

# NEW YEAR'S MESSAGE

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by

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Here before us is the holy astronomical commandment that we humbly receive as what is known as the coming of a New Year. This ashram, Sivananda Ashram, the Divine Life Society, has now seen sixty New Years after its birth. Sixty cycles of time have passed in the history of this ashram. This revolution of sixty years is regarded, according to tradition, as a great achievement in the life process of anything.

Whether anything moves or nothing moves, we cannot say because our judgments are based on the apparatus of understanding with which we are endowed, and the instrument of knowledge conditions and determines the nature of our judgment. We are told ever and ever that everything passes. Years roll on, and we have new years. The meaning of the coming of a fresh year is not always intelligible to the human mind. What does actually happen when a new year comes and stands before us? Physically, to normal perception, it will appear that nothing happens. The same today will continue tomorrow. Whatever we have been experiencing today, we will experience tomorrow also.

Then what is the newness of the year? Where is the freshness of it? It is the cussedness of human nature that prevents people from knowing what is actually happening. We cannot even know that we have been growing from our babyhood to adulthood. We did grow, and there was

moment-to-moment newness in our life, but never for a moment did we think that we are becoming newer and newer every moment. We felt that we are static, and nothing is happening to us, and nothing has happened to us. What a wonder! Every minute constituent of human personality has changed from its inception in order that it has to become an adult corporate body. But why is such a continuous movement never known to be existing at all? We do not know that anything is happening to us. We are perfectly all right. We are static and solid individualities always, and we never become something else.

This phenomenon of something perpetually taking place and yet not being known by anybody is the mystery of the universe. We belong to different realms of being, and we belong, simultaneously, to all levels of being. At one stroke, we are everywhere. This is the reason why we feel that we are not changing at all. There is an unchanging eternity presiding over all the movements of our nature, due to which we feel that we are solid like a rock and we are perfectly stable.

But there is another world to which we also belong which is called the sense world - the world presented by the sense organs of colour and sound and activity. Involved in it, we are hurrying forward into a destination whose end is not clear to the mind. It is like an animal that has a rope around its neck and is pulled forward by the owner thereof, though the animal may not be aware as to where it is being dragged.

The problem that we are facing in life is this mysterious dual operation taking place in us - a false complacency of everything being fine and stable and secure - and, on the other hand, a helpless hurrying forward through every cell of our body and every part of our mind towards a destination of which no one can have any idea.

How did the world come about? When did it begin? What was there in the world when it started? Where were all of us at the commencement of the world? Or, were we not there? How many years have passed since creation took place? And

how many beings lived and died during this process ever since the commencement of the world - if at all we can say there is such a thing called a commencement of time? How can time commence – because, for the time to begin, there must be a prior state where time was not. A timeless situation cannot be imagined to be causing another condition called the time process. There will be no connection between timelessness and time.

We are no wiser in delving into these mysteries of the commencement of time and the end towards which time is perhaps moving. We sometimes designate the time process as evolution; but in what direction is the evolution? There is nothing that does not move in this world; and when it moves, it carries everything inside it – as when a vehicle moves, all those who are seated in the vehicle also move.

Every particle of matter, every plant, every tree, every animal, every human being, anything whatsoever moves helplessly in the direction taken by this wonderful evolutionary process which we call the drama of creation, preservation and destruction. We have heard in our scriptures that God created the world once and He made arrangements for preserving it and he will destroy it one day. But this process of creation, preservation and destruction is going on perpetually even now in our own body. Every moment there is a creation of new components of body. Every moment there is a tendency to preserve the stability of these components. Every moment there is also a tendency of these components to deteriorate, dismember and get destroyed into a vacuous nothingness. Creation, preservation, and destruction are continuous. It is not that yesterday there was creation, today there is preservation and tomorrow there shall be destruction. It is a movement from eternity to eternity. But what we call the New Year is a psychological acceptance of a natural occurrence which rings into our ears the message of perpetual deterioration of everything that is created, and a perpetual longing for the fulfilment of a perennial existence. The New Year is, rather, a reminder to everyone that unconsciously some activity is

taking place everywhere, and at least at some time we should be conscious of what is taking place really. Unconsciously being dragged on is one thing, and consciously accepting this movement is another thing.

Everything moves towards God; but conscious movement towards God is called spiritual *sadhana*. An unconscious activity is no activity. It has no value. Action should be consciously motivated. In the astronomical universe, as we are told, endless activity is taking place in which we are perpetually involved. We are involved in the very process that is taking place in the galaxies which we wrongly imagine are very far away from us. We look at the sky on a dark night when the sky is clear and see the galaxy, the Milky Way and, therefore, we come to a conclusion it is very, very far. But we cannot know we are involved inside it. When we look at the Milky Way, actually what we are doing is looking at part of our own body, to which even the solar system belongs. If the toe has an eye, it can look up and see the head as if it is far away. But the head is not far away from the toe. It is a connected organism. So are the stars; so is everything that is contained within this large expanse of space and time process. We cannot imagine that we are capable of cosily sitting calmly, unknown and undetected by the cosmic forces. Every breath that we breathe is thundering forth with a loud noise in the highest of heavens, just as every little pain in any part of the body is known to the whole body.

Now we must awaken to the fact of our really belonging to a world of which we are inseparable. Otherwise, the toe with its imagined eyesight can imagine that it is some light years away from the head - which it looks at as a distant object. Nothing in the world is distant. The absence of distance in the makeup of a thing is called organism. It is a living completeness. Such is creation, and it has to be so because it is an emanation from an indivisible substance. That which emanates from indivisibility has also to be indivisible. Dividedness cannot proceed from an indivisible cause, just as our own bodily functioning is a wholesome,

total operation going on from moment to moment, minute to minute, second to second.

There is one action taking place everywhere, into which we are pulled forward; and we may imagine that we are also contributing something to the activity of the world. But our cooperation is incomplete. We have our own personality, assumed vehemently in our own selves, which objects to its being included in the operation of any other organisation – and, therefore, that organisation to which everything belongs compels this diffident part of it to move with it by transforming it into a new constituent individuality, which is known as the process of birth and death. Our defined attitude compels us to undergo this process of changing of vestures called the body and mind. .

The arrogance of human nature and the assertiveness of the ego – the intense satisfaction one feels of being located in a little six-foot body – prevents the entry of cosmic energy into oneself; therefore, that particular formation of individual constitution perishes for the purpose of remodelling itself into a new condition which will be able to consciously participate in the requirement of the larger organism of the universe. In every activity, God calls man. It is the summoning of God which is the coming of the new years or the going of the old years. God calling is life. Difficult it is to appreciate in the circumstance of inveterate longing to live in the body and a weddedness to the erroneous perception of natural and social living.

What can we expect in the new year that is ahead of us and is now coming on our heads? To accept it humbly. The great lesson that we can make our own in our daily life is an adoption of humility of spirit and a humbleness before the might of God. There is a 'greater' than what we are in our own selves. We carry it wherever we go. Something more than what we are is sitting within us and making us perpetually restless and insecure. This 'higher than what we are' – which is called the higher self or whatever we may call it – insists that the 'lower than what it is' should give access to

what is above. It is a war between the lower and the higher within our own selves.

The lower and the higher are not two different physical existences. They are two densities of operation, two pressures continuously being exerted within our own selves – two voices speaking at the same time, one trying to drown out the voice of the other. In this warlike operation of two kinds of voice, we have the history of mankind whereby human history becomes a panorama of perpetual ignorance of the future and an inner longing to live perennially, forever and ever.

Deep meditation on this cosmic mystery may be considered our perennial duty. Everything is meditating, says the Upanishad. In this meditative activity of harmonious arrangement of ourselves with what is actually happening around us, we set ourselves in tune with the powers that rule the world and the powers that direct our vision ahead.

Action, activity, performing, running about – this cannot satisfy you. You may run from the North Pole to the South Pole, but you cannot be sure that you have done anything worthwhile in life. The rootedness of your being is crying from the bottom of its heart, and the physical body runs from one corner to another corner in order to find on the surface of the earth all that you need. Weeping you come and crying you go, and miserably, painfully, you live in the middle of it. That circumstance should be avoided by a deliberate adjustment of your consciousness to that indivisibility which contradicts every kind of divided activity in the world and includes within itself, within its compass, all which is beautiful, magnificent, grand, powerful and eternal.

People have no time to sit quiet. They are busy people. Everybody says, "I am busy. I have no time." Where has the time gone? And why are you so busy? To what end? What are you gaining by your being busy every day? It is the business of everyone to understand that every business should be a part and parcel of the meditative process. That kind of business and activity which is imperative for the purpose of

maintaining a meditative consciousness is allowed. That which is contradictory to it is not allowed.

It is difficult to know what pure, conscious meditation is. It is not thinking something as you think anything in the world. It is an inwardisation of your spirit, a becoming of your Self in the deepest recesses of your being, and going into the depths of what you really seem to be in your deep sleep condition. You imagine that joys are scattered everywhere outside in the world. That is why you run here and there to pick up little granules of happiness. But why are you happy when you are in deep sleep? Where is the dinner, where is the lunch and where is the tea party? Where are the friends and relatives? Where is the position? Where is the wealth? Where is your authority when you are fast asleep?

Everything has gone into the winds, but there you enjoy a bliss that is incomparable to an emperor's joy in the outer world. Why is it so? How is it that an abolition of every activity and relationship seems to be capable of providing immense bliss incomparable with any other joy that one can think in the world? Are you not greater than what you are? This is the preparation for meditation: "If everything has gone in the state of deep sleep, and yet I have been the most blessed of all people, there must be some mysterious thing within ourselves." Thus is the meditation where sense organs cease to act, the body is not existing at all, and even the mind does not operate. The body, mind and senses, which are your greatest treasures, do not exist when you are most happy. This means to say that your great blessedness is neither in the sense organs, nor in the mental operations, nor in the body. It is in another thing that you may call your Self. But one cannot delve into this state easily because of the compulsions of physical nature and mental distraction.

It is necessary for even the busiest of people of the world to find time to sit for awhile to deeply contemplate the welfare of one's own self. Where does my welfare lie, really speaking? Put a question to yourself: "Where is my welfare? My welfare is in my dear relations. My welfare is in my land

and property and money and bank balance. My welfare is in the love and affection that I have from the society of people.” This is a wrong notion. Anything that is connected with you can also be separated from you. The dearest and the nearest can get cut off in a moment’s time, as if they never existed at all. To your surprise you will find the nearest and the dearest things have vanished into thin air, and you will find yourself alone.

It is a terror to be alone to oneself because it is a death of all sources of sensory enjoyment and social comfort. Test yourself. Be alone to yourself. Speak not to anybody. Close your doors and be alone to yourself. How long can you be like that? Please verify. When you are alone to yourself - unseen, unknown, uncontacted by anybody in the world - are you feeling miserable at that time? Do you want to open the door and go to the market to see the sceneries of social panorama? Or do you feel that the world has been tormenting you rather than helping you, and you would like to be alone to yourself? This test must be applied to every person. What do you feel when you are totally alone to yourself - unseen, uncontacted by anyone? How long can you sit alone to yourself? How many minutes, how many hours in a day? Mostly you will feel wretched. “Let me go out and breathe, and see people and talk. What is the good of sitting like this? I get nothing out of it.”

This is the usual unhappy phenomenon that follows even the first step in the practice of yoga meditation. There are many pitfalls, hundreds of setbacks and wrong whispers from our own selves. One person met me and said, “What is there in life except social relations, good company, many children, many relatives? Is it not a joy to live with them?” That this is a phantasm before the human being will be shown one day or the other.

Sarvaṁ tam parādāḍ yo'nyatrātmano sarvaṁ veda (Brihadaranyaka Upanishad II.iv.6) is the great statement which you have to remember which was uttered by Sage Yagnavalkya in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad. Anything

which is outside you will leave you at any moment - whatever be that dear thing and safe thing and near thing and unavoidable thing. Anything that is external to you cannot be with you; and if everything is external to you, then what will remain, finally? Only you will remain. What kind of 'you' will remain? Even the body cannot remain for a long time, so when it is said you will remain, you must be clear as to who is remaining, finally. The body goes, together with the bodies of everybody else whom you hugged as your close relations. What remains when it is said that only you remain? Be clear as to what it is that remains. This is how you can go deeper into the question of the realities of life. Don't be foolhardy and imagine that everything is milk and honey in this world. There is no milk, no honey; nothing is there. It is all an eye-wash, something to befool the ignorance of human nature.

"Guard yourself," says the Upanishad. After describing the whole process of gestation, birth and suffering as a little baby and passing through the misery of earthly life, old age and death, and getting reborn into any kind of formation, maybe as a human being, or as an animal, or as a plant, or as a reptile, or as a frog, or as a mosquito. After having described all these things, the miserable state of everything that is born, the Upanishad clinches the matter by saying, "Be guarded." Be watchful. Guard yourself, and if you cannot guard yourself, nobody else will guard you. You guard yourself from the onslaught of phenomenal insecurity and illusory presentations. When you came, you did not bring anything with you. When you go, you will not take anything with you. How then did you come to the conclusion that in the middle you own so much of property? Is there any meaning, even the least sense, that you are very wealthy, rich and possessed of all things in the middle? When in the beginning you have nothing, and in the end you have nothing, how did you grab everything in the middle? From where did it come? Such is the stupidity of life as a whole.

To shed this ignorance of the true welfare of one's own self would be an undertaking worth the while of everyone in

this new year that is to come - to rejuvenate oneself in every way, to reinforce oneself with the energy of the Spirit that is sleeping inside and is mildly presenting itself in the state of deep sleep, saying, "I am here". When everything goes, something will tell you: "I am here. I am here whom you have forgotten all the while. Here I am now. Come to Me. I am your real friend. Come unto Me." One day this voice will speak. Let us be prepared to listen to that voice now itself, and not when we are forced to listen to it willy-nilly. That voice is there even now, but the din and clamour of the sense organs prevent this beautiful music of the heavens from being heard.

This may be taken as our New Year message that we guard ourselves against any kind of illusory presentation, against any kind of false promise that the world can give. The world can give us nothing. It always makes false promises. We live by our own spiritual strength, without which even the best of medicines will not protect the decaying body.

I mentioned to you that this ashram has seen sixty years of life, which is actually the life and the message of Gurudev Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj. It was his message briefly that I placed before you just now. He spoke this message, he wrote this message, he lived this message in his life. Here is a great stalwart of spiritual personality before us known as Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj who possessed nothing, who had no house to stay in, who had no property, who had no friends and relations, who wanted nothing and gave everything. He gave all things that came to him because that thing which comes to us is intended only to be given, as that which comes from outside does not really belong to us. Utter renunciation and relinquishment of attachment highlighted the fire-like blazing light of this great master in whose institution we are living, we have been living, and perhaps hope to be living in future also.

May God come into your life - into the life of all people - and guide the destiny of mankind as the one reliable boatman in this sea of *samsara*. Suhr̥dam sarva-bhūtānāṃ jñavatā māmśantim rchatī (Bhagavadgita V.29), says the great

Lord: Know Me as your real friend. Suhr̥dam sarva-bhūtānām jñavatā māṁśantim rcchati: Peace will be unto you if you recognise Me as your friend. When all things go, I will be with you. Who can speak to you like that? “When everything goes, I shall be with you.” Which father, which mother, which friend can speak these words?

May we befriend this great Being. May the New Year herald blessedness, peace, security and happiness to the whole world, which is now under the pressure of tension and every kind of insecure phenomenon. May the world be rid of this tension. May our deep meditations, collectively undertaken, contribute a new strength to the effort to bring this solidarity, peace, and happiness to mankind. We can bring peace to the world by our meditations and prayers, not by our hands and feet. Physical activity cannot bring peace. It is our meditational, spiritual concentration of a noble motive that can bring peace to the world.

Only a human being can bring peace to human beings; nobody else can do that. A human being means one who is really humane and human in thought, culture and behaviour. Animal man, brutal man, cannibal man cannot be called ‘man’. They are not real human beings. Ye yathā māṁ prapadyante tāṁs tathaiva bhajāmy aham (Bhagavadgita IV.11): “As you are to Me, so I am to you,” So not only God says, but everything says. Even a leaf in the tree will say that: As you are to me, so I am to you. If this noble meditational impulse is to arise within the hearts of every one of us, this collective meditation will save the world from disaster. We need not be under the impression that the world is going to the dogs. It will not go like that. There is a soul operating in the whole cosmos. It will not allow it to perish like that, provided it embosoms within its own feelings this perennial call or message of God Himself that He is with us as our perpetual friend. Suhr̥dam sarva-bhūtānām jñavatā māṁśantim rcchati.

In your own lives, you would have seen that you have no real friends. Your dearest friends will leave you one day.

They will say, "We do not know who you are. I might have seen you, but I do not know who you are." This is how friends speak, finally. When you cannot trust your own body, how will you trust another body? We can speak of God's greatness, but to make God our own in our deepest feelings and in our daily life is not easy.

The blessedness of a person is equal to the blessedness of the whole of humanity. World peace is individual peace, and individual peace is world peace. If the world is suffering, an individual cannot be at peace. And if all the individuals are in peace, naturally the world also is in peace. When the part is in peace, the whole also is in peace. When the whole is in peace, all the parts also are in peace. May we delve into our own selves in a collective meditation by bringing into our own hearts the whole cosmos in one gamut. Such meditation may we make our own whereby the entire creation enters into us, sinks into our vitals, and energises every cell of our body. The world stands united with us and when we meditate, the world in its totality meditates. Thus is the meditation. Hari Om Tat Sat.

[Swamiji leads the group in chanting Om and concluding prayers.]