

THE RISING STARS OF THE 20TH CENTURY

by

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Human nature, in its present state of achievement, is in a struggle through which it is passing. It is being pulled at the lower end by the instincts of the brute nature from where it has arisen through ages of evolutionary process; and simultaneously with the anguish and uncertainty characterising its involvement in lower nature, it is being pulled up by its great destiny through certain indications of that possibility planted in itself.

Every stage of earlier levels is present in the human being. There is appetite, like the vegetable and plant kingdom. There is lethargy and inertia, like a stone or a mineral; there is rapacity, cruelty and violence characterising animal nature, and selfishness which is the hallmark of undeveloped human consciousness. Even when the lower levels are surpassed by transcendence, in the earlier stages human nature remains semi-animal, semi-vegetable and semi-stonelike, and these historical evidences are available in the lives of prehistoric cavemen. It is half-conscious of its own self, and semi-conscious of the outer world. Then, there is self-consciousness of an intensely assertive, selfish nature—each for oneself and the rest takes care of itself. Then there is a further development by the rise of ages in the process of time, when community life becomes a necessity,

and it is felt that even individual existence is not comfortably possible if social life is absent.

The rejection of the presence of others will so interfere with one's own self that every need that is felt by a person can be jeopardised by the similar reactive rejecting process exercised by other people. So, the consciousness of community life arises. This also is a kind of selfish life only. Society is not an unselfish existence, because each one has to survive, but this survival is not possible without the cooperation of others. Higher up still is the consciousness of doing good for good, and bad for bad—tit for tat. Whatever you do to me, I shall do to you. That consciousness rises further, and it realises that this is not true human nature. To be human is to be humane at the same time. Goodness arises, which is a semblance of the reflection of a higher realm of existence; or rather, a beam of light arises from the soul within itself, until which time it was sleeping. It is waking up gradually in the good person who aspires to become a holy person, whom we call a saintly person.

It is not enough if we are good. That is also inadequate in the spiritual evolutionary process. We have to be sanctified in our spirit. The presence of God has to be adequately reflected in human nature, in order that it may be saintly or holy. Holiness is the name we give to a quality of behaviour and existence which can be seen only in the most holy—the holy of holies.

God does not make Himself felt in individual life until a very advanced stage of human evolution. Men and women always consider themselves as men and women only. The human being considers himself or herself only as a human being. In this stage, the presence of divinity is not felt. People who are engrossed in social work, and erroneously consider a rule that they take upon themselves as the goal of life, get into the mess of involvement in sufferings from which they wish to redeem people, and enter into it themselves. Often many die when they cross the feelings of people in their eagerness to reform them. Those social workers who went

beyond the limit of understanding of people outside suffered themselves while they worked for the relief of the suffering of others.

It is not enough if we have enthusiasm. We have also to develop understanding. It is only at the level of the manifestation of understanding and superior reason that we can say that God has descended into us. Social life is not necessarily spiritual life. God is not a social being. He is not a leader of a house or a parliament. He is not a community leader. He is not one among the many; He is One Alone. The need for another does not arise here.

I mentioned that in the earlier stages there is great confusion in the development of consciousness. Warfare, rather, takes place within itself because of not knowing where it is moving, with several progressions and retrogressions, ups and downs, almost simultaneously. After aeons and aeons and ages of development through the evolutionary process, the presence of God is felt by a pull upward against the gravitational downward pull of lower animal instincts. Here, such a presence is felt in our purified reason. The reason can also go wrong by justifying the acts of the sense organs and emotional upheavals.

Often, it so happens that the reason acts only as a justifying medium of emotional deeds and sensory inclinations. But we have two kinds of reason: the lower reason and the higher reason. The lower reason, which we generally call the mind, is just a logician confirming the validity and system adopted by the working of the sense organs and the emotions; but the higher mind is an ambassador to God. It reflects the light from above. The sun shines in this level of consciousness.

Spiritual seekers will find themselves in great difficulty when the earth pulls them down on the one hand, and heaven pulls them up from another side. Who wins victory is for anyone to say. This is the battle, the war of the gods and the *asuras*—heaven and earth pulling an individual in different directions. It is at this juncture of human history

that great Masters are born, saints and sages who practically inundated the Twentieth Century in meteoric birth and life. Such a great Master is our Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj. The process of time is so long that the life of a human individual, though it appears long, is really short. That is why I use the word 'meteoric'—it just flashes forth and afterwards disappears, but during the period of this short time of the flash, it sheds light. It brightens the whole atmosphere, the whole firmament, and leaves, and it is for anyone to know what it was.

Thus, Swami Sivananda came to this world. He came, not as a seeking human individual struggling against heavy odds, but as a potential God-man himself. His *sadhana* must have been over in his previous incarnation; otherwise, suddenly a person cannot reach such heights of spiritual power in one incarnation. Any amount of *sadhana*, *japa* and worship cannot make people so great, powerful, majestic and divine like Master Swami Sivananda.

This greatness and glory should be attributed to their spiritual practices in earlier incarnations, as we may say in the case of Buddha. The individual which was to become Buddha had already passed through hundreds of lives, until he became the matured great being called Gautama Buddha.

Saints mature from within, and their maturity is seen only when they manifest it outside. The work that Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj has done in this world of human history may be a perpetual record, a great chapter in the story of civilisation and human development. He realised the deepest truths of life, and broadcast that knowledge through every means possible. He is one of the spiritual Masters who adopted every available means of spreading knowledge. His main purpose was not to prepare an incarnation or a great disciple. That was not his mission. His mission was to wake up slumbering humanity, to shake it up from its lethargy and to leave it at that, so that when we wake up, we will know what is to be done by ourselves.

Such a great Master some of us have seen with our eyes, to our own blessedness that God has bestowed upon us through our own past *karmas* of whatever nature, and today we remember him again. It is no use merely remembering him once in a year. He has to be remembered perpetually. He has created an atmosphere of a powerful resuscitation of values. Today there is no country in the world which has not heard the name of Swami Sivananda. Though he never travelled abroad, his power of thought was such that it reverberates in the hearts of people everywhere. He never moved anywhere. He had no house. He had no bungalow. He had no physical comforts. He had the Ashram, of course, but he was contented living in a cave-like, hovel-like residence on the bank of the Ganga. He wanted the Ganga and nothing more.

This is the great Master whom we are remembering now—a God-man, a saint and a sage, a mastermind, and a great exemplar for everyone who has eyes to see and ears to hear. May you all remember him, not as a person who has written books, who has given you *prasadam* when you saw him. This is not the way in which you have to remember him. You have to remember him as your leading light, who has shown you the path along which you have to move—the path of ascent, and not digressive descent.

Like him, there were many other great Masters born in the Twentieth Century. Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa Deva, Sri Aurobindo, Ramana Maharshi, Baba Ram Das, Mahatma Gandhi, and many others who we can recount came like sudden rising stars in the heaven, and they vanished almost at the same time. They came together, almost, and went together, really. It appeared as if the Twentieth Century was intended to have the blessing of these great veritable giants of the spirit, who came all together, shook the Earth, and then left us. Verily, they shook the Earth, and left this Earth. Our hearts were shaken, remoulded, refurbished, and made to rise to a capability to receive the call of the higher nature.

As I mentioned, we are living in a state of struggle. We do not know who is pulling us. Are the lion and the tiger pulling us, or is God pulling us? There is a dubious feeling, oftentimes. Sometimes we are tigers and lions. Sometimes we feel, “No, it is not like that. God is calling me.” At this crucial juncture of cross purposes, as it were, in human life, one has to be very cautious. One cannot be one’s own leader; otherwise, the lion will come instead of God coming, and we will not know who is coming. One thing will look like another thing. Guidance of a great Master is necessary. Have the company of sages and saints. Live with good people—or at least not with obstructing people. If nobody is available, be alone to yourself. Thus, build up your personality for the great coming.

Physical life is very short. We should not imagine that we can live in this body for ages together: “What does it matter? Slowly, I will do it.” There is no question of doing it slowly. By that time, *kala* will come and catch our throat.

A bee was engaged with great avidity in drinking the nectar from the filaments of a lotus flower. It drank nectar and got intoxicated. It went on sucking from morning to evening. When evening came, the lotus closed, and the bee could not come out. “What does it matter?” it said. “Let me drink the nectar throughout the night, and in the morning the sun will rise and I will fly with my joy.” During the night it was drinking the nectar with these feelings, but the sun did not rise. Wild elephants trampled the pond where the lotuses were growing and crushed everything, together with the bee, and its salvation was over in one minute.

So, we should not imagine that life is a comfortable dinner party of honey, milk, and everything pleasant: “I will do *sadhana* tomorrow; let me eat today.” Tomorrow will not come, because the wild elephant may come before we wake up the next morning. A caution should be exercised by every one of us. “Heedlessness is veritable death,” says Sanatkumara in a great admonition to Dhritarashtra in a wonderful scripture called Sanatsujatiya. There is no such

thing called death. Heedlessness is death; foolishness is death; carelessness is death, especially regarding one's own self.

To rouse people from this predicament of unfortunate sluggishness and carelessness, Swami Sivananda, the great Master, came and made us what we are, and pulled us to this Ashram, and made us all sit here the whole day from morning to evening. It is a blessing that has come from him. May it come to you for ever and ever.