

# THE STATURE OF THE SPIRIT OF SWAMI SIVANANDA

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by

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We deeply contemplate at this moment the great stature of the spirit of worshipful Sri Gurudev Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj. The stature of his spirit is the proper word to me, it appears, 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 nothing else in his mind.

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 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. They can do anything in any manner they like, without adhering to the common norms of human conduct and thinking. They are the Mahakartas. They are also Mahabhoktas. They can enjoy anything, and there is no norm fixed for that, also. They can renounce anything—

Mahatyagis—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 norm of a Procrustean bed type.

His meditations were his strength. That was everything. There was no connection he maintained with anybody in this Ashram, though he maintained an intimate connection with everybody, and looked after all as his own children. But it takes a moment for him to renounce everybody and to consider that he has 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 in the morning that he would see was the Karmachari who came to clean his room. He was the first one he could see with his eyes. 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 could come; another flower comes 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 the saints and sages during discourses, but this will never enter the mind of any person. Hardheaded 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 contented 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 that the Guru is intending in the mind; the Guru's very existence and being and demeanour becomes 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 be easily comfortable with all the mechanisms that we have created for prolonging our life and keeping us 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 God-man, to mention briefly. Some say such great beings are called man-gods. All the gods are within them. Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansadeva was also called man-god. He could appear as this god, appear as that god at other times. Sri Gurudev Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj used to speak 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, caress you, as your very 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 for us. The discarnate spirit of his universal presence seems to be operating in a more vigorous and expanded manner than in the comparatively limited way that the work was going on earlier. You must have seen with your own eyes that there is an expansion everywhere—expansion of the comprehension of the values of life, and expansion of the very concept of human existence, and the reputation that this great Ashram has established in the eyes of the committee of nations.

There are liberated souls of various categories—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 it attains a state called Satvapatti. The 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, and the

reality that flashes the light, as well as 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 the 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. He might have attained Brahmaloaka. We must consider that he must be 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. The true service arises from the thought of the mind. We are told that there were great masters who came to this world, even whose names are not known to everybody. Their names do not appear in newspapers, or even scriptures. The books do not mention their names. 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 left are the protective forces of this world. They do not advertise themselves; they do not write books; they do not speak. No one can see them, even. 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 in your mind? 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 many things and doing several 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 this great masterly stature of spirit.