

SRI SWAMI SIVANANDA AND HIS MISSION



by

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ABOUT THIS EDITION

Though this eBook edition is designed primarily for digital readers and computers, it works well for print too. Page size dimensions are 5.5" x 8.5", or half a regular size sheet, and can be printed for personal, non-commercial use: two pages to one side of a sheet by adjusting your printer settings.

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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

The Guru-disciple relationship is the most revered and intense of all relationships. During the years of concentrated study and training that a disciple undergoes under the guidance of his or her Guru, the highest Truth is imparted. Such was the relationship between Swami Krishnananda and his Guru, Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj, at whose feet Swamiji spent nineteen years studying and serving.

Swami Krishnananda arrived in the Ashram in May 1944 and was loved and cared for like a dearest son by Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj. Swamiji loved and worshipped Sri Gurudev as the Almighty walking on earth in human form.

Though Swami Krishnananda gave individual talks about Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj on many occasions over the years, it was during Sadhana Week in 1985 that Swamiji gave a series of discourses entitled *Sri Swami Sivananda and His Mission*. With Swami Krishnananda's usual holistic approach, the world circumstances that precipitated the incarnation of Sri Gurudev are discussed, followed by details of Gurudev's early days in Rishikesh and the foundation of The Divine Life Society.

May the blessings of both these great Masters, Gurudev Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj and Worshipful Sri Swami Krishnanandaji Maharaj, be upon us always.

Chapter 1

THE EMERGENCE OF A SUPERNORMAL POWER

The world is frequently visited by stars coming from Heaven, shedding their light throughout the atmosphere of the Earth and giving everyone a living fillip, as may be required under the conditions prevailing at that hour. This coming of the divine power under prescribed conditions and circumstances is called an incarnation, or the sudden rising into action of a luminary, sometimes known as a great sage or saint. The word 'incarnation' suggests the coming into form—or, more popularly, the embodiment in flesh and blood—of that which is essentially formless and capable of assuming any form. A potential which has the ability to work in any fashion whatsoever can also work in only a given fashion and under a given condition. The principle of medicine is a general policy of setting right the functions of the physical organism, but it manifests itself as a specific prescription under a given condition. This is an analogy before us of how a formless methodology and a principle can take form for the purpose of activating the exact energies and powers that are required to set in alignment those components which have been placed out of gear, as it were, for some period, for certain reasons.

In a broad sense we may say that the powers of the world maintain themselves in a state of balance, just as the physical and psychological conditions of our body try to maintain a balance so that mostly we are healthy people; rarely are we ill. Normally we maintain a balance, and that is the usual way of our conducting ourselves physically and mentally. We are not basically sick people; basically, we are healthy. Illness is due to certain abnormal conditions arising in the system for certain specific reasons. In a similar manner, this world maintains an equilibrium in itself. It does not fall sick always. People in the world—living beings in general—are positively happy. They are not always weeping. Weeping is not the natural condition of things. But an occasional situation which may not be regarded as natural may insinuate itself into

normal conditions, impelled by certain pressures into whose fundamentals we cannot enter so easily in a few minutes of discussion. It is like asking, "Why do we fall sick at all?" This question is also the question, "Why should there be any trouble in the world?"

The reason behind the troubles and sorrows of life is also the reason why we sometimes have physical illness. We do not have an easy answer to this question of why we fall ill, though we may have a tentative answer such as, "I went out in the rain and caught a cold", "I walked in the sun and got a headache", "I travelled at night and now my body aches all over" and "I ate something wrong yesterday and my stomach is disturbed." These answers may be from a ready-made repertory, in order to explain the condition. Though these causes just mentioned may be regarded as the immediate propulsions for our illness, there are certain susceptibilities in our personality without which toxic matter, even if it enters our body, could not disturb us so badly. Biological science and medicine tell us that disease-producing factors are everywhere. They do not manifest themselves only at times or only for our sake. They are suspended in the air even now, at all times of the day and night, but we do not feel their presence because of the capacity of our system to resist them. Our mental and physical strength is so great that most of the time these adverse disease-producing conditions are not felt by us. They are acutely felt when there is a susceptibility of the organism, for important reasons which each one has to understand for himself or herself. Umpteen are the reasons.

The conditions of life are equivalent to the conditions of our physical body. Whatever obtains to us, obtains to everyone else and to creation as a whole; and so, if we want to understand the world and want to find a solution to the difficulties of life, we may have to turn inward into our own selves and see what our personal problem is. How have we got into this rut of difficulty? What are the causes? What are the factors? In these enterprises of ours, we may make a mistake. Rarely do we judge dispassionately, because our

personality always comes to the forefront and assumes an abnormal importance for itself. We will find that we are the most important person anywhere, in any condition. If we go to a hotel or a marketplace or a bus stand or a railway station, we are the most important person there; all others are secondary. It is very difficult to understand how each one thinks he is the most important person and others are secondary. Any kind of neglect of the requirements of a particular individual is an affront to that person on the part of others who remain there as just 'others', and not as people like one's own self.

This is the tragedy of the psychological operation in human beings. Due to a non-alignment in our own internal psychic apparatus, we are also not in a state of universal psychological alignment—because the world of human beings is nothing but a constitution of people like me, like you, like everybody else; and many such drops make the ocean. Many a non-alignment, individually considered, is a mass non-alignment politically, socially or economically. We make the world; there is no world independent of us. Many people like us together are the world; and whatever the world is, is exactly what we are. Therefore, any kind of evaluation of circumstances in life may have to start from an evaluation of one's own self because many 'one's own self' make the so-called 'others' in the world. This is to probe a little into the deeper background of the general issues manifesting themselves outwardly in our daily life.

We are not here to go into the cosmical condition that may be operating behind the problems of life. The theme of our present discussion is something different, and is more practical. It is our adjustment to the conditions of the world and to the conditions of our own selves in relation to divine powers that come into action whenever there is a necessity felt for such a descent—when the world finds itself in a state tending towards illness, which manifests itself as what we call the problems of life.

History is supposed to be a study of the movement of human enterprises, thoughts and actions, and those who

believe and feel convinced that human history is just what people do of their own accord or what people are compelled to do by other people may not be good students of history because there are historical forces which are independent of and different from people, the embodiments of human action. A historical force is not to be confused with historical personalities. This force, which is the Time Spirit, we may say, is the dispensing authority behind the activities of people and the prompting of the minds of people—which, incidentally, become the immediate causes of historical occurrences, whatever their nature be. We seated here are considered to be especially blessed in the sense of having been endowed with a fair amount of impersonal judgement of things. This is what we mean by a person being a spiritual seeker: one who has the power to judge impersonally and dispassionately in a required or at least adequate measure. We may console ourselves that we who are here in this hall at present have achieved at least a passing mark in this exam of being endowed with a power to judge things by not unnecessarily protruding ourselves into the atmosphere of judgements and, also, for considering other issues which are equally contributory to the coming into action of any event or experience in life.

The Bhagavadgita says that God incarnates Himself in the world. Whenever there is a necessity to introduce structure into life in the world, an administrative authority which is beyond human capacity—a supernormal power—is supposed to manifest itself. There are certain problems which we ourselves can independently set right. But human problems are not always entirely human, and there are certain aspects of human difficulty which may not be under the jurisdiction of human endeavour and capacity. When such a difficulty arises which is the difficulty of humanity in general and not of me or you in particular—not a local difficulty of a family or a community or even a country, but a general issue which torments the minds of all people—no one can come forward as a redeemer or a remedying element under such conditions. A problem which is everybody's problem cannot be solved by any person in the world,

because every person is involved in the same problem. Such difficulties arise occasionally in the march of human history; and it is at such times that a supernormal power finds it necessary to emerge.

Such an emergence of a supernormal power is called *avatara*, incarnation, the coming into formation—embodied in flesh and blood—of an invisible pervading strength. These incarnations have taken place many a time in history, right from the time of creation itself. We read in the scriptures that God incarnated Himself; and mighty leaders were born into this world. There were leaders in different fields of human endeavour who shook the whole Earth. There were mighty political geniuses, statesmen whom we remember with admiration even today. There were wondrous artists, painters and musicians whom we cannot afford to forget even today. In every language of the world there were masters whose poetry and writings are a blessing upon the world of intellectuality even today. Many great geniuses have come into this world through the process of human history, and they came for a certain purpose. The purpose was to fill up a particular lacuna in the all-round growth of the human personality—which includes political security, aesthetic satisfaction, intellectual enjoyment, and so on.

But the greatest need of the human being, apart from political protection, aesthetic satisfaction, intellectual necessity, etc., is a spiritual touch—spiritual security. We may be growing healthily by being blessed with political, aesthetic, intellectual and economic security, but spiritually we may be ruined. We may be rich from the point of view of money, but be bankrupt in the spirit. Then, what will happen to us? We will be adorned corpses, decorated physical frames minus life, and we can imagine the value of that physical frame—a royal personality dressed in silk, gold and silver, minus life. The world can sometimes enter into such a condition. The world can become a decorated corpse, mightily adorned with wealth and every conceivable physical comfort, but the soul has left.

This happened many times in human history; and if we bring the name of God into this issue, we may say that God does not act always. The secondary forces of divine operation manage the issues themselves. But occasionally, when everything seems to go out of order, God Himself may act directly. This is like the centre of administration not always concerning itself with minor issues which can be handled by lesser powers. But a crisis of the whole world, which we may call a state of emergency, may call for the central authority to open its eyes and unleash all its energies. Occasionally we have certain difficulties of this type. Those who are good students of history know the manner in which people have lived in this world, right from the dawn of human history. It is necessary to read history because, as I tried to point out, history is not a story of people's doings, of the coming and going of kings and the battles that they wage. Nothing of the kind is human history.

Actually, the study of history is the study of the forces operating behind the events we normally call the recorded history of mankind. This requires a scientific attitude of the student—a philosophic grounding, I may say—and it is not just the story of England or India or America or any country, as is taught in our educational institutions. That is not history. What happens is one thing, but why it happens in that manner is more important than the knowledge of what happened. Why did that catastrophe take place? This is the subject of many great students of history. Many of us do not even know the existence of such great researchers of human history. We should be abreast with the conditions that are necessary to make us appreciably educated. I do not say that we can be entirely educated; perhaps that is beyond us. But to an appreciable extent, at least, we must be enlightened in respect of what is at the back of the operation of things. And one of these things is the study of the powers behind human history.

There was a time, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, when physical science strode like a peacock and strutted with pride as the be-all and end-all of all things, and

mathematics became the explanation of life. It was a 'eureka' of humanity which began to feel very, very wrongly that it had found the solution for the difficulties of life. This was the complacency into which physical science landed itself, and it was a great joy of discovery, especially when it was coupled with the Industrial Revolution that took place sometime in the middle of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century. What do physical science and mathematics tell us? What is the import behind the Industrial Revolution?

The import is that the world of matter, when it is fully controlled, is the solution for the problems of man. We have fast-moving vehicles and machines which can rapidly produce commodities which would take years for us to produce manually. And when the powers of electricity were discovered, people thought they were veritably in heaven. Even today, at this moment, we know the suzerainty of electrical power in the world. We cannot move an inch without the aid of an electric force. For everything, whatever be that operation of ours, there is the need for summoning what is called electric energy. A day may come when we may not even be able to swallow our food without some mechanism, and that may be the apotheosis and the goal of our achievements. Today we are far more advanced in the operation of physical matter than we were in the middle of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century, which was the time when Newton ruled the world of science. He was the God of science. Even today Newton is a god in some way because of his study and research in the field of physical manipulation and the operation of matter.

'Matter' is a crucial word, and that became the deity which man began to worship. Everything that we have to control and anything that is necessary for our comfort as an appurtenance coming from outside is matter, a material value. All our joy is there, outside. It is in a machine; it is in an office; it is in some action which is to be performed in some place; it is somewhere outside us. The idea that all the values of human life are somewhere outside the human being is the

thinking of materialists. Anything that is worthwhile in life is outside us. It is not inside us, because what is inside us is the mind, and the mind has to summon support from forces outside.

The dependence of the human individual on forces which are outside the human individual is called the philosophy of materialism. This was highlighted almost to the breaking point at the beginning of the twentieth century, when it was considered very great to be educated along these lines and an educated person was a master of the knowledge of handling material power. The curriculum of studies in schools and colleges was designed in such a manner that it adapted itself very ably to this outlook of life which was framed in the light of material science; and we in India are well aware of this fact. When we compare the present system of education with the details of Macaulay's system of education, written many years ago—a policy of training people—we will see how the very fundamentals of learning on the basis of a commercial interpretation of life, which is the child of material philosophy, were developed. A commercial outlook is begot by materialistic science. Hence, everyone who is wholly a commercial person is also a materialist.

Education which was framed under the aegis of this kind became the guideline for the normal behaviour of people in all fields of life. Man sold himself to the devil, as it were. Goethe, the great German poet, wrote the epic of Faust, which is the story of a person who sold himself to the devil. By reading that epic we can know the conditions under which man may be compelled to do these things. There is a time in the life of a man when he would not mind bargaining with the devil and saying, "Here I am; purchase me" in return for comfort and the dizzy feeling of satisfaction that comes from an atmosphere which is totally outside. It is Heaven selling itself to Hell, saying, "Hell, my dear, come and possess me."

I am not telling a story of something that happened merely in the past; it is something that is happening even

today. Today we are no longer under the lordship of Newton, the scientist. Macaulay is dead and the classical materialists of science are not as prominent as they were earlier. Though there are saints and sages, and spiritual institutions, the generality of the outlook of people has not changed. If we honestly view things from the bottom of our heart—view and interpret things dispassionately—we will see that the basic outlook of people in general has not changed. Though we may not call ourselves materialists and none of us may think that commercial life is the whole of life, though we are religious people who pray, study the scriptures and meditate every day, it is necessary to understand what it is to be a materialist in order to know whether we are free from its clutches.

A lack of confidence in powers that are not entirely outside and a wholesale confidence in powers that are entirely placed outwardly in life is a tendency to materialism. For instance, the love of money can make a person giddy; and a person can even collapse into coma and death if money in the form of gold and silver is lost. Anything associated with this kind of outlook is nothing but an apotheosis or deification of materialism. Each one has to be a judge for one's own self because each person is ultimately a client before the Supreme Judge, the Almighty Creator. There is no proxy, no advocate here when we are placed face to face in the court of the Universal Judiciary. There is no use saying that everything shall be fine. There is a heart inside our heart, and that which is within the heart will be our lawyer who will argue dispassionately, properly, without any kind of twisting of the facts.

In this light, we will find that even though eighty years have passed, not much change has taken place in the general evaluation of things in life. We are in the eighty-fifth year of the twentieth century. But in human history, eighty-five years is very little, though some action has already been taken by the Time Spirit. I mentioned that sometime during the beginning of the twentieth century, or a few years earlier, it appeared that the world was headed towards the breaking

point. The powers of health in our body give us a long rope, and they act only when we go to the breaking point. Many of us are not aware that we are tending towards illness, because illness is felt only when it is manifest outside as a headache or a stomach ache, etc. An inward tendency to a non-alignment of the psyche cannot be known unless it rises to the conscious level of our mind. Similarly, we may not know what is going on in the world. We should not merely say that so many years have passed. These years are only the beginning of the first step, as it were, of the working of the Time Spirit.

As I said, the materialist forces went to the breaking point. Anything carried to the extreme tends to tilt the balance to the other side, and suddenly there is catastrophe. A world war took place, and we can imagine what kind of catastrophe it was—the abolition, the annihilation of life, and the placing of people in utter insecurity. This is what one may feel when the temperature of the body rises to 105 degrees Fahrenheit. Precarious—one does not know whether one will live or die. That kind of fever of action of the moving spirit of the world is what is called a cataclysm, a cyclone, a war, a battle, destruction and sorrow—which comes in a pronounced manner and in a most unexpected fashion, and which will almost break the heart of a person. We can imagine how it feels to be so ill that we do not know what will become of us. But, these are the rectifying forces of nature emerging forth at that time.

Great personalities—we may call them incarnations, *avatars*, *purushas*, the healing spirits of mankind—incarnated themselves in different parts of the world. When we speak of incarnations, generally we think of Jesus Christ, Lord Krishna, Rama, Buddha, Guru Nanak; these are the people who come to mind when we think of incarnations. But a divine interference need not necessarily be in the form of these well-known personalities. It can be any event which sets right the whole situation, and it can be any person who sees to it that things are all right. It may even be the head of a village. Why go so far to people who are well known in

history? The chief of a village or a community may be a rectifying medium for the trouble there, and it is a divine interference.

Anything that contributes to the maintenance of a balance in society or in the personality of an individual is the coming into action of God Himself, because God is another name for the power of balance. Anything that sets a thing in a state of equilibrium is the work of God, though it may be so very insignificantly manifest as not to be noticed by even the person who is benefited. For instance, a person who did not feel well yesterday could be all right today for reasons which he does not know. He rested, and feels better. What has happened? Something has worked which was not known even to him. What is meant by resting and becoming better? It is a manner of speaking, another way of accepting that a healing power has worked. What we call rest is nothing but the working of that healing power introducing itself, even without announcing itself to us and even without our knowledge of its having done any work at all. In this sense, whenever there is peace of mind, whenever we are healthy, whenever we feel comfortable and satisfied, we may be sure that God has worked.

Such pronounced actions of God make themselves felt in human history. This was the theme with which I began. These pronounced manifestations in human history, from our point of view at least, are the descent of great personalities. It is my intention, during these days, to bestow a little thought to the role played by these masters who were felt in various parts of the world as if they were touching our skin. Only if we know history very well can we know who these persons were. They include even great generals of the army, and not only those whom we regard as holy people. Field marshals who won astounding victories are also to be taken into consideration in the assessment of the manner in which God works.

God's action is both pleasant and unpleasant. As I mentioned, to have a high fever is not a pleasant phenomenon even though it is necessary, and that which is

necessary need not necessarily be psychologically satisfying. Our psyche is attached to the bodily conditions of prejudice and a narrow-minded attitude to things in general, so that which is good for us is not always pleasant for us. The good and the necessary sometimes looks like unpleasant occurrences because of our inability to think impartially—being totally wedded, as we are, to a partial and individual outlook of things.

Thus came personalities of a lofty stature, from spiritual leaders like Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Swami Vivekananda and Swami Rama Tirtha, social resuscitating powers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy and great political geniuses turned into great masters of the spirit, such as Sri Aurobindo Ghosh; and there are others such as Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King, with whom we are all very familiar. These personalities come and go. They come in order to do something; they do it, and go. And, they go in the manner that is necessary for them to go—not as we prescribe. They may go in any way, and how they have to bear this exit is left to the discretion of the great Director of this drama of the cosmos. The wages are paid according to the performance, but everybody is paid.

In this great saga of the coming of masters, geniuses, there is one among us whom we have seen: the great master Gurudev Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj, whose life some of us have witnessed physically, and many of you have heard and read about. His coming effected a transforming dramatic touch to the lives of people, and the entire procedure and methodology of spiritual action can be regarded as the story of the ascent of man to God. It is a story which Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj lived in his own personality, and a story through which we have to pass, each one of us individually—a story which is also the theme of every one of the works that he wrote, which, in miniature, may be said to be the story of the world in its aspiration for God.

These are the issues that shall receive our attention.

Chapter 2

BEING IN TUNE WITH WORLD THOUGHT

“The world is in a state of yoga,” says the Upanishad. This single statement may be regarded as the essence of all higher teachings. Yoga is the composure of oneself; and, a settling of oneself in oneself is what is attempted by the world as a whole. This perpetual activity on the part of all creation—namely, to maintain itself in a state of a healthy balance of its parts—is the yoga of God’s creation. We are told in the Veda as well as in the Upanishads that prior to the act of creation, God performed *tapas* and concentrated Himself in a fashion which, in its vast inclusive ambit, was clear about every detail of what was to be projected. The thought itself was the action, and the action was the same as the being of God. The world in which we are living is a part of creation, though it is not a part in the sense of something that can be isolated from the whole to which it belongs. It is only a conceptually separable entity but is essentially, integrally, related to creation.

Thus there is a point in the Upanishads telling us that the world is practising yoga. The sky meditates, as it were, and so does the earth. To conceive in our minds a state where the world can be contemplating creation, is a state of yoga. In order to be able to appreciate at one stroke the possibility of such a self-settledness on the part of the whole world, we might have to shed our human personality for a few seconds. If it is true, and it is certainly true, that the world is in a state of self-settled composure and inclusive compactness of its spirit, and if at the same time it is also true that we human beings are not capable of separation from the stuff of the world, then every one of us is in a state totally opposed to yoga—because we do not think with the world. We may think *of* the world, but not think *with* the world. Here is the crux of the matter, which has an import which is spiritual and temporal at the same time. We can think that there is a world, but that is different from aligning our thought with

the composure that the world is said to be maintaining in itself.

To participate in the world is different from looking at the world and harnessing it for purposes that are human or individual. We cannot harness to any particularised purpose a thing with which we are moving and without which we cannot be said to have even an existence worth the name. We have, first of all, to convince ourselves that we are outside the world in order that we may exploit the world, use it for our purposes and deal with it, a term which implies a wealth of undesirable meaning. To deal with a thing is to totally cut oneself off from all vital relationship with that with which one is seeking to deal. Else, if that with which we try to deal is not so entirely vitally cut off from ourselves, our dealings with it would be equivalent to dealing with our own selves. We do not appreciate and understand the magnitude of the consequence that is involved in the errors of our thinking. This is the scientific base, the philosophical foundation, the core of the matter behind the difficulties of life, problems galore, and any blessed thing that we can think of in our minds.

The philosophy that I referred to yesterday as a materialistic outlook is this catastrophic thought, as it can be called, which persists in non-aligning itself with the way of the world and vainly attempts to align the process of the world with a temporarily significant process of one individual or even a group of individuals. Such an attempt is considered to be the task of life and the principal occupation—that is, putting the world to use and seeing that it moves parallel with the intentions of human behaviour and conduct. We have to subtly go into the depths of the difficulties of people in the world. Glib talking and a veneer of an outward interpretation of our difficulties will not do. There is a basic cause which refuses to come to the surface of analysis and persists in maintaining its isolation as a background of human thinking. Even our psychic endeavours and logical approaches are not adequate instruments to discover the basic difficulties of humanity, because these

causes of our materialistic outlook are at the very back of even our psychic approach and are the conditions that are necessary for us to think in a particular manner—to think in a human fashion, so to say.

These conditions are prior—*a priori*, as it is called in philosophy—precedent to the action of every kind of human thinking, including rationality, scientific observation and philosophic probe. Man is conditioned in this sense. We know the meaning of the word ‘condition’. It has many meanings, psychological as well as social; but it has a deeper meaning than we are able to know. Psychologists may tell us that we are psychologically conditioned. Social conditioning is something well known. But there is a further conditioning which is the cause of all these exterior limitations of our psychophysical personality that determines our every endeavour, so that even the attempt to overcome our limitations seems to be varnished with a very thick coat of the very condition of this limitation—and so goes all learning of humanity. Once a long rope is given to this kind of thinking—when an instinct or impulsion or a natural proclivity is given unlimited freedom of action—it becomes the law of the day and the natural rule of ensuing thought and activity.

Aeons have passed since this circumstance of human creation seems to have taken place, and many an explanation is offered to describe the way in which this human outlook originated at a time which was perhaps even prior to the coming of time itself—and we can imagine what length of time has passed. We have been educated in this fashion of thinking, to which I referred to as being an unyogic way of thinking. This kind of thinking of man—of every one of us, of humanity as a whole—considers the world as an associate which has to be put to use and to be utilised for the sustenance of the human individuality, to make it secure for as long as possible within the duration of time on this Earth, and in every blessed manner. But, this is not to be. If this is not to be, man cannot be happy in this world when he

persists in this inveterate way of thinking which he considers as his own thinking, and not the thinking of the world.

The masters, the supermen about whom we had occasion to consider certain aspects, are different from ordinary human beings in the sense that the super-humanity about them is the characteristic of the operation of their minds, which are set in tune with the thought of the world. To think as a yogi would think would be to think as the world would think. Hard is this statement, difficult is the import of this suggestion, because we cannot understand what the world is thinking and how we are expected to think if we are to be in tune with the thought of the world. Later we shall have occasion to consider what all this means.

Since a thought which is contrary to the way of the world is unhealthy and is a sickness of the world as a whole, it has to be remedied. The remedying feature when sicknesses of this kind erupt in the context of world history is that health forces begin to act. These forces of health and regeneration of the world—these forces that are unleashed for the purpose of remedying the illness of life—are the saviours of humanity. We may call them incarnations, great leaders of mankind, sages or saints. The world is perhaps incapable of thinking in terms of persons. It is doubtful if it is aware that we are existing as people. This is a matter which requires some consideration. The body, for instance, may not be aware that it has fingers; it may be aware that it *is*. Something like that may be the way in which the world thinks.

Personalities are of no value for the world, and human history has been a demonstration of this truth—of the manner in which people are treated by the world. They are treated as something which we, as humans, are not able to understand. Great geniuses have exited from the drama of life in one second. Great heroes of history in various fields, whom we would like to remain here in our presence for ages to come, are cast to the winds by the powers of life, the forces of the world. Does the world care for us? Our demands seem to be given scant recognition by the rule and the law of the

world. The world does not bother if we are born; it does not bother if we die. It also does not seem to bother how we live, because it cannot consider us in the way in which we consider it. Here is the difference between a loving parent looking at a child and an ignorant child understanding its parent.

The considerations of world forces in respect of people like us are impersonal considerations, not personal affiliations of human friendship or social affiliation. The world is not a human society. We may think it is only that; but, it is not just that. This is the reason why humankind, right from creation onwards, has never been able to understand what this world is or why things are happening in the way they happen. Things are happening in the way they have to happen, but things are not happening in the way we would like them to happen from the point of view of the observation and interpretation of values which we have foisted upon the world—not the real world, but a world which we have created in our own minds, a world of an exterior association and affiliation in regard to ourselves, whereas the world is not an exterior appendage to our personal lives. Remember—the world is not an appendix to the book of our personal lives; it is a standard existence by itself. However much we may stretch our thoughts to concede an independent value to the world, especially when we speak of world peace, human welfare, etc., we may not fully understand what is happening to our minds when we think or speak in that fashion.

Even when our thoughts, so-called, extend or appear to extend to the whole area of the world, geographical as well as social, we remain there as persons. In fact, we have not melted into the humanity which we consider as the deity of our social activities. The social welfare worker is as yet a hard-boiled ego. He cannot cease to be, merely because the sea of humanity has engulfed him in this endeavour at social welfare or his thought of world good. It is not easy—rather, it is almost impossible—for us to get out of the clutches of the background of our very method of thinking, however much

we may imagine that we are thinking altruistically and balancing ourselves with the way of things and the world outside. This is a psychological root. I do not want to use the word 'unconscious' which is used by psychologists, when we do not know the exact meaning that they have in their minds for this word. Apart from that, it is not a suitable discussion for what I am trying to convey as the background of our difficulty. It is unconscious in the sense that it is not capable of thought. That means to say, this background of our method of thinking cannot be converted into an object of thought, just as one cannot see one's own back.

Hence, to *be* with the world, which is said to be the art of yoga, may require a type of effort and endeavour on our part that is not just a psychological effort. When we are students of yoga in the real sense of the term, it is not this mind that is working. This mind that is human—which is mortal and caught up in the body, which thinks from its own individual point of view and cannot consider the ways of the world as a whole—is not the mind that practises yoga. That is the reason why yoga teachers often make a distinction between the lower mind and the higher mind. We have heard these terms 'lower' and 'higher', but we cannot easily discover the difference between these two aspects of human thinking. As I pointed out a little earlier, the lower mind is that kind of thinking which is concerned only with the maintenance and the security of the bodily individuality and the psychic ego.

The higher mind, whatever that mind be, is that capacity within us by which we can wrench ourselves from our own selves, pull ourselves out of ourselves, as it were, and become associated with the world processes—partly thinking as the world would think. I am again reverting to the point of the way in which the world thinks, which is supposed to be the yoga of the world. What does the Upanishad mean when it says that the world is in a state of yoga and, therefore, we too have to be in a state of yoga because of the fact that we are not *in* the world but we *are* the world? We live by the world and not merely inside the world, as living in a house. Our sustenance is the world. Our vitality is the world. Our soul

itself is the world. The world soul sustains the so-called souls of individuals. Then what does it mean to think as the world thinks? This methodology of our consciousness is very easy and very difficult at the same time. We have to exert a little in order to be able to align ourselves in a totally different manner. Can we imagine that the world does not see anything outside itself because the world *is* all things?

We are all the world, and we are in the world. The world includes all things for our practical purposes. If that is the case, that world which includes all of us will not be thinking of us, because if the world would be put to the needs of thinking of people like us, we would not be in the world; we would be outside the world. If we are in the world, if we are inseparable from the world, the world thought would not be a thought of people like us. It would not be any thought at all as we are accustomed to imagine. It would be thinking itself. Here we are required to exercise the will to be able to think in this manner. Why is it not necessary for the world to think of anything outside itself? The answer is very clear. That which we would like the world to think of is in the world and, therefore, *is* the world. Hence, the world does not think of anything; but it does think, in the sense that all thought is world thought. All thoughts are in it, and it is the thought. This is the world's *pratyahara*-action taking place.

We have heard of the abstraction of the forces of the senses, the withdrawal of the mind and all that which yoga scriptures speak of by way of instruction: withdraw the senses, restrain the mind, and so on. In a broadly spread-out universal fashion, the world does this and it does nothing else, while we may be doing many things side by side with a yoga activity. We know very well this is what we are doing. We have a few minutes of yoga, a few hours of religion, but there are many other things in our life which we seem to consider more important—very, very unhappily. If that is the case with our yoga, it is not the yoga that the world is thinking of. Yoga is the only thing that the world does. It has no other function to perform. It has no other activity, in the same way that the physical organism has only one action to

perform—the maintenance of the health of the system. It has no other intention at all. The balancing of the whole system to maintain its perpetual health is the central intention of the whole physical organism. This is the yoga of the body; so is the yoga of the world.

Thus, the centrality of the features of yoga may slowly land us in a new discovery, namely, that it is a kind of thinking which does not require anything to be thought—not because there is nothing that is to be thought, but because there is no necessity for the mind to think of that which is to be thought. The need to think of objects, as we call them, arises because we have an anxiety that they are not with us. There is no necessity to think of that which is already with us—not merely with us, that which has already become us—just as we do not go on feeling anxious that the limbs of our body will drop off. They are very secure indeed. We are anxious about our wallet, our watch, our land, our house, because there is a feeling that they are not ours—and really, they are not ours. As they are not in our possession and, much worse, they have not become ourselves—they are not us—there is a need to think about them.

But that which is already with us, and that which is ourselves, need not require thought. It was pointed out that the world has no need to think in this fashion, because all that is required to be thought of is part of its being. The world includes all things. This will throw some light on to how it is possible for the world to be in a state of yoga—and how it is imperative on the part of every one of us, everything in the world, to be only in a state of yoga. If the world does nothing other than being in a state of yoga, and that is the only thing that the world has to do, can do and must do, and if it is also true that we are one with it and we cannot be outside it, we also have to follow the same path.

There is no duty except to be in a state of yoga. The question of other duties should not arise. There are no other duties, because the so-called others that we have suddenly and unnecessarily insinuated are a part of this yoga of the world. Here comes the importance of karma yoga, which is

the converting of so-called other duties into the very substance, the very self and soul of the participation required by our minds in respect of world-thinking. So we should not say, "I have other duties—duties other than study, other than meditation and other than *japa*. I have office work." These are irrelevant ways of understanding the situation of life. There are no other duties in the world, as there is no other. The word 'other' should not be used here, because that so-called other is that over which we have no control, over which we have no say whatsoever, which is not us, and over which we have, therefore, an anxiety that has to be brought into alignment with the thought of yoga, which is world thought. This process is karma yoga.

The whole teaching of the Bhagavadgita is only this much—that our so-called other duties, vocations, performances, activities are not actually activities, duties, works, performances, drudgeries, etc. Nothing of the kind are these. They are part and parcel of the needs of the world and, therefore, they are included in the thought of the world. Hence, if we are wise enough to be in tune with world thought, we shall be taken care of. The world shall protect us, and our so-called other duties also will be taken care of without our sweating as much as we do. These are the fundamentals of what we may sometimes call philosophic thinking, spiritual thinking, yogic thinking, higher thinking, religious thinking, divine thinking—thinking that will make a mortal an immortal.

The world was finding it difficult, inscrutably though, we are not able to fully ascertain the manner of this difficulty in the present mood of our minds. When there was a shake-up in a non-aligned fashion in the inner components of the world psyche—or the stuff of the world, we may say—necessity arose for rectifying media or corrective forces to rise into action, because the law of life is health; and, it is the health of everyone. There is no greater treasure than health, no greater requirement on our part than health. If we are healthy, we have everything. We need not ask for anything else. Health is an attainment by itself. It is an end in itself, and

not a means. It is a great blessing to be healthy—mentally and physically, and in every other manner. Thus, yoga is also the science of health. It is the science of the health of everything that is connected with us in the world, in creation—anywhere. Yoga is the science of health in the sense that it is the way of coordinating the inner parts of the whole of human life, the life of the world, so that a yogi is not an individual person. It is not somebody doing yoga in some corner. It is not an individual affair. This wrong notion has to be given up.

“I am doing yoga.” This is not a correct statement. We are not *doing* yoga, because when we do it, we cease to be the ‘I’ that we are. We have begun to participate in a world process. As a river enters the ocean, we have gone into the depths of the sea of the world. In this sense, we may say that being in the state of yoga is the greatest service that we can render because to enter into people and to be what they are is the greatest service that we can do for them. Hence, when this was lost sight of—when this ideal of world health was difficult to maintain in the process of time, through the passage of history—when such a situation arose, difficulties also arose. Whenever we are not healthy, we have some difficulty; and any number of problems can arise from that, one after the other. There is no end to the problems that can arise when we are sick in our core.

What I intend to present during these days is the role which saints and sages play in this divine purposive action of maintaining the solidarity of the world, contributing to the well-being of everyone, and injecting into the whole of humanity that mighty relieving medium which will stand us in good stead forever. Even centuries after these incarnations came, their impact was felt. Even today, after ages of the departure of these incarnations and masters from the world, we feel a secure and comforting atmosphere around us when we remember them. Even a thought of these great masters is a satisfaction for us. We pray to the gurus, the masters, the incarnations, and to God Almighty. Even the very thought of them sustains us. That is the way in which they spread their

aura around themselves. Not merely outside in the physical world, their aura spreads itself even through the passage of time, and it maintains itself for ages to come.

There is a short biography of a great saint who is remembered by devotees of God as a *siddha purusha*. One of his disciples showed the great master's horoscope to a group of astrologers. "For how many years will my Guruji be alive?" the devotee asked. The Guruji was also present. One of the astrologers said one hundred years, another astrologer said three hundred years, and a third astrologer said seven hundred years. "How is it that you great astrologers say different things—that my Guru will be alive for one hundred years, three hundred years, and seven hundred years?"

The Guruji, who heard the pronouncements of the astrologers, said, "They are all correct. This body will live for one hundred years, its writings will be known to people for three hundred years, and its force will be felt for seven hundred years." I am referring to the great Raghavendra Swamiji, whose *samadhi* is in Mantralaya. It is said that he made the statement that his presence would be felt for seven hundred years, his writings would be read for three hundred years, and he would be in the body for one hundred years. This is the glory of the great masters. The aura of the great master Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj, who was amidst us, is sustaining us, and his physical absence is not a spiritual absence. And if spirit is more than matter, we have lost nothing.

With these words I conclude today, and hope to tell you something more about the very magnificent, interesting and stimulating life of this great master, Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj, and his wondrous message to mankind.

Chapter 3

AWAKENING INTO SELF-INVESTIGATION FIRST

The life of a saint is a miniature world history. In the lives of most of these great leaders of mankind there is a turning point when suddenly they have a power and an outlook of a new personality altogether, as if the person has been reborn. This is a new feature—a common, interesting, sometimes intriguing feature—in the development of the process of the lives of most of the greatest leaders of people. When I say leaders of people, I do not mean necessarily those who are called saints, but all astounding personalities—the *vibhutis*—those who strike a hallmark in the history of mankind in any field of operation. It may be a remarkable military leader; it may be a scientist who has shaken the world with discoveries and inventions; it may be a literary genius; it may be a religious or spiritual leader.

To appreciate this peculiar occurrence in supernormal personalities, we have to carefully study their lives. It was the case with St. Augustine, who wrote his confessions in which we have a record of the transformation that took place in him in such a way that he became just the opposite of what he was earlier. It is said that Christ was not visible for eighteen years. He went away somewhere, and his mission started after that apparent invisibility of his person—a period, as it were, of the preparation of a new personality of what was going to be considered as the great Christ. So was even the well-known scientist, Albert Einstein. He was a poor little nobody, as it were. He was rejected from every office as a poor mathematician and not even a mediocre scientist. So was the calibre of a mathematician like Srinivasa Ramanujan, which was not detectable to the naked eye. No one appreciated Shakespeare when he was alive; his plays were never read. He was an attendant in a theatre, and not regarded as master as he is today. Many great personalities of this kind were born into families that are not usually recognised in human society. They may be born in the houses of carpenters, shoemakers or farmers. We rarely hear of a

master of this kind being born in the house of a business magnate, an industrialist or a millionaire. It has not happened, for reasons which anyone can imagine.

In a similar manner, we read of a sudden landmark in the great mission for which the great master Swami Sivananda was born. The little that we know of his early days is like the knowledge we can have of a budding seedling or sapling which, when it is seen with the eyes, cannot be easily recognised as to what it will grow into. Is it going to grow into a banyan or a mango tree, or some such thing? When any event is to take place, it is prepared in its seed form as a nebular condition of a future action, a precedent condition wherein it is not yet fully formed into the pattern in which it has to work later on. This preparatory, precedent condition, antecedent to the form in which it has to work, is the condition through which every event has to pass, even if it be a sickness of the body or a political revolution. A sudden windfall of fortune and a bursting into a new outlook, a discovery or an invention in the field of religion or science—all great things are outcomes of sudden intuitions. They are rarely preparations by experiment, observation and logical induction or deduction. It is a sudden burst, and we cannot compare it to any occurrence in the normal ways of the world. It is an awakening from a slumber of potentiality. We may, for argument's sake, accept that the seed contains the whole tree in a latent form, but for all practical purposes the great event which the life of a leader is cannot be adequately imagined in the earlier days of unrecognised and unknown preparation. So was the case with the leader Mahatma Gandhi. There was a time when he was not known. I am just mentioning the names of a few well-known masters who appear to have a common procedure adopted for a common purpose, to be achieved through totally differing *modus operandi*.

A genius in medical science and a genius in literature are not actually doing two different things, though it may appear that literary activity has very little to do with medical research, or vice versa. The world works for a single purpose,

though it may employ different personalities and instruments in different ways for the fulfilment of its intention. It does not mean that they are freaks suddenly erupting into the daylight of human recognition, coming from nowhere and doing what no one can understand. As I mentioned earlier, there is a single operation going on in the whole world; and this has to be borne in mind by every one of us in order to understand life in its proper perspective, though it may be very difficult for people to entertain such an outlook of carefulness and vigilant observation in the very process of thinking. We read in the newspapers that many things are happening in the world. But only one thing is happening in the world, really speaking—which is an inner adjustment of its components.

The personality of the world—the World Spirit, the Time Spirit—accommodates itself to the conditions necessary for the fulfilment of its purpose. The latter part of the twentieth century saw the sudden rising of luminaries in the firmament of science, political leadership, medicine, religion, philosophy and literature. If we cast a glance over world history for the last fifty or even a hundred years, we will see what intense activity took place in all the countries of the world. Developments galore highlighted human history in many a feature. The origin of rivers and the origin of *rishis* cannot easily be seen. Where the river starts, we do not know; and where the *rishi* or the sage or the saint started, also we cannot know. *Rishi moolam* and *nadi moolam* cannot be known, and they are not supposed to be known. The great line of reformers of a totally different nature started practically with the birth of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa in this century, and there was a continuous flow of the stream of this kind of work, with a many-sided touch to it. We will be able to understand the meaning of this kind of all-round activity in which the world engages itself only if we become careful students of the cultural history of the world in the latter part of the century.

The mission of all saints may look like a single performance of awakening the spirits of people to a

consciousness of a higher life; that may be true. But different times require that variegated touches be given to this single performance, and so a person born in Mecca or a person born in Palestine or a person born in India may not necessarily adopt the same formation of procedure—though the procedure adopted may contain within its purposive activity the same force—because the mode of the application of this force of the rectification of any kind of irreconcilability within the world as a whole should be so aligned that it fits into the particular preponderating physical conditions, political conditions and social conditions, and it may even have something to do with the ethnic characteristics of people. For instance, the saint has to speak in the particular language of the region in which he incarnates himself. Even language is a very important aspect to be considered in the activity of people—the language which they use as an instrument of their performance.

The saints and the sages are seen to be working in a very mysterious manner. For instance, we have cases where great masters led a single disciple forward who then became the torch-bearer of the Guru or the master. A single personality was prepared by this force that incarnated itself as a sage or a leader. And there are others who came for a general shake-up of the very structure of the world.

This kind of work is not concerned with personalities. An awakening of the entire slumbering humanity and not necessarily a work connected with groups of people or individuals may be said to characterise Gurudev Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj, the saint and sage we are considering now. If we are shaken up and made to see with our own eyes what things are there in front of us—if we have been helped to wake up from sleep and enabled to see with our own eyes—we will know what is good for us. When we see what is in front of us with our own eyes, it does not require much of an effort on our part to do what is proper. And so he came to rouse people from a kind of sleep. People were asleep—*asleep to the Spirit that is within—and totally unconscious of*

their own souls, but intensely conscious of what is not the soul.

There can be a sleep of a different kind altogether. Sleep is not necessarily a state of unawareness of things. It can be that, but it can be worse than a total unawareness. An awareness of what is really there is one thing; an unawareness of what is really there is another thing. But that condition of an awareness of what is not there is the state into which mankind descends when it gets involved in the objects of the world. We may underline here that the world has no objects in itself. There are no objects in the world. There is the world, but there are no objects. You have to bring to your memory a little of what I said during the first two talks. There are no 'things' in this world. There is no such thing as something being 'in the world'. There is the world, but there is no 'in' and 'out' for the world. Hence, to be conscious of an object would be to characterise the knower of that object as an individualised location which has managed to consider itself as the centre and the world as its satellite.

There was a time when people thought the Earth was the centre of the whole of creation and the entire solar system was moving round it. This has now been superseded by a later discovery. "I am the centre." Every observer, every seer, every perceiver, every knower considers himself to be the centre around which the whole world operates as a conglomeration of objects. The status of the seen is inferior to the status occupied by the seer. This is partly a concern of psychology, whereby we get to know how comfortably we see ourselves placed when we are the observers and not the observed. It is to be in a state of great discomfort to be observed. It is a great comfort to observe. We can appreciate this point of view. No one would like to be observed, seen, noticed, handled or made a thing of study. That would be to get converted into the status of an object, a thing, a satellite—something that is an associate without a status of its own. An observer, a seer—one who conducts an operation

and investigates—is always in a superior position to that which is being investigated.

Are we observers of the world? Are we seeing the world, or is the world seeing us? We can never imagine that the world is seeing us. It looks as if we are seeing the world. But, there is another aspect to it. When we speak of the world as an object of our perception, we include all people except our own selves. All the people around are the world; they are part of the world. The observer himself is not the world because to convert or to place oneself in the position of an object would be to get deprived of the status of the observer. And gradually people began to get involved in this dependence on what they considered as the objects of the world—to which I made reference previously as the outlook of materialism, an outlook which disbelieves that it is at all possible to live in the world without being dependent on things outside.

Our life seems to be a medley of a variety of dependences hanging on various factors for our security—a bare permission to exist. If sustenance is not to come to us from outside, we would not be alive. Is this true? If this is true, all glory goes to crass materialism. All life is a product of the collocation of material forces, and all significance, all meaning and all value have to be attached only to the patterns and the formations of the constituents of matter. That this is not true—that the peculiar and uncomfortable status which the observer of things appropriates to himself while converting everything in the world into a lower status—has a great meaning. Why is it that a seer or an observer should have a higher status? Though this is something into which we cannot easily conduct investigations, it is something which we have to accept.

The reason behind this is the presence of a status in the observer and, at the same time, there being no such thing as an observed object. The automatic action that takes place within ourselves when we observe anything—an action which bifurcates the seer from the seen and keeps the seer on a higher pedestal and the seen on a lower—has a super-

empirical connotation. We are not made up of material forces. We are not hanging on the mercy that is bestowed upon us by natural forces. Each person has a status of his own or her own. Therefore, dependence is not our birthright. Freedom is our birthright. No one can be regarded as free who is so dependent on external factors. If our life is a dependence entirely on natural world forces, freedom is a misnomer; no one can be free. It is impossible even to conceive it. But, we ask for nothing but freedom. It looks as if we are asking for something which cannot be there, and yet it is the only thing that we are asking for: freedom and freedom and freedom, and nothing but freedom. We want to have a free hand in everything. This is what we ask for.

Dogs lie down in the shade of a tree. They lie down and sleep the whole day. But if a rope is tied around the dog's neck and it is tethered to a tree and left to sleep, it would not like to sleep like that, though nothing has been done except that a rope has been tied. The dog has been lying there the whole day; but as soon as it is tied to a rope, it becomes unhappy. It goes on whining throughout the day so that the rope may be removed, because its freedom is limited. "Sleeping is alright, but is a rope tied around my neck? Then I don't want it!" So the dog whines and struggles and tries to break the rope. We do not want the pleasures of life; we want freedom. Pleasures minus freedom are only pains. It is status that everyone asks for, not riches. All riches and wealth minus status and recognition is like a husk. But why is it that we ask for freedom? What is wrong with us, or right with us?

Freedom is the birthright of everyone; and everyone is basically free. Nobody can be bound. There is no bondage, really speaking. Bondage does not exist. A kind of involvement of ourselves in situations which are inextricable and unintelligible produces a sense of bondage. We are not merely essentially free; we are also deathless. Both these statements are very hard to understand. We do not appear to be free at all. We have got harassments from every side—troubles and problems and sorrows, and nothing but these. Who is free in this world, though we are told that we are

basically free? Everybody dies, and yet we are told that we are deathless. These two highly intriguing proclamations seem to astound us, and it is so because even when we are conscious that there is a world—for instance, as we are now—we are awake, but we are, really speaking, awake in a different sense. As I stated, sleep is not necessarily a state of total unawareness. It can be something worse than that. Often to be unaware is not as bad as to be aware in a totally erroneous manner.

In the technical language of philosophers, this is sometimes called the *avarana* and *vikshepa*: a clouding of consciousness and a projecting of consciousness. The clouding is the preventing factor which sees to it that we cannot know what is there. A thick veil is hung in front of our eyes. But a peculiar distorting lens also seems to be clutching to this, through which we are forced to see a completely distorted figure. That which is inside is thrown out and made to appear as an outward phenomenon, and that which is really outside looks as if it is within. According to the story of creation that we have in the Upanishads and elsewhere, we individual people are later products than the creation of the world. Individualities emerged afterwards; the whole world-stuff was created earlier. It may be due to this reason that Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj used to say that the policy of our life should be: “God is first, world is next, and we are last.” We are the last because we came last. The cause is the world; we are the effects. Now for us the world looks like an effect, and we are the causes. There is a topsy-turvy perception.

In the epic language of the Upanishads, we are told that at the time of creation celestials fell head-long, upside-down—with legs up and head down, as it were. In biblical language, this is how Lucifer fell and became Satan. Falling headlong is not to be able to see naturally. An unnatural perception is world perception. To put it cryptically, that which is everywhere is made to appear as something which is outside us. That which was produced later, an effect, is given the position of the cause, and the cause appears as an effect. Thus, the philosophy of the dependence of the senses

on objects arises as a natural consequence of this erroneous perception. This kind of sleep is a fatal blow to mankind as a whole. It is a hypnotisation of the spirit, and in that condition nothing that is said can be received. A hypnotised person is not a normal person. Therefore, a person who believes in the value of this topsy-turvy perception cannot be instructed. Nothing can go into the head of that person because the mind of that person has decided to think in a completely erroneous manner, in a topsy-turvy fashion; and that fashion of perception determines even the capacity to receive, so even if the right thing is told, it will be received wrongly. Such was the condition of the world. Even today it is not far removed from this unfortunate condition of devaluing the spirit of life and valuing the unspirit, the anti-Christ.

Each one of us is the judge for himself or herself: In what manner do we appreciate things? There is a great joy when riches fall on our heads from the material sources of the world. To be dispossessed of material contents is regarded as poverty—while true poverty is the poverty of the spirit. Loss of self is true poverty; the gain of the world is not to be rich. But, how do we think even today? To gain the world is to be wealthy; and we forget that we cannot gain the world unless we have lost ourselves first. The gaining of the world is a simultaneous loss of the spirit of man. The 'within' has become clouded in the dark operations of exterior matter which we call the comforts of life. Hence, a worldly life is the death of the soul. And who is worldly? Let each one consider for himself.

This outlook which is what we call a worldly, earthly, material, crass attitude had to be remedied by a medication which had to come only from the spirit. It is the spirit that has to heal itself. No material force can be a remedy for this illness. Spiritual leaders alone can be the saviours of mankind, if we believe that mankind is nothing but a society of souls and spirits, and not an association of material bodies. The world of humanity is a family of spirits, kindred souls, and not the dancing of atoms. That cannot be called the world.

This was to be brought to the notice of these slumbering souls. Some were actually fast asleep in the unconscious spirit, and the others were sleeping in the consciousness of matter. Both are types of sleep. To be unconscious of the spirit is one kind of sleep; to be conscious of material existence is another kind of sleep. One is called *avarana* and the other is called *vikshepa*. They are the twin ailments of mankind; they are two prongs, as it were, of a single attack of wrong perception. A fork, sometimes called Morton's Fork, is that which catches us from both sides.

There was a minister to King Henry VII of England who was called Morton. He was a tax extractor. He used to apply an administrative fork. If he saw a very well-dressed person, he would tell him, "It seems you are a well-dressed, wealthy, happy, rich man. Pay the tax." If he saw a poor person, dressed in tattered clothes, he would tell him, "You are pretending. You are a wealthy person. Don't pretend like this. Pay the tax." Either way, they were caught. Whether they looked rich or poor, it did not matter; they were caught. This kind of double attack was called Morton's Fork in the taxation policy that was adopted by Morton during the reign of King Henry VII.

So here is the Morton's Fork of the two-pronged catch of *avarana* and *vikshepa*. We are caught if we are unconscious and we are caught even if we are conscious, because to be unconscious is bad and to be conscious of the wrong thing is still worse. So in what condition are we? Let each one know and try to place himself or herself in the proper position of self-investigation—for delivering which gospel to mankind, Sri Swami Sivanandaji and such saints came.

Chapter 4

THE FOUNDATION OF HARDSHIP

The perception of pain and suffering is often the impulsion behind the sudden rise of a religious awareness, and it acts as such a powerful awakener that one begins to see a new world in front of oneself. The transitory character of things, which is the basic conditioning factor of all things, is exactly what misses the attention of people. It required a person like the Buddha—Gautama Siddhartha—to tell people that everything is transient.

Why should someone have to tell us that things pass away? Do we not see this phenomenon with our own eyes? We do see the coming and the going of all things; so why should Buddha have to tell us, as if we do not know it? We see the birth and the death of people. Everything everywhere on Earth is insecure; one's condition on the morrow is not guaranteed today. Transitoriness is a poor word to describe this problem. It is as if we are carrying death on our heads or it is hung around our necks. Our only possession of worth, our only treasure, seems to be our subjection to death. Nothing else seems to be present, existing or stable anywhere in the world.

The stability of objects is an illusion. Nothing stands; everything moves. Neither the flame of a lamp nor the movement of a river is a phenomenon of staticity. It is a dynamic action. Velocity is mistaken for stability. The blades of fast-moving electric fans look like stable existences, as if they do not move at all. When the rapidity of movement passes beyond the ken of the capacity of the eye's perception, it ceases to be an object to the eyes. Our eyes cannot catch the speed of things, and so we see what is not there. Hence, it requires an awakened spirit to come and tell us that things are not what they seem. "Even this shall pass away" is a line from Shakespeare. Everything passes away. Not merely shall it pass away—everything passes away at every moment. There is a continuity of the procession of events. The whole

world is a procession, and not a stable entity. It is a rapidly moving series of cinematographic pictures, as it were. Even this is not a proper comparison because here at least the pictures are stable, even if just for a split second, but in this world nothing remains stable even for a split second.

The world is a process. When we say the world is a transition, we are likely to feel that something is moving from one condition to another condition. It is not something that is moving; it is only movement, and nothing but that. It is difficult to understand what force means. Force is not a substance. We cannot tangibly cognise it or perceive it or come in contact with it. There is no tangibility in a process or a movement. This is the way in which we can distinguish between objects and bits of energy or force.

Hence, there is a great similarity between the modern discovery of the whole world being a sea of energy and Buddha's ancient proclamation that all is transition. They are only two different ways to describe the same occurrence. The world is not; it is just a movement. How is it that we seem to be caught up by the apparent stabilities of things in this world and we do not perceive the inherent destruction that is gnawing into the vitals of the apparent stabilities? Are we not from moment to moment heading towards death? Are we not preparing for this termination of the movement of our procedural activities through this anatomical body? Are we existing? Are we moving, even if it is only movement and transition and dying? How is it that we do not perceive it?

The reason is a peculiar interaction between the perceptual faculties and the so-called structural pattern of objects, which really are not objects. A particular collocation of forces at a given point in space and time catches the attention of a particular structural pattern of the perceptual apparatus, and this peculiar momentary interaction between these two terminals of perception gives the impression of a stable object in front. This is a sort of scientific explanation of the erroneous perception of stability in actually moving forces. While science requires a laboratory to discover the momentary condition of things, an illumination of this kind

struck the mind of Buddha. It is suddenly presented before the minds of great leaders of mankind—spiritual heroes—and they realise the *anityata*, the *dukhamayata* and the *asasvatata* of the whole world.

Gurudev Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj was a medical man. The anatomy of the physical body may be said to be a real description of its beauty. Gurudev used to say that only doctors can know the truth of things because they can probe into the human system more accurately, more precisely than the naked eye of a relative, a friend, a father, a mother or a brother. The medical man that Sri Swami Sivanandaji was, he could very easily be turned into a physician of the soul. Though very little of his early life is known to us, it is said that this phenomenon of transition, transitoriness, sorrow, pain and suffering of people awakened his spirit. His actual career as a torchbearer of the spirit may be said to have commenced between the years 1922 to 1924.

In the year 1922 there was an astounding flood—water, water everywhere. The water level rose to such an extent that towns were flooded. In the cyclic movement of time, occasionally such floods do come. We had a little experience of it here in the year 1963, when five feet of water entered the *kutir* of Gurudev Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj, and inside his bedroom one could be drowned. After that, the Ganga never rose to such an extent; it never rose at all. Devotees with an eye to seeing the mysteries of things saw significance in the Ganga rising to such a level, which she never did at any other time. She came, as it were, to meet the great spirit that left. Otherwise how could we expect the Ganga to enter the room and rise to a height of five feet inside the room? In those days many of us might not have been in this world. Some of us might have been little children, and a few might have been adults. The years were 1922 to 1924. We need not go into the details of the manner of Swami Sivananda's wind-like movement northwards; the point is that the wind touched the North.

What was Rishikesh like in those days? It is really worthwhile to contemplate those conditions. Only those who

can stretch their imaginations, like an artist, can behold the beauty of such an atmosphere. When I was a little boy, I heard that monks used to carry fire on their heads when they travelled from Haridwar northwards to Badrinath. It must have been intensely cold that they carried fire on their heads. There were no roads from Haridwar onwards. It was a forest, a thick jungle inhabited by wild animals. Even some thirty or forty years ago people saw tigers in these forests. Nowadays the tigers must have left, or they died. There was nothing here which could be called a human environment. It was considered as an abode of anchorites, ascetics, renunciates who could somehow manage to survive—by what means, God alone knows.

Incidentally, I may mention the hardships of the lives of these great saints and sadhus in those days. There was no question of food, because sadhus had no means of purchasing food and there was no other way of obtaining it. There was a great saint called Swami Vishuddhanandaji Maharaj, usually referred to as Baba Kali Kamli Wale because of the black blanket that he used to wear. Evidently he was a master spirit in himself, which we can appreciate from the effect produced by his austerities, as can be seen today. Pilgrims used to walk on hard ground that was covered with pebbles and stones. There was no footpath even worth the name, and there was no accommodation whatsoever on the way. We should not compare those days with the present when we can travel quickly by car and reach Badrinath and perhaps even return the same evening. Such comparisons cannot be made. There were hardships galore. Swami Vishuddhanandaji Maharaj—Baba Kali Kamli Wale—observed the sorrows of these pilgrims, that they had no water and no food. It appears that he stood in the middle of the shambles of the little town of Rishikesh and insisted that some arrangements be made for the poor pilgrims. He appealed to the well-to-do Seths, Marwadis, etc., that a *chowki* (halting place) should be built in Rishikesh and food should be offered to the sadhus, and facilities should also be provided along the way for them to rest.

This is the story behind the founding of what is today called the Baba Kali Kamli Wala Kshetra, where hundreds and hundreds of sadhus are given free food. Incidentally, as a branch, as it were, the Swargashram Annakshetra was opened a little later. This ashram known as the Swargashram existed in a seed form, functioning in miniature during those days. This may not have been exactly in 1922—maybe two or three years afterwards. It is not very clear to us. One of the disciples of Swami Vishuddhanandaji Maharaj, known as Atmaprakashanandaji Maharaj, settled down on the other side of the Ganga and named that location as Swargashram, and opened an Annakshetra for the resident sadhus there. That was where Gurudev Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj did his *tapasya*. There was no Sivananda Ashram. There was no Divine Life Society. There was nothing. There was just stone and thorn and jungle—no house, no human beings.

There was the Ram Ashram, built by Lala Bidyanath, a great lawyer and scholar who was a disciple of the late revered spiritual leader Swami Rama Tirtha. The Ram Ashram is said to be named after Swami Rama Tirtha, the great saint. We are told that by some mysterious occurrence—God only knows what was the reason behind it—the body of the great saint was found floating on the river Ganga. This is what we hear—that it was seen at this spot. As a mark of respect for the great saint whose body was discovered there, Lala Bidyanath had this ashram constructed—the Ram Ashram, which is mainly a library now.

Swami Sivananda was initiated into the order of Sannyasa by most revered Swami Vishvananda Sarasvati. Magic-like was that initiation. Instantaneous was the conversation, and in a minute the whole process was over. We hear that he received Jnana Sannyasa—initiation into Sannyasa by the method of pure communication of wisdom, or knowledge. After this initiation, the ritualistic form of it was completed in the present Kailash Ashram, and at that time the pontiff was Swami Vishnudevanandaji Maharaj (not the one who is in Canada now). He was a very old Sanskrit

scholar—a great genius in Sanskrit studies and Sanskrit wisdom whom Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj adored as his own Guru and beloved master—and he completed the rituals of the Sannyasa *diksha*. Then Swami Sivanandaji moved to the other side of the Ganga, and in a little hut, a little cottage, he found his abode.

What was his diet? There was no clarified butter, or *ghee*, no oil, no milk, no fruits. What else was there? Dry bread used to be distributed to the sadhus, with a little bit of pulse, or *dal*, with no oil or *ghee* in it. Try eating such a thing for several days—dry bread with no lubrication whatsoever—you will see what will happen to your stomach. The sadhus used to suffer very much with dysentery, and illnesses of various kinds due to inclement weather. No medical treatment was possible; there were no hospitals. I mentioned that there were not even human beings, let alone hospitals and such other facilities—no shops, nothing. There was just a little mini-township called Rishikesh.

Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj was a doctor, a medical specialist, and he was well read in the modern sense of the term. He was the only English-educated sadhu. They used to call him Doctor Swami. When I occasionally visited Kailash Ashram to pay my respects to the great Swami Vishnudevanandaji Maharaj, he used to ask me, “Doctor Swami *kaise hain?*” Swami Sivanandaji was a medical specialist and a Good Samaritan for all suffering souls.

Swami Sivanandaji had no money. Financially he was a pauper, and so were all the sadhus. They had nothing. But he was a reputed person. He was a stalwart in many ways, and he was recognised as a kind of spirit that leads, who could speak intelligently—not merely speak intelligently, but even contact government authorities because of his education and sympathetic nature. He was not an isolated individual, remaining only in his room. He noticed the problems of the sadhus in Swargashram. I should mention here a great little service—it can be called great and little at the same time—which is that Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj received one rupee per month from a schoolmaster in Nagpur called Hari Ganesh

Ambekar, who later on took Sannyasa and became Swami Hariomananda Sarasvati. He was a science teacher in a high school. He read a pamphlet or a book of Swami Sivananda, and he used to send a one rupee money order every month. In those days one rupee was a very great treasure. One could survive for a month on two rupees, so one rupee was a very great thing indeed. We hear that this one rupee which came from this schoolmaster was utilised in a most appropriate manner. How was it utilised? A little milk and a little yogurt were purchased by Swami Sivanandaji. What for?

It was not for himself. He used to observe which sadhus were suffering with stomach trouble, with diarrhea, dysentery, fever. But those sadhus were of a peculiar type; they would not accept anything from anyone. One sadhu could not go and give a little yogurt to another sadhu; he would not accept it. He would say, "No, I am satisfied." He would certainly reject any kind of offering, especially if he knew who gave it. So when the bell rang for *bhiksha* in Swargashram and the sadhus went for their alms, Swamiji would quietly go into the *kutirs* of the sadhus who were ill and put a mug full of milk or yogurt in the corner of the *kutir*, and leave without anyone knowing. The sadhu who returned from the *kshetra* would not know who gave it, so he would accept it. For months and months nobody knew what this phenomenon was, and it was not discovered. Later on Swamiji became a friend, philosopher and guardian.

But with the growth of reputation, Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj also became a cynosure of all eyes in a very unpleasant manner. We know very well that there is a trait in human nature which cannot appreciate the growth of another person. One does not like that another should prosper, especially if one is unable to prosper equally, in the same proportion. "When I am small, why should the other person be big?" This attitude is present practically in every person, and one day or the other it can manifest itself under given circumstances. "If I am poor, let all be poor. If I die, others also should die. Why should they live?"

This subtle jealousy arose due to the reputation of the educated Swami and the adoration that was bestowed upon him by the other Mahatmas. This was not considered as a happy thing by those who had authority over the sadhus. It slowly brewed, like a simmering volcano, and it took twelve years to actually boil to the surface. This is a side issue.

Incidentally, to repeat again, this medical Swami was not merely satisfied with collecting medicine, curd and milk, etc., for sadhus. He found a location near the other side of Laxmanjula Bridge and opened a little dispensary called the Sathya Seva Ashram Dispensary, which is today a government hospital. That was the place where he started his medical work.

But Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj was not merely a medical man. He was a spiritual healer who came from the South to the North not only to do this kind of work; he was an austere and very fierce type of *sadhaka*. 'Fierce' is the only adjective I can use to describe the type of *tapas* that he is said to have performed. He used to be busy throughout the day in the service of pilgrims who passed by. There was no motorable road. Pilgrims had to cross over the bridge and follow the footpath. It is there that Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj had his little abode, the Sathya Seva Ashram Dispensary. It was a very convenient place for him to see all the pilgrims passing by and find out who required any kind of aid. It gave him great joy. "To serve is my duty. It is my gospel," he said. But Swamiji was altogether different inside. This is something which was observed by many of us who lived with him for so many years. He was a very amiable, ultra-social type of person, over-enthusiastic in the service of people, going out of the way to be of assistance to others—initiating talk, even if they did not speak. Such an extreme type of social, serviceful humanitarian was totally different inside himself.

The one who was concerned with the welfare of everyone was really concerned with nothing. That great difference has to be reconciled. We have to find an explanation for the coming together of these apparent

contraries in the personality of that single individual. A person who was an out-and-out humanitarian social welfare worker, as it were, wanting to be of help to people even if they were not wanting any assistance, running after pilgrims who were going to Badrinath in order to give them medicine, a cup of water, a little milk—running after them because he had missed these people and they had already walked a furlong or two or even a mile. “Oh. I didn’t see them. I was elsewhere”—so he ran with a cup of water, a little milk, some medicine and something they could carry with them. Such a person who could be considered as a super social worker wanted nothing for himself. That he wanted nothing for himself was something which was manifest in many of his actions in later days, which we ourselves observed. I am one of those persons who lived with Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj for several years, and I was close to him even physically, so that many of his peculiarities—they may be called idiosyncrasies, contraries, greatnesses and magnificences—could be observed. I am not going to recount all of them, but some interesting features are worth making objects of our contemplation.

Even though Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj was a super social welfare worker, he was a person who had no social relations. He was busy throughout the day with this kind of medical service, but what was he doing at night? If you can walk for about a mile or so northwards along the road you will find, at a particular bend towards the left, a governmental habitat of tin sheds, evidently a kind of base for the project of a dam that they are trying to construct across the Ganga. There you will find a sandbank on the other side which is said to be the place of his *tapasya*. That sandbank was the place of Swamiji’s *tapasya*, and the Ganga flowing in front touching the sandbank was the place where he stood up to his navel in the cold water of the Ganga. Later on he developed lumbago, and he used to say that lumbago was the consequence. The cold water struck his bones so hard that he could not bend properly. Anyway, his *tapasya* was standing in the Ganga, navel deep, and doing whatever he did. It was his inner secret and contemplation on the

sandbank there. That sandbank can be seen even today. It is a very holy spot. Nobody goes there because nobody knows the significance of that place, but it is worth noticing.

I mentioned that a schoolmaster sent Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj a money order of one rupee every month. Swamiji had no fountain pen with which to write a book; he had no paper, no clerical assistance, and no printing facilities. After taking *bhiksha* in Swargashram he used to go to the Ram Ashram library and read book after book. Most of the books in the library of the Ram Ashram have many red marks that were made by Swami Sivanandaji. There is practically no book there which he has not read, especially the books in English; and all the red underlining is supposed to have been done by him.

Then he used to go to Rishikesh and collect a bundle of old newspapers and bring them back to his *kutir*. What did he do with the newspapers? Newspapers have a little bit of space in the margins, maybe half an inch. That was the paper on which he wrote, because he had no other paper. The margins of those newspapers were his writing pads, and I am told that one of the first, or perhaps the first, manuscripts that he wrote later became a book called *Spiritual Lessons*, in two volumes. It was a bundle, and not a well-trimmed manuscript. A heap of cuttings of the margins of newspapers, bundled up like a haystack, were his thoughts recorded as *Spiritual Lessons*.

Who would print it? There were two devotees in Madras. One was G. A. Natesan and another was P. K. Vinayakam. They had printing presses and they were publishers, but they were not job workers; they would not take up just any kind of work. Somehow, when the Swami from Rishikesh in the Himalayas, a stalwart saint, wrote a line asking about the possibility of releasing these writings in print, G. A. Natesan replied, "Great Swamiji, we do not undertake job works, but because this letter has come from a great saint, we shall do it." This book, *Spiritual Lessons*, was the first of Gurudev's writings. Some say it is *Practice*

of Yoga, which was in two volumes, though today the same book is in one volume. *Spiritual Lessons*, *Practice of Yoga* and *Sure Ways of Success in Life and God Realisation* were the earliest of his writings, followed by *The Practice of Vedanta*, which is not available today, and *Vedanta in Daily Life*, which was published by M. Elley and Co., Amritsar and Lahore Printers. These great benefactors should be remembered because in those days of hardship, helpers of this kind were rare. Those publishers who were associated with this great master in releasing his writings which came out of such hardship should also be considered as pillars of the great edifice of the Divine Life Society, which grew later on.

Chapter 5

AN EMBODIMENT OF TAPASYA

Tapas which is an adoration of God is different from austerities which merely subjugate the senses or restrain the mind from its normal operations. In an honest presenting of oneself before the Almighty, which is the greatest *tapas*, these operations automatically take place. The life which is saintly, austere and devout is, in a way, a great enigma—a difficult enterprise which has many sides that look like many different features of approach, yet form a single endeavour for a concentrated purpose. The way in which one looks at things through the eye of the mind is the portrait of one's true personality. The personality of a saintly figure is thus pictured by the inward operation of the psychological perceptive faculty which sees things with the mind and not merely with the physical instruments with which one looks at the world of persons and things.

The goal of austerities and performances of *tapas* in yoga *sadhana* is a collecting of oneself—a gathering up of oneself—into what one has to be. Does it mean that we are not ourselves normally, so that in a religious mood or while performing a spiritual exercise we have to collect ourselves as if we have been scattered? We are indeed dismembered personalities—a thing which is not noticed by us in our busy hours. We may be physically sitting in one place, but we are really in many places at the same time. Wherever our interest is, there we are, and it is not necessarily on the physical chair or the seat on which the body may be perched. The human person is basically a psychic entity, not a physical body. All occurrences to the body are really occurrences to the person.

Even if the body is affected in some way, a person may be unaffected. Do we not see physical operations taking place—medical treatment being administered that causes changes and transformations of various kinds in the physical system? Yet, the person is intact and unaffected even though changes

take place in the physical system, in the organism, in the limbs of the body. Sometimes the body may be put to hard work, yet the mind may be very happy if this work is a means to the satisfaction of the mind—all which shows that we are not exactly what the body is. We may even put ourselves to the condition of physical starvation for the sake of mental happiness. We may walk long distances in order that we may be mentally secure and psychologically happier. We may not eat for days and not sleep at all—which is a great discomfort to the body—if it would enhance the satisfactions of the mind. There are heartened longings of the inner man which do not mind any kind of physical hardship. Thus, we may try to understand the difference that seems to be there between what we really are and what our physical framework appears to be.

Therefore, it is not necessary that we should be regarded as located in just one spot merely because the body is in one place. What the body does is not what the person does; and where the body is need not necessarily be where the person is. The person has a different subtle mystery inside, which cannot be intelligently identified or equated with the body. This is all the more true in the case of a religious exercise. Bodily exercises are not necessarily the exercises we perform. We cannot say that we are doing what the body is doing. We may simultaneously be doing something quite different from what the body is doing by its actions and operations, and whatever the body may be doing would be immaterial to the man inside. The body may be comfortably seated, well-fed physically, but the mind may be tormented inside; or the body may be put to hard work which is voluntarily undertaken for the sake of satisfaction of the mind. These are interesting principles of psychology. If this is the case, anything that we do is not to be mixed up with what the body does, because what we do need not necessarily be the same thing as what the body does; and, alternately, the body's actions need not necessarily be our actions.

Thus, our bondage and our freedom may be said to consist in what *we* do and how *we* are related—not in what

the body does or the manner in which the physical body is related. A physical body may be placed on the throne of an emperor. It does not mean that the person has become a king—because the king is not the body. Therefore, the enthroning of the physical body does not make that person a king. If the body is not the king, what else is the king? Here is the mystery of man. The rich man is not the physical body; the poor man is not the physical body. He who cannot get what he wants is poor. He who feels that he has everything that he needs is rich. These are all interesting pictures of our inner subtleties, giving an insight into what we really are and what is expected of us when we place ourselves in the exalted position of a spiritual seeker—or a *yogin*, so to say.

Yoga is self-control. It is the control of ourselves. Now, who are we that have to be restrained? Self-control is the restraining of the various relations in which we have been placed and severing the relations which we have established—mark the word ‘we’, the real we, the real me—and the maintaining of our own real status so that all the energies that have been channelised in relations are brought back, in the same way as forces in an administrative organisation are summoned back to the centre under conditions of necessity. When a frontal confrontation for a specified purpose is requisitioned, all energies are centralised. And the greatest confrontation is the practice of yoga. Here all the forces are centralised in oneself, and no permission is given to any part of the personality to move outward for any other purpose than the chosen one—the great religious engagement we call austerity, *tapas*.

By controlling the mind through the exertion of force or the power of the will, its strength can be enhanced. As we know, a particular intensified action results in its opposite: hunger increases by starvation. The more we eat, the less we feel appetite; the less we eat, the more is the appetite. This is how things work. So here, the less we concern ourselves with what is not us, the greater is the strength that is generated within us, because if we distribute all our wealth in a thousand directions, we become poor. When we withdraw all

this distributed wealth and concentrate it in ourselves, we have the satisfaction of having all the possessions. It is difficult to practise *tapas* because it is not easy to know what exactly is meant by the restraint of oneself.

Many a well-intentioned seeker can miss the mark here in this practice because the objective, the aim, the purpose of the practice may not be clearly placed before the mind. Once it is clear as to what is meant by these processes of restraint, we have to be in one place only, not in many places. We may say, "I am always in one place. I cannot be in two places at the same time." But it has been pointed out that we can be in a thousand places even if we are physically in one place only; and perhaps every one of us is in many places, or at least in more than one place, because that which we think of is the place where we are. It is not difficult for anyone to appreciate where work is located at a particular time. We have distributed ourselves in a thousand ways by scattered interests and segregated occupations which pull us in many directions; and we place ourselves in the very condition of a man who has to dole out his wealth to many children, many relations and many enterprises, thus having practically nothing for himself. Why should we be in many places? How can we be specialised?

Here is another difficulty, and it is very intriguing indeed. How can we become individuals, special entities—without being which, we cannot scatter ourselves in this manner? How can space cut us into pieces and locate us in one thousand centres unless we have become the non-we—or to put it more precisely, the Atman has become the *anatman*, the Self has become the non-Self? Such a situation cannot arise. It is impossible for us to have multitudes of psychic locations of interest unless we have divided ourselves spacially into bits so that we have become bits of psychic action rather than a single person. Certainly in this state of affairs we are poorer than the poorest, psychologically, because all the strength has gone out. It has gone out; it is not within us. The outwardness of the particular centre in which we are interested is the explanation for our being scattered

in that manner. The isolation of our psychic components in this way can be accounted for only if we have become other than what we are, because if that has not taken place, we cannot have any interest outside ourselves. The outsideness of interest is the conversion of the Self into the not-Self. This is the foundation of the very art of understanding mental operations, the very root of the study of psychology. A seeker of truth, a student of yoga, has to be a very good psychologist, at least in the sense of knowing one's own mind and its operations. Psychologically, we are not actually as we appear.

Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj was a master in the knowledge of the subtleties and the tricks of the mind. He was not concerned about the reputation he had during the days that he lived in the Swargashram. We can imagine how hard it is for a single person to live in one place for twelve years continuously, unbefriended by people, unspoken to, unattended by anyone, having no one and nothing to call his own. Any one of us may try this art of living alone, having nobody who will speak to us. The sadhus in Swargashram were independent persons. They would not speak to one another; they lived in their own worlds. They had their own problems and aspirations, and one had no occasion to speak to another. In that state of affairs it was a wilderness of humanity, literally. In that condition of human isolation, how could one expect a person to live with all the aspirations, emotions, impulses and propulsions characteristic of human nature? Yet it was done, and it was done with one single intention: the summoning of the divine spirit for the vision of which he appeared to have come to this world.

The miracle that Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj worked is its own explanation. That *tapas* which he performed is the seed and the tree of whose fruit we are tasting at this present time as this vast organisational work and wave of spiritual enlightenment. In our scriptures it is always said that concentrated practice should be carried on for a period of at least twelve years, and there should not be any other occupation during these years of self-discipline. In the case of

Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj, the twelve years were practically years of his utter solitude. We have to struggle hard in our minds to understand, to appreciate and to discover any meaning in the way in which one could have lived for such a long period in such hardship. There was the terrific heat of the sun in summer, followed by the pouring rain during the monsoon season and the shivering cold in winter—when cold winds howl and one had to bathe in the freezing water of the Ganga, sometimes in the rain, for at least six months of the year—and with the diet that I described yesterday. All that is difficult was the legacy of these mahatmas, these sadhus in the Swargashram. However, as it is said, intense forces become recognised and broadcast by their own powers, as the blazing sun cannot be hidden even by the thickest of clouds. Swami Sivanandaji's presence was always felt; and the aura or the magnetism, we may say, of this personality must have reached some distance. Seekers began to gravitate to that centre of this austere personality, and there were some old, unknown disciples, swamis, who were the pioneers during the time of the construction of the very idea of the Divine Life Society.

There was an old swami from Bihar called Swami Swarupanandaji. And there was a swami called Swami Atmanandaji, whose physical body hailed from Gujarat. And there was another great lawyer from Gujarat called Advaitananda Sarasvati. These were the *trium virate*—the three brave ones, we may say—that associated themselves with this stalwart of spiritual genius, Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj, and lived with him along with a few of a lesser category who served him in their own humble capacities.

There were two other great saints here at that time. One of them was Swami Tapovanji Maharaj, usually known as Tapovanji of Uttarkashi—a towering Sanskrit scholar hailing from Kerala and an out-and-out Advaitin in his outlook of philosophy. The other was Swami Advaitananda Sarasvati, a lawyer Sannyasin. These two differed in their concept of Brahman, the Absolute, and Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj used to describe details of this in his own humorous way.

Sometimes Swamiji would be standing outside after completing his office work, and Swami Advaitanandaji Maharaj and Swami Tapovanji Maharaj would quarrel over ideological points. Brahman cannot have power, would be the point of view of Swami Tapovanji: “You cannot say Brahman has power, because power is something that is exercised in a capacity of external motivation, and inasmuch as Brahman, the Absolute, cannot have any motivation outside, you cannot say that Brahman has power.” This was the point of view of Swami Tapovanji. But Advaitanandaji Maharaj said, “No, it is not like that. The potentiality of power should also be considered as power. A strong person need not always express his strength. An elephant is very strong, everyone knows that. But why should you deny that it has strength merely because it is not lifting anything heavy? So the existence of power in Brahman cannot be denied by any kind of argument given by Swami Tapovanji.” These were the philosophical quarrels of these great masters.

There was another saint, Swami Purushotamanandaji Maharaj, in Vasishtha Guha. He was a silent anchorite, a recluse who used to hibernate in a cave. These were some of the contemporaries of Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj.

Due to social reasons and reasons of convenience in regard to the housing of Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj's associates who had joined him, the necessity was felt to shift from the Swargashram. Considering all these factors, one day Gurudev Swami Sivanandaji suddenly rolled up his little bundle of clothing and crossed the Ganga in the rowboat that the Swargashram had in those days. But, what was there on this side?

There was nothing. It was all jungle, infested with mosquitoes, and there were some stray cattle dropping dung everywhere. Where to find a place to stay? There was a little hutment near the Ganga. It was a deserted cowshed containing some rotten leaves and stinking hay, and dung everywhere. That place was cleaned up, as there was no other facility available. There these pioneers of the Divine Life spirit—the original pillars, we may say—planted

themselves. We can imagine how uncomfortable a stay it was—very uncomfortable indeed. There is a small building near the Publication League, called Ananda Kutir. A first floor was added later on, but originally there was only the ground floor. That particular building was the very spot on which Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj sat. It was the office, if it could be called an office, of the Divine Life Society during its pre-founding days. The spot on which he sat and worked is where dressings are now done by some medical assistants in the hospital. It was a very small, hovel-like place. For some time, in our early days in this ashram, myself and Swami Chidanandaji Maharaj also stayed there. That was Ananda Kutir—the famous Ananda Kutir! It was later known as the Sivananda Ashram, but at that time there was no ashram at all.

There they stayed, on a little spot on the ground to sit on; but what did they eat? They had shifted from the Swargashram, so the question of going there and taking *bhiksha* did not arise. Due to the blessing of Swami Vishudhanandaji Maharaj, the Baba Kali Kamli Wala Kshetra was still functioning. They gave alms to the sadhus, and *chapatis* and *dal* were the daily constituents of the menu. Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj was not required to go there, though every few days he himself went with a small vessel to contain the *dal* and a bag in which the *chapatis* were put. Some of his disciples did not want him to take the trouble of walking, but there was no *tonga* at that time, and even if a *tonga* was there, they had no money to go in it. They had to walk.

So it was a question of walking every day to Rishikesh town for the little *biksha*, which was just dry *dal* without any kind of lubrication—no oil, no ghee—and dry *chapatis*. By the time it was brought back, it was cold and had lost its taste. Even the little taste that it had when it was warm was lost when it became cold, and it was eaten just like that. And the associates? Stalwarts they were! They were all learned people and very good *sadhakas*, and they underwent this hardship. The *chapatis* and *dal* were brought, and an extra

dish was collected from the *kshetra* for Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj. All had to eat the cold *dal* and the cold *chapatis*. The number of associates increased by a few, and I am told that one of those who were there at that time was Swami Govindanandaji Maharaj, who is even now staying with us in a little *kutir* near the Ganga, at the pump house which is being constructed near Gurudev's Kutir.

There was another swami, called Swami Narayananandaji. He was a thin, villager type who used to paint the doors and windows, so he was sometimes called Painter Swami. They say he was the person who lit the first fire in that little hovel of a cowshed to which I made reference. He heated the *dal* for Gurudev Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj, as they did not want him to have cold food every day and felt very grieved at this predicament. Many members of the Divine Life Society and the residents here remember Swami Narayanananda—an unknown, forlorn person who lit the first fire. Naturally, his hand must have been a magic hand, as we know very well that the fire he lit in the kitchen continues even today and it is expanding in its capacity in the manner we all see daily with our own eyes. So, the blessed hand of Swami Narayanananda lit the first fire, which was intended only for the single purpose of heating the *dal* for Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj. The others ate cold *dal* because there was not enough firewood to heat everyone's *dal*. From where would they get the firewood? Only a few sticks were brought, which were for Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj. There was no hearth. A few bricks were put one over the other and a crude hearth was constructed for the sake of the great master—to heat a little *dal* for him.

Those were wonderful days, indeed. 'Wonderful' is the only word we can use. What kind of life it was—can we imagine it? These things are not found in books. I can tell you many a thing from my own experience which cannot be found in any printed book. These things could not be written down and it was not possible to write them down, because much was known only to those who were actually with Swami Sivanandaji.

However, one day a spurt of religious enthusiasm and spiritual fire caught the great master, and in an intriguing fashion which could not be known in detail by others, he embarked upon a *sankirtan* tour. I should mention that there was no Divine Life Society at that time; there was no name, and not even an ashram. There was only a hut in which Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj stayed with a few people: Swami Swarupanandaji, Swami Atmanandaji and Swami Advaitanandaji. Swami Tapovanji was usually in Uttarkashi conducting teachings on the Brahma Sutras, Upanishads, etc.

These three—Swami Atmananda, Swami Advaitananda and Swami Swarupananda—went on the *sankirtan* tour through the whole of northern India. Swami Swarupanandaji translated into Hindi the discourses and lectures that Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj delivered in English. Swami Swarupananda did not translate literally. He did not give a dictionary-like translation of Swami Sivanandaji's English words; he would interpret them and add his own comments. Swami Sivanandaji would sometimes say that he would translate something quite different from what Swamiji had spoken. That was the kind of translation that Swami Swarupanandaji Maharaj did. He was a very good man; I saw him for several years when he was in the ashram. He was a specialist in expounding the Gita Govinda of Jayadeva, and was a great devotee of Lord Krishna and Radha. Swami Advaitanandaji was a lawyer, a scientific thinker and a logical type of philosopher.

So, this *sankirtan* tour through the whole of Uttar Pradesh and Punjab was undertaken. One of the pioneers who supported Sri Gurudev in this work was Chand Narain Harkuli of Lakimpur Kheri; and Swamiji remembered C.N. Harkuli and his family for many years. Then the wave moved to Punjab, right up to Lahore and various other places. It was mainly a movement in Uttar Pradesh and Lahore, maybe through the Delhi jurisdiction.

After a few years of this spiritual *sankirtan* tour, some people who were enthused, inspired, fired up and ignited in

their spirits collected together and importuned Sri Gurudev: "Swamiji, we should have a place to sit and work; and it is good that we organise this place of work in an official manner, in a well-recognised fashion, and make it into a Society." This suggestion was made in Ambala, in Punjab. Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj advocated what he called DIN: Do it now. If a thought arises, it has to be implemented now. It cannot be postponed until tomorrow. "A thought has come, so now itself I should do it! Sit. I'll dictate something." He could not wait even for a second. He would not go to his *kutir* until the matter was decided then and there. So as soon as the suggestion was made, Swamiji said, "Yes; and now write."

The deed of registration was written, and it was registered in Ambala under the aegis of the government of Punjab during those days. Thus the Society was officially registered in Punjab, not in Uttar Pradesh. Then it gathered momentum; the force gathered itself into itself. It became stronger and stronger, and a centre for publishing Swami Sivanandaji's writings was also found. It was in Lahore, and partly in Amritsar. Later on it was in Calcutta, due to the association of some devotees from Bengal.

Yet, Sri Swami Sivanandaji Mararaj was the same Swami Sivananda that he always was. I have been told that until the year 1943, he was the same person that he was in the Swargashram—very, very reticent, and not speaking to people at all. He spoke a few words only to the people who were around him, and observed a kind of practical defacto *mauna* (silence)—never interfering with anybody, never talking, never saying anything, and never showing interest in anything.

It is said that until the year 1943, Swami Sivanandaji was a thorough-going *virakta*. An old sadhu from the Kailash Ashram who knew him during those days used to come to our ashram for *bhiksha*. He would say, "He was an *agni of virakti*": a fire of renunciation. *Tyag tyag, tyagi; aag tyagi; aag tyagi*: Renounce, renounce the renunciate; fire on the renunciate; fire on the renunciate. This has a very mystical

meaning. Swami Sivanandaji used to define *tapasya* as the process of generating heat and fire inside by the control of the senses. The Sanskrit word *tapas* means 'heating'. The whole personality gets heated up by a concentrated centre of energy and capacity, due to the withdrawal of depleting energies by the control of the senses. Such a force was generated in Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj and he became an embodiment of *tapas*, wanting nothing for himself.

I am told that towards the end of 1943 he called his associates and workers and said, "Listen to me. I shall tell you what I did." Swami Chidanandaji Maharaj was there at that time, having come in the month of May or so in 1943. I came a year later, in May 1944—a difference of one year. He told me that everyone was called, including Swami Nijabodhanandaji, Swami Vishuddhanandaji, Swami Narayananandaji and Swami Purnanandaji, who were the great personalities there. Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj spoke for the first time and narrated, in a vociferous fashion and in detail, what he was and what he did, and gave them some idea of his life. He began to narrate his own life history, and each one of them was expected to take down notes of what was heard. The outcome of what Swami Chidanandaji Maharaj, in his pre-Sannyasa days, took down came out in the form of his book called *Light Fountain*. Another book, called *Swami Sivananda*, was written by a *brahmachari* who is no longer here; and *Perfect Master* was the book written by Swami Narayananandaji. Swami Nijabodhanandaji and Swami Purnanandaji did not write anything. I remember these two first-rate original biographies of Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj. While the writing of Swami Chidanandaji Maharaj, in the form of *Light Fountain*, is a little more intellectual and more polished in the modern style, the work of Swami Narayananandaji, which is called *Perfect Master*, is more an emanation of his heart and feelings—a *bhakta* writing about the nature of his Guru. *Saint Sivananda* is a very small book by another devotee, written in a very elevated style of English. Well, these people were all seated there.

Thus, the biographies emerged for the first time. How? By listening to what Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj himself said on a sudden brainwave, we may say, that occurred to him sometime in the year 1943. Up to the year 1943 it was one chapter of this whole organisation, the Divine Life Society. The picture changed from the beginning of the year 1944, when it became more expanded in its career of humanitarian services, publications, and its reach to the public in general.

Chapter 6

TRANSFORMING OUR UNDERSTANDING OF SPIRITUALITY

There is a general feeling that godmen and saints come to take people to the state of salvation, enabling humanity to attain *moksha*—liberation from the turmoils of earthly life—and instruct them in the art of renouncing the world. There is also a tradition which has entered the very blood of all religious thinkers and participants—that the apex of human achievement is the entry into the order of Sannyasa. All this has an associated aspect, which is the insinuation that this world is not so very meaningful, valuable, significant and requiring consideration as we are often made to feel in regard to it. There is a consequent conclusion that the world is not as real as God; or perhaps it is not real at all in any sense of the term, because we cannot abandon that which has even some reality. We cannot throw away even ten cents, though its value is less than a million dollars.

But why should it be necessary for us to be taught that the world has to be renounced, unless it has no significance at all? Even one cent has some value; no one would like to throw it away. The world is not worth even one penny—is it so?—but for which peculiar attitude of the mind, the tendency to the renunciation of the world is inexplicable. The world has no substance, no value—nothing we can call real. If this is not established, there would be difficulty in accounting for the deification of what people consider as the total renunciation of everything in the world. It will be found that the answer to this question will not easily come forth, because under conditions which engender feelings of a religious renunciation—a feeling for the life of a hermit and the like—we may be cornered into accepting that the aim of all life is the renunciation of all life. But, we do live in the world. This is something that cannot be gainsaid. We are not living elsewhere.

The renunciate is not outside the world. The renunciate has to plant his feet on the Earth and in the world in order that it may be possible to renounce the world. Segregation, isolation, renunciation, abandonment, *tyaga* are bywords in religious circles everywhere. Very rarely does it occur to anybody's mind that there is a mix-up in this attitude—a kind of hotchpotch conclusion arrived at by a hasty analysis of the conditions of life, due to not being clear as to what it is that we are aiming at. The child's philosophical outlook is also, many a time, a mature religious devotee's outlook, as far as the final issues of life are concerned. We may be grown up intellectuals, educated geniuses in one way, but when crucial situations arrive and confront us, there is a difficulty in meeting the realities of life face to face and we will find that we are not much better than little children.

When a monkey screams and tries to attack, rarely do we see a difference in the reactions of people—mature or immature, grown up or otherwise. Confronted by a tiger in a jungle, the educated and the uneducated, the learned as well as the unlearned, may react in the same way. These are the realities. The structure of the human mind is partly responsible for difficulties of this kind. There were metaphysical philosophers, as we are sometimes prone to call them, who went into the very depths of these psychological backgrounds of the very art and the system of human thinking. It is impossible for the human mind, made as it is, not to imagine the goal of life as something above the Earth. Whatever that 'above' be, in that concept of the so-called above, we are little babies. We may look up without actually knowing the significance of this looking up. What are we gazing at or looking up to when we fold our hands and turn our gaze upwards?

The idea of God being above is a crude notion of the basic conditions of human thinking. What are these fundamentals of the psychic specialisation of everything, temporalisation of everything, localisation of everything, and externally connecting one thing with another thing? This is social life. This is also a philosophical way of thinking—but even if we

are philosophers, we cannot actually jump out of our own skin. We stick to the skin of our psyche and then philosophise sociological ideas, personal feelings, instinctive promptings and conditions to which the whole humanity is subject. We cannot jump out of the conclusions that we draw from conditions which are basic to the very anatomy of our minds. Hence, we are willy-nilly compelled by a force of habitual thinking to feel that the Creator of this world is outside the world, because we have never seen the manufacturer of something being anywhere but outside the manufactured goods. The cause is always outside the effect from which it has come. We never see the carpenter inside the furniture that he has made. He is outside.

Anything that is made, is made by someone or something which is not in the thing that is made. This is common knowledge, simple common sense. Philosophy cannot be wiser than this, as we have never seen two things becoming one. We cannot see a collusion of 'A' and 'B'. In logic this is called the law of contradiction. 'A' cannot be 'B'; 'A' is 'A', and 'B' is 'B'. I cannot be you, and you cannot be me under any condition—whatever be our friendship and family relationship. We may be the closest of friends; nevertheless, I am I, and you are you. We have seen that one thing is one thing; one thing cannot be another thing. The exclusiveness of the items of the world, human or otherwise, conditions everyone and everything in this fashion, and we cannot but place ourselves outside the purview of God's jurisdiction.

We can never feel that somehow or the other we are involved in God. Such an involution is not possible, even by intense exercise of thought. Though God is the Creator, we are the created and we are the thinkers of God. We conceive of God. We pray to God and we practise meditation on God, so that God is an exclusive object—in the same way as a tree is different from a stone. These are psychological conditionings of the human mind. And if one object cannot be another object, man cannot be God. This is so much so that there is an excluded remoteness required to place God as far as possible from the horizon of the Earth, partly because of

the extent of the visible creation which appears to cover the entire space; therefore, God should be above space. Are we not told that God is above space and above time? One thousand times we have been told this. How wide is space and how long is time? If that is the case, how far is God? Far! Far, as far as the reach of the sky or the end of time. As time's end is inconceivable and the height of the sky cannot be thought by our minds, we do not know how far God is. He is far, unthinkably far, and it is difficult to reach Him.

The difficulty in reaching God arises out of the extensive distance that obtains between us and God. This is a frightening feature in the conception of God: the immense distance. And there are other difficulties in wholly devoting oneself to God—namely, the impossibility to exclude the attention being paid to things which are also existent. The world is not non-existent to our eyes. It is as real as our own selves. To the extent that I am real, what I see is also real. There is a compressence of the subjective side and the objective side: the world is as much real as we are, and it is as much unreal as we are unreal.

Now here, incidentally, we may say that to consider the world as less real than ourselves would be a false attitude, because we are involved in the world as part of the world. At least that much we have to concede. The renunciation of the world as an unreal phantom by a person who is not unreal is an irreligious mix-up of emotions, sentiments and unrelieved problems. Many times we make this mistake of not conceding as much reality to the things of the world as we give to ourselves. The food that we eat is as much real as the reality of our hunger. We cannot satisfy real hunger with unreal food. That is to say, the seer and the seen are on par. This is one issue of the matter.

Hence, it is to be accepted that the renunciation of the world by any particular person is not so easy an affair because in the renunciation of the world, simultaneously oneself is also renounced. It is beyond one's capacity to imagine how oneself also can be renounced. Who has done that? It is not possible to throw oneself out of oneself in the

manner we try to throw the world and the relations with things outside in a fit of renunciation. So here also it must be logically accepted that the world cannot be renounced as long as we do not renounce ourselves in equal proportion. To what extent it is possible to renounce one's own self is for anyone to imagine; and to that extent, one can renounce the world. But this is beyond ordinary possibility because it is not easy even to think what it all means, let alone actually do it. What on earth does it mean that we should, in percentage, renounce ourselves along with that with which we are connected and which we renounce in the spirit of religious renunciation? The things of the world insist on being recognised as some sort of reality. Their insistence is so vehement that no person with a little sense can deny that. The body is intensely real to us. If that is the case, anything that is connected with the body also becomes equally real.

The world is, therefore, an interconnected arrangement of relationships which are partly physical, partly social and partly psychological. The psychological aspect of human relation is not less real than the physical or social family relations. We cannot say that what we are related to in our minds is comparatively less in the degree of reality than our physical, economic and social relations, because we had an occasion to observe that our minds are stronger and more real, and what the mind affirms should be regarded as a higher reality and of greater consequence than the so-called physical contacts. Physical contacts will amount to nothing if the mind revolts against associating any meaning to them. All this is to say that the world is not as simple a thing as it appears, or it is made to appear, before us.

However, mistakes are made even by great men; and in the greatest pursuit of life, which is the religious pursuit, we can make a terrible blunder—just as we can make a mistake in a little calculation of arithmetic in school. The susceptibility to commit mistakes is what is important, and not the kind of mistake that we have made. There is an old saying that a person who steals a pencil is as great a thief as one who has stolen an elephant. So we cannot say he has

stolen only a pencil and not an elephant, and therefore he is not a thief. The character of being a thief is important, and not the object that is associated with that act. Hence, the susceptibility of our inner constitution is to be taken notice of, and not the actual physical consequence that follows from it, because it is a weakness; and a weakness is a kind of illness. It is a weakness of a difficult type—namely, the impossibility and incapacity on our part to judge things correctly. Considering this impossibility on our part, we have been told: “Judge not lest you be judged.” Who are we to judge? We always make a mistake in judging things.

Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj was a great religious leader and a veritable incarnation. He was a teacher of religion, spirituality and yoga. What sort of religion did he preach? What was the yoga that he taught, and what was his interpretation of the renunciation of the world—or rather, being a Sannyasin, which he himself was? Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj—Gurudev—was a Sannyasin par excellence. He renounced, and therefore we would also like to renounce as he did. He was a religious stalwart. We also would like to become religious stalwarts. He was a spiritual seeker and a spiritual seer, and we also would like to be like him. Now, what does all this imply? The great role that this unique master played in the field of religion and philosophy is the rectification of these blunderous involvements of the human mind in its asking for noble things like religious ideals. As I mentioned, we commit the same mistake in large things that we make in small things. The capacity to commit mistakes is what is to be considered; and we carry this susceptibility always. A reluctant worker is always reluctant, even in the face of God Himself, because reluctance is a peculiar trait of the mind, and so are the traits and incompatibilities in which it is involved.

The philosophy and the teachings of Sri Gurudev Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj are difficult to understand unless the entire compass of his writings is covered in a research mood and in the attitude of a sincere and earnest student. It is not possible to understand any scripture or the work of any great

philosopher by reading only a few lines of what he wrote here and there, because their teachings comprise a compact presentation of the values of life. We cannot fully receive what such towering teachings hand down to us unless we are prepared and are capable of receiving the teachings. The teacher and what is taught are important, no doubt. We ask for big gurus and large teachings; but we have to be so made, burnt and burnished that this lofty instruction should pass through the medium of our personalities.

We never pay sufficient attention to this unavoidable and imperative condition that the preparation of the mind for the reception of knowledge is as important as the nature of the knowledge that is communicated. We have some idea as to what this knowledge is. It is something that is, on the one hand, totally different from the knowledge we acquire by means of empirical studies in the world; and, on the other hand, it includes every kind of learning, art and knowledge. The little I mentioned just now about the conditioning factors of the human mind will make it clear that it will not be easy for one to get out of this condition—which is necessary to do in order to absorb and imbibe the significance and meaning of this imparted knowledge, or even to understand the significance of the life of a saint. The completeness of the teaching also involves its many-sided variegatedness.

This also applies to the very life of the teacher himself. It is such a many-sided presentation that, for a casual onlooker, it may appear to be a bundle of contradictions. When looking casually, we sometimes see irreconcilable statements even in the Bhagavadgita. We do not know what it tells us, finally. The behaviour of these great masters, geniuses, religious heads is like God's behaviour in this world. It is not a uniform, rounded ball that is presented to us. The multifacetedness of the very meaning of life is the explanation for the incongruence that we often see in the lives of these great masters—because we have a streamlined, blinkered perception. We cannot see all sides of any particular issue. This is due to the lodgement of our thinking faculty in certain crucibles into which it has been cast. It will

take the shape only of those crucibles, and there is no other way of thinking. We have been cast in that mould. A human mind will think only like a human mind, and a human mind will think only that which a particular impulse pressing itself forward under a given moment would permit.

Therefore, it was laid down that a student that approaches a teacher should be prepared to undergo the required purificatory process—namely, the practice of the canons of what are known as the *yamas* and *niyamas*, and the well-known Sadhana Chatushtaya system—in order to prepare the mind to receive it. The light of the knowledge will then reflect itself as expected by the student. The teaching method in this field called religion or spirituality is not the method that is followed in schools and colleges. We do not sign an application form or an admission form and go and sit at a desk and listen to a lecture to get this knowledge. This is not a commodity that can be transported from one brain to another brain. There is no means of communicating this knowledge. Therefore, here the way of teaching is spiritual.

The spiritual way of the communication of knowledge is by living the knowledge—living it. The knowledge of a saint is the same as the life that he lives. It is not a book that he has written. What he thinks, how he lives and what he does is the exact counterpart of the knowledge with which he is blessed. The student is prepared in the same way as an embodiment that lives that knowledge. It is not thinking some thoughts that is knowledge. It is not memorising some texts that is knowledge. It is an infusing of a mode of living and a transfiguration of the psychophysical personality in us—which we are—so that, just as we feel a kind of energising bolt entering into us when we are given a vitamin injection, so do we feel an energising atmosphere within us when knowledge enters us. We have to repeat, again, that knowledge is *being* of knowledge; it is not an acquiring of something that is from outside.

Hence, it was difficult for many people to live with Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj. Thousands must have come here as

dedicated ones and with a determination to live here till they attained salvation—but it was not to be. Among the many that came here, even a handful did not find it convenient to stay, because it is not merely staying in a geographical place. It is not listening to what is told; it is not doing some work. It is a transforming of oneself into a higher person, a lofty individual, a stronger embodiment of the very thing that one knows. To live the life spiritual is to make knowledge one's torch in the movement of the career of our lives.

In the present condition of our minds it would be difficult for us to understand what it means to live the knowledge. It is something that we hear, the meaning of which cannot be very clear. How can we live our knowledge when we make this inveterate conclusion, again and again, that knowledge is an abstract acquisition by way of information gathered by the mind, which also looks like an ethereal something while the body is a solid object? We conclude that the solidity and the substantiality of the beingness of a thing are to be equated with a physical condition of the thingness of anything. Whenever we think of realities, substances, we compare them with bodies—stones, trees, mud, or this physical body of ours—and in that sense, the mind does not look real. We have never seen the mind, and we have never seen knowledge. It is something that is conceived.

Thus, our knowledge seems to be a conceptualisation, an idealisation of certain features of the human psyche, and we are unable to attribute to it as much reality and substantiality as we give to our physical bodies. Even the most learned person in the world will not be able to credit his knowledge with as much reality as he gives to his physical body. This is a tragedy. But, knowledge is not an ethereal abstraction; it is a solid thing. The body is not as solid and substantial as knowledge is, nor is it as hard or concrete as being is. It is not the body that is important; it is the *being* of the body that is important. Here, again, we are in a difficulty. We cannot conceive being except as some thought process, while being is not a process of thought. It is at the back of even the very

way of thinking itself. Just as knowledge is not a concept, being is not an idea.

We who are used to thinking in a totally topsy-turvy fashion will be able to agree that we are not fully prepared for the reception of this kind of knowledge, where knowing is not a property that we own as an outside something. It is something that has entered us and become what we ourselves are. The more we know, the stronger we are. The more we know, the more righteous we are. The more we know, the happier we are. This is a little touchstone, a graph by which we can judge ourselves. To what extent are we powerful and strong in ourselves? To what extent are we men of virtue and righteousness and goodness? To what percentage are we happy in life? In that percentage, to that extent, we are learned people—educated, cultured, men of wisdom. If this is not there, there is something awfully wrong with our very approach to things; and if we are awfully wrong everywhere, we are wrong in our religious practices also.

Spirituality has to be remodelled to suit not the current mindset of the people living in the present-day world, but it has to be modelled according to the requirement of its own basic composition. If we wish to scale the peak of Mount Everest, we have to be competent to reach its top. We cannot bring down the height of the mountain to our level because we are puny creatures. Similarly, the magnitude of this great life we call spiritual life cannot be brought down to our little level, the puny condition of our distorted thinking. We have to lift ourselves to that status.

It is just to bring about a total transformation in the religious outlook of people in general that the incarnation of the great master Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj had to be effected by God Almighty; and he gave what I may call a transforming magical touch to every issue of life. There was a spirit, or the spirit of spirituality we may say, hidden behind every writing of his. Even a line that he wrote on a medical subject—on ayurveda, allopathy, naturopathy, or

on such simple commonsense subjects like how to become rich, how to be successful in life, and so on—even these very, very realistic and down-to-earth teachings had the thrust of a spiritual connotation. And he would not forget to implant in these little commonsense teachings for the work-a-day man that God-realisation is the goal of life. But in what sense is the goal of life to be conceived by mortal man? For that Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj lived, for that he worked, and for that he dedicated his life.