

GURUDEV SRI SWAMI SIVANANDA MAHARAJ'S MISSION IN THIS WORLD

by

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Sivananda's departure from this Earth.)

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 Sivananda 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 and 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 or 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 Sivananda 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 axillaries, 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 works 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, and 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 used to ask: "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.