risen



from the physical structural pattern of the animal body, we have not yet transcended animal nature wholly. That is why we have wars, battles, cut-throatism, pick-pocketism, corruption and what not—which are attempts at overcoming one's own brother.

Divinity is a transcendence of human nature itself, which would be an impossibility if humanity has not gained its own consciousness, at least in an appreciable proportion. Divinity cannot show its head in humanity if the animal nature has not been sublimated adequately; and divinity completely manifests itself in human nature when animality is completely overcome and we become totally human. The total, purified and sublimated form of human nature is exemplified in the personality of Sri Rama. We cannot find a person like Rama. He was the apotheosis of human nature, the perfection of human character, i.e., what man ought to be. He did not demonstrate divinity; that was not the purpose of Rama-avatara. He demonstrated only human nature to its perfection, to its logical limits. And if we can come to that level of human nature, reach that perfection of humanity, then we can automatically reach divinity. We are trying to reach the seventh *bhumika* and *nirvikalpa samadhi*, and we talk only of *nirbija*, and so on. We never talk of anything less than that. But all this will end in tall talk. It will end in nothing ultimately, when its roots are in the animal's bowels.

Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj was tirelessly hammering this point in the minds of people of different places in the world. He called them the branches of The Divine Life Society. The branches of the Society are not like the branches

of a tree. They are invisible forces projected by his own self. Swami Sivananda never travelled abroad during his lifetime, and he travelled through India only once. He stuck to Rishikesh. He said: "My characteristic is stickability." People used to call him 'a stickable Swami', i.e., he stuck to one place only; he never moved anywhere. Well, he also wrote a poem on stickability. With that stickability he has shaken the consciousness of mankind in an unprecedented manner, and his arms reached humanity on different continents.

Saints and sages, Masters and Incarnations do not work through their bodies, because they are not bodies. And whether or not they fly in a plane makes no difference. They fly without our knowing it. Their bodies are only the vehicles of the force which they really are. The electric bulb does not shine; it is the power that is inside it that shines, and it exceeds the limit of the walls of the bulb. The bulb is so small, only a few inches in diameter, but the light goes so far. Its illumination reaches farther than the limitation of the bulb. Even so, Masters such as Swami Sivananda worked miraculously, to the wonderment of man, and stirred mankind, creating gems in different parts of the world. All this is due to his *tapas*, austerity.

The more we remember the austerities, the *tapas* of Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj, the more do we bow in obeisance to his lotus feet. His power is working in leaps and bounds. He used to say: "My mission is not complete." Sometimes he would humourously say, "In this birth, everything I have written in English. In the next birth, everything I will write in Sanskrit, because people would like to read my works in Sanskrit also." He was a very jocular person. His jokes

were multifaceted, all-instructive, full of wisdom, sometimes going directly into the heart of a person and making him different that very minute.

A few blessed souls have received direct grace from Swami Sivananda, and there are hundreds of thousands who were inspired and transformed by him in a mysterious manner through his writings. He has brought about a transformation in their hearts through his invisible powers, and those hearts he called the branches of The Divine Life Society. The Divine Life Society is in the heart of every man. As a matter of fact, it is in the heart of man only. It then manifests itself outside in the form of action and the visible shape or instrumentality of its mission. The purpose of these centres is to ignite other sparks. The spark is everywhere. It is in you, in me and in every person, but it is smothered, it is stifled, it is covered over, and it is not able to become Self-conscious. When the spark itself is not Self-conscious, it cannot make others Self-conscious. To rouse the spark of the Spirit in man to its own Self-consciousness is the work of The Divine Life Society and its branches.



## **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 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 such as Albert Einstein. It was also the time for a 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 such as 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 such as 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. For example, why do we elect a person as a representative of a constituency? 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 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 the Son of Man, i.e., the son of *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 social status and position; we have 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 in a vernacular of India or in 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 to give a message to be broadcast on All India Radio concerning 'the relevance of religion to national integration'. I was trying to explain, in that short message which I gave on tape, that it is very strange that he should speak of the 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 wrongly conceive. The soul is not any such thing. 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. 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.

Hence, 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. 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 such as 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 Stature of the Spirit of Swami Sivananda**

We deeply contemplate at this moment the great stature of the spirit of worshipful Sri Gurudev Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj. To me, the 'stature' of his spirit is the proper word to describe his true personality, his being, and his renunciate mastery over the spirit of God. Some of us who have lived with him physically had this experience of observing that he was, on the one hand, a renunciate par excellence, and on the other hand, one who was rooted in God and thought of nothing else.

He was a great combination, a great blending of apparent contradictions. The world and the spirit came together in his personality. He was a lover of all, but a friend of none. Such great souls are described in the scriptures as Mahakartas, Mahabhoktas, and Mahatyagis. Those who are stationed in the spirit of God are Mahakartas. They can do anything, incomprehensible though it be to the workaday human mind. Mahakartas can do anything in any manner they like, without adhering to the common norms of human conduct and thinking. They are also Mahabhoktas. They can enjoy anything, and there is no norm fixed for that. They are also

Mahatyagis, and can renounce anything in utter abandonment; relinquishment of even the notion of belonging to anything is abandoned. We cannot conceive such persons in minds that are small, bound by rules and regulations of human stereotyped creations of what we call a Procrustean bed type of norm.

His meditations were his strength. That was everything. He maintained no connection with anybody in this Ashram, though he maintained an intimate connection with everybody and looked after all as his own children. But it took only a moment for him to renounce everybody and to consider that he had nothing to do with any person. His meditations, as he had told us personally on some occasions, were based on the great Vedic cosmological hymn known as the Purusha Sukta.

The first person that he would see in the morning was the *karmachari* who came to clean his room, and a few flowers would be placed on the head of this person with a mantra meaning, "One of the heads of the Cosmic Being has come." Afterwards his attendant would come, and another flower would be placed with a mantra meaning, "Another head of the Cosmic Being has come."

It is difficult for untrained minds to imagine that the heads of everyone are the heads of God only. All the eyes are His eyes; all the ears are His ears. These ears with which we are listening now are the ears of God. This mind with which we are able to think just now is the mind of God. These feet with which we have walked up to this place are the feet of God. These hands of ours are the hands of God. It is God that pulsates in our hearts, breathes through our

lungs, speaks through our mouths, and understands through our intelligence.

We have heard all these things any number of times from the scriptures, and from saints and sages during discourses, but this will never enter the mind of any person. Hard-headed is the human being. Flint-like is the stiffness of the ego, the human nature. It does not permit the entry of any nobility or greatness that is external to itself. If there is anything great, the ego says, "I am great." Everywhere this "I am" comes in. Because of that affirmation which is so very unfortunate, the great 'I' of the Absolute God does not enter us. Any amount of effort on the part of a frog or a mouse will not permit it to think like this, and if we are like frogs and mice, and are content to be what we appear to be to our own selves, then the true spirit of our stature of Being is not being followed.

We are told that there are three kinds of disciples. Even before the Guru speaks, the first type of disciple knows what the Guru is intending in his mind; the Guru's very existence, being and demeanour become an instruction. The second type of disciple is one who has to be told, "Do this." If he is not told anything, he will not do anything. The third kind of disciple will not do anything even if he is told to do something. He will have his own way.

This is the attitude we develop towards God also. Even if instructions come that this has to be done, we shall not follow them because we believe that our way of living will continue for a long time, and we can easily be comfortable with all the mechanisms that we have created for prolonging our life and keeping ourselves happy.

There are some who follow the letter of the instruction: the Gita says, the Bible says, the Upanishad says. What does it matter what they say, when the import has not been comprehended properly?

Gurudev was a Godman, to mention briefly. Some call such great beings Mangods. All the gods are within them. Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa Deva was also called a Mangod. At times he could appear as a particular god, and at other times appear as another god. Sri Gurudev Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj used to say to us, “Do you know who I am? I can be Vishnu, and I can be Rudra, both. Lovingly I will take care of all of you, protect you, love you, and caress you as your father and mother. But I can be Rudra; I can turn you out, and I will not look at your face.” He could be highly creative like Brahma, protective like Vishnu, and dispassionate like Rudra.

Many years have passed since he became invisible to this world, and he is remembered more now than even when he was physically observable to mankind. His work seems to be getting more and more accelerated, much more than when he was physically available to us. The discarnate spirit of his universal presence seems to be operating in a more vigorous and expanded manner than the comparatively limited way that the work was going on earlier. You must have seen with your own eyes that there is expansion everywhere—expansion of the comprehension of the values of life, expansion of the very concept of human existence, and expansion of the reputation that this great Ashram has established in the eyes of the committee of nations.



There are liberated souls of various categories. There are those who have managed to maintain a relationship with the Ultimate Reality and with this world at the same time. They are discarnate Jivanmuktas—not incarnate ones, whom we generally call Jivanmukta Purushas. The connection that one can maintain with this world and with God simultaneously is the symptom of a Jivanmukta. This is generally believed to be the characteristic of a person who is physically alive. But there are others who can be discarnate and yet maintain this relationship between the higher and the lower.

There are seven stages of knowledge and Self-realisation. The first three stages are the stages of aspiration, spiritual effort and struggle in sadhana, to which category the people of the world may be said to belong. But there is a fourth stage where the spirit ascends above the world and attains a state called *sattvapatti*. Flashes of the light of God become the light of day for that perception. They do not see the world with sunlight, but with flashes of another *sattva* which is emanating from the higher realm. This flash illuminates their own vision as well as the world below, so they can see themselves clearly, as well as the Reality that flashes the light, and the world below. That is the condition where we can contact them directly, even in our meditations. They will descend into our hearts, into our workaday life, and operate by their very thought. Such great Masters are many who can act for us and work for us, and do things for us by the very thought of them. Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj has been operating in this way. We must consider that he is in Brahmaloaka, the universal, interconnected, internally organised centre of the

universe, which is illuminated by this light of God. Such were his contemplations.

This Purusha, the great mighty Being, is connected with this world, as well as not connected with this world. So are the great Masters. Having enveloped the whole world of perceptibility, they stand above it to a large extent, uncontaminated, untouched, unrelated in any manner whatsoever. Even to contemplate in this manner is to invoke them in their true spirit into our own hearts. The greatest service that one can do is to meditate on the values of life—that which controls the destiny of mankind and the power that operates through nature.

Hands and feet cannot do service adequately. True service arises from the thought of the mind. We are told that there were great Masters who came to this world whose names are not known to everybody. Their names do not appear in newspapers, or even in scriptures. Their names are not mentioned in books. They come and they go. But what do they do when they come? They think. They leave their thoughts, and then go. These thoughts that they leave are the protective forces of this world. They do not advertise themselves; they do not write books; they do not speak. No one can even see them. They are energies operating in the form of what we may call invisible incarnations of divinity.

There are others who work with hands and feet, and so on. What I mean is, there are great people of varieties of intensity of behaviour. Your thought is what you are. What you do with your physical limbs is not what you are. Do not say, “I have done so much. I have been serving so much.” This counts little in the eyes of the higher values of life. Tell

me what you are thinking in your mind. The whole day, from morning to night, what have you been thinking? What are the ideas that arose in your mind? That is the service that you have done, not the running about here and there, and seeing and doing many things.

Such is the series of thoughts that occur to my mind at this moment when I recollect my association with the great Master, Gurudev Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj. I offer my humble obeisance to him, and request you to offer your obeisance to him in his great masterly stature of spirit.



## Lest We Forget

The 8th of September, the sacred birthday of His Holiness Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj, marks the occasion when seekers, disciples and devotees bring to their minds their relation to the Preceptor—the fact of a disciple having surrendered himself to the Guru, the necessity to attune oneself with the wishes and commands of the Master, and the imperative of rigorous sadhana on the path, according to the behests of the Guru. To the disciples, the day is the sacred moment when they worship God in human form, or sometimes even in forms other than human, and invoke Divine Grace to descend into their being. The *adhyatma-marga*, or the spiritual path, is the inner way of the introversion of the senses and the mind. A secret ‘strait gate’ marks its beginning (hence the difficulty of treading it), and the aspirant free from heedlessness undertakes the arduous journey with the hope that the Light from the Above will illumine his way throughout. The Guru is the focusing medium for the spiritual splendour.

At intervals of time, a being from the higher regions finds its way to this planet of ours, bringing with him the power, majesty and glory of that far-distant region from whence

he came. He knows the purpose of his visit, shares the life about him, and enters into their joys and sorrows. Such a one, it may be said with justice, was Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj. Swamiji's sense of selfless action was so intense that he worked himself to fullness for the fulfilment of his noble, divine ambition, viz., to be a guide on the path in the distress and darkness of seekers, nay, to become the spiritual food by which humanity lives, and to render kind, benevolent acts and daily services with a willing heart and an open purse to strugglers known and unknown. Through the pages of his numerous books, Sri Swamiji's mission reveals that the secret of reflective action lies in the knowledge of the true Self and in the annihilation of the ego. He endeavoured to acquaint people with the knowledge of that full life which neither psychology nor philosophy can convey, as all knowledge is futile if the basics are not mastered, and transmute that knowledge into character. Sri Swamiji averred and exemplified that man only works well when he is working with the whole of himself. The universe is an indivisible whole; one cannot break it up, seize some part and call it his own without that part slipping from his grip and belonging to the universe undivided. He emphasised that our ineffectiveness and paltriness are due to the philosophy of fragmentation. We feel atomised because we have sadly lost our sense of belonging to the whole, of being conscious participants in the affairs and patterns of the universe. And, therefore, revising our entire outlook, let the whole become our unit of measure. This, said Swamiji, is a method of approach to a loftier expression of being.

We, as disciples of His Holiness Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj, should follow the lofty examples that he has set before us in blending together the relative and the Absolute. The world and God blend in our own life. We do not reject anything. The specific nature of the sadhana and the philosophy as propounded by Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj is this: he neither rejects God nor the world. In his philosophy there is no rejection; it is only inclusion. He was one of those saints, sages and seers who had nothing to avoid, abandon or reject in this world; everything was to be absorbed, sublimated, transformed and redeemed. That was his philosophy, and sadhana is naturally a practice of this philosophy.

The putting into practice, to the extent possible, of this supreme principle in our own life is sadhana. According to him, sadhana is essentially a mental act, not a physical feat. Sadhana is an attitude we have towards the Supreme Being, and it means the requisite adjustment of our personality in social life also. It is a movement as well as an expansion. It is a movement, vertical and horizontal. We move towards God in an ascent, and then we also expand ourselves in social life, so that we take the world with us when we reach God. With this attitude, if we endeavour to work in life and fulfil our duties, whatever they may be, it will be observed that there is no occasion for feeling ill will or disgust towards anything. To see God in the world is the highest sadhana. They say the footprint of an elephant includes the footprints of all other animals, because it is the biggest footprint. This supreme concept of the immanence of God in the world is inclusive of every concept which is spiritually valuable.

To contemplate on God in this world is the highest sadhana, and this automatically implies love towards all beings. We cannot see God in all and yet not love all people. These are contraries. To see God in all and love all equally is implied, and we need not mention it separately; and this also implies service to all. To recognise one's own self in others and to work for the fulfilment of this in life is a part of our sadhana. Love all, serve all, because God is in all. The Christ said, "Love thy neighbour as thy self." What did he mean, and what is the reason behind it? Because our neighbour is our own self, we have to love him as our own self. There is a rationale behind this teaching. In daily life we have to conduct ourselves in a manner which is in consonance with this supreme principle which is our ideal, our objective, and the object of realisation.

With what words could the wisdom of saints and sages be praised? In a world where struggle for existence and the survival of the fittest, or in other words, selfishness and hatred, would seem to be the order of things, these saints and sages had the foresight and wisdom to choose renunciation and divinity as their ideals, and boldly exhorted mankind to adopt them for the noble purpose of retrieving humanity from perdition. As these great ones are truly free from selfishness and egoism, it is really God that speaks and acts through them. Through these saints and sages, God shines in the world. Yes, God manifests Himself through all, but our egoism suppresses and veils that manifestation as the dark cloud hides the sun; but these being absent in the sage, he is God himself, and whatever he does is really the work of

God. Bhagavan Sri Krishna says in the Gita, “I regard the sage as Myself.”

Such are the qualities, the nature, the far-reaching and lasting results of the activities of saints and sages on this Earth. Therefore, it behoves us all as human beings to keep in mind, with a deep sense of gratitude, the facts, principles and lessons indicated in connection with their lives and teachings.

Lest we should forget, let us all, on this auspicious birthday anniversary of Gurudev Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj, resolve that we shall exert ourselves to the utmost to study these exalted teachings, assimilate them and make them, as far as we possibly can, the working principles of every moment of our daily life. The water drawn up and stored as clouds during hot summer manifests itself in plentiful showers that usher in the advent of fresh life everywhere. May we all, likewise, begin now to seriously put into actual practice all the theory that we have stored up in us through patient study, and thus commence spiritual life. Let all that we have read, heard, seen, learnt and imbibed become, through practice, transformed into a ceaseless outpouring of universal love, loving service, prayer and worship of the Lord seated in all beings. Let us generate fresh waves of spirituality. The day is sacred to the memory of a great sage, a man of wisdom; and our true Guru *dakshina* is to live up to what our Master’s lofty heart aspired for and expected of us. May God and Guru bless us all to that end!





## **Gurudev Swami Sivananda**

We bring to our memories today the advent of a great soul which incarnated upon this Earth many, many years back. We remember the birth into this Earth-plane of the great Master Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj.

Usually such indefinable individuals are called supermen, or if we would like to be a little more philosophical, super-individuals. An extended form of an individual person—that is the meaning of super-individuality. In what way does he extend beyond the dimension of his visible personality? The extension of the dimension of a person is not actually the extension of the physical body, because the body is not the person. The mind or the consciousness that animates the body is what determines the meaning of a super-individual. We have to carefully keep in our mind the point that a person is not the body. The force that is exerted by a person, the knowledge and the capacity to execute action of any kind, is not seen in the five element based physical body. It is in the mind of that person. What the person thinks is itself the person; otherwise, everybody looks alike. Even Sri Rama and Sri Krishna looked like any other human being, but they were intensely super-individual; they extended beyond

themselves. What is it that is extending beyond itself? It is that which is the person.

Swami Sivananda never travelled abroad, but there is no country in the world that does not know his name. How did he spread himself around the globe of the Earth without seeing anybody outside India? Living in a little cave-like room on the bank of the Ganga, with no ventilation even, dark inside—what is the principle working through him that made him so famous even today? As time passes, his name captures more and more people. The books that he has written are a magazine of magnetism. The writing of Sri Swami Sivanandaji is the manifestation of a soul force. He was entirely present in every word that he wrote. The author should be immersed in the words that he speaks or writes; otherwise, the book will not cut ice.

Whenever you think, you must be there wholly in your thought. It is not that you think something and at the same time think twenty other things; then that thought will not have any power. When you think a thing, you think only that, and not another thing. This is the principle not only of spiritual growth, but also of even the maintenance of good health in the body. The dissipated action of the mind distracted in various directions does not permit its concentration on anything. Even when you eat your food, you cannot think you are eating food. The mind is in the railway station if you have to catch the train after half an hour. A person who is wanting to catch the train after half an hour need not eat food. It is better to go. Else, the stomach cannot digest what is eaten. The modern malady is in the haste with which things are being done. Everything is rapid; it must

be done now, and then another thing must be done. Go on doing. But you are not in anything that you are doing; you are outside it. This kind of action, where you are not present, is called binding action. Action in which you are wholly present is liberating action. But any one of us can close our eyes for a few minutes and think deeply whether we are wholly present in anything in this world. We will find, to our dismay, that we are not present wholly in anything. Therefore, there is failure in whatever one touches.

“*Na karma lipyate nare.*” Karma does not bind, says the Isavasya Upanishad, provided that you condition your action with the proviso in the first line of the Upanishad, “*Ishavaysam idam sarvam.*” If God does a work, it cannot bind, and if you do a work by uniting yourself with God, your action cannot bind you, because you are not the doer.

Swami Sivananda is generally called a Godman. A French writer called Romain Rolland wrote a biography of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa. He strangely titled his book as *Sri Ramakrishna, the Mangods*. Not Godman, but Mangods. To a casual reader it looks very strange. What is Mangods? It is a man in whom every god can be found. A Godman is a person who has planted God in his heart, and a Mangods is a person in whom every god is residing.

We may say this in connection with Sri Swami Sivananda also. Whatever word he uttered was a scripture. Whenever residents in this Ashram went and requested him to give a message, he would say, “What message do you want? See how I am living, see how I work. That is my message. If you can follow my footsteps and think as I am thinking, and

do as I do, what other message do you want?" The life of a person is the message of that person.

Sri Rama is not great because Valmiki or Tulsidas wrote a book about him, but because his greatness was in his personality. He was charming, resplendent, kind, compassionate and indomitably powerful; and so was Krishna. All the gods were present there—Brahma, Vishnu, Siva were operating through these incarnations.

To every spiritual seeker Swami Sivananda was an ideal, an exemplary Guru, wanting nothing but giving everything. If anybody offered a basket of fruits, he would immediately distribute it to everybody. He would not say, "Let me eat it; keep it there." No, he would not do that. He did not want anything. "*Tena tyaktena bhunjiyha*" is another passage from the Isavasya Upanishad: Enjoy the world, but under the condition that it is pervaded by God. It is like saying enjoy God Himself. Every leaf of the tree, every breeze that blows, and every ray of the Sun and the Moon is the dazzling lumination of the fingers of God Himself.

Till the last day, Swami Sivananda was kind to every one of us. Large-heartedness is a small word; he was much more than a large-hearted person. Some of us were physically present during his lifetime, and many of you might not have even seen him. That his name is thundering through the world as a whole even now is enough insignia of his greatness. So charitable was his heart that many local people, Sannyasins, sadhus in Swargashram and in other places, and in Rishikesh, used to say he is not Sivananda, he is 'Givananda'. The demonstration of his divinity is in the manner in which he gave. "Give, give, give, give."

There are humorous incidents in his life, very humorous indeed. One day he called me and said, "I don't like this kitchen, so small! I want a dining hall as long as the distance from Rishikesh to Darshan Mahavidyalaya. I like to feed people. I want to feed thousands every day. Ah, yes, I may do it in the next birth otherwise." See the feelings of a great soul! The last word in the Vaishvanara Vidya of the Chhandogya Upanishad says, "He need not have to eat much; one grain will do to satisfy him." Do you know the power of a little atom? It is invisible to the physical eye, but what is its capacity? Such is the capacity of the little food that a great saint eats. The world satisfies itself by the satisfaction of the saint. Says the Mandukya Upanishad, "Go and worship these great souls if you want prosperity"—prosperity not merely in the material sense or spiritual sense, but in every sense. They are wonderful persons, wonder-men; that is the only thing we can say.

There were many wonder-men here in this country. They cannot be called by any particular name. What kind of wonder it is, it is impossible to describe. Even if you see them, you are blessed. People flocked to have darshan of Swami Sivananda.

When we remember him today, on his birthday as we call it, we must know what we are remembering. We are remembering the Mangods, or the Godman. Everything will come to us if this one person is thought of. You need not have a large audience; that one person in itself is the audience. He is the repository, the abode of all the values of this world. If you give, you feel you are losing something. If you have one dollar and half a dollar is given to somebody else, you

feel that half a dollar has gone away, you are less by half. But the manner in which you give will see to it that whatever you have given is doubled and given back to you. You must give; and here again, the underlying factor is yourself. You have to be present in the act that you perform. Half of you should go away when you give; otherwise, it is not a sacrifice. Whenever you do some good work, feel whether you have done a sacrifice or you have lost nothing. If you have lost nothing in giving, you have given nothing. It is a sharing of your own being in some measure that is called charity. You must lose your lower self, to some extent at least. The greedy, grabbing habit of the mind is what is called the lower self. Everyone wants everything, but nobody wants to lose anything.

The Isavasya Upanishad and the Bhagavadgita are great teachers to mankind. The whole principle of spiritual existence is an assessment of the quantum of your being present in the act that you do, the thoughts that you express, and the words that you speak. If you speak a word with the whole of your being imbedded in it, it will command respect. But if only your tongue speaks, nobody will listen to it. The whole of spiritual life is contained in the principle of your location in your act and speech and thought. Where are you located? You are not located on the surface of this Earth. You need not move one inch to get what you want, because what you want is sitting under your nose. Gurudev's satisfaction was not in gathering the material of this world, not the glory of the Earth, not adumbration, not show, but in a satisfaction which is the satisfaction of All-being.

People have written biographies and anthologies of Swami Sivananda, but none of these anthologies contain what he was seen to be by people who were living with him. When you see a person daily, you know that person much better than what biographies can say. See me, that is enough. This Ashram has become so big; its reputation has reached the end of the world. What would be the reason behind its recognition by everybody? It is the immanent action taking place even now right from the high heavens of the presence of this great Master. He used to tell us, "I will never allow you to be hungry. You will always be fed; don't be afraid. I have established a scheme called Vishwanath Mandir Mooladhana. That fund will fetch some interest, and with that you can do the worship and prepare *kitcheri* and eat it. The *kitcheri* will allow you to survive forever. You need not beg for food."

A person who is confident that he will never starve as long as God is in Heaven, will never starve. His thoughts will pull towards himself everything that he needs. You are pulled towards the world; the world is so powerful that it catches you and drags you towards it. People run about everywhere for some personal satisfaction. But can you draw the world into yourself? You pull the world towards you; is there anyone who can conceive such a possibility? If you enter the world, you pull the world towards yourself; but if you live within your kitchen-like or chicken-like heart, the world will kick you out. The utter unselfishness of a spiritual seeker is in the conviction that he needs nothing because he will receive everything.

Such was the great Swami Sivananda. For years we used to see him every day, and every day he would say some new word; that was a gospel. To sit with him was a joy. His presence was a solution to every problem. We had various difficulties in the Ashram, all kinds of problems. We used to go and present them to Gurudev, “Swamiji, this problem has come.” He would say, “It will go.” He did not tell how he would solve the problem; he would just say it would go, that is all. And it really went. How it went, we cannot say. In the early days of the Ashram, tormenting problems were after us, but they all vanished gradually. When God is with you, the world is also with you. When the world is with you, all the people are also with you. What is your problem? That was his philosophy.

We begin our meditations with a prayer to Guru. Prayer to Guru does not mean prayer to the form of the physical body of the Guru which passes away, but the energy of the Guru, the expanded form of the consciousness of the Guru, and its immanent presence which is enveloping us. The Guru is not sitting outside you; the Guru is above you. You must remember this. That which is above you is the Guru, not that which is sitting outside you, because the outsideness of anything prevents real contact with you. When a thing is above you, it inundates you completely; you are flooded by its presence. It rains grace and blessings upon you. You have to remember the difference between ‘in front of’ and ‘above’. God is not sitting in front of you, He is above you. This is the key to meditational techniques. Meditation is the art of concentrating the mind on that which is above you—not necessarily in front of you, to the side of you, etc. Then that



particular thing which you concentrate upon as that which is above you will shower Grace. A rain of virtue will soothe your heart. The great sage Patanjali calls it *dharma mega samadhi*. An identity with this kind of principle can collect clouds of virtue and rain blessings upon you.

There were many great saints in this country and also abroad, and the immediate presence for us is Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj. If you remember him and the miracles that he performed, and the kindness and the compassion and the charity of his heart, all your sins will be destroyed. Just think of him as he was really, as something which was transcendent to you; you will be purified. May we receive his Grace.



## **The Blessings of Discarnate Masters**

Our revered and dear Gurudev is Worshipful Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj. Actually, discarnate forms of the Masters of the Spirit form an inclusive fraternity among themselves in the higher realms of being, not capable of contact by the physical eyes of human beings. Just as in the United Nations each nation maintains its own identity and yet also establishes a relationship with other nations in the world, even as an ambassador representing a particular country but posted in some other country establishes a double relationship in his operations—namely, an intimate connection with the country where he is expected to work, and a permanent relationship with his own country which has deputed him as an ambassador—so are these Masters of the Spirit operating in a realm which is on the one hand inclusive, and on the other hand interiorised.

That they belong to a fraternity of large inclusiveness of blessed ones and that, at the same time, they also maintain a scintillating identity among themselves marks them as distinguished divinities not comparable with anything that we observe in this world. Because of the inclusiveness of their relation in the fraternity of the leaders of the Spirit, they are

supposed to be conscious of every one of us. But because of the fact they are interiorised in their own self-identical nature, our faculties of understanding cannot contact them. Even if a great Master is now sitting in front of us in this very hall, he may see us, but we cannot see him.

There are two defects in the human way of thinking which are obviated in the way in which the minds of these great Masters work. One of the defects in human thinking is that every person is a self-identical physical entity, and any kind of relationship that we establish with other people in the world, to speak correctly, is artificial. An inclusive, organic relation of ourselves with other people is not possible because we are bodily conditioned, ego-ridden, and we struggle hard to maintain ourselves as we are in our body. Basically, the human being has scant respect for any other person, though this is not visible to us in our daily life because of an adjustment, an adaptation that every person makes in social life, knowing well that utter self-identical physical assertion will defeat the very purpose of that kind of assertion.

But in the case of these great Masters, it is a different thing altogether. They are interiorised not as we are introverted psychological individuals, but are interiorised in a universal sense. That means to say, the universe is an interiorised comprehensiveness; it is not an exteriorised particularity of little things. We see a variety of things in the world, yet internally they form an inclusiveness and rootedness in their base. Every star has some connection with every other star, yet every star looks different from other stars.

As distant stars shed their bright rays on the surface of the Earth and condition even our life in this world, these

great Masters, perpetually operating in a realm beyond sense-perception, send a sea wave of blessing to all people. Every divinity as a god in the high heavens is internally related to us, and so are the Masters. In that realm of inclusive interiority of the Spirit, there is no such thing as 'my Guru' and 'somebody else's Guru'. Everybody is 'my Guru', 'our Guru', because this socially conditioned ethnic differentiation that we find in physically embodied Masters is cast aside there, and they are not even human, or males and females. They are centres of light.

The more they rise above in the higher realms of being, the more they become impersonalised in their existence. There are many levels of being, and in every level there are discarnate spiritual entities. The higher ones have greater capacity of conducting themselves in respect of everything in the world; the lower ones have lesser capacity.

In the highest interiority of the spiritual kingdom, light is reflected in light. Every so-called shining star of that spiritual entity gets reflected in every other star, which is also a spiritual entity. In our tradition of India we call that highest interiority of spiritual fraternity as Brahmaloaka, the kingdom of the most blessed ones. There they maintain a kind of self-identity, yet they are permeating into every other such entity. Everyone is reflected in everyone else, like millions of mirrors reflecting one another when they are placed in a proper context and juxtaposition.

Thus, they are ambassadors of the Spirit, arms of God operating in the world. Their will to bless, to redeem in a most compassionate manner, is their perpetual characteristic, not arisen in themselves by effort. If we give a few coins to a

beggar, this is a feeling of charity that we may have sometimes, but it is occasional, done with effort, and not always spontaneous. But the charity embodied by the Masters is a spontaneous manifestation of their very makeup. In their internal makeup and constitution as spirits, they touch everything, and therefore they are permanently, perpetually in contact with everything in the world. Such contact is an automatic blessing, we may say.

The grace of God is a perennial rain that inundates our Earth. It is not extracted with great difficulty. Just as the rays of the Sun touch the surface of the Earth without our summoning them—spontaneously there is a world of light brightening the surface of the Earth when the Sun is in the sky—so are the waves of blessing that emanate from this vast ocean of beneficent individuals. They have human characteristics in the sense that they can bless us. They have super-individual characteristics in the sense that they do not belong to this world.

The highest Heaven touches this Earth even now. Though due to our erroneous reading of the passages of the scriptures we may think that Heaven is a number of kilometres or millions of miles away from us, this is a defective way of measuring height and distance with our mind. There is no distance between Heaven and Earth because Heaven is the most rarefied form of Universal matter which, in the process of creation, descends into denser and denser forms of expression until it reaches the very Earth on which we are seated. Since the distance between Heaven and Earth is nothing but the distance between the most rarefied form of Universal

substance and its lowest, grosser form, there is a continuous invisible vital relationship of the highest with the lowest.

We are in such a blessed atmosphere—not in Rishikesh, not in Sivananda Ashram, not in any particular town or country. We are floating on the surface of the billowing ocean of Universal majesty and grace. But stupid as the human mind is, it gets extroverted so intensely towards other material objects, such as the body of one's own self, that anything that is interiorised cannot make itself felt due to the repulsive habit of the human individual affirmative character. We bring tragedy to our own selves by our tragic thinking, and we can also bless ourselves the moment we are in a mood and capacity to inwardise ourselves in communion with the great Masters.

In such a way, Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj is blessing us, and we shall trust it and be thrice blessed.



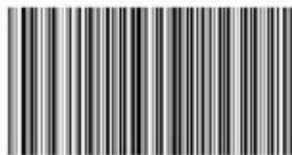
### ***About This Book:***

This book is a compilation of eighteen discourses on Gurudev Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj that Swami Krishnananda gave over the years. Swamiji discusses the circumstances that necessitated the incarnation of Sri Gurudev on Earth at that period in history and the spiritual renaissance that arose at the beginning of the twentieth century. Swamiji also talks about Gurudev's early days in Rishikesh and his austere *tapas*, various aspects of Gurudev's nature, his mission in the world, and the founding and purpose of The Divine Life Society.

When Swami Krishnananda speaks about Sri Gurudev, it is from direct experience as a disciple who lived closely with the holy Master for decades, and along with this personal viewpoint Swamiji brings everything to Universality in a totality of vision.



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