

# SWAMI SIVANANDA

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by

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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 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, 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 the food. Better go. Else, the stomach cannot digest what you eat. 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 one's eyes for a few minutes and think deeply whether we are wholly present in anything in this world. We will find, to the dismay of our own selves, that we are not present wholly in anything, therefore there is failure in whatever one touches.

Karma does not bind, says the Ishavasya Upanishad: “*na karma lipyate nare*”, provided that you condition your action with the proviso in the first line of the Upanishad: “*ishavaysamidamsarvam*”. 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. Godman is a person who has planted God in his heart, and 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’m 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 wrote a book or Tulsidas wrote a book, 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 will not say, “Let me eat it; keep it there.” No, he would not do that; he did not want anything. “*Tena tyaktenabhunjiyah*” is another passage from the Ishavasya 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 present physically during his lifetime, and many of you might not have seen him even. That his name is thundering through the world as a whole even now is enough insignia of his greatness. So much charitable was his heart that many local people, Sannyasins, Sadhus in Swargashram and 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 next the 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, wondermen, that is the only thing we can say.

There were many wondermen in this country here. 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 of it. 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 Ishavasya Upanishad and the Bhagavad Gita 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 and 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 daily see a person, 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 to every place 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. Every day we used to see him for some years and years. Every day he would say some new word; that was a gospel. To sit with him was a joy. The presence of him 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's all. And it really went. How it went, we cannot say. Tormenting problems were after us in the early days of the Ashram, but they all vanished gradually.

When God is with you, the world also is 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 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 us, He is above us. 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 soothen your heart. Great Sages call it *dharma mega samadhi*. An identity with this kind of principle can collect clouds of virtue and rain blessings upon you. This is a Sutra from Patanjali's Yoga System.

There were many great Saints in this country and also abroad, and the immediate presence for us is Swami Sivananda. 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 has he was really, as something which was transcendent to you; you will be purified. May we receive his Grace.