

# SPIRITUALITY AND LIFE

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by

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The philosophy and culture of India is one of Ananda or Bliss. "From Bliss-Absolute we have come; in Bliss-Absolute we are rooted; and to Bliss-Absolute are we destined," says the Taittiriya Upanishad. It is not a message of pain, agony and distress. Pessimism is unknown to India's culture. It is a culture of exuberant positivity of approach, an approximation to God in the end, who is the greatest of positivities. Life is held to be a movement from joy to joy, and it is this that we call the evolutionary process of the soul. It is movement from a lesser truth to a higher truth, which is a better way of putting things than to repeat the hackneyed tradition that we move from error to truth. In the glorious kingdom of God, which is within everyone, there cannot be any ultimate error. Error is only a misplacement of values. It has no ultimate existence and cannot have an absolute value. Absolute error is unthinkable, and it cannot be. Absolute falsehood does not exist. Everything is as a relative representation of God's perfection and so everywhere, even in the so-called erroneous movements of material, psychological and social forces, there is an element of God present, urging all these processes towards Perfection. To our culture, which is the culture of God, the culture of Perfection, all the duties of life become a manifestation of happiness. The glorious gospel of the Vedas, the Upanishads

and the Bhagavadgita, which may be regarded as the tripod of India's message to mankind, provides us with the hopeful exhortation that we can never be helpless at any moment of our life. Our culture is the blossoming full-moon, the real 'Purnima' of hope after hope; aspiration after aspiration. May we recall to our minds, once again, the message of the saints and sages of all times and climes, who have plumbed into the depths of the Great Reality of the universe, that we exist in God, live in God, breathe in God, move in God and perform the functions of our life in the Kingdom of God.

The great message of the Christ that "the Kingdom of Heaven is within you" should be a miraculous and revolutionary teaching to all those who think in terms of the temporal and always evaluate things from the historical point of view. A kingdom cannot be inside anyone. Can you imagine a kingdom being situated within anyone? And, yet, a great incarnation spoke this truth to mankind: - "The Kingdom of Heaven is within you!" Either it is a contradiction in terms or a super-mundane fact which the human understanding cannot fathom. That which is external is also the internal, is also a message of the Chhandogya Upanishad (Section VIII), which is echoed in the statement of the Christ that the Kingdom of Heaven is within us. The whole cosmos is vibrating within every cell of our personalities. Everything that is everywhere is also within us and is inseparable from us. This was the foundation of the doctrine of God's supreme perfection given to us by Acharya Sankara also, on the basis of the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Bhagavadgita and the Brahma Sutras. Everything we need is in us. Everything required by us for our existence, every movement in evolution towards perfection, is implanted in our being. When we were born we brought with us everything that is necessary for us and we carry all these necessities with us wherever we move in this world. We cannot be separated from these needs or standing necessities; they are inseparable from our vital existence.

This is the spirit of true spirituality. There is the letter of the teachings of spiritual life, and also the spirit of these

teachings. The letter of the teaching is what is generally practised by the masses in the world, but the spirit is missed. The letter is easy to understand, but the spirit is difficult to follow. What is the letter of the teaching of spiritual life? What does the letter of religion say? It says: you must love God, you must believe in the existence of God, you must speak the truth, you should be honest in your dealings with your brethren, and you should be living a life of purity, goodness and truthfulness. But the letter of the teaching has been so construed, on account of the very constitution of the human mind, that the life of the spirit, or the life of God, or the life of spiritual aspiration, has been covertly, without one's knowing what is happening, separated from the day-to-day activities of life, so that we are one thing in the street or the shop and another thing in the temple or the church. Thus, we have two ideals before us, the ideal for the marketplace and the ideal for the church or the temple. This is the traditional and organised creed of what you may call the churches of religion.

Religion today appears to be shaking from its very roots, because the edifice of the popular religion is built on a sandy basement and has no substantial support at the bottom. The so-called religious man does not really believe in God. The religious mind has taken advantage of its apparent belief in God or concept of God as an instrument in the personal fulfilment of its wishes and ambitions. To most of us, God is an instrument, not the aim or goal of life. Our asking for God is not because He is all-in-all, but because He is a tool for the fulfilment of our ulterior motives. We have desires and desires, in all the levels of our personalities. We are made up of desires: "*Kamamayoyam purushah*". We do not *possess* or *have* desires: We *are* made up of the desires. Every fibre of our being is constituted of desire alone. Therefore, this desireful personality contrives a tool in the form of the concept of a God in Paradise, in Brahmaloaka, Vaikuntha or Kailasa, for its own fulfilment. God's existence is travestied; it becomes a blasphemy of the very notion of God. We are told,

again and again, that God is the goal of life and not a means to the satisfaction of the needs of the individual.

We now have to be taught the primary lessons of life itself. We are still in need of the initial educational process, which has to set right the very thinking method of our mind. There is something wrong with us at the very root itself. We think in terms of the body, the personality and its relationships external. These relationships subtly interfere with every activity of our life, including the 'activity' of the 'practice of religion'. It is very unfortunate that 'religion' had become a sort of 'activity', a kind of 'work' among the many other duties in life. The religious consciousness is not a work, it is not a function, it is not an action proceeding from our individual being, because the personality of the individual is an effect; it is of the nature of a process of becoming, tending towards something else transcending it. And, therefore, any activity proceeding from this procession of individual existence cannot be identified with the religious consciousness which is the emblem of God's Being. God is Being. We call Him the Supreme Being. The human mind cannot conceive the meaning of true being. We have a very wrong notion of even what 'being' is. When we say that something exists, something is, we associate 'being' as a kind of adjective with the object that is supposed to exist. The chair exists. When we say that a chair exists, the chair is the subject and its existence the predicate. We have conceived existence as a predicate of the chair which is the subject. But existence cannot be a predicate of anything. It is always the subject. It is presupposed by the notion of every other individual thing in the world. Existence precedes even the notion of chair; it cannot be a predicate of it. On the other hand, when we understand the situation metaphysically, philosophically or spiritually, the chairhood of the so-called object is known to be the predicate of the existence which precedes it. And because of a peculiar twist of character in human thinking, we conceive God also as a predicate to our temporal life. God is an appendage to all our needs, necessities and desires! So God does not seem to be helping

us, at least openly. We have misused our relationship with God. We have conceived Him as a kind of attribute to our individuality! A very sorry state of affairs! God cannot be an attribute. He is the Supreme Substantive. He is the Reality. The Supreme Being that God is, is the presupposition of even our thought, of 'being'. That is why we say that God cannot be thought through the mind. And if such an unthinkable presupposition even of all human understanding is the nature of God's existence, what should be the character of religion which is the way to God? It should be characterised by all the attributes which 'being' can have, though in varying, lesser degrees. These sublime characteristics of true religion are inclusiveness – not rejection – and the capacity to transmute every lower phase in the higher, by way of understanding and appreciation.

So, the practice of religion is the practice of God-consciousness in some degree or the other. It is to flood our personality with something super-mundane, super-personal and super-individualistic. When we become religious seekers, we are touched by the non-temporal not only in our personal life but also in our social existence. To be a seeker of God is not easy. You cannot just receive initiation into a Mantra from a Guru and think that you are at once a religious adept. When you receive initiation you are led into a new way of living and being. Your life is to get transformed and there has to be a complete transvaluation of values. Unless that essential condition is fulfilled by the disciple, the initiation will not reveal the needed light.

The law of evolution from matter to life, from life to mind and from mind to intellect, whether in its individual or social form, is initially a law permitting a diversity of being in an apparently multitudinous variety, which gradually rises upwards into lesser and lesser intensities of diversity and objectivity of character, until there is only a universalised consciousness confronting a universal object as the vast creation. But this consciousness has to become its object: a unity of knowing with being, the oneness of self with all

existence is the goal of the evolutionary-processes. The cosmic consciousness realises that the cosmos is itself.

This is the message of Bharatavarsha, the message of India's culture, the message of true spirituality, and the message of Gurudev Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj, the message of all the mystics, saints and sages of the world. God bless you all! Peace be to the whole world!