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FUNDAMENTALS OF THE SPIRITUAL ASCENT

SWAMI KRISHNANANDA

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PUBLISHERS' NOTE

The 25th of April 2022 marks the auspicious occasion of the Birth Centenary of Worshipful Sri Swami Krishnanandaji Maharaj. To commemorate this sacred occasion, the Headquarters Ashram has decided to bring out booklets comprising the illuminating discourses of Worshipful Sri Swami Krishnanandaji Maharaj for free distribution.

Worshipful Sri Swami Krishnanandaji Maharaj arrived at the holy abode of Gurudev Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj in 1944, and remained here until his Mahasamadhi in November 2001. Swamiji Maharaj was a master of practically every system of Indian thought and Western philosophy. "Many Sankaras are rolled into one Krishnananda," said Sri Gurudev.

Over the years, Swami Maharaj gave many profound and insightful discourses during Sunday night Satsanga, and on holy occasions such as Sri Gurudev's birthday, Sri Krishna Janmasthanami, Mahasivaratri, etc., and also during Sadhana Week and Yoga Vedanta Courses conducted by the Yoga

Vedanta Forest Academy of the Ashram. Sri Swami Maharaj always spoke extempore, spontaneously, without any preparation, and every discourse was fresh, unique, and divinely inspired. The audience was bathed in that stupendous unfathomable energy that radiated from Swamiji Maharaj during these discourses.

We are immensely happy to bring out some of Sri Swamiji Maharaj's discourses in booklet form as our worshipful offering at his holy feet on the blessed occasion of his Birth Centenary.

The present booklet, **'Fundamentals of the Spiritual Ascent'**, consists of Sri Swamiji Krishnanandaji Maharaj's discourse on the basic requisites for man's gradual ascent towards liberation.

May the abundant blessings of the Almighty Lord, Sadgurudev Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj and Worshipful Sri Swami Krishnanandaji Maharaj be upon all.

—The Divine Life Society

FUNDAMENTALS OF THE SPIRITUAL ASCENT

Humanity may, in a very important sense, be regarded as a wholly brainwashed species, indoctrinated from childhood into the prejudices of nationality, groupism, colour-bar, family and language clings, and the like, of different types. The strange notions of the social norms of communities, the politically dichotomised law and regulations, the credal rules of convenient ideas of rectitude, the civil and criminal systems of parochial judicature, all cut off man from man, nation from nation, group from group, ideology from ideology, and introduce disturbing interpretations of the relation of man to man in the world, though none of these innovations may have any relevance to the ultimate nature of things. The selfishness of man wishes to get rid of all its obstacles either by personal onslaught on another's welfare, or by a legalised massacre of his brethren through its religious and political codes of judging persons from its own avowed notions of propriety, righteousness and ethics of living.

It is evidently necessary to draw a distinction between 'getting rid of' and 'freeing oneself from.' Political revolutions, generally, try to 'get rid of' their opponents by any means, even the most drastic and inhuman, but these methods cannot 'free' people from their real opponents. Opposition does not really come from physical personalities and things which are attempted to be 'got rid of,' but from certain historical motive forces unleashed by Nature under its cosmic scheme of achieving a specific purpose. Even the death of an enemy as a physical embodiment cannot be equated with the annihilation of the inimical impulse, which is indeed superphysical, and which will persist till the cause of the opposition is finally resolved in the light of the higher purposes of the workings of Nature. Wars will continue even if only two persons are going to be alive in the world. The reason must, now, be obvious.

The logic of Nature, when it is lost sight of due to ignorance, becomes the cause of failure in life, even in the case of honest and sincere seekers of Truth. To the seekers of this kind, the oppositions are generally regarded to be family relations, material possessions, love of self-respect and of social position, and the urge of sex, all going with the basic instinct for

psychophysical survival. In rare cases the love of higher learning and knowledge predominates, in the exceptionally intellectual, scientific and rational types of individuals.

Mostly, seekers try to get rid of these mentioned types of impulses and urges of the human constitution by running away, geographically, by unnecessary fastings and vigils exercised by the force of will, by abstinence purely of a repressive nature, without knowing why the impulses occur at all, and what is the motivating cause behind them in the general scheme of creation. Religious scholarship and traditional dogmatics tries to brush aside these subtle difficulties by some commercial jargon of society, which really explains nothing, except as the way a physician who is ignorant of the real illness of the patient gets rid of the cause by a harmless and useless 'add aqua' recipe. No one can be truly religious or spiritual who adopts such self-deceptive methods of appearing to be holy and good, or religious and spiritual, merely in a social or communal sense, or from the public mob point of view. Spirituality, or true religion, is the ascent of the mind by every stage of the evolutionary pattern of things, even what human society, in its inadequate comprehensions, calls evil, ugly, or abhorrent, by

a dextrous adjustment of consciousness with the reality behind these so-called evils, for, if these phenomena were unreal phantoms not intended to exist at all, there would be no reason why one should be constrained to hate them. Hatred and dislike imply a secret acceptance of the reality of things disliked and hated; for what is real cannot be destroyed, and what is unreal need not engage one's attention. Man, today, requires proper education more than anything else.

All the present-day systems of spiritual exercise, or Yogas, are mostly human ways of encountering superhuman issues. This is naturally a contradiction in approach, for it stands to reason that the superhuman can be approached only by superhuman techniques, which have to be learnt from a competent master, and cannot be acquired through printed books which can only appease the psychological and social idiosyncrasies of the masses.

One of the boldest attempts ever made to overcome human empiricity entirely by way of the practice of true religion, is the scientific method of a supersocial nature, which the purely socially conditioned mind, ridden over by traditions of community, cannot comprehend. The

Brihadaranyaka Upanishad (I.4) proclaims that the Absolute 'I-am-I,' or 'I-am-the-All,' contemplated itself as such, and was there by itself, as One alone without a second. It had no second to it, the very idea of the second being contrary to the All-in-All. The consciousness of 'a second' is the true evil which it destroyed by being the All. One who knows this truth, says the Upanishad, destroys all the 'non-I's,' or anything second to oneself, and no external can exist before such a one, the external being burnt up by the inclusiveness of the All-Being. This is the first stage of Being, which is the prius to creation. In the second stage, the All-One alienates itself into a cosmic 'another,' the cosmic subject has before it a cosmic object, the cosmic positive beholds the cosmic negative, spirit encounters matter, man sees the woman, male the female. In that non-personalised superhuman contemplative bipolarity of existence, these universal bipolar phases exist as one and two at the same time, inseparable and separable simultaneously, the knower and the known in an act of inscrutable embrace, as it were, the union of the one in two and the two in one. This is the second stage, which explains the cosmic background of the three basic instincts of self-regard (Lokaishana), possession of wealth

(Vittaishana), and sexual integration (Daraishana), as the strings operating behind every species of created being, as the Upanishad specially reiterates (I.4.17). But, beware, whoever feels that the thing which one needs is outside oneself shall lose it, as it will flee away from the one who regards it as an 'other' (II.4.6). It is in the third stage that the group of the five Cosmic Elements, or rather the Cosmic Force-Continuum, emanates as an embodied form of this Cosmic Dual-nature potential in all things, so that in creation everything is one and not one, at the same time. No one can be entirely alone to oneself without the consciousness of some relation to another. This is the mystifying secret of the manifested universe where everything is and is not at the same time, satisfied and unsatisfied, happy and unhappy, complete and incomplete, wanting nothing and wanting everything, the universal life and universal death warring with each other.

The duals of the gods in heaven, the deities of the celestial kingdom as facets of the All-Being, are envisaged in the next stage, which is the fourth one. The one God has become the many gods who fill the universe as the one body fills all its limbs. The problem now is in the following stage, which is the fifth, where the quandary arises as to how the

one can be many, the knower contact the known, or the universal can have anything which it has to face or encounter, how there can be a God with a world outside Him, and how there can be a world independent of God's existence. God seems to be the world and also the opposite of the world. The world is sunk in God as its very being, and yet is the opposite of God in every way, being an 'externalised' entity different from universality. In the sixth stage, this problem is resolved by the One, knowing that, after all, it is itself the so-called 'other,' and, so, the 'other' is one's own All-Self. In the seventh stage, the difficulty of the dual existence becomes a more complicated state of a tripartite cosmicality of the consciousness of there being an objective world, a subjective knower of it, and an intermediary link between the two holding them in a state of balance, the three facets being known as Adhibhuta, Adhyatma, and Adhidaiva, respectively. Here it is that we begin to know that there is a world, that we are there to behold it, and that there is a God above both the perceiver and the perceived.

The multiplicity of the perceiving individuals in a world of external perception who have no consciousness of there being a link between the perceiver and the perceived requires to be brought

into the state of a harmonious community of a purposive organisation, for their very survival, which is done in the eighth stage, by an introduction of a law known as Dharma, called also Rita, which cements the apparent multiplicity of individualities by stages. This law works at the ninth stage, by the cooperative or organising principle of action, through (1) directing wisdom, (2) administrative power, (3) commercial activity, and (4) requisite labour, which go by the name of the classes of society. Added to this system of social life is also the necessity for the education of the individual, in an ascending order of (1) discipline and study, (2) interdisciplinary contact with the world by an actual experience of its constituents, (3) a consequent detachment from anything external to oneself, and, finally, (4) a self-absorption in the contemplation of the Infinite. This is achieved by the necessity of the (1) law operating to blend together the system of the cosmos with the (2) material and (3) emotional needs for the purpose of the (4) ultimate liberation of the individual in the Universal being.

As a Tenth Commandment, the Upanishad insists upon social service requiring everyone to sustain the grace of the gods, by worship, of the sages by sacred study, of the forefathers by ritual offerings

and ablutions, of the humans by charity, of the animals by loving feeding, of the plants by tending them, all as a sacrifice by which the (1) gods, (2) the sages, (3) the forefathers, (4) the humans, (5) the animals, (6) the plants and even the (7) birds and insects love the seeker as their own self, and protect him as they protect themselves.

Here will commence the art of concentration and meditation of consciousness for its gradual upward ascent towards liberation in its own universality, in terms of a 'return current' of its whole being.

All the present-day systems of spiritual exercise, or *Yogas*, are mostly human ways of encountering superhuman issues. This is naturally a contradiction in approach; for, it stands to reason that the superhuman can be approached only by superhuman techniques, which have to be learnt from a competent master, and cannot be acquired through printed books which can only appease the psychological and social idiosyncrasies of the masses.

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