SRI SWAMI SIVANANDA'S
Sannyas Centenary



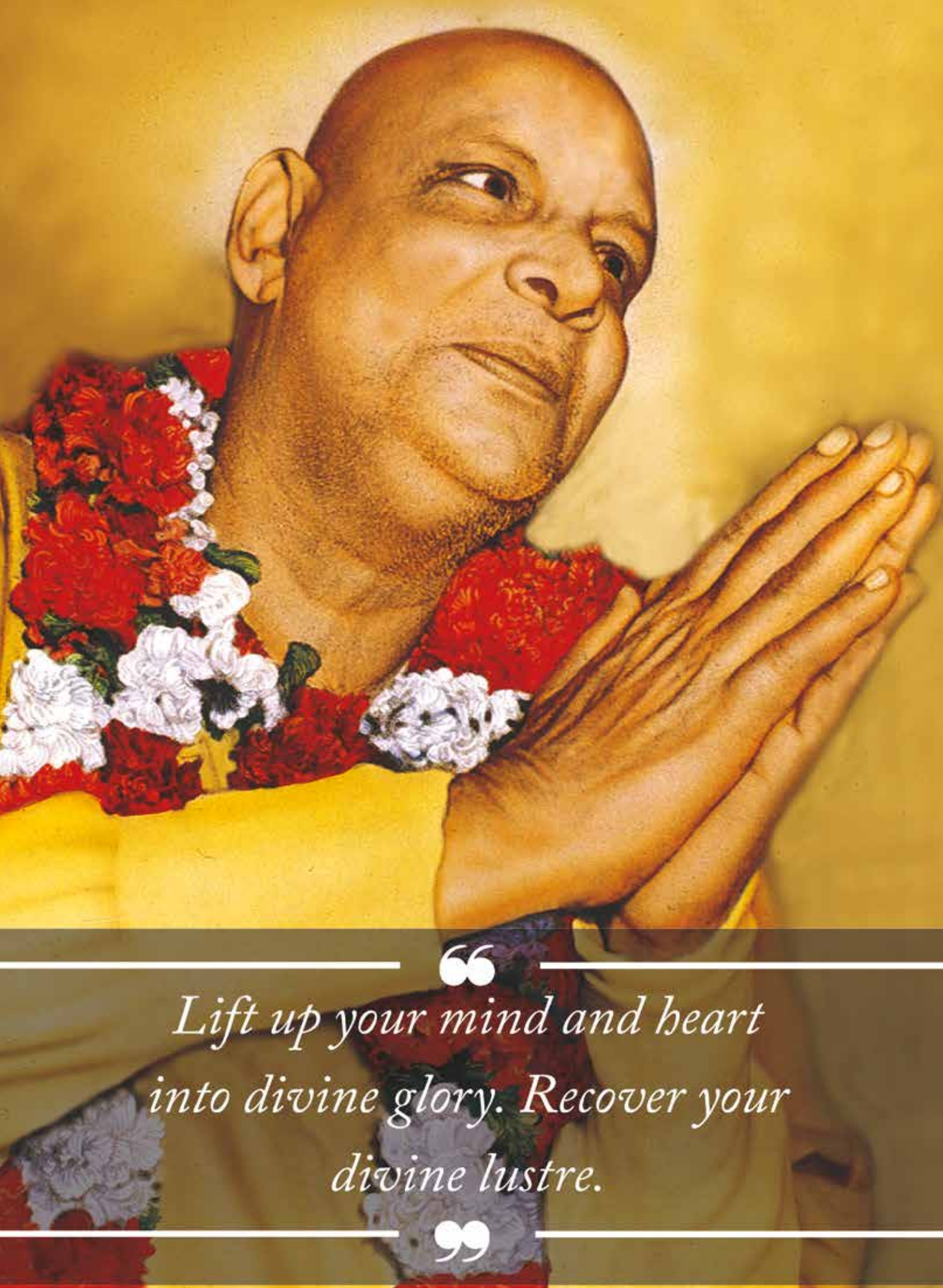
DIVINE LIFE SOCIETY OF *South Africa*

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Universal Prayer

O adorable Lord of mercy and love,
Salutations and prostrations unto Thee!
Thou art omnipresent, omnipotent and omniscient;
Thou art Satchidananda;
Thou art the Indweller of all beings.
Grant us an understanding heart,
Equal vision, balanced mind,
Faith, devotion and wisdom.
Grant us inner spiritual strength to resist temptations
And to control the mind.
Free us from egoism, lust, greed, anger and hatred;
Fill our hearts with divine virtues.
Let us behold Thee in all these names and forms;
Let us serve Thee in all these names and forms;
Let us ever remember Thee;
Let us be ever loyal to Thee;
Let us ever sing Thy glories;
Let Thy Name be ever on our lips;
Let us abide in Thee for ever and ever.
Om Shanti, Shanti, Shanti!



Lift up your mind and heart into divine glory. Recover your divine lustre.

Anniversary Celebrations

It is now a well-known fact amongst devotees, donors and well-wishers of Divine Life Society of South Africa that 2024 is a milestone year in the history of the Society. It is the anniversary of two major events. Firstly, it is 100 years since our Divine Master, Sri Swami Sivananda was initiated into the Holy Order of Sannyas by the venerable Swami Vishwananda Saraswati and, secondly, it is the 75th Anniversary of Divine Life Society of S.A. It is for these reasons that we decided to commemorate the events in a special brochure and to celebrate these joyous occasions.

This commemorative brochure contains priceless information relating to our Master's Sannyas initiation and his spiritual practices which give one a deeper insight into his life. Dr Kuppuswami was initiated into the Holy Order of Sannyas on 1 June 1924. From that day onward, he became known as Swami Sivananda Saraswati.

Every year, on the first of June, we celebrate this momentous event. The fire of his Tapasya, his burning desire for God and his deep compassion for suffering humanity are all hallmarks of a spiritual giant who blessed the soil of India.

Through his writings and teachings based on ancient Hindu scriptures, Sri Swami Sivananda made significant contributions to the world in the fields of religion, health care, education, philosophy, culture, the promotion of ethical values, and many more. These fields are covered in the estimated 250 books he wrote during his lifetime.

During the second world war, Sri Swami Sivananda wrote: "There are many hidden Sannyasins in the Himalayas. They are sending their thought-vibrations to the world. It is not necessary that a Sannyasi should come to the platform and give lectures and interpret the *Gita* and the *Upanishads*. They can purify the whole world by their thoughts. Such is the glory of sannyasins!"

Seventy-five years is indeed a landmark in the life of any institution. In these 75 years, the Society was not without its tests, trials, tribulations and challenges. It is through the Grace of our Master and the unconditional surrender of Pujya Swami Sahajananda whose dogged determination and fearlessness in the face of insurmountable obstacles, saw the emergence of success and triumph.

Today, Divine Life Society of South Africa is nearing 677 humanitarian projects, all testifying to the commitment, love and compassion of Pujya Swami Sahajananda. The success of these projects, which sowed seeds of goodwill and harmony among different communities, is the result of Pujya Swamiji's obedience and surrender to his spiritual preceptor, Sri Swami Sivananda.

As the Society was nearing its 50th project, Pujya Swamiji touchingly referred one day to the inner feeling that gave him inspiration to press on with the African education projects. In a letter to the Department of Education and Culture, KwaZulu-Natal Government Service, dated 24 September 1984, he wrote, "*Our work is an ongoing affair. I myself do not take the African children as 'others'. They are my own, and part and parcel of my own being. I am greatly concerned about their welfare. We are completely dedicated to their educational needs*".

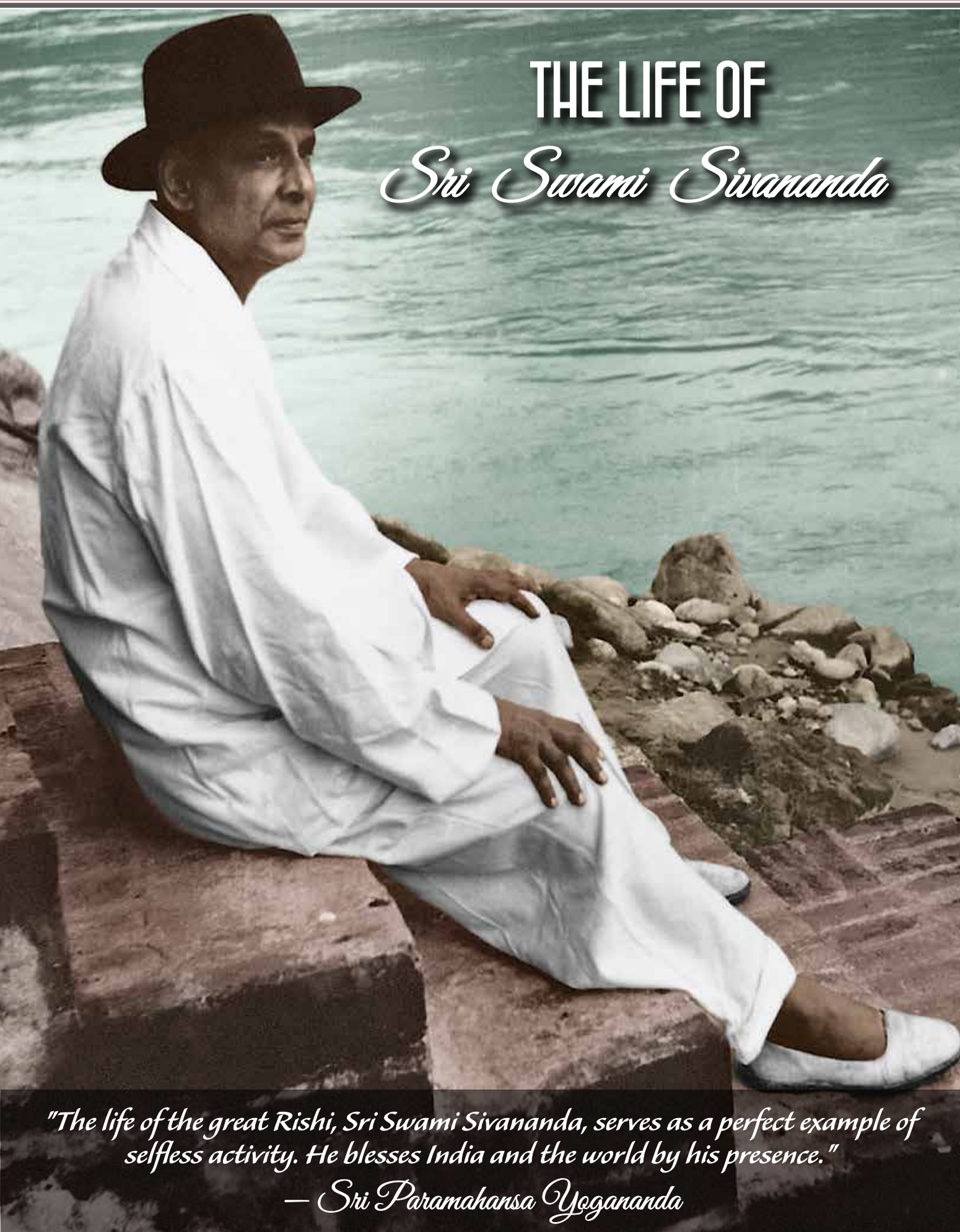
On 7 January 2024, in the "Inaugural Centenary Launch Address" at SICC, our presenter stated, "Dear devotees, you and I are here today, not by chance or coincidence but through divine destiny that we earned over many human births. In this lifetime, we survived a pandemic in which, according to the World Health Organisation (WHO), some 15 million people died and we live to commemorate the 100th Sannyas Anniversary of Swami Sivananda. This year also marks 88 years since Sri Swami Sivananda founded Divine Life Society in India and 75 years of Divine Life Society of S.A.

"We invite each one of you to offer yourselves—body, mind, heart and soul, towards the various commemorative activities and celebrations over the next two years, and in the words of Swami Sivananda: "*Let the glorious chant of the Divine Name fill all quarters. Let virtue be implanted in every heart and Dharma and the good life be seen in every walk of life. Divine Life must be practical. Remember always that work is the important thing, not personal views and individual opinions. Therefore, dissolve all differences and work together for the cause of a pure life and spiritual perfection*".

We are ever grateful to our Divine Master and Pujya Swami Sahajananda for the foresight and vision that went into the growth and development of the Society. In *Path of Divine Grace*, Volume 2, Pujya Swamiji states, "Any hard work is often tested, but the Grace of God and our Divine Master always comes to our aid".

We conclude this introductory note with gratitude to all devotees, donors and all well-wishers of the Society who nurtured, sustained and supported this divine work over the past 75 years. We pray that our Divine Master and Pujya Swamiji shower their blessings upon all for peace, protection and spiritual progress.■

"Self-reliance is the highest of all virtues."—Sri Swami Sivananda



THE LIFE OF
Sri Swami Sivananda

"The life of the great Rishi, Sri Swami Sivananda, serves as a perfect example of selfless activity. He blesses India and the world by his presence."

— Sri Paramahansa Yogananda

Biography Of The Master

His Holiness, Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj came from a well-known family of Yogis and saints, of which Sri Appayya Dikshitar was the crest jewel. Appayya Dikshitar was the author of over a hundred original texts in Sanskrit dealing with philosophy. He was a great Bhakta, a Yogi and a Jnani, all in one. Sri Swami Sivananda was a descendant of Sri Appayya Dikshitar. He illumined the earth by his appearance on 8th September 1887, at Pattamadai, South India, on the banks of the famous Tamraparni River in South India. His parents named him Kuppuswami.

BOYHOOD

Kuppuswami's parents were extremely pious and noble. As a young boy, Kuppuswami possessed a marvellous physique. He was versatile both in the classroom and on the sports field. He was very obedient to his parents and teachers. There was something in him which attracted all the teachers and professors to him. He had a charming and magnetic personality. In his youth, Kuppuswami was ever ready to serve, share and sacrifice.

EDUCATION

Kuppuswami completed his general educational career in his teens and took to the study of tropical medicine and surgery. He was an expert musician and dramatist too. He was the most intelligent student in his class. In two years of study of medicine, he possessed the knowledge of a student of the fifth year. He was freely admitted into the operation theatre and dissecting room in the very first year.

A JOURNALIST

As soon as he completed his study of medicine, Dr Kuppuswami was inspired to start a medical journal. He edited the journal himself and provided most of the finance to run it. It was called *Ambrosia*. He himself used to contribute articles under various pseudonyms. His illuminating articles on health and hygiene and the simple remedies for common diseases were much valued by the public.

DOCTOR IN MALAYA

After two years of life as a medical journalist, there was an inner urge in him to discontinue the profession and enter into active service of the sick and the afflicted. He wished to proceed to the Federated Malay States. After a great deal of difficulty, Dr Kuppuswami was able to secure a job at a hospital in the rubber plantations. Nowadays, there is a cry everywhere of "practise before you preach; show something substantial before you begin to preach your philosophy". No one can bring forward this argument against Dr Kuppuswami because his life in Malaya was one of ideal service, love and sacrifice. He was the chosen messenger of the Lord to spread the gospel of selfless service through action as well as through precept. In him was blended the heart of a Buddha and the devotion of a Florence Nightingale.

Dr Kuppuswami was very influential and widely known throughout Malaya. He would help the unemployed with a letter of recommendation to a high officer and see that the candidate secured a decent salary. If anyone came to him in a helpless condition, he would feed him and provide him with shelter.

PREPARATION FOR SANNYAS

The religious tendencies and instincts slowly developed when he came into contact with Sannyasins and Sadhus. He began to study religious books. His shelves were full of books on philosophy and a variety of other subjects in which he was interested. He was a voracious reader. Such was his devotion to Sannyasins and Yogis that if he heard that one was passing his station, he would hasten to him with rich presents. He often kept them with him for a number of days and sent them to their destination with due respect, securing for them first-class train tickets. As soon as the religious instincts manifested, he commenced doing Japa, worship, etc. The charm of the Himalayas often lured his mind, but at the same time he had the ambition of doing something substantial in the medical field, some research that would do great good to the world, something new which nobody had done before. This agitated his mind.

DONNING THE OCHRE ROBE

Even as a boy, Kuppuswami displayed spiritual tendencies. He drew his inspiration mainly from his parents, especially his father. He was regular in the performance of his Sandhya Vandana and Gayatri Japa and went to the temple. He took part in community Bhajan in his locality and attended religious dramas and discourses. His friends even dubbed him "Madisanchi", which in colloquial parlance meant "one who meticulously adhered to formal religious observances".

At the S.P.G. College, Kuppuswami turned more to books for spiritual comfort. He attended the *Bible* class and tried to practise the *Bible* teachings. Western philosophers as well as Christian mystics claimed his special attention.

By the time Kuppuswami joined the Tanjore Medical Institute, he had developed an inner light and began

to have spiritual visions. This gave him solace. Later, when he returned to Tiruchirappalli to run *Ambrosia*, he delved more earnestly into philosophical books. Besides the traditional *Bhagavad Gita*, *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, he read the Tamil works of Thayumanavar, Ramalinga Swami and the Eighteen Siddhas. He went through Theosophical literature. He pondered over the writings of Swami Rama Tirtha and Yogi Ramacharaka.

He commenced practising Yoga Asanas, Pranayama and meditation. He started paying increasing attention to what he ate and drank, so that they conformed to the diet prescribed in the Yoga Shastras. In Malaya, Dr Kuppuswami's interest in spiritual matters led him to seek the company of holy persons. He got in touch with certain highly evolved souls, like Krishnaji, the Hatha Yogi. He met many Indian saints who visited the peninsula from time to time. These contacts proved helpful.

In those days, there were in Malaya some Tantrik adepts. They were skilled in the use of several Mantras and Yantras. It was a wonderful science. A special unguent would be applied on the thumbnail of the adept. Through this he would be able to perceive distant happenings. One such Tantrik taught Dr Kuppuswami the Mantra. The doctor had great reverence for that Tantrik and used to prostrate before him and serve him nicely. Later, however, he gave up the Tantrik practice, as he did not like the idea of subjugating Deities and getting things done through them. Moreover, he could visualise no lasting spiritual gain through acquiring such minor powers.

Selfless service of humanity, study of spiritual literature, association with saintly souls, devotional practices at home—all these brought about a gradual transformation in the doctor's outlook on life in general. They purified his heart and turned his mind inward. He became more introspective. Everywhere around him the doctor found people greatly distressed, both physically and mentally. His heart bled for the poor, the sick and the suffering. This human tragedy rent asunder the compassionate doctor's heart.

In the hospital, Dr Kuppuswami had to battle against pain everyday. Malaria was rampant. On top of it came the Spanish Flu. It took a heavy toll. The doctor, too, had an attack, but he somehow escaped. Though it fell to his lot to save some dying souls, he was not infallible; many died. He saw them sinking before his very eyes. Could none save these helpless beings? What could death be? It remained an eternal mystery, though the doctor knocked his young head against its portals again and again.

At this critical juncture in his life there came to Dr Kuppuswami an itinerant Sannyasin. Stopping with the doctor for a few days, he fell ill. So tenderly did the doctor nurse him back to health that the Sannyasin was captivated by the loving treatment. He carried with him certain valuable books which he had at first refused to part with. Now he voluntarily gave the doctor the best of them. It was the *Jiva Brahma Aikya Vedanta Rahasyam* by the Cuddapah saint, Satchidananda Swami. This most inspiring book gave Dr Kuppuswami his first lessons in Vedanta.

The positive aspects of life and the real aim of human existence were made apparent. Dr Kuppuswami now developed an ardent desire to tread the path of the wise and unlock the realms of immortality. This desire grew in intensity with every passing day. He practised Anahat Laya Yoga (concentration on mystic sounds) and Svara Sadhana (breath control). Pacing on the lawn around the house, or sitting in his study, he spent the time in musing on the unknown.

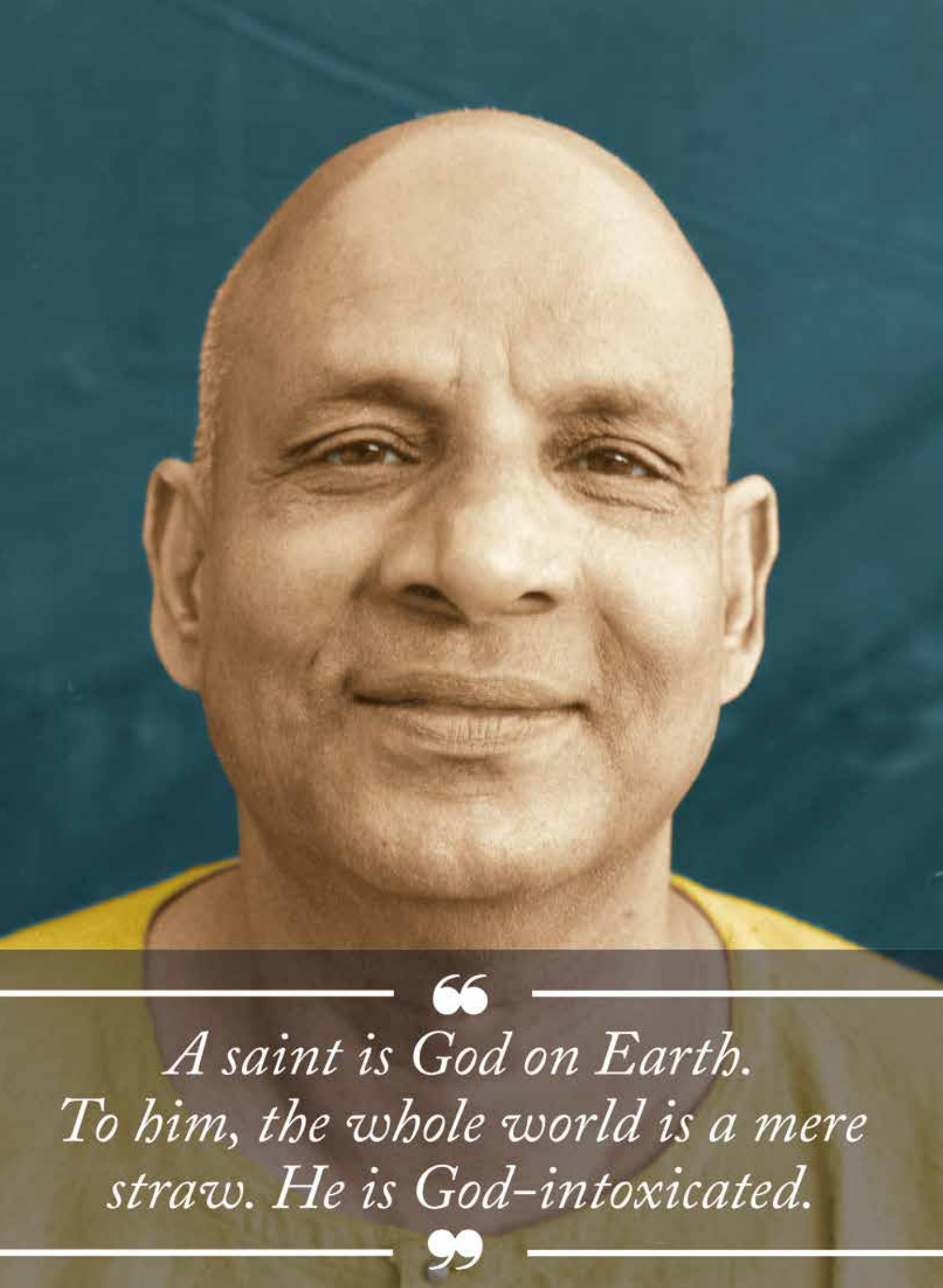
Then, one day in 1923, the spiritual spark which Dr Kuppuswami had nurtured all his life, coalesced and burst into a burning flame. There came a light in his inner vision. Worldly desires departed from him. Materialistic civilisation was impotent; it disgusted him. He spurned wealth; he spurned position, titles and status; he spurned the world that could offer no lasting solution to the problem of suffering. He ran to the bosom of Mother Nature, and in the holy company of sages of all times, asked himself, "Is there a solution?"

Very soon Dr Kuppuswami became like one possessed. His lips began to repeat effortlessly that angelic spell, *Om Namasivaya, Om Namasivaya*. He had no idea of whither to go and what to do. But he longed desperately for absolute bliss, for unmixed happiness, for perpetual peace.

The doctor was alone and friendless in his effort to find a way to calm down the spiritual eruption in his heart. Many a night he sat in quiet on the terrace, pining for things which he felt but could neither define nor understand. To his friends and well wishers he became a cause for anxiety. They wished to rescue him and used their friendly privileges in an attempt to save him from the muddle!

One said that he was a gullible fellow; Dr Kuppuswami nodded off that sympathetic rebuke. Another mocked at his superstition; the doctor smiled him away. A third colleague asked him, in the Name of God, to define the texture of his faith and ambition. Dr Kuppuswami pointed to the starlit sky and the temple corner of the town and exclaimed, "You cannot understand!"

Dr Kuppuswami now reached a stage where he could no



A saint is God on Earth.
To him, the whole world is a mere straw. He is God-intoxicated.

longer discharge his duties in the hospital and therefore resigned from his job. A portion of his belongings he gave away to whomsoever he thought fit. Some he left with his friends, supposedly for safe-keeping. The rest he packed, and with that baggage left the shores of Malaya.

On the boat to India a stranger met him and suddenly remarked, "You have the 'Bhikshu Rekha' on your forehead". It meant that Dr Kuppuswami would soon wander about and beg for alms.

When Dr Kuppuswami finally reached home, his family members and others received him fondly. While his goods were being taken out by the cartman, it was discovered that he was missing. The family thought that he had perhaps gone to visit friends. They waited for weeks but could find no trace of him!

Dr Kuppuswami's destination was Varanasi, the abode of Lord Siva, and the gateway to liberation. It is a popular Hindu belief that anyone who dies in Varanasi attains liberation automatically. Because of this belief, aged people from all parts of India come to Varanasi to spend their last days there in the hope of attaining salvation when their physical sheaths fall off in the holy place.

Nothing interested the doctor *en route*—no talk, no sights, no amusements. The din and bustle at wayside stations, the noise and chatter of incoming and outgoing passengers, all fell on deaf ears. There was but one burning thought in his mind at the time—*I must realise God now.*

With his mind full of this one thought, he finally reached Varanasi. He knew not a word of Hindi. He was an absolute stranger to North Indian habits and customs. Going to a sweetmeat shop, he asked for milk. It was given to him in a *kullar*, a mud-cup. The doctor thought that the *kullar* meant the same to the North Indian milk vendor as the brass tumbler to his counterpart in the South; so after drinking the milk, he washed the mud-cup and handed it back to the vendor. "Throw it away," howled the Lala, twitching his face in disgust. The doctor, who in his life had never uttered a harsh word to anyone, took it calmly.

After a bath in the Ganga, he wended his way through the narrow, circuitous lanes to the temple of Lord Viswanath. He stood still and prayed in silent communion. He cast a longing look at the Linga, his eyes fixed and steady, mind unruffled, his senses dead, as it were. An infinite thrill swayed his whole being that blessed hour.

Varanasi, the doctor had thought, would be a small pilgrim centre where he could sit under a tree and sing the Lord's Name, living on chance morsels that passers-by might give. He had wanted seclusion, but now discovered to his considerable dismay that Varanasi was a big, crowded city.

He had little money. He went to the railway platform to rest for the night. The cold was biting. It was peak North Indian winter. The doctor had not anticipated it and had no idea of the North Indian climate. It took him by surprise. But his mind was fixed on God and this mental concentration helped him to a degree to ignore the cold. A good Samaritan, who had been watching his plight, gave him a blanket. It was a God-sent boon.

The doctor thanked the stranger and spoke to him of his aspirations. The kind-hearted man advised him to go to Pandharpur and bought him a rail ticket to Poona. On arrival at Poona, the doctor gave away in charity the small change he was left with. Turning himself into a wandering monk, he placed himself completely at the mercy of the Lord. The prediction of the stranger on the boat from Singapore had started to materialise.

Carrying no possessions, with God as his guide, the erstwhile doctor began his wandering life. He visited Nasik, Pandharpur and other holy places. Village after village he passed through. The land, the language, the people—all were strange to him. Dr Kuppuswami had no experience of begging. He who always gave, could not easily bring himself around to ask. Going to a village house, he would quietly approach a man and whisper into his ears, "I am a Madrasi Brahmin. I am hungry. Can you give me some food?"

Those whom he approached thus were surprised, for the countenance gave him away. Sometimes, a hospitable man took him in and served him good food. After eating, the doctor would bow low to his hosts and, praying that God might bless them, go his way. He would not visit the same house again. He used to feel: "What will the man think? Will he not get disgusted with me?"

Sometimes, a pious family would request him to stay on, but the doctor would slip out to the next village for fear he should prove a burden on the good folk. Bareheaded, barefooted and scantily clothed, the lone novice wandered beneath the burning skies of Maharashtra. At times he would be overtaken by nightfall and sleep on the bare earth underneath a roadside tree. At other times, he had to go without food and walk tiresomely kilometre after kilometre.

Forced by hunger, he would then pick up wild figs and gooseberries fallen from wayside trees and eat them after wiping away the dirt and the dust. For some time he had merely two pieces of clothes on his person. After a while, one got worn out and he was left with but one piece. When it got dirty he would wash it in a stream, dry

it on the bank and wear it again. Seeing his predicament, the kind inhabitants of a hospitable village raised a small fund and bought him a pair of new clothes.

The wandering life helped Dr Kuppuswami to develop equal vision, forbearance and serenity of outlook in pleasure and pain. During his wanderings, he stayed for awhile at Khedgaon, in the Ashram of Yogi Narayan Maharaj. He similarly spent some time with another great Yogi near the Vindyas. At other places, too, he met Mahatmas and Sadhus and learnt a good deal from these saintly and learned souls.

By and by, Dr Kuppuswami came to a village called Dhalaj, on the banks of the Chandrabhaga. It was a beautiful evening. Seating himself on a small rock, he listened to the music of the rippling waters. The scenery enchanted him. His mind seemed to feel peculiar vibrations of harmony and peace. He felt like staying on in the place to pray and meditate. But then he knew nobody in Dhalaj. Who would feed him? Who would accommodate him? Thoughts like these crossed his mind for a fleeting moment. The next second he dismissed them, for had he not placed himself totally at the mercy of the Lord?

As he sat musing thus, the doctor felt a gentle touch on his shoulders. He turned around and saw a pious elderly face. He greeted the stranger with the Lord's Name and bowed to him. The stranger, a local man spoke, "Dear sir, why are you sitting here in this lonely place? It is already well past twilight. Are you a pilgrim?"

"Yes, I am a pilgrim." Dr Kuppuswami hesitated a few seconds and hastened to correct himself, "No, I am not a pilgrim. I am a wanderer; I am nature's child."

The strange reply and the firm but charming expression on his face impressed the local man. He carefully studied Dr Kuppuswami from head to foot, limb by limb and, quite convinced of the latter's high birth and breeding, invited him to his house. They ate together and then the two sat talking late into the night about God and His glories.

The host happened to be the postmaster of the place. He was a widower, of noble character and religious bent. He insisted that the doctor should stay with him. The latter silently wondered at the mercy of the Lord. Dr Kuppuswami spent his time in Dhalaj chanting the Lord's Names and singing His glories. Side by side with his devotions, he made himself useful to others. He helped his host in cooking and in bringing water from the well. He hewed wood for him. In the evening, when the cows came home from the fields, he led them in and gave them fodder.

Even the postal peon did not escape his kind attention. The peon used to leave at nine in the morning to distribute the day's mail and return home only at about three in the afternoon. As soon as the postman came back, the doctor would give him cool water to cleanse his feet, and buttermilk to quench his thirst. If he looked greatly exhausted, the erstwhile doctor would shampoo his legs, pleading, "Don't object. Take me to be your son or brother. I cannot see you suffer like this."

At Dhalaj, a wiseacre Sadhu spotted Dr Kuppuswami. He noticed the latter's education, knowledge of English and spirit of service. He wanted to mislead the doctor to his own advantage. He held out rosy promises of name and fame and a happy-go-lucky life if only the latter would follow him. Dr Kuppuswami, who from his boyhood had worshipped Sadhus and Sannyasins, would not be led astray even by a Sadhu. Soon, he found out the hollowness of the Dhalaj Sadhu and politely declined his offer.

Dr Kuppuswami had been in Dhalaj for four months, when the postmaster brought a woman into the house. Now his inner voice prompted him to leave the place at once. Miraculously, about the same time, the postmaster of nearby Dixal, M.V. Datta by name, who had heard about the doctor Sadhu from Malaya, asked him to be his guest for awhile. The doctor agreed.

At Dixal again, Dr Kuppuswami made himself the servant of the household. Service was in his nature. It was this ingrained spirit of service which enabled him to lead a smooth life of peace everywhere. After a while, he expressed to his host his desire to settle down in a place which would be congenial for rigorous austerity. Datta suggested Rishikesh and gave him a generous Rs. 25 for rail fare and expenses.

Dr Kuppuswami took the train to Haridwar and went to a rest-house, but someone objected to his stay there. He could not understand what the objection was about, as his knowledge of Hindi was poor. He silently left the place and slept on the platform in Hari-ki-Pauri, near a clock tower. From Haridwar he started trekking to Rishikesh. On the way, he rested beneath a tree by the roadside. Just then a horse-cart came clattering down the jungle road. As it passed the spot where the mendicant was resting, the pilgrim inside flung a coin towards him. Dr Kuppuswami, then in a mood of intense dispassion and spiritual aspiration, walked away from there without so much as a glance at the coin.

Soon he was in Rishikesh, the abode of saints. Darkness fell and he slept on the verandah of the Charan Das rest-house, near the Rishikesh post office and adjacent to Ganga Ashram. The next morning he woke up early, as was his wont, and went about his spiritual practices.

"Be great and noble-minded in whatever you do."—Sri Swami Sivananda

At dawn he saw numerous Sadhus there. Of them, one elderly Sannyasin immediately arrested his attention. His name was Swami Vishwananda. There was a peculiar aura about him. He knew not why, but the moment he set his eyes on the monk, Dr Kuppuswami felt overwhelmed. He fell at his feet with great love and devotion. Fondly the old monk raised him, embraced him, and spoke to him with affection.

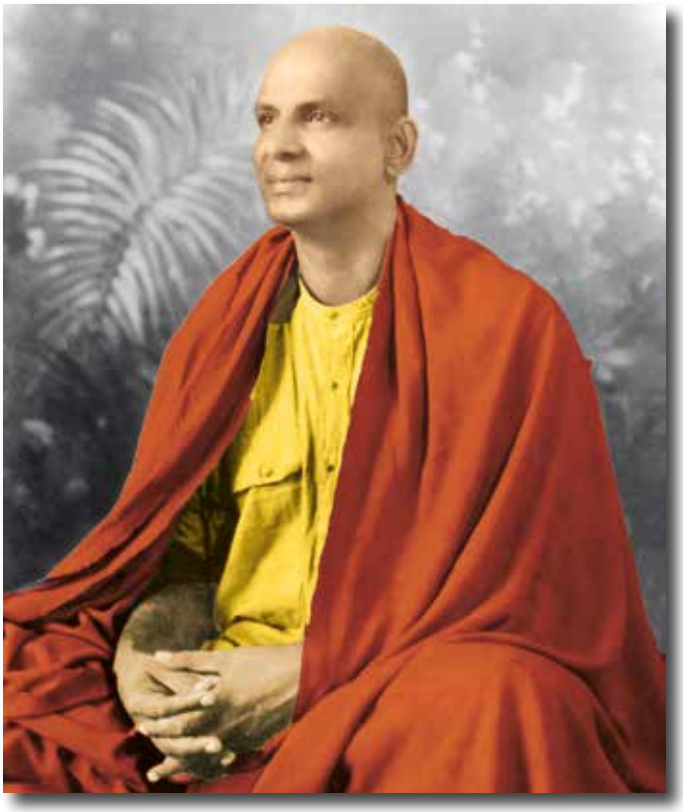
Later in the day, Dr Kuppuswami went for alms at the Baba Kalikambliwala Kshettar, but they refused to give him food as he was not a Sannyasin. While he was walking back after this refusal, Swami Vishwananda happened to meet him on the way. Straightaway the old Sannyasin felt an urge to initiate Dr Kuppuswami into Sannyas. That very day he gave him the ochre robe. Dr Kuppuswami was now dead; Swami Sivananda Saraswati was born. It was June 1, 1924.

The next day, Swami Vishwananda left for his native Varanasi. From there he wrote to his new disciple, giving brief instructions about Sannyasa Dharma. The rite of Vraja Homa was conducted later on by Swami Vishnudevananda, a learned scholar and head of the orthodox Kailas Ashram, near Rishikesh. With that, Swami Sivananda became a fully ordained Sannyasin.■

Sivananda's Gospel Of Divine Life

SERVICE, THE MASTER'S SALVATION: *"Sastriji, I think I will never attain salvation. You see, worldly people are attached to their wives, children, family and properties, but I am attached to service and dissemination of spiritual knowledge. Even if the thought of running away into the forest comes to me, it leaves the next instant. The desire in me to work, work and work while this body lasts, to serve aspirants in every way I can, smothers in a trice such a desire for seclusion. What can I do? I think I will never get out of this circle. I will be born again and again in this world to serve the aspirants every time."*

"But what about my salvation? All right, I should be content to wait till I have served you all to my satisfaction and till you have all attained salvation. Yes, that is right, I do not want to get salvation myself until everyone leading the divine life gets it. Till then I shall take any number of births and join the Divine Life Society."



Voice From Within

I heard a Voice from within:
"Siva, wake up!
And fill the cup of your life
with this nectar;
Share it with all.
I shall give you strength,
Energy, power and wisdom."
I obeyed the command;
He did fill the cup,
And I shared it with all.

Swami Sivananda

"God comes to the aid of those who are utterly humble."—Sri Swami Sivananda

How God Came Into My Life

It would be easy to dismiss the question by saying: "Yes, after a prolonged period of intense austerities and meditation, while I was living at Swaragashram and when I had the Darshan and blessings of a number of Maharishis, the Lord appeared before me in the form of Sri Krishna. But that would not be the whole truth, nor a sufficient answer to a question relating to God, who is infinite, unlimited and beyond the reach of speech and mind.

Cosmic Consciousness is not an accident or chance. It is the summit, accessible by a thorny path that has steps—slippery steps. I ascended them step by step the hard way; but at every stage I experienced God coming into my life and lifting me easily to the next stage.

My father was fond of ceremonial worship in which he was very regular. To my child-mind, the image he worshipped was God; and I delighted in helping father in the worship by bringing him flowers and other articles of worship. The deep inner satisfaction that he and I derived from such worship implanted in my heart a strong conviction that God was in such images devoutly worshipped by His devotees. Thus did God first come into my life and place my foot on the first rung of the spiritual ladder.

As an adult I was fond of gymnastics and vigorous exercises. I learnt fencing from a teacher who belonged to a low caste. He was a Harijan. I could go to him only for a few days before I was made to understand that it was unbecoming of a caste-Brahmin to play the student to an untouchable. I thought deeply over the matter. One moment I felt that the God whom we worshipped in the image in my father's worship room had jumped over to the heart of this untouchable. He was my Guru all right. So I immediately went to him with flowers, sweets and clothes and garlanded him, placed flowers at his feet and prostrated myself before him. Thus did God come into my life to remove the veil of caste distinctions.

How very valuable this step was I could realise soon after this, for I was to enter the medical profession and serve all, and the persistence of caste distinctions would have made that service a mockery. With this mist cleared by the light of God, it was easy and natural for me to serve everyone. I took keen delight in every kind of service connected with the healing and alleviation of human misery. If there was a good prescription for malaria, I felt that the whole world should know it the next moment. Any knowledge about the prevention of diseases, promotion of health and healing of diseases, I was eager to acquire and share with all.

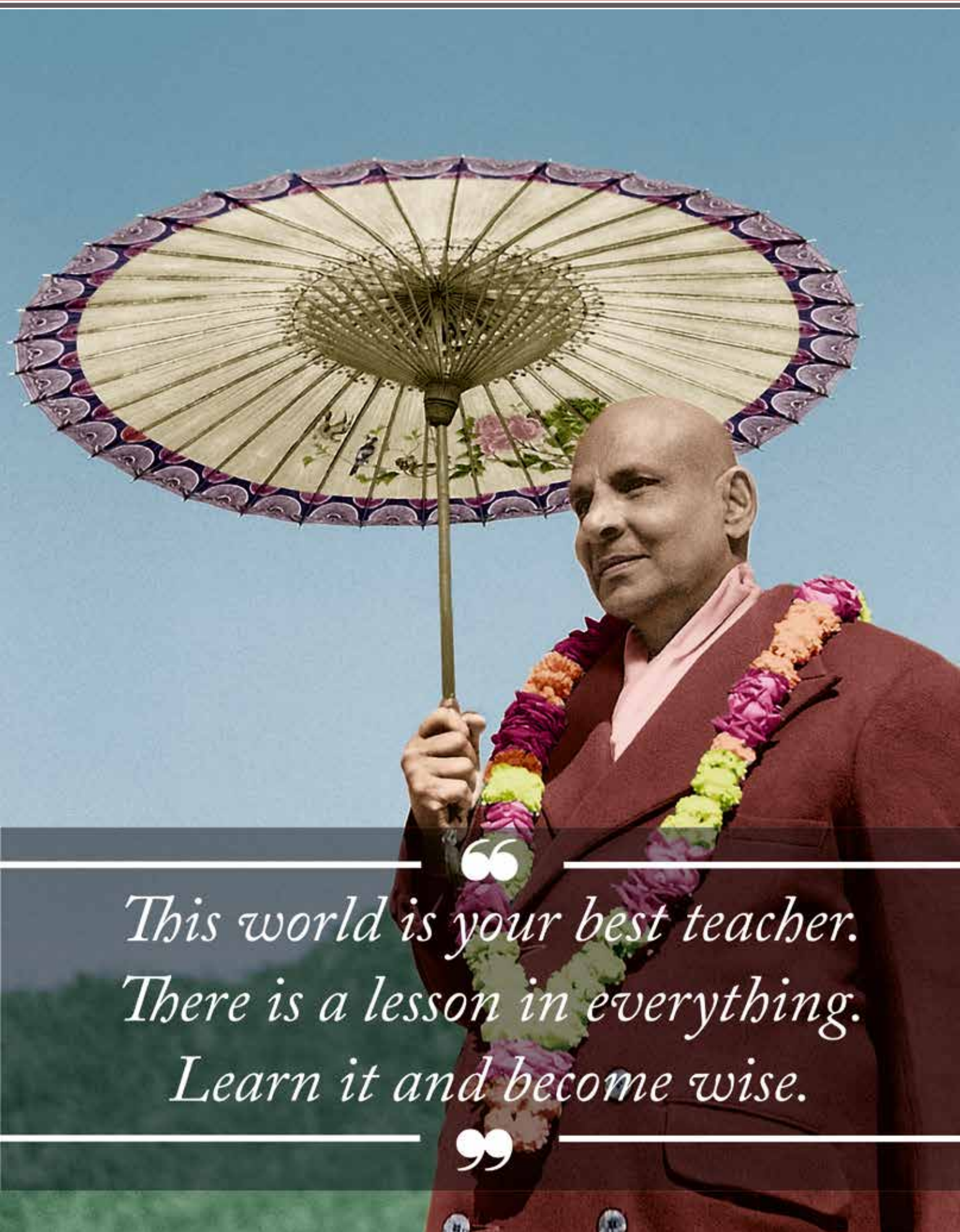
Then in Malaya, God came to me in the form of the sick. It is difficult for me now to single out any instance, and perhaps it is unnecessary. Time and space are concepts of the mind and have no meaning in God. I can look back now upon the whole period of my stay in Malaya as a single event in which God came to me in the form of the sick and suffering. People are sick physically and mentally. To some, life is lingering death; and to others, death is more welcome than life; some invite death and commit suicide, unable to face life.

The aspiration grew within me that if God had not made this world merely as a hell where wicked people would be thrown to suffer, and if there is (as I intuitively felt there should be) something other than this misery and this helpless existence, it should be known well and experienced. It was at this crucial point in my life that God came to me as a religious mendicant who gave me the first lesson in Vedanta. The positive aspects of life here and the real end and aim of human life were made apparent. This drew me from Malaya to the Himalaya. God now came to me in the form of an all-consuming aspiration to realise Him as the Self of all.

Meditation and service went apace; and then came various spiritual experiences. The body, mind and intellect as the limiting adjuncts, vanished, and the whole universe shone as His Light. God then came in the form of this Light in which everything assumed a divine shape and the pain and suffering that seem to haunt everybody appeared to be a mirage, the illusion that ignorance creates on account of low sensual appetites that lurk in man. One more milestone had to be passed in order to know that "everything is Brahman". Early in 1950—on the 8th of January—the Lord came to me in the form of a half-demented assailant, who disturbed the night Satsang at the Ashram. His attempt failed. I bowed to him, worshipped him and sent him home. Evil exists in order to glorify the good. Evil is a superficial appearance. Beneath its veil, the one Self shines in all.

A noteworthy fact ought to be mentioned here. In this evolution, nothing gained previously was entirely discarded at any later stage. One coalesced into the next, and the Yoga of Synthesis was the fruit. Idol-worship, service of the sick, practice of meditation, the cultivation of cosmic love that transcended the barriers of caste, creed and religion, with the ultimate aim of attaining the state of Cosmic Consciousness, was revealed.■

"The foundation of religion is faith."—Sri Swami Sivananda


“This world is your best teacher.
There is a lesson in everything.
Learn it and become wise.”

What Life Has Taught Me

It was, I should say, by a flash that I came to the conclusion early in my life that human life is not complete with its observable activities and that there is something above human perception controlling and directing all that is visible. I may boldly say that I began to perceive the realities behind what we call life on earth. The unrest and feverish anxiety that characterise man's ordinary existence here bespeak a higher goal that he has to reach one day or the other.

When man gets entangled in selfishness, greed, hatred and lust, he naturally forgets what is beneath his own skin. Materialism and scepticism reign supreme. He gets irritated over little things and begins to fight and quarrel; in short, man becomes miserable.

The doctor's profession gave me ample evidence of the great sufferings of this world. I was blessed with a new vision and perspective. I was deeply convinced that there must be a place—a sweet home of pristine glory, purity and divine splendour—where absolute security, perfect peace and happiness can be enjoyed eternally. Therefore, in conformity with the dictum of the *Sruti*, I renounced the world—and felt that I now belonged to the whole world.

A course of severe self-discipline and penance endowed me with enough strength to move unscathed amidst the vicissitudes of the world-phenomena. And I began to feel the great good it would do to humanity if I could share this new vision with one and all. I called my instrument of work "The Divine Life Society".

Side by side, the stirring events since the advent of the twentieth century, had their effects upon all keen-minded people. The horrors of the past and possible wars, and the consequent suffering, touched the minds of people. It was not difficult to see that the pains of mankind were mostly brought on by its own deeds. To awaken man to his errors and follies, and to make him mend his ways so that he may utilise his life for attaining worthier ends, was felt to be the urgent need of the time. As if in answer to this need, I saw the birth of the Divine Life Mission, with its task of rescuing man from the forces of the lower nature and raising him to the consciousness of his true relationship with the Cosmos.

This is the work of rousing the religious consciousness, of bringing man to an awareness of his essential divinity. Not by mere argument or discussion can religion be taught or understood. Not by precepts or canons of teaching alone can you make one religious. It requires a peculiar atonement with one's vast environment, an ability to feel the deepest as well as the vastest. It requires a genuine sympathy with creation. Religion is living, not speaking or showing. I hold that whatever be one's religion, whoever be the prophet one adores, whatever be one's language or country, age or sex, one can be religious provided the true implication of that hallowed term "Tapas", which essentially means any form of self-control, is made capable of being practised in daily life to the extent possible for one, in the environment and under the circumstances in which one is placed.

I hold that real religion is the religion of the heart. The heart must be purified first. Truth, love and purity are the basis of real religion. Control over the baser nature, conquest of the mind, cultivation of virtues, service of humanity, goodwill, fellowship and amity, constitute the fundamentals of true religion. These ideals are included in the principles of the Divine Life Society. And I try to teach them mostly by example, which I consider to be weightier than all precepts.

The modern thinker has neither the requisite time nor the patience to perform rigorous Tapas and austere religious practices; and many of these are even being relegated to the level of superstition. In order to give the present generation the benefit of real Tapas in the true religious sense, to reveal to them its real significance, and to convince them of its meaning and efficacy, I hold up my torch of divine life, which is a system of religious life suited to one and all, which can be practised by the recluse and the office-goer alike, which is intelligible to the scholar and the rustic, in its different stages and phases. This is a religion which is no other than what is essential to give true meaning to the daily duties of the human being.

The beauty of divine life is its simplicity and applicability to the everyday affairs of the ordinary man. It is immaterial whether one goes to the church or the mosque or the temple for offering one's prayers, for all sincere prayers are heard by the Divine. The average seeker after Truth is very often deceived by the caprices of his mind. A person who takes to the spiritual path is bewildered before he reaches the end of his journey. He is naturally tempted to relax his efforts halfway. Many are the pitfalls, but those who plod on steadily are sure to reach the goal of life, which is universality of being, knowledge and joy. I have laid great emphasis in all my writings upon the discipline of the turbulent senses, conquest of the mind, purification of the heart, and attainment of inner peace and strength, suited to the different stages in evolution.

"There is something good in all seeming failures."—Sri Swami Sivananda

I have understood that it is the foremost duty of man to learn to give, to give in charity, to give in plenty, to give with love and without expectation of any reward, because one does not lose anything by giving—on the other hand the giver is given back a thousandfold. Charity is not merely an act of offering certain material goods, for charity is incomplete without charity of disposition, of feeling, and of understanding and knowledge. Charity is self-sacrifice in the different levels of one's being. Charity in the highest sense I understand to be equivalent to Jnana Yajna, the sacrifice of wisdom.

Similarly, I consider that goodness of being and doing constitute the rock-bottom of one's life. By goodness I mean the capacity to feel with others and to live and feel as others do, and be in a position to act so that no one is hurt by the act. Goodness is the face of Godliness. I think that to be good in reality, in the innermost recesses of one's heart, is not easy, though it may appear to be simple as a teaching. It is one of the hardest things on earth, if only one would be honest with oneself.

There is no physical world for me. What I see, I see as the glorious manifestation of the Almighty. I rejoice when I behold the *Purusha* with thousands of heads and thousands of eyes and feet, that *Sahasrarasirsha Purusha*. When I serve persons, I see not the persons, but Him of whom they are the limbs. I learn to be humble before the mighty Being whose breath we breathe and whose joy we enjoy. I do not think there is anything more to teach or to learn. Here is the cream of religion, the quintessence of philosophy that anyone really needs.

The philosophy I hold is neither a dreamy, subjective, world-negating doctrine of illusion, nor a crude world-affirming theory of sense-ridden humanism. It is the fact of the divinity of the universe, the immortality of the soul of man, the unity of creation with the Absolute, that I feel is the only doctrine worth considering. As the one all-pervading Brahman appears as the diverse universe in all the planes of Its manifestation, the aspirant has to pay his homage to the lower manifestations before he steps into the higher.

Sound health, clear understanding, deep knowledge, a pure, powerful will and moral integrity, are all necessary parts of the process of the realisation of the ideal of humanity as a whole. To adjust, adapt and accommodate, to see good in everything, to bring to effective use all the principles of nature in the process of evolution towards Self-realisation along the path of an integrated adjustment of the human powers and faculties, are some of the main factors that go to build up a philosophy of life. To me, philosophy is not merely a love of wisdom, but actual possession of it. In all my writings I have prescribed methods for overcoming and mastering the physical, intellectual, mental and vital layers of consciousness, in order to be able to proceed with the Sadhana for self-perfection.

To behold the Lord in every being or form, to feel Him everywhere, at all times and in all conditions of life, to see, hear, taste and feel everything as God, is my creed. To live in God, to melt in God, and to dissolve in God, is my creed. By dwelling in such union, to utilise the hands, mind, senses and the body in the service of humanity, to sing the Names of the Lord, to elevate devotees, to give instructions to sincere aspirants, and disseminate knowledge throughout the world, is my creed, if you can call it one.

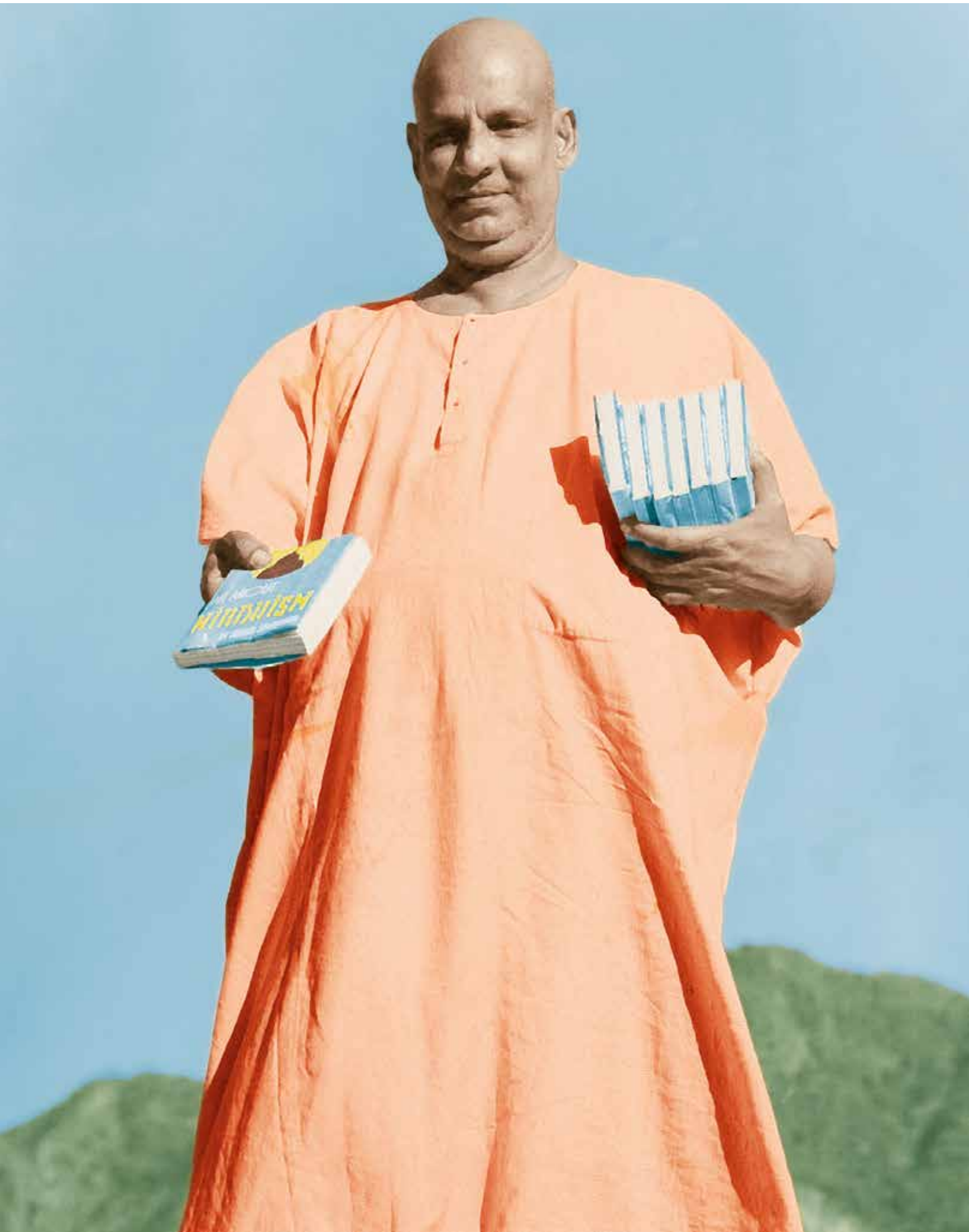
To be a cosmic friend and cosmic benefactor, a friend of the poor, the forlorn, the helpless and the fallen, is my creed. It is my sacred creed to serve the sick, to nurse them with care, sympathy and love, to cheer up the depressed, to infuse power and joy in all, to feel oneness with each and everyone, and to treat all with equal vision. In my highest creed there are neither peasants nor kings, neither beggars nor emperors, neither males nor females, neither teachers nor students. I love to live, move and have my being in this realm indescribable.

The first step is often the most difficult one. But once it is taken the rest becomes easy. There is a need for more courage and patience on the part of people. They usually shirk, hesitate and are frightened. All this is due to ignorance of one's true duty. A certain amount of education and culture is necessary to have a sufficiently clear grasp of one's position in this world. Our educational system needs an overhaul, for it is now floating on the surface without touching the depths of man.

To achieve this, cooperation should come not only from society but also from the government. Success is difficult without mutual help. The head and heart should go hand in hand, and the ideal and the reality should have a close relation. To work with this knowledge is Karma Yoga. The Lord has declared this truth in the *Bhagavad Gita*.

I pray that this supreme ideal be actualised in the daily life of every individual. I pray that there be heaven on earth. This is not merely a wish—this is a possibility and a fact that cannot be gainsaid. It is to be realised if life is to mean what it ought to mean.■

"There is no true friend on this earth like the all-merciful spiritual teacher."
—Sri Swami Sivananda, *Guru Bhakti Yoga*


HINDUISM

Impact Of The Master's Writings

Right from the beginning of time, the world has been guided by spiritually illumined people who come from time to time to raise man's consciousness and to remind us of the pathway to peace and happiness. Sri Swami Sivananda was one great soul who was born to give guidelines on spiritual life to thousands across the globe. He did not travel to the west nor did he venture into the far east, but today he is everywhere. This is due primarily to the powerful impact of his writings, charged with the power of Mother Saraswati, as he himself revealed.

Sri Swami Sivananda wrote, "I cannot stop writing. I will write till I become blind. If I become blind, I will dictate and somebody will write for me. Thus, I will continue my mission of dissemination of spiritual knowledge till the end of my life". This is the intense passion that our Divine Master, Sri Swami Sivananda had for sharing spiritual knowledge with all, not only in India but to all parts of the world. About charity, the Master himself wrote in *Bliss Divine*, "Sharing generates cosmic love, sharing purifies the heart. The best form of charity is the charity of knowledge". It is in this spirit, the Master gave thousands of books, free of charge, to seekers the world over. Because of his unlimited generosity in various forms of charity, he was often called "Givananda".

The versatile genius of the Master was burning with pure passion to spread the message of our ancient Hindu Dharma, to sow seeds of peace, harmony and goodwill. His prolific pen captured the essence of all scriptures. He devoted his time to promoting Hinduism, unravelling the mysteries of the mind and dealing exhaustively with the various Yogas and health & diet.

The Master's literature has literally saved countless persons from cultural and spiritual bankruptcy and filled them with life-giving ideals and a higher purpose in life. Pujya Swami Sahajananda often reminded us that there is a great Shakti in the writings of Swami Sivananda, because he not only practised what he preached but also because Mother Saraswati had blessed his writings. The power in these books has a protective effect and it is for one of these reasons that Pujya Swamiji asked us to carry them in our cars.

If an editor of a magazine asked for one article, the Master sent four or five. He would say, "Even if they are not published, at least some of the editorial staff in charge of selection will go through them. I am satisfied even if one person reads the articles." What compassion! Among the many magazines to which the Master contributed, there were some which carried some undesirable reading material. Critics remarked, "Why should Swami Sivananda send articles to magazines containing advertisements on sex matters. This is not good." The Master replied, "I will continue to send articles to such papers first. The minds of those who go through sex matters will be purified by going through spiritual matters." From 1931, his powerful "Spiritual Lessons" began to appear regularly in its pages. Thousands turned into avid readers of the Master's articles and became his students and devotees.

Ananthanarayanan (author of *From Man to God-man*) states, "The persons who thus benefited by his writings were fired by an unmistakable spiritual enthusiasm, and in that mood, they wrote to him. They related their joys and sorrows, placed before him their problems and perplexities, and sought his help—and help came with lightning speed".

In *From Man to God-man* we read the following, "A German lady complimented the Master after reading his book, *Concentration & Meditation*, she wrote, 'I have been having experiences during the practice of spiritual exercises about which no book in Europe and no man in Germany could give me the right explanation, but this book, portraying the experiences of other beginners on the spiritual path gave me the answers. After reading it, I began to do the exercises'".

Former President of India, the late Dr Abdul Kalam says, "I am a fan of Sivananda's simple, and uncomplicated style of writing. After his discourse on the *Bhagavad Gita*, every evening, normally he would randomly select two people from the crowd for an interview. I was one of the two selected. I don't know what made him select me. He called me to his chamber, then he looked at me and said in Tamil, 'What's your name?' 'Abdul Kalam,'I replied. 'Why are you sad?' he asked. This great one, this chosen one, this godly person, knew of my sorrow! I replied, 'Swamiji, I will tell you the facts. I had come from an interview with the Air Force Selection Board and I was not selected to be a pilot.'

"Swami Sivananda looked at me. I was such a small fellow in front of him. Then he opened the *Bhagavad Gita* at the eleventh chapter, Vishwaroop Darshan, in which Lord Krishna appears in front of Arjuna in all His forms. When Arjuna tells Krishna, he is afraid of fighting in the Kurukshetra war, Krishna tells him, 'Defeat the defeatist tendency'. Swami Sivananda asked me to repeat the statement 'Defeat the defeatist tendency' three times. I repeated it three times and I was cheered up. He then gave me twenty of his books published in Tamil and English. It was such a great experience. So, friends, I will never forget this incident in my life. Swami Sivananda's Mantra: 'Defeat the defeatist tendency' always comes to me whenever I'm in trouble".

The Master wrote for this day and age. He understood the ills that plague this modern world and set about giving effective solutions. Stress is one of the foremost ills of this present age. And so, through Pujya Swamiji, the Master revealed the cures for stress in the Peace Series (a set of four books containing inspiring instructions that according to Swami Sahajananda, will effectively solve and dissolve all problems). Pujya Swamiji said that as he was typesetting this series, the knowledge came from above and was pouring into his head. So, clearly this knowledge came from God and it will be worth our while to read these precious inspirational sayings again and again. Perhaps at bedtime to allow the subconscious mind to work actively whilst the reader is asleep.

Many criticised the Master for writing in English. Sri Ananthanarayanan writes, "Half a century ago in India, the glamour of western civilization had begun to play upon the mind of the then generation, particularly the middle-class section, who were gradually drawn towards what looked like the superior culture of the sophisticated Westerner. It was a critical period, when sons of the soil turned up their noses at their own mother culture. This invasion of alien ideology was helped by a soulless education introduced by the ruling British in India's schools and colleges. It needed the powerful English writings of the Godman, Sivananda, to turn the minds of the Indian youth back to the glory of their own tradition and culture.

"One such case is that of Samananda, a modern Hindu youth, who tells his story. 'Born in an orthodox family in South India, I was drawn very early in my boyhood to the sweet Sanskrit hymns of Sankara which my mother recited daily. But later, a bit of college education completely

dislodged me from the rock of my faith, setting me wandering in a windless wilderness of wasteful atheism. But one book that I read, and one portrait that I saw, brought about the change. The book and the portrait were those of Swami Sivananda, the Saint of Ananda Kutir. It was in 1934'." Like Samananda, many were the modern Indian youth who were reclaimed by the Master and his writings.

The Master's message went worldwide. His literature was like a spiritual tsunami and it stormed many parts of the world. Dr R.T. Werther of Perth had been a seeker for many years. He had gone through two churches. He came in touch with the Master. The Master's books and loving letters drew him to Rishikesh. It was Christmas time and there were celebrations at the Ashram. Dr Werther later spoke of it as the greatest Christmas experience of his long life, and went on to add: "There and only there, I found the peace which comes when all your inner conflicts are resolved. Yes. Only there I found real Christianity, which I did not find in our western world."

Some of the most influential people of our times had come into contact with our Master's literature. The political prisoners at Robben Island in South Africa, including Dr Nelson Mandela, had received books such as *Light, Power and Wisdom* from our Press here in Durban. A few years ago, a high-ranking military official, involved in Arab-Israeli peace initiatives, requested copies of our Peace Series and other books. Like this, many eminent statesmen and countless other souls around the globe in search of spiritual guidance and solace found their answers in our Master's writings.

What does all this mean to us? It means that we should follow in the noble footsteps of the Master and Pujya Swamiji. The best way to show our gratitude to the Master and Pujya Swamiji for the bountiful gifts they have showered upon this country, is to implement his teachings into our daily lives. We can show gratitude by distributing his books, by selling his books and by giving them out to others as gifts so that they too can tread the path of spirituality in earnest.■

"He who repeats the Guru's Name gets not only liberation but also worldly prosperity, good health, long life and divine Aiswarya also."

—Sri Swami Sivananda, *Guru Bhakti Yoga*

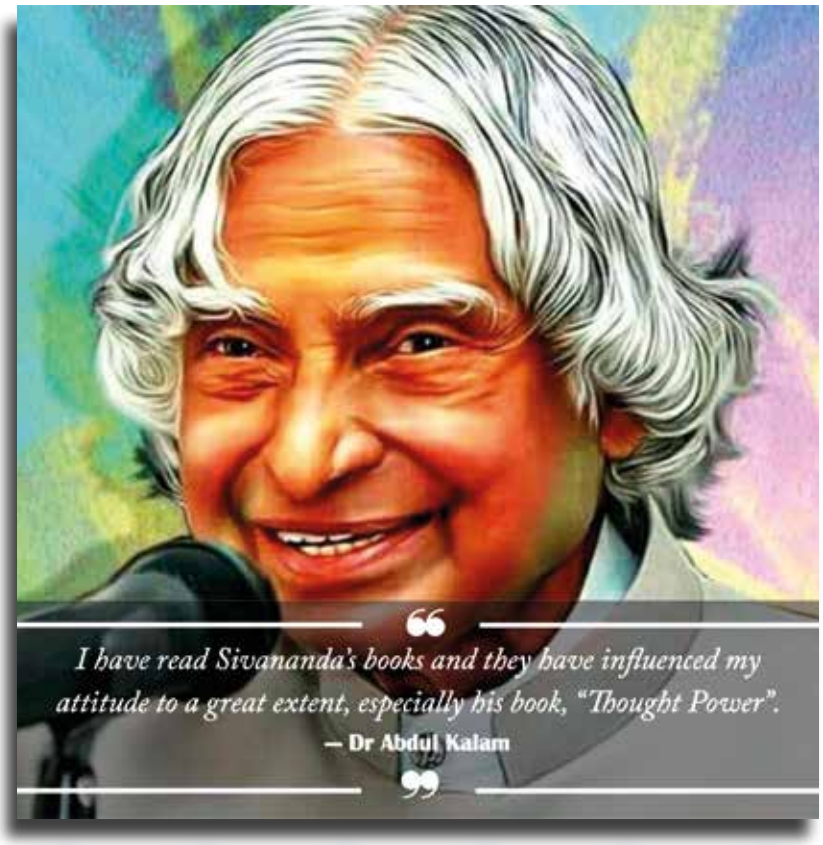
Sivananda's Gospel Of Divine Life

GIFT OF KNOWLEDGE: The Master attached so much importance to this work of dissemination of spiritual knowledge that even when there was a financial crisis in the Ashram, he refused to slow down the tempo of work on the publication side.

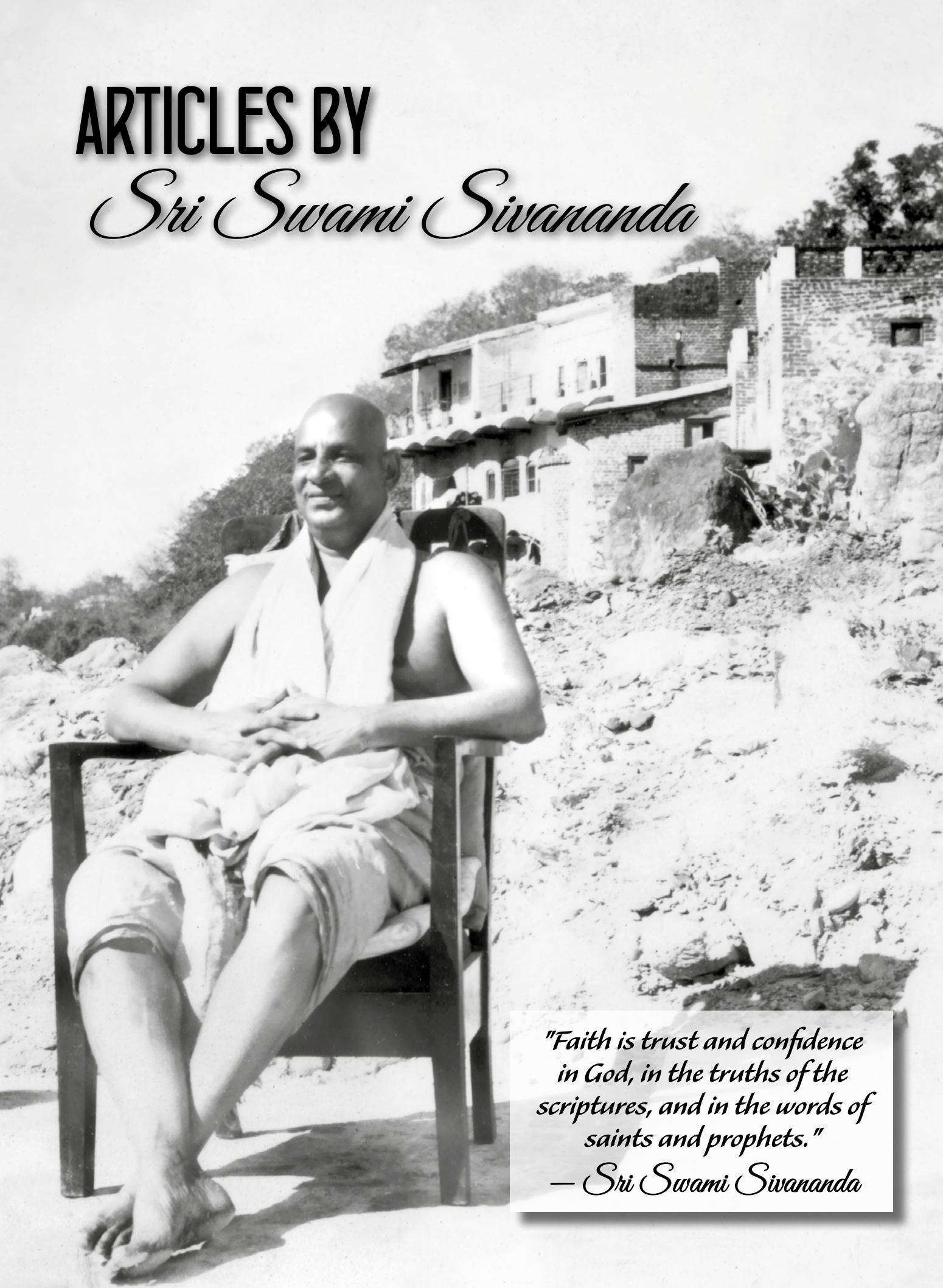
"We can all go to the alms-house and live on alms," he would say, "but Jnana Yajna must go on."

In 1949, the budgetary position of the Ashram became too tight and some inmates had to be asked to leave. Still, the Master would not economise on book production.

"To me, the printing of books is the greatest necessity," he said. "All other works have a secondary value."



ARTICLES BY
Sri Swami Sivananda



"Faith is trust and confidence in God, in the truths of the scriptures, and in the words of saints and prophets."

— Sri Swami Sivananda

Renunciation (Sannyasa)

Sannyasa is a life of renunciation. It is, in other words, the Upanishadic life. It is the last of the four Ashramas. The order of Sannyasa is one of the most ancient in the spiritual world. Action is for the man of the world and wisdom is for the Sannyasin who has risen above worldliness. Only the man of renunciation with knowledge attains Brahman, and none else. Without perfect renunciation, it is impossible to pursue the path of Brahma Vidya.

The Sannyasin is dead to the world and his family. He renounces the whole universe at one stretch and has nothing to do with anything except the one Self. To the Sannyasin, name and fame are equal to the faecal matter of a pig.

The Sannyasin has only three duties to perform in life—the observance of cleanliness, collection of alms and meditation. There is no fourth duty for him. Meditation is his duty, meditation is his food, meditation is his life. He lives meditation and breathes meditation. He is ever intent upon the realisation of the Supreme Brahman.

The Sannyasin lives in the height of wisdom—like a fool or like a child. Blossoming with knowledge, he behaves like an idiot. Absorbed in the Atman, he talks not a single word.

FITNESS FOR SANNYASA

The Sannyasa order is open to a Brahmachari, a Grihastha or a Vanaprastha all alike. One can take Sannyasa either direct from Brahmacharya or otherwise as he likes. One should qualify oneself with the four pillars of knowledge namely, discrimination, dispassion, self-control and the desire for liberation, before entering the order of Sannyasa. There should be perfect renunciation born of discrimination. The dispassion should not be mild and half-hearted. It should be a burning flame of disgust for everything that is seen and that is not seen. Nothing but the state of Kaivalya or final liberation is to be the ideal of attainment. There should be no desire for wife, children and worldly activity. The Sannyasin should be encircled by the fence of dispassion on all sides.

The self-arrogating faculty is to be finally reduced to naught. Love [worldly love] and hatred should be effaced completely. The aspirant should be above the tricks and bondages of this worldly life. As soon as disgust arises in the mind for all the objects of the world, one should take to Sannyasa without any further hesitation.

If you like seclusion, if you are free from attraction and passion, from worldly ambition, Karmic tendencies and attractions of this world, if you are reticent and serene, if you have disciplined yourself while remaining in the world, if you can live on simple food, if you can lead a hard life, if you have a strong constitution, if you are not talkative, if you can remain alone without company or talk, if you have a meditative temperament or reflective nature, if you can bear all the difficulties on the spiritual path, if you can lead the laborious life of an ascetic till the end of your life, if you can bear any amount of insult and injury, then you can take to the path of renunciation. Only then will you be benefited by embracing Sannyasa.

You should actually lead the life of a Sannyasin for one or two years in the world itself, otherwise you will find it extremely difficult to tread the path. For a man of discrimination and strong will this path is all joy and bliss. A passionate man should not take Sannyasa. A person who takes Sannyasa even when he is being overpowered by passion, goes to the regions of darkness and gloom. Whose tongue, genital, stomach and hands are properly disciplined, that man is fit to take Sannyasa.

If women are equipped with the four means of salvation, they are also quite eligible for Sannyasa. They are as efficient as men in the field of spirituality. When one is born with Sannyasa samskaras, no force on earth can prevent the person from taking to the path of renunciation. Even if you keep a hundred guards to prevent such a person from leaving the house, they cannot check him.

The father of the great Buddha guarded him in all possible ways but Buddha's horse scaled the heights of the compound and took him to the forest. It is only the effeminate, impotent and timid men who are only moustached ladies, with no good Samskaras and no spiritual assets, who are spiritual bankrupts, that cling to things mundane and die like worms. They always speak against Sannyasa.

ROLE OF SANNYASINS IN SOCIETY

Every religion has a band of anchorites who lead a life of seclusion and meditation. There are Bhikkus in Buddhism, Fakirs in Mohammedanism, Sufistic Fakirs in Sufism, Fathers and Reverends in Christianity. The glory of a religion will be absolutely lost if you remove the hermits and Sannyasins or those who lead a life of renunciation and divine contemplation. It is these people who maintain and preserve the religions of the world. It is these people who give solace to the householders when they are in trouble and distress. They bring hope to the hopeless, joy to the depressed, strength to the weak, and courage to

the timid, imparting the knowledge of Vedanta philosophy and the significance of *Tat Tvam Asi*.

Sannyasins live on a few pieces of bread and in exchange, move from door to door and spread the sublime teachings of Vedanta throughout the length and breadth of the country. The world is under a great debt of gratitude to them. Who can repay the debt to them? Their writings still guide us. Study a few verses of the *Avadhuta Gita*. You will at once be raised to magnificent heights of divine splendour and glory. You will become a changed being. Depression, weakness and anxiety will vanish at once.

A real Sannyasin is the only mighty potentate on this earth. He never takes anything. He always gives. It was Sannyasins only who did glorious, sublime work in the past. It is Sannyasins only who can work wonders in the present and in the future also. It was Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, Rama Tirtha, Dayananda and Vivekananda who disseminated the sublime teachings of the scriptures and preserved the Hindu religion. It is only bold Sannyasins who have cut off all ties and connections, who are fearless, who are freed from delusion, passion and selfishness, that can do real service to the world.

A Sannyasin alone can do real service to the world because he has divine knowledge and is a fulltime man [renunciate]. One real Sannyasin can change the destiny of the whole world! It was one mighty Sankara who established the doctrine of Kevala Adwaita philosophy. He still lives in our hearts. His name can never be obliterated so long as this world lasts.

Just as there are research scholars or post-graduates in science, psychology, biology and philosophy, so also there should be Yogis and Sannyasins who will devote their time to study and meditation, to research on the Atman. These postgraduate Yogis will give to the world their experiences and realisations in the field of religion. They will train students and send them into the world for the purpose of preaching. It is the duty of householders, Zamindars and the administration to look after the wants of these Sannyasins. In turn, these Sannyasins will take care of their souls. Thus the wheel of the world will revolve smoothly. There will be peace in the land.

NECESSITY FOR SANNYASA

I do not believe those who say: "We have given colouring to our hearts." This is timidity and hypocrisy. If there is a real, internal change, the external change is bound to come. You cannot be a sage inside and a rogue outside. The inner nature will not allow you to keep an opposite nature outside. I do not maintain that merely an attempt towards eradication of egoism, Sankalpas and Vasanas constitutes Sannyasa. The distinction between the different orders of life is absolutely necessary.

Why did sages like Sankara and Ramakrishna take Sannyasa? Why did Yajnavalkya take Sannyasa even after realisation of Brahman? Where is the necessity for this order at all? Can you imagine a greater Karma-Kandi, a follower of the path of mundane life, than the great Mandana Misra? He was the greatest votary of Karma. He argued with Sri Sankara for days together on the point that Sannyasa is not necessary. He wanted to establish that one can attain Mukti or salvation by following the mundane life, and that renunciation is not absolutely essential. But Sri Sankara defeated Mandana Misra in the end and the latter also became one of the four disciples of Sankara. When such a mighty man became a Sannyasin, are you not convinced that it is necessary?

SANNYASA—A MENTAL STATE

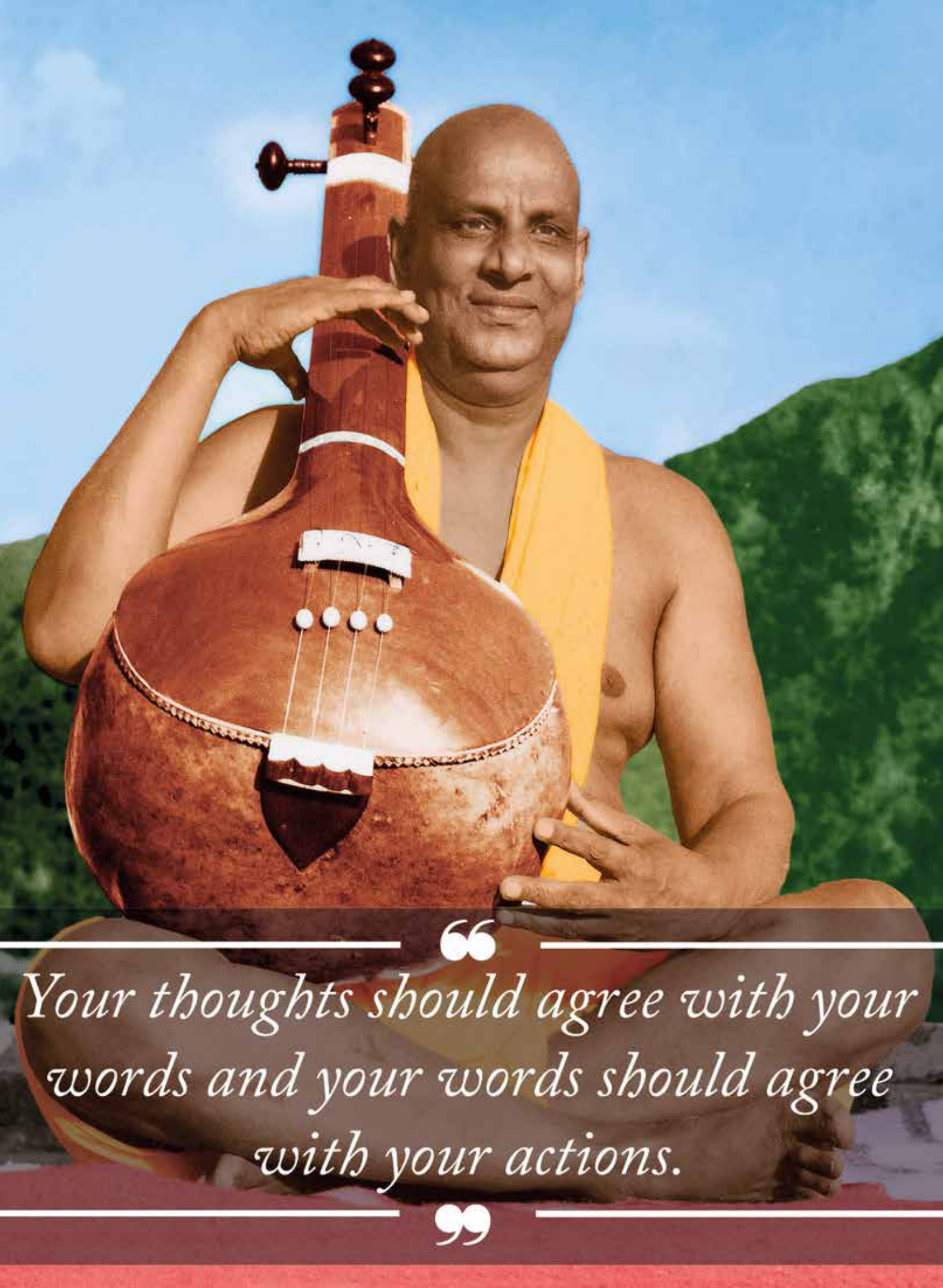
Sannyasa is Gerua or colouring of the heart and not of the cloth alone. Sannyasa is a mental state only. He is a veritable Sannyasin who is free from passion and egoism, and who possesses all the Sattwic qualities, even though he lives with the family in the world. Chudala was a queen Yogini-Sannyasini though she ruled a kingdom. That Sannyasin who lives in the forest but who is full of passion, is worse than a householder and a worldly-minded fool. Sikhidhwaja was a worldly man though he lived in the forest naked for many years.

True renunciation is the renunciation of all passions, desires, egoism and Vasanas. If you have a stainless mind, a mind free from attachment, egoism and passion, you are a Sannyasin, no matter whether you live in a forest or in the bustle of a city, whether you wear white cloth or an orange-coloured robe, whether you shave the head or keep a long tuft of hair.

Shave the mind. Someone asked Guru Nanak: "O saint, you are a Sannyasin, why have you not shaved your head?" Guru Nanak replied, "My dear friend, I have shaved my mind." In fact, the mind should be cleanly shaved. Shaving it consists in getting rid of all sorts of attachments, passions, egoism, infatuation, lust, greed and anger. External shaving of the head has no meaning so long as there is internal craving.

Many have not understood what true renunciation is. Renunciation of physical objects is no renunciation at all. True renunciation lies in the abnegation of the mind. It consists in renouncing all desires and egoism, and not merely renouncing the world. Real renunciation consists in the renunciation of egoism. If you can renounce the ego, you have renounced everything else in the world. If the subtle ego is given up, then identification with the body automatically dies. ■

"Love never reasons but gives abundantly."—Sri Swami Sivananda



Your thoughts should agree with your words and your words should agree with your actions.

Dispassion (Vairagya)

Vairagya is the opposite of attachment, which binds a man to the wheel of birth and death. Vairagya liberates a man from bondage. It purifies the sensual mind and turns it inward. It is the most important requisite for a spiritual aspirant. Without it no spiritual life is possible.

THE PULL OF LIKES AND DISLIKES

The two currents of the mind, attraction and repulsion—really constitute the world of birth and death. A worldly man is a slave of these two mighty currents and is tossed about hither and thither like a piece of straw. He smiles when experiencing pleasure, he weeps when in pain. He clings to pleasant objects and runs away from those which cause pain.

Wherever there is a sensation of pleasure, the mind gets glued, as it were, to the object that gives pleasure. This is what is called attachment and it brings only bondage and pain. When the object is withdrawn or when it perishes, the mind suffers unspeakable pain. Attraction is the root cause of human suffering.

A dispassionate man has a different experience altogether because his training is different. He is a past-master in the art or science of separating himself from the impermanent, perishable objects. He has absolutely no attraction for them and constantly dwells in the Eternal. He stands as adamant as a peak amidst a turbulent storm, as a spectator of this wonderful world-show. A dispassionate man has no attraction for pleasant objects and no repulsion for painful ones. Nor is he afraid of pain. He knows well that pain helps considerably in his progress and evolution, in his journey towards the goal of God-realisation. He is convinced that pain is the best teacher.

HOW TO CULTIVATE VAIRAGYA

Vairagya comes through looking into the defects of sensual life. Look into the defects of sensual pleasure and you will know the truth and thus develop dispassion. If you are not impressed by rich living, a rich style of living will not attract you. If you feel that meat and wine are not at all pleasurable, they will not tempt you. If you feel that a person of the opposite sex is nothing but a combination of flesh, blood and bones, he or she will not attract you. So if you do not get meat or wine or the company of the opposite sex, or have rich living, you will feel no agony.

Aspirants should study Bhartrihari's *Vairagya Satakam* and other works on Vairagya. These writings will increase the desire for liberation and strengthen one's conviction in spiritual truths and in the spiritual life. Sri Rama describes the disastrous effects of lust and wealth and the miseries of birth and infancy. A beautiful description is given in the Vairagya Prakarana of *Yoga Vasishtha*. Everyone should read it. It will induce dispassion in the mind.

DEGREES OF VAIRAGYA

There are different degrees of Vairagya. Supreme dispassion comes after you attain Self-realisation. The whole world then looks like a piece of straw. The Vairagya then becomes perfectly habitual. This gives intense spiritual strength and courage because there is perfect detachment. Temporary fleeting dispassion is not Vairagya and will not help the aspirant in the attainment of Self-realisation. It is common to have dispassion for some particular objects, through some cause or other. But it is only by having dispassion for all objects at all times that one can attain knowledge of the Self. Intense dispassion will help the aspirant to adhere to the spiritual path. Temporary dispassion born of disappointment, loss, death of relatives and domestic troubles, will leave you at any moment. The objects that were once renounced will attract you again. Then the dispassion will evaporate quickly like ether, chloroform or ammonia.

The Vairagya that is born of discrimination is enduring and everlasting. It will not fail the aspirant like the Vairagya that comes temporarily when a woman gives birth to a child, or when a man attends a funeral at the crematorium. Real dispassion should come through enquiry. Sensual objects do not give us lasting happiness but lead us to pain and sorrow.

Such deep enquiry made again and again for a long time, produces a lasting kind of Vairagya. It is the real wealth of an aspirant and helps him to do real spiritual Sadhana. It makes the mind introverted. This Vairagya puts a break on the extrovert tendency of the mind. Even if the mind runs towards objects, at once it will point out that there is pain there, that sensual pleasure is the cause of rebirth and intense suffering. So the mind gets terribly afraid and gradually, through intense practice, it gets established in real, lasting, sustained Vairagya.

The mind should be gradually weaned off its old habits and cravings. If you cut off the pleasure centres all at once, the mind will get confused. You should train it slowly in meditation and make it taste the inner bliss. Gradually it will leave off its old habits and you will be able to establish yourself in true dispassion.

"Stick to one Guru at all times."—Sri Swami Sivananda

VAIRAGYA—A MENTAL STATE

Vairagya does not mean abandoning social duties and responsibilities of life. It does not mean detachment from the world or life in a solitary cave of the Himalayas. It does not mean living on *neem* leaves, wearing matted hair and carrying a water-pot made of coconut shell. It does not mean shaving the head and discarding one's clothes.

Vairagya is mental detachment from all connections of the world and its objects. A man may remain in the world and discharge all the duties of his order and stage of life with perfect detachment. He may be a householder, he may live with his family and children. But at the same time he may have perfect mental detachment for everything. He performs his Sadhana systematically. Such a man who has perfect mental detachment while remaining in the world is a hero indeed. He is much better than a holy man living in a cave in the Himalayas, because the former has to face innumerable temptations at every moment of his life.

Wherever a man goes, he carries with him his fickle, restless mind, his desires and subconscious impressions. Even if he lives in solitude in the Himalayas, still he is the same worldly man if he is engaged in building castles in the air and in thinking of the objects of the world. In that case, even the cave becomes a big city for him. If the mind remains quiet, if it is free from attachments, one can be perfectly dispassionate even while living in a mansion in the busiest part of a city like Calcutta [now Kolkata]. Such a mansion will be converted into a dense forest by him. Vairagya is purely mental.

Generally, aspirants say, "I have given up wearing clothes and live only on bread and lentils." Their whole spiritual practice consists in "giving up"—giving up this, giving up that. Real spiritual life does not involve any giving up or taking up. The only thing is that you should not give any leniency to the mind. If you are very hungry in the morning, take one or two cakes and a small cup of milk. But do not give leniency to the mind or it will hurl you down. Be eternally vigilant. Pray fervently for spiritual strength and Grace.

Some renunciates practise Vairagya in order to attain fame and respect. Some, working for the public good, make resolves, "We will not travel in trains, we will walk only. We will not take milk and fruits. We will not use fountain-pens and watches." These are not desirable resolves. This is not the real nature of dispassion. It is another kind of whim or defect.

Attachment to Vairagya is as much an evil as attachment itself. These renunciates want to do service. If they move in cars or trains, if they keep the body strong and healthy, they can do more service in a short space of time. Those who do much writing work can turn out more work if they use a fountain-pen. Foolishness assumes various forms. This is one kind and does not leave even educated persons or cultured renunciates. You should have extreme dispassion internally and at the same time follow the middle path externally.

Vairagya is a means for the attainment of wisdom of the Self. It is not the goal itself. A realised sage has neither desire nor dispassion. If you give him a little dry bread, he is quite satisfied and will not grumble. If you give him delicious sweetmeats, milk and fruits, he will not refuse them, but he will not be elated by such good food either. He has equanimity of mind and is above likes and dislikes. He always delights in his own Self only and not in external objects.

A GREAT RENUNCIATE AND A GREAT ENJOYER

He who is endowed with equanimity of mind towards objects is called a great renunciate and a great enjoyer in the *Yoga Vasishtha*. It is easy to practise Vairagya but it is extremely difficult to keep up evenness of mind.

Sukadeva was tested by Raja Janaka. He was made to remain without food at the gate of the palace for some days. He was quite peaceful. Then he was taken to the harem. Queens served him and gave him the best of foods, but he remained unaffected. This is wisdom.

Young aspirants should be very careful and cautious. They should not take advantage of the liberty of a great renunciate or a great enjoyer. This can be practised only by an advanced Yogi who has equal vision over all beings. Beginners should stick to their resolves of truth, Ahimsa, dispassion and celibacy to the very letter and spirit.

Do not imitate the realised sages. You are still an aspirant. Vasishtha had a wife but he was born with psychic powers. Janaka ruled a kingdom after severe austerities and realisation of the Truth. Krishna lived a very princely life but He was one with the Infinite. You are not expected to behave like them. You must do spiritual Sadhana. You must have patience and dispassion.■

"The form of the Guru is the root of meditation. The feet of the Guru are the root of worship. The teachings of the Guru are the root of all Mantras. The Grace of the Guru is the root of salvation."

—Sri Swami Sivananda, *Guru Bhakti Yoga*

“O Mother Bhagirathi, O Ganga!
Thou art the remover of all miseries.”



Mother Ganga

The Ganga is the most sacred river in India. The origin of the Ganga is ascribed to celestial glory. Lord Krishna says in the *Gita*, "I am the Ganga among rivers."

To a Hindu, the word "Ganges" or "Ganga" has its own sacred association. Every Hindu thirsts for a dip in the Ganga and for a drop of its water at the time of death. Aspirants and mendicants build their huts on the banks of the Ganga to practise meditation and austerities. Bhishma spoke very highly of the glory of the Ganga in his parting instructions to the Pandavas from his bed of arrows.

In the Satya Yuga, all places were sacred. In the Treta Yuga, Pushkara was considered the most holy place. In the Dwapara Yuga, Kurukshetra was regarded as the most sacred place. In the Kali Yuga, the present age, the Ganga has this glory.

Devi Bhagavata says: "He who utters the name of the Ganga, even from hundreds of miles afar, is freed from sins and attains the abode of Lord Hari".

THE GANGA BATH

Thousands of pilgrims visit Haridwar and Rishikesh every year to take a dip in this sacred river. They have immense faith in the glory of Mother Ganga. They believe that all their sins will be washed away if they take a dip in the sacred waters of the Ganga. And in reality, they are washed away. There is no doubt that a dip in the Ganga instantly purifies.

Even confirmed atheists and rationalists come to Haridwar for a refreshing bath in the holy river. Wherever a pious Hindu goes to take his bath, he invokes first the Ganga and feels Her presence in the water. If he lives far away from the Ganga, he yearns intensely to see Her and to have his being blessed by bathing in Her holy waters someday. When he has this blessing, he carries some of the water to his home and carefully preserves it to use it for purposes of purification.

GANGA—A FORM OF THE SUPREME BEING

Ganga is the form of Vishnu, having come out of the Supreme Being. Her sight is soul-stirring and elevating. She flows in the valleys and lives by the side of Parvati, daughter of Himavan. How magnificent She is when She flows in the valley of Rishikesh! Her colour is like that of the ocean. The water is very clear and sweet. Rich people from the plains get their water from Rishikesh. They are taken in large copper vessels to far-off places in India.

To have a look at the Ganga at Rishikesh is soul-elevating. To sit for a few minutes on a block of stone by its side is a blessing. To stay for some months at Rishikesh doing spiritual practices on its banks takes the aspirant to the abode of Lord Hari. To live forever on the banks of the Ganga practising meditation is the Grace of Lord Siva. Mother Ganga bestows seen and unseen powers on those who crave for Her Grace.

Sit alone on its banks and concentrate and meditate. Notice how the spiritual vibrations accelerate your inner heart even overriding your guilty conscience. From whence has the supreme joy come that suddenly fills you? How She instantaneously withdraws your mind and conscience from the physical world to the regions of immortality, only to suckle you with bliss and blessedness! Invoke Her blessings whenever you sit on Her glorious banks. You will enter into deep meditation without much effort.

PURITY OF GANGA WATER

The water of the Ganga is extremely pure and sanctifying. No germs can flourish in it. This has been verified by various scientists. Rich in minerals, the water cures almost all kinds of diseases. The Ganga is saturated with antiseptic minerals. Even in the West, doctors prescribe Ganga water for the treatment of skin diseases. The Ganga is not merely a river but a sacred place. It possesses mysterious powers which are not found in any other river in the world. Even scientists have admitted to the efficacy of the water.

Dr F.C. Harrison of McGill University, Canada, writes: "A peculiar fact which has never been satisfactorily explained is the quick death, in three or five hours of the *cholera vibrio* in Ganges water. When one remembers sewage by numerous corpses, often cholera casualties, and by the bathing of thousands of people, it seems remarkable that the belief of the Hindus that the water of this river is pure and cannot be defiled, and that they can safely drink it and bathe in it, should be confirmed by means of modern bacteriological research".

A well-known French physician, Dr D. Herell, made a similar investigation into the mystery of the Ganga. He observed some of the floating corpses of men having died of dysentery and cholera and was surprised to find that "only a few feet below the bodies, where one would expect to find millions of dysentery and cholera germs, there were no germs at all". He then grew germs from patients having the disease and to these cultures

added water from the Ganga. When he incubated the mixture for a period, much to his surprise, the germs were completely destroyed.

A British physician, Dr C.E. Nelson, F.R.C.S., tells us of another striking fact. He says that ships leaving Calcutta for England take their water from the Hoogley River, which is one of the filthy mouths of the Ganga; and this Ganga water remains fresh all the way to England. On the other hand, ships leaving England for India find that the water they take from London does not stay fresh till they reach Bombay, the nearest Indian port which is a week closer to England than Calcutta. They must replenish their water supply at Port Said, Suez or Aden on the Red Sea. It is no wonder that the Indian people should hold that the Ganga is very sacred and possessed of mysterious powers.

A SILENT TEACHER

The Ganga starts from Gangotri in the Himalayas, encountering many obstacles on Her way, but finally reaches the goal—the ocean. Similarly, the spiritual aspirant should never give up the struggle, however insurmountable the obstacles on the path may appear to be. All difficulties and obstacles will be removed through the Grace of the Lord, and if the aspirant is sincere in his Yogic practices he will reach the goal.

The Ganga always gives you cool, pure water. It does not expect anything from you in return. The sun sheds its light on all without anticipating any reward. Derive lessons from the sun and from the Ganga. Always give, give and ask for nothing in return. Expect nothing in return, not even appreciation or recognition.

Both a rogue and a saint can drink the water of the Ganga. The sun sheds its light on the wicked and on the virtuous. The mango tree gives its fruit freely to all. Develop equal vision like the Ganga, the sun and the mango tree.

I love Ganga and the Himalayas. Ganga is my Mother Divine and the Himalayas my Father Divine. They inspire and guide me. I bathe in the Ganga and swim in it. I adore Ganga and feed the fish in it. I wave lights before Mother Ganga and pray to Her. I do salutations to Ganga and sing Her glory. I write about the grandeur and glory of Ganga. Ganga has nourished and comforted me. Ganga has taught me the truths of the *Upanishads*.

O friend! Follow the example of Mother Ganga. Be pure, adaptable and tolerant. Be forgiving and sweet. Pour out your love on all. Share what you have—physical, moral, mental and spiritual—with humanity. The more you give the more you will receive. Give without any selfish motive, without expecting any reward. Embrace all. Cultivate equal vision. See the Lord in all.

All glory be unto Mother Ganga, the giver of life, light and love! Worship Her with faith, devotion and piety. Adore Her with the flowers of purity, love, self-restraint and equal vision. Sing Her Names. Attain Brahman through Her Grace. May Mother Ganga bless you all! May She help you to live on Her banks and practise Yoga and austerities!■

Siva's Experience

I have seen God in my own Self.
I have negated name and form, and what remains is Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute and nothing else.
I behold God everywhere.
There is no veil.
I am One. There is no duality.
I rest in my own Self.
My bliss is beyond description.
The world of dreams has gone.
I alone exist.

Swami Sivananda

Sivananda's Gospel Of Divine Life

REAL WORSHIP: On the evening of November 25, 1949, R. Anantakrishna Sastri, a well-known Oriental scholar, arranged to perform ceremonial worship of the Ganga at the Ashram ghat. The ghat was nicely washed and the Ashramites and visitors seated themselves comfortably on the clean steps. The Master also was there. Sastriji and his wife began the worship.

The Master watched it all intently and then commented, "One year of daily ceremonial worship of the Ganges like this is equal to one week of whole-hearted service of a typhoid patient—washing his clothes and cleaning his bedpan. Such service will at once purify the heart and bring about inner illumination."

"Sympathy is the key that fits the lock of any heart."—Sri Swami Sivananda

Hinduism

Hinduism is the religion of the Hindus and is the oldest of all living religions. It is not a man-made religion, and was not founded by any single prophet or religious leader. It is not based on a set of dogmas preached by a particular set of teachers, nor was it begun as a system like Christianity and Islam.

It is the product of the seers of the *Vedas*, developed from age to age by the teachings of incarnations, seers, the Hindu scriptures and epics. It will exist as long as the world lasts. There is a peculiar, mysterious spiritual force that is ingrained in the heart of Hinduism.

Hinduism is also known by the names *Sanatana Dharma* and *Vaidika Dharma*. *Sanatana Dharma* means the "Ancient Law", the "Eternal Religion". *Vaidika Dharma* means the "Religion of the *Vedas*".

Hinduism allows absolute freedom to the rational mind of man. It does not demand any undue restraint upon the freedom of human reason and upon the freedom of thought, feeling and will of man. It is a religion of freedom, allowing the widest margin of freedom in matters of faith and worship. It allows absolute freedom to one's reason and heart with regard to such questions as to the nature of God, soul, form of worship, creation, and goal of life. It does not force anyone to accept particular dogmas or forms of worship. It allows each one to reflect, enquire, investigate and cogitate. Hence all manner of religious faiths, various forms of worship and spiritual practices, diverse rituals and customs have found their place, side by side within Hinduism, and are cultured and developed in harmony with one another.

Hinduism, unlike other religions, does not dogmatically assert that final emancipation is possible only through its means and not through any other. It is only a means to an end, and all means which will ultimately lead to the final goal are approved. The religious hospitality of Hinduism is proverbial. Hinduism is extremely catholic and liberal. This is its fundamental feature. It pays respects to all religions, and does not revile any other, accepting and honouring truth from wherever it comes and in whatever garb it is presented.

The *Sruti* and *Smriti* are the two authoritative sources of Hinduism. *Sruti* means "what is heard", and *Smriti* means "what is remembered". *Sruti* is revelation; *Smriti* is tradition. What is revealed is *Sruti*. The *Upanishads* are *Srutis*. What is remembered is *Smriti*. The *Sruti* is direct experience. Great seers heard or experienced the eternal truths of religion and left a record of them for the benefit of posterity. These records constitute the *Vedas*. Hence the *Sruti* is the primary authority. The *Smriti* is a recollection of that experience. Hence it is a secondary authority. The *Smritis* or *Dharma Shastras* are founded on the *Sruti*. They are also books written by sages but they are not the final authority. If there is anything in a *Smriti* which contradicts the *Sruti*, the former is to be rejected. The *Bhagavad Gita* also is a *Smriti*. So is the *Mahabharata*.

The *Vedas* are the oldest books in the library of man and are the very ultimate source to which all religious knowledge can be traced. Religion is of divine origin, revealed by God to man from the earliest times and then embodied in the *Vedas*.

The *Upanishads* are the concluding portions of the *Vedas*, and the teaching based on them is called Vedanta. The glorious *Upanishads* are the gist, the goal of the *Vedas*. They form the very foundation of Hinduism.

There are great truths behind the ancient mythology of Hinduism. You cannot ignore a thing because it has a garb of mythology. Do not argue. Keep your intellect at a respectable distance when you study mythology. It will delude you. Cultivate love for imagery. Sit like a child and open your heart freely. You will comprehend the great truths revealed by mythology. You will penetrate into the hearts of the Rishis who wrote them.

The object of myth and legend is merely to lure the mind to the truths of religion. By studying mythology, you learn several object lessons for moulding your character and leading an ideal divine life. The lives of Sri Rama, Sri Krishna, Bhishma, Nala, Sita, Harischandra, Lakshmana, Bharata, Damayanti, Hanuman, Yudhishthira, Savitri, Radha and Arjuna are all sources of great spiritual inspiration for moulding your life, conduct and character. When you are in a great dilemma as to what to do when confronted by puzzling situations, when there is conflict of duties, you will find the exact solution through the study of mythology.

Hinduism is not a religion of mere theories. It is very practical. In no other religion will you find such a variety of Yoga practised, and such sublime and unique philosophy expounded as in Hinduism. Hinduism provides spiritual food and Yogic spiritual practices to suit all temperaments, capacities, tastes, stages of spiritual development and conditions of life. It prescribes Yogic spiritual practices even for a scavenger or a cobbler, to attain God-realisation, while doing his ordinary tasks in the world.

Hindu Yoga and Vedanta teachers lay great stress on self-restraint, austerities, renunciation and practical spiritual Sadhana, which are best calculated to control the mind

and the senses, unfold the Divinity within and attain Self-realisation. Religion is the practical aspect of philosophy, while philosophy is the rational aspect of religion. The philosophy of Hinduism is not armchair philosophy. It is not meant for intellectual curiosity and vain discussion. It is a way of life. The philosopher of this practical religion reflects seriously after listening to the *Srutis*. He enquires into the nature of the Self, meditates constantly, and then attains the Self. He attempts to attain perfection here and now.

A foreigner is struck with astonishment when he hears of the diverse sects and creeds of Hinduism. But these varieties are really ornaments of Hinduism. They are certainly not its defects. There are various types of minds and temperaments. So there should be various faiths also. This is but natural. This is the cardinal tenet of Hinduism. There is room in this religion for all types of souls—from the highest to the lowest—for their growth and evolution.

The term "Hinduism" is most elastic. It includes a number of sects and cults, allied, but different on many important points. It is more a league of religions than a single religion with a definite creed. It is a fellowship of faiths, a federation of philosophies. It accommodates all types of men and prescribes spiritual food for everybody, according to their growth and evolution. This is the beauty of this magnanimous religion. This is the glory of Hinduism. Hence there is no conflict among the various cults and creeds that are prevalent in the different parts of the country.

Lord Krishna says in the *Gita*, "However men approach Me, even so do I welcome them, for the path men take from every side is Mine." All the diversities are organised and united in the body of Hinduism. Despite all the differences of the metaphysical doctrines, modes of religious discipline and forms of ritualistic practices and social habits prevalent in the Hindu society, there is an essential uniformity in the concept of religion and in the outlook on life and the world.

Muslim emperors ruled India for seven hundred years. The British ruled India for two hundred years. Some joined Islam through force. The number of Muslims in undivided India was ninety million. The number of Christians in India was ten million. The Muslim emperors and the British were not able to convert the whole of India. The glory of Hinduism still persists. The culture of Hinduism prevails. Nothing can shake its greatness and root. Hinduism is neither asceticism nor illusionism, neither polytheism nor pantheism. It is a synthesis of all types of religious experiences. It is a whole and complete view of life. It is characterised by wide tolerance, deep humanity and high spiritual purpose. It is free from fanaticism. That is the reason why it has survived the attacks of the followers of other great religions of the world. It is extremely catholic, liberal, elastic and tolerant. No other religion is as elastic and tolerant as Hinduism. It is very stern and rigid regarding the fundamentals but is elastic in readjusting to the externals and non-essentials. That is the reason why it has survived through millenniums.

Hinduism stands unrivalled in the depth of its philosophy. Its ethical teachings are lofty and unique. It is highly flexible and adaptable to every human need. It is a perfect religion in itself and is not in need of anything from any other religion. No other religion has produced so many great saints, great patriots, great warriors and pure women. The more you know of the Hindu religion, the more you will honour and love it. The more you study it, the more will it enlighten and satisfy your heart.

Become true Hindus. Let the flame of true love fire your soul. Stand up. Gird up the loins. The hostile forces are ready to absorb you. Strengthen yourself. Unite.

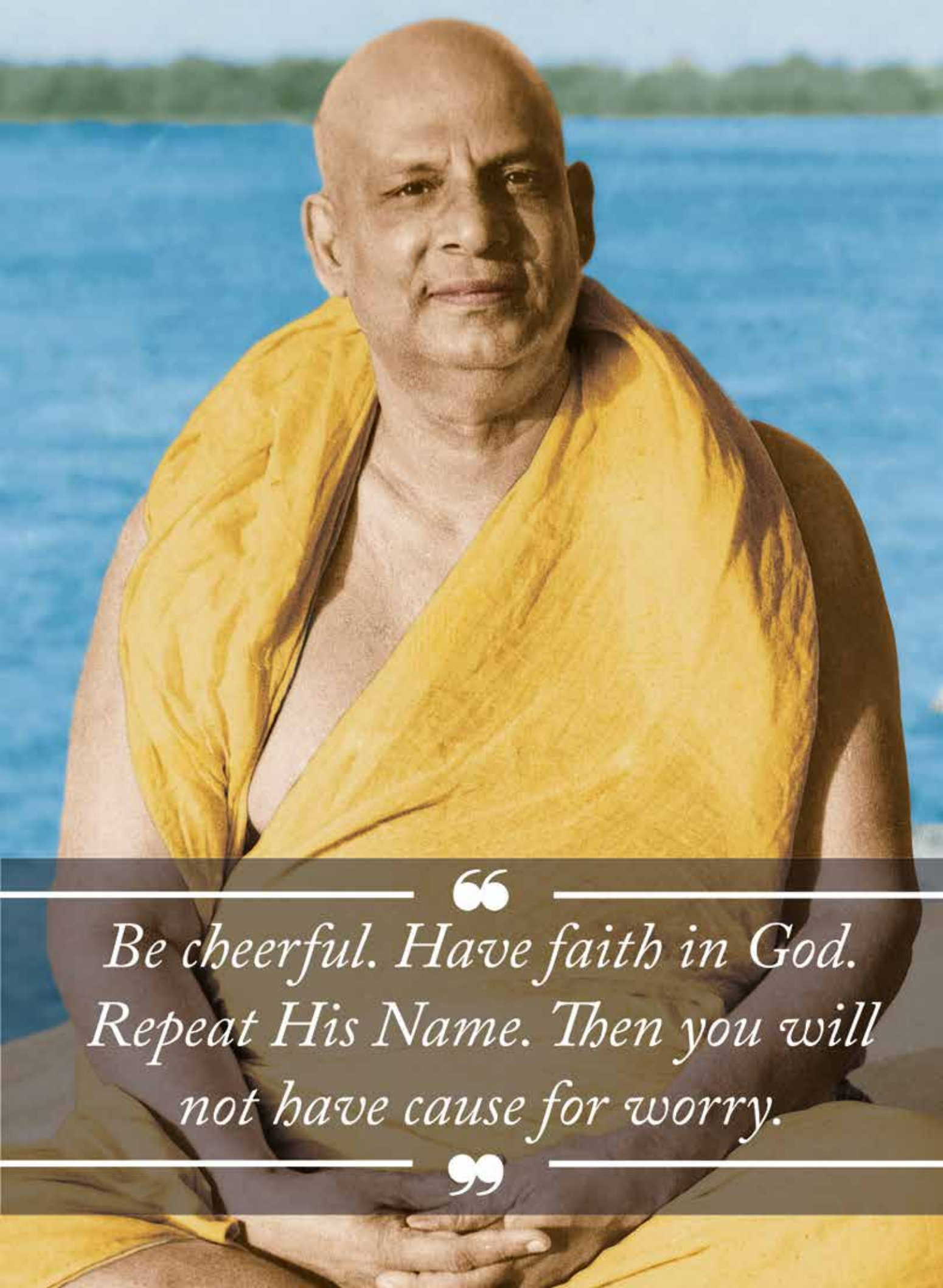
Chant the Divine Name in the temple, at home, at your workplace, while driving and at all times. O man, take refuge in the Divine Name. God and His Name are inseparable. Sing the Lord's Name incessantly. Remember the Name of the Lord with every incoming and outgoing breath. In this age, repetition of the Divine Name is the easiest, quickest, safest and surest way to reach God and attain immortality and perennial joy. Glory to the Lord! Glory to His Name! Glory to Hinduism!■

Power of Hindu Dharma

The culture of Hinduism prevails,
Nothing can shake its greatness and root,
Hinduism is not a man-made religion,
It was not founded by any single person,
Like Islam and Christianity,
It is a product of the seers of the Vedas,
It was developed from age to age
By the teachings of Avataras, Rishis, Vedas,
The Upanishads, the Gita, and the Itihasas,
It will exist as long as the world lasts,
There is a peculiar, mysterious spiritual force
That is ingrained in the heart of every Hindu;
A Hindu will give up his life
But he will not give up his principles and Dharma;
He won't be tempted by woman or wealth for conversion,
He would rather prefer death than conversion.

Swami Sivananda

"True sympathy is putting yourself in another's place."—Sri Swami Sivananda


“
Be cheerful. Have faith in God.
Repeat His Name. Then you will
not have cause for worry.
”

Sublimating The Sex Urge

If the Veerya or semen is lost, the breath gets unsteady. If the breath gets agitated, one becomes nervous. Then the mind also cannot work properly and the person becomes fickle-minded. There is mental weakness. Such a person will not be able to engage in selfless service effectively. Brahmacharya brings both material and spiritual progress. It is a powerful weapon for waging war against the demons of lust, anger, jealousy and greed. It gives great energy, a clear brain, strong will, retentive memory and good power of enquiry.

Lack of Brahmacharya causes loss of memory, a weak will, nervous disorders, tension, poor concentration and diseases. The ignorant man is an instrument in the hands of his thoughts and actions. Man, the master of his destiny, has lost his divine glory and has become a slave, a tool in the hands of sex and ego. Sex and ego are the products of ignorance. Attainment of knowledge of God destroys these two enemies.

Some Western psychologists wrongly believe that if one does not indulge in sex, then there is a danger of developing some kind of "complex" in the mind; they feel that some undesirable results, such as diseases, may appear. This is an ill-founded doubt. These complexes are due to other causes. They are morbid states due to excessive jealousy, hatred, anger, worry and depression. In fact, the opposite is true. Even a little practice of self-restraint is an ideal "pick-me-up". It gives inner strength and peace of mind. It invigorates the mind and nerves. It helps one to save physical and mental energy. It helps to increase one's memory, will-power and brain power. It bestows immense strength, vigour and vitality. It gives new life to the system, rebuilds the tissues and cells, improves digestion, and gives one power to face difficulties in the daily battle of life.

A perfect Brahmachari can shake the whole world, can stop the waves of the ocean, like Lord Jesus did. Like the youthful sage, Jnana Dev, he can blow up mountains and command the five elements. There is nothing in the world that cannot be achieved by such a person.

A well-disciplined life, study of scriptures, holy company, repetition of the Divine Name, meditation, breathing exercises, pure and moderate diet, daily self-analysis and introspection, practice of right conduct—all these will pave the way towards the attainment of perfection in Brahmacharya. Most people lead a life without any kind of discipline and religious ideals, with the result that they are always filled with cares, worries and anxieties. They get entangled and create many problems for themselves. In the case of children, pure, non-stimulating food, games and daily exercises are very important for keeping up Brahmacharya.

THE IDEAL BRAHMACHARI

The word "Brahmachari" is used in two senses. Firstly, there is the student Brahmachari. He marries and becomes a householder after his study. He is in the first of the four stages of life prescribed in Hindu law books. The second type of Brahmachari is the one we are concerned with here. He is the lifelong celibate. Brahmacharis of this latter type are very rare. The lifelong Brahmachari is one who has not allowed a single drop of semen to be wasted for an unbroken period of twelve years. Such a person can have the vision of God without effort. He achieves the goal of life. Even the sun pales before such a Brahmachari, as he glows with effulgence.

The seminal energy of a true Brahmachari has been converted into spiritual energy through the process called sex-sublimation. Such a person can turn out a great amount of mental work. He is very intelligent. He has a magnetic aura on his face. His eyes shine very brightly.

Swami Vivekananda, the great disciple of Sri Ramakrishna, attributed his phenomenal memory to the practice of unbroken Brahmacharya. Swami Dayananda, the founder of the Arya Samaj, was also a perfect Brahmachari and possessed great physical strength also. The body of the perfect celibate has the smell of a lotus flower. A man who is very lustful, and in whom the gross semen is formed, may, on the other hand, have the odour of a goat. The semen dries up in those who practise breath control seriously. It is then stored in the brain as spiritual energy and returns again as sweet nectar.

Glory to those who have attained perfect sex-sublimation and who rest in their own divine nature! May we all attain success in Brahmacharya through the practice of self-restraint, enquiry, dispassion, prayer and repetition of the Divine Name! May we all reach the goal of life in this very birth! May the Indweller of our hearts grant us spiritual strength! May we all become perfect Brahmacharis like the saints and sages of yore!

WHY BRAHMACHARYA IS DIFFICULT

A man has a thousand and one desires, but the one central, strong desire is the sexual desire. All other desires hang on this main, central desire. Desire for money, desire for a child, desire for property, desire for wealth—all these

"Lust is the greatest enemy on earth."—Sri Swami Sivananda

come later. Because the whole creation of this universe has to be kept up, the Lord has made the sexual desire very powerful. The sexual desire urges one to indulge in sex, which results in the process of childbirth. So sexual desire is absolutely necessary for the preservation of the human species. Had it not been for the sexual desire, there would have been as many sages in this world as university graduates. It is easy to get a university degree. It demands money, memory, intelligence and a little strain. But it is really an uphill task to master the sexual impulse.

There is always a complaint amongst spiritual aspirants that they do not get success in Brahmacharya despite their earnest and sincere practice. They get discouraged. This is a sad mistake. There is a thermometer in the spiritual realm also. It is very subtle. This thermometer will indicate progress even if you score the smallest victory over your undesirable urges. You require a pure intellect to see the degree of purity that has been gained. Intense spiritual practice and burning desire for liberation bring about the highest degree of mental purity.

If one repeats a sacred syllable for half an hour daily, the spiritual thermometer at once registers a degree of purity or Brahmacharya. Due to the impure intellect, one is unable to note it. Do spiritual practices for one or two years. Note the condition of your mind after that period. You will find a vast change. There will be more calmness, purity and strength. There will be no doubt about this. Much struggle and exertion are necessary.

THE EIGHT BREAKS IN BRAHMACHARYA

There are eight kinds of breaks, so to say, in the current of unbroken Brahmacharya practice. You must avoid them through great care, sincere effort and vigilant attention. Then only will you be perfectly successful in the practice of Brahmacharya.

1. Looking at a member of the opposite sex with carnal desire.
2. Desire to touch, embrace or be near a person of the opposite sex.
3. Praising his or her qualities to your friends.
4. Amorous sport with the opposite sex.
5. Talking privately to a member of the opposite sex.
6. Lustful thought of the opposite sex.
7. Strong desire for carnal knowledge.
8. Sexual enjoyment.

Only one who is free from all the above can be called a perfect Brahmachari. A real Brahmachari, who is seeking God earnestly, and who is engaged in spiritual practices, should avoid all these breaks ruthlessly. A break in any one of these vows is a break in Brahmacharya. This point should be well borne in mind.

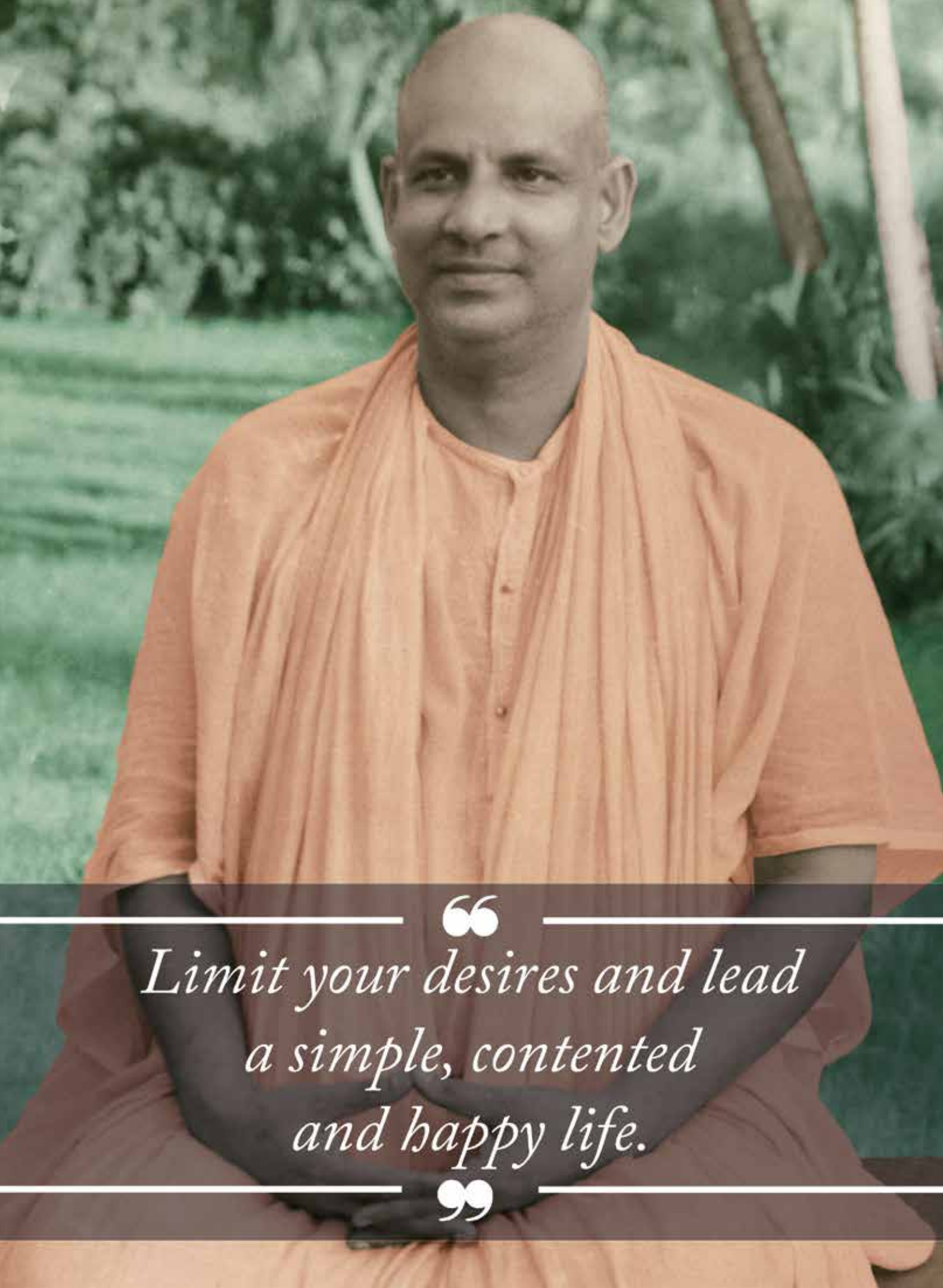
RULES FOR BRAHMACHARIS

The Hindu scriptures say: "The Brahmacharis, as long as they are in school life, must get into the habit of controlling their senses by abstaining from alcohol, meat, perfumes, flower garlands and the company of the opposite sex. They should avoid violence. They should avoid foods that cause restlessness, oil, eye-paste, gambling, gossip, lies, looking at the opposite sex, striking each other and sleeping with others.

"The student should never, not even in dreams, let go of his Veerya. If he does it willingly or knowingly, he fails in his duty. It is death to him. It is a sin. He is a fallen victim. By means of proper spiritual practices he should try to preserve the vital force. By the practice of Brahmacharya alone can he make physical, mental and spiritual progress".

The following rules are useful for those trying to observe Brahmacharya in thought, word and deed:

1. Give up evil company, loose talks, cinemas, and novels and newspapers dealing with sex and love. Do not mix freely with the opposite sex. If this is found unavoidable, a male can mentally address a member of the opposite sex as "mother". A female can address a male as "father". Sri Ramakrishna worshipped God as the Divine Mother and looked upon all women as Her form. Anandamoyi Ma, the well-known saint of Bengal, used to address all elderly males as "Pitaji" or "Baba".
2. Keep your head bowed while you walk in the street.
3. Minimise your needs. Do not look into the mirror often. Lead a rigorous, disciplined life.
4. Root out love of leisure and ease. Overcome laziness and always be engaged in some useful work. Let the mind be always occupied in the study of spiritual literature or some active work along useful lines. Let there be no time for idle pleasure.
5. Let the work you do be a source of joy. Find pleasure in your work. Let it not be done under compulsion. The mind turns away from that which it does not like, and then takes recourse to other objects for getting pleasure. You should work freely and happily, so that there may not be occasions for the mind to resort to unhealthy practices. Work for the sake of the Lord. Then all work will become interesting. Take to hard physical labour but do not exhaust yourself. Do your work as a hobby. Then you can do it happily without any anxiety or worry.
6. Practise Yoga postures. Practise breath control. Take long walks. Take part in games and sports.
7. Take cold baths if you can. Don't use perfumes and fashionable dress. Do not attend dance or music parties. Do not sing worldly songs. You may take part in singing devotional songs without trying to display your musical talent.■


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Limit your desires and lead
a simple, contented
and happy life.
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Sadhana

Sadhana is spiritual movement that is consciously systematised. Sadhana is the purpose for which we have come here. Sadhana is a lifelong process. Every day, every hour, every minute, is an onward march. Obstacles are innumerable on this great voyage. But, so long as you hold God on your side and as your guide, there is nothing to worry about. You are sure to reach the other shore.

Mere curiosity will not help you to attain any spiritual progress. This curiosity-mongering is more abominable than mischief-mongering. Introspect and analyse your thoughts and find out whether you have real spiritual hunger or mere curiosity. Transmute curiosity-mongering into real thirst for salvation by constantly keeping company with the holy, by studying religious books, by prayer, repetition of the Lord's Name and meditation.

You must select a practice that is suitable for you. You must have the ability and capacity to do Sadhana. Then alone you will have joy and full success. Moral purity and spiritual aspiration are the first steps on the path of the seeker. Without a strong conviction in moral values, there can surely be no spiritual life or even a good life.

Stern self-discipline is absolutely essential. Self-discipline does not mean suppression, but taming the brute within. It means humanisation of the animal and spiritualisation of the human.

The spiritual path is rugged, thorny, and precipitous. The thorns must be weeded out with patience and perseverance. Some of the thorns are internal; some are external. Lust, greed, wrath, delusion and vanity are internal thorns. The company of evil-minded persons is the worst of all the external thorns. Therefore, shun evil company ruthlessly.

During the period of Sadhana, do not mix much, do not talk much; do not walk much, do not eat much, do not sleep much. Carefully observe the five "do-not's". Mixing will cause disturbance in the mind, while talking much will cause distraction of the mind. Walking much will cause exhaustion and weakness. Eating too much will induce laziness and lethargy.

During the period of Sadhana avoid the company of the opposite sex. You must never mix much with young people, however strong you might be. Maya works through undercurrents so stealthily that you may not be aware of your actual downfall. Keep the mind fully occupied with spiritual pursuits and keep yourself as far as possible from everything that would stir up your passions. Then only will you be safe.

Do not live with householders who are worldly-minded. Do not test your spiritual strength and purity when you are a beginner on the spiritual path. Do not rush into evil associations while you are a spiritual neophyte, to show that you have the courage and strength to face sin and impurity. It will be a serious mistake and you will be running into grave danger. You will have a quick downfall. A small fire can be very easily extinguished by a heap of dust.

Mind has a great power of imitation. That is the reason why a spiritual aspirant is prohibited from mixing with worldly-minded people. His mind will try to imitate the worldlings and a downfall will ensue.

The spiritual path may in the beginning, appear to be very hard, thorny, precipitous and slippery. Renunciation of objects gives pain at the outset. If you struggle hard to tread the path, if you have strong determination and firm resolve, then it becomes very easy. You have renewed joy and interest. Your heart expands and you have a broad outlook on life. You have a new, wide vision and feel the help from the invisible hands of the Indweller of your heart. Your doubts are cleared by themselves by getting answers from within. You can hear the insistent, sweet voice of God.

The new life produces an indescribable thrill of divine ecstasy from within, and deep, abiding, everlasting joy and unruffled peace. There is enjoyment of ineffable, unabating, undecaying and undiminishing spiritual bliss. This gives new strength and the footing on the path becomes firmer. The realised sages, Yogis, liberated souls and immortal beings lend their helping hands to the struggling aspirants. The aspirants actually feel this. The feeling of loneliness and of being neglected and forsaken vanish entirely. The aspirant is always backed up by the mighty power that works everywhere in the cosmos. Therefore there is nothing to fear. If he takes care of the details in Sadhana, the major factors will take care of themselves.

Spiritual progress is slow as the spiritual Sadhana is difficult and very laborious. It is like a spiral. In the beginning, great striving is needed. Gradually, the circle becomes smaller and smaller. The striving also then becomes less. The aspirant gains spiritual strength

slowly. He marches faster after some time. Eventually, he goes not go by furlongs but proceeds mile after mile. He gallops. Therefore, be patient and persevering. Be steady.

True spiritual progress is really and accurately measured by the peace, serenity, and calmness that you manifest in the waking state. You will have a body that is healthy, the secretions will be scanty, the mind will be calm, the voice will be sweet and the face brilliant. The eyes will be lustrous. You will ever be calm, tranquil and poised, you will be ever cheerful, fearless, and content. You will be dispassionate and discriminative. There will be no attraction for the world, and things that used to upset you before will not upset you now. You will have an unruffled mind and heart. There will be introversion of the mind.

Things that used to give you pleasure will now produce disgust. You will have a one-pointed mind that will be sharp and subtle. You will long to have more meditation. You will experience visions, lights, divine smell and divine taste. The idea that all forms are forms of the Lord will become stronger. Everywhere you will feel the Presence of God. You will experience the nearness of God. You will have a steady posture. You will develop a burning desire for selfless service.

Watch whether you are stagnant on the spiritual path or retrogressing or advancing. If your repetition of God's Name, meditation and Vedantic enquiry thicken the veil and fatten the ego, it is not then spiritual Sadhana that you are doing. Remember this point well. It is only a kind of occult practice. Watch and introspect. Practise self-analysis and ruthlessly kill this formidable egoism. This is an important Sadhana. Egoism will lurk like a thief and assume various forms like a chameleon or a dramatic actor.

Do not stop spiritual practices when you have a few glimpses of the Self. Continue the practice till you are fully established in the unconditioned Brahman. This is important. If you stop the practice and move about in the world, there is every likelihood of a downfall.

Beware of reactions. Examples are not lacking. Numerous aspirants have been so ruined. A glimpse cannot give you perfect safety. Do not be carried away by name and fame. You can renounce your wife, children, parents, home, friends and relatives, but it is very difficult to renounce intellectual pleasure, the pleasure for name and fame. I warn you seriously.

A man who can draw happiness from the Atman within, will never care for this trivial, paltry world. The world is a mighty big thing for one immersed in sensual pleasures. It is like a straw to a knower of Brahman. It is like a mustard seed, a pin-point, a dot, a bubble, an airy nothing to a knower of the Self.

Sometimes the aspirant gets stuck and cannot proceed further on the path. Sometimes he is side-tracked through psychic powers. He loses his way and walks in some other direction, missing the goal. Sometimes he is assailed by temptations and various oppositions. Sometimes he has false contentment and thinks he has reached his goal and stops all Sadhana. Sometimes he is careless, lazy and indolent, he cannot do any Sadhana. Therefore, be eternally vigilant, like the captain of a ship, like the surgeon in the operation theatre.

The spiritual path is full of hurdles. If you conquer one obstacle, another is ready to manifest. If you control the sense of taste, another sense is simply waiting to assault you with redoubled force and vigour. If you remove greed, anger waits to hurl you down. If you drive out egoism through one door, it enters through another. Great patience, great perseverance, vigilance, and undaunted strength are needed.

Be steady, firm and steadfast. People will mock at you; be silent. People will insult you; be silent. People will spread evil rumours about you; be silent. Stick to the spiritual path and do not swerve. Seek the Truth wherever it may lead you, and whatever be the cost and sacrifice.

Act now and live now. Know and realise now. Be happy now. Every death is a reminder. Every bell that rings, says, "The end is near." Every day robs you of one part of your precious life. Therefore, you should be very earnest in plunging yourself in constant Sadhana. Never fall a victim to fruitless regret. Today is the best day. Today is the day of your new birth. Start Sadhana now. With folded palms, bid goodbye to past mistakes and faults. You have learnt your lessons. March forward now with new hope, determination, and vigilance.

Waver not. Fear not. Doubt not. Do something substantial in the path of Sadhana instead of wasting your time in idle pursuits and lethargy. You have infinite strength within you. There is a vast reservoir of power within you. Therefore, do not lose heart. Obstacles are stepping stones to success and will develop your will. Do not allow yourself to be crushed by them. Defects remind you of perfection. Sins reminds you of virtues. Choose the positive path.■

"A disciple must be punctual in the service of the Guru."

—Sri Swami Sivananda, *Guru Bhakti Yoga*

Meditation

Leading a virtuous life is not by itself sufficient for God-realisation. Concentration of mind is absolutely necessary for spiritual success. A good, virtuous life merely prepares the mind to be a fit instrument for concentration and meditation. It is concentration and meditation that eventually lead to the realisation of the Self. Without the help of meditation, you cannot attain knowledge of the Self. Without its aid, you cannot grow into the divine state. Without it, you cannot liberate yourself from the trammels of the mind and attain immortality. Meditation is the only royal road to the attainment of salvation or liberation.

WHAT IS MEDITATION?

Meditation is keeping up an unceasing flow of God-consciousness. All worldly thoughts are shut out from the mind. It is filled or saturated with divine thoughts, divine glory and the Divine Presence. Meditation is the seventh rung or step on the ladder of Yoga. Forget the body and surroundings. Forgetting is the highest spiritual practice. It helps meditation a great deal and makes the approach to God easier. By remembering God you can forget everything else. Lord Jesus says: "Empty thyself and I shall fill thee". This corresponds to the teachings of Patanjali Maharishi. He says: "Yoga is annihilation of all mental functions." In the beginning of Yogic practices, there are countless waves in the mind. There is much agitation and tossing. Gradually the thought-waves subside. In the end, all mental modifications are controlled.

HOW TO PRACTISE MEDITATION

Sit in a quiet place in the Lotus or cross-legged posture. Free yourself from all passions, emotions and impulses. Subjugate the senses and withdraw the mind from objects. Now the mind will be calm, one-pointed, pure and subtle. With the help of this trained instrument, the disciplined mind, contemplate on that one infinite Self. Do not think of anything else. Do not allow any worldly thoughts to enter the mind. Do not allow it to think of any physical or mental enjoyment. When it indulges in these thoughts, give it a good hammering. Then it will move towards God. Just as the Ganges flows continuously towards the sea, so also thoughts of God should flow continuously towards the Lord.

You must have a clear mental image of God or Brahman—concrete or abstract—before you begin to meditate. If you are a neophyte in meditation, start repeating some sublime verses or hymns for ten minutes as soon as you sit for meditation. This will elevate the mind. It can then be easily withdrawn from worldly objects. Then stop this kind of thinking also and fix the mind on one idea only through repeated and strenuous effort. Then meditation will ensue. In the beginning of meditation, neophytes fall into their old grooves. They have to lift up their minds again and again and fix it on the goal.

WHAT HAPPENS DURING MEDITATION

In meditation, new grooves are formed in the brain, and the mind moves upwards in the new spiritual grooves. When the mind becomes steady during meditation, the eyeballs also become steady. When you enter into very deep, silent meditation, the breath will flow in a very fine stream or not at all for some time. There may be occasional, slow movement of the lungs and the abdomen.

In profound and continued meditation, thinking ceases. There is only one idea of "I am Brahman". When this idea also is given up, the Superconscious State ensues, where mental modifications cease to exist and the non-dual consciousness is experienced. Just as salt melts in water, so also the pure mind melts in silence in Brahman, its substratum.

AIDS IN MEDITATION

For the practice of meditation you must have a calm, clear, pure, subtle, sharp, steady and one-pointed intellect. Brahman is pure and subtle, and you need a pure and subtle mind to approach Brahman.

Those who have removed the impurities of the mind through the repetition of the Name of the Lord, through charity, selfless service and Pranayama, will enter into deep meditation as soon as they sit for practice. The pure mind will at once burn with the fire of meditation.

SOME USEFUL HINTS

During meditation, do not strain the eyes or the brain. Do not struggle or wrestle with the mind. It is a serious mistake. Make no violent effort to control the mind but rather allow it a little freedom for a while and let it run and exhaust its efforts. At first the mind will jump about like an untrained monkey. Gradually it will slow down. Do not drive away intruding thoughts with violence. Gently allow the divine thoughts to flow. Vicious thoughts will vanish by themselves. During meditation, under pressure of Yoga and through the Grace of God, various kinds of impurities float about on the surface of the mind. You must bravely remove them one by one by suitable methods and counter-virtues.

Good qualities and dispassion help meditation. Meditation

"Meditation on the Guru is the royal road to attain Godhead."—Sri Swami Sivananda

increases the pure qualities. When you meditate, when you develop divine or pure qualities, a spiritual road is constructed in the mind. If you are not regular in your practice, if your dispassion wanes, if you become careless and non-vigilant, the spiritual road will be washed away by the flood of impure thoughts and evil, latent desires. Therefore, be regular in your meditation. Regularity is of paramount importance.

REASONS FOR FAILURE IN MEDITATION

There is always a complaint amongst aspirants: "I have been meditating for the last twelve years but have made no progress. I have realised nothing. Why is it so? What is the reason?" They have not plunged themselves in deep meditation into the innermost recesses of their hearts. They have not saturated their minds thoroughly with thoughts of God. They have not done regular and systematic spiritual practices. They have not disciplined the senses perfectly. They have not collected all the outgoing rays of the mind. They have not made the self-determination: "I will realise this very second." They have not given the full hundred per cent of the mind—their full mind—to God.

If the meditator has divine thoughts for ten minutes and worldly conflicting thoughts for the next ten minutes, he will not succeed in getting merged in Divine Consciousness. You must run after one rabbit only with vigour, strength and one-pointedness. You will surely catch it. You must have only divine thoughts at all times. Then you are sure to realise God and enjoy peace. You must not be too eager for the fruits when you take to meditation. If you meditate for some time regularly, then the mind will become one-pointed and you will eventually get Self-realisation. Haste makes waste.

EXPERIENCES IN MEDITATION

Aspirants get different spiritual experiences in meditation. There cannot be a common experience for all. It depends upon the temperament, mode of spiritual practice, place of concentration and various other factors. Some hear melodious sounds in the ears. Some see light. Some have spiritual bliss. Some have both luminosity and bliss. During the practice of meditation, one may experience that one is rising from the seat. Some feel that they are flying in the air. If you have glimpses of the Self during intense meditation, if you see a blazing light, and if you have visions of angels, archangels, seers, ascetics, gods and any other extraordinary spiritual experiences, do not fall back in terror. Do not mistake them for phantoms. Do not give up the spiritual practice. Plod on. Persevere diligently and break veil after veil.

Aspirants are eager to have spiritual experiences quickly. As soon as they have them, they get afraid. They are greatly alarmed when they go beyond body-consciousness. They entertain a passing wonder whether they will come back again or not. Why should they be afraid at all? It does not matter much whether you return to body-consciousness or not. All our attempts are directed mainly towards getting over this body-consciousness. Courage is needed. It is an indispensable requisite.

If your general health is sound, if you are cheerful, happy and strong, physically and mentally, if the mind is peaceful and unruffled, if you experience bliss in meditation, and if your will is growing strong, pure and irresistible, know that you are improving in meditation and that everything is going on alright.

MEDITATION AND WORK

He who meditates is often not able to work. He who works is not able to meditate. This is not balance or equanimity. The two principles—meditation and action—must be well balanced. You must be able, if you are ready to follow the Divine injunction, to take up whatever work you are given—even stupendous work—and leave it the next day, with the same quietness with which you took it up, and without feeling that the responsibility is yours.

BENEFITS OF MEDITATION

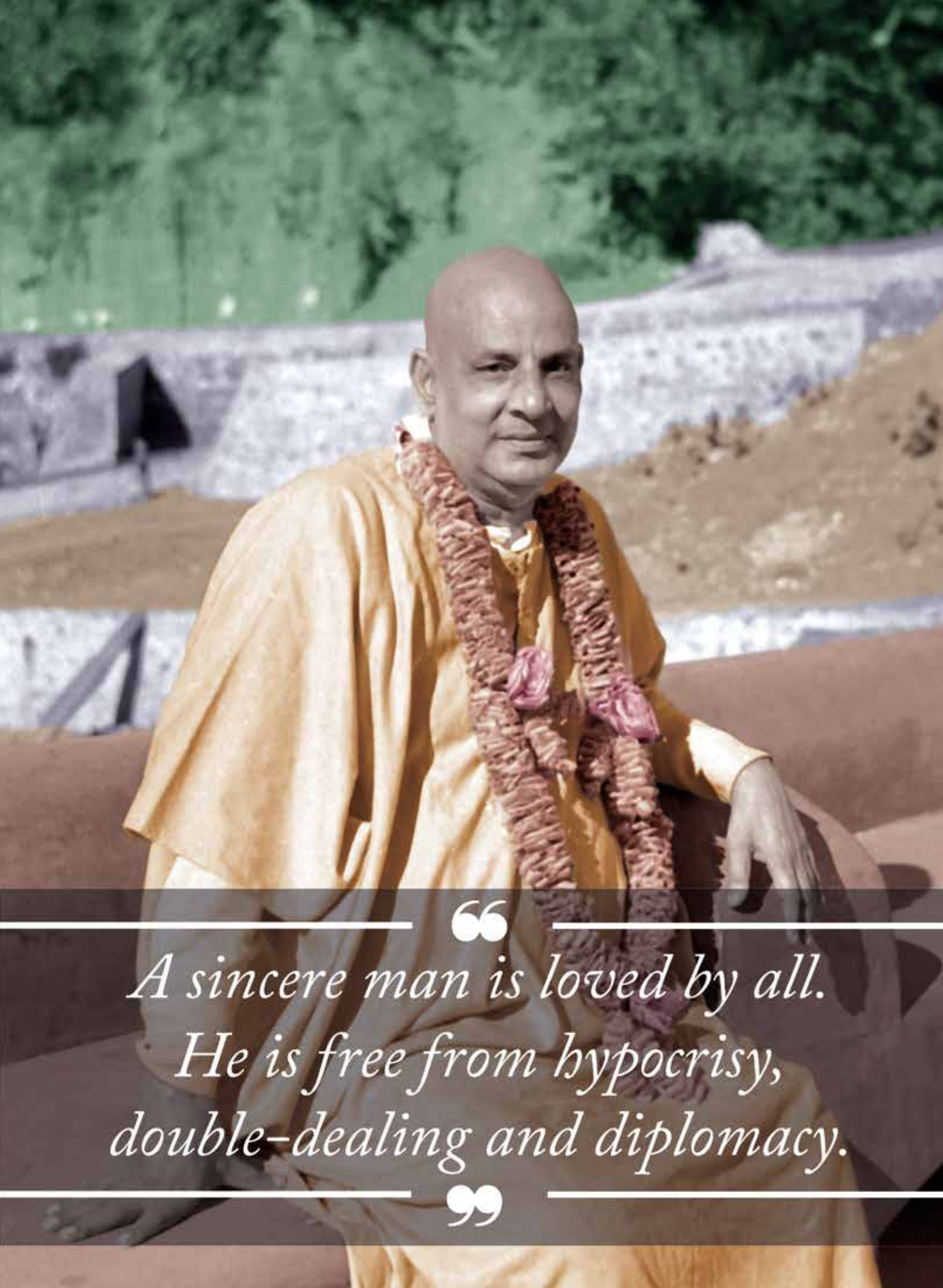
Meditation acts as a powerful tonic. The Divine energy freely flows from the Feet of the Lord to the different organs of the aspirant. The holy vibrations penetrate all the cells of the body and cure diseases. Those who meditate save on doctors' bills.

Meditation helps much in checking various emotions and impulses. If you regulate your emotions and moods, you will not do foolish and wrong actions. If you meditate for one or two hours in the early part of the morning, you will be able to work peacefully throughout the day. Nothing will disturb your mind. Regular meditation opens the avenues of intuitional knowledge, makes the mind calm and steady, awakens an ecstatic feeling and brings the student of Yoga in contact with the Supreme Spirit.

Meditation develops strong and pure thoughts. Mental images are clear-cut and well defined. Good thoughts are well-grounded. Through clarification of ideas, confusion vanishes. You will yourself feel the way to place your steps on the next rung of the spiritual ladder. A mysterious inner voice will guide you. Listen to it attentively. If there are doubts, they will all be cleared as you march steadily on the path of meditation.

The fire of meditation annihilates all impurities due to vice. Then comes sudden knowledge. This divine wisdom directly leads to final emancipation. Meditate, meditate. Do not lose even a single minute. Meditation will remove all the miseries of life. That is the only way.■

"Prayer can move mountains."—Sri Swami Sivananda



A sincere man is loved by all.
He is free from hypocrisy,
double-dealing and diplomacy.

Guru

The Guru is God Himself manifesting in a personal form to guide the aspirant. The Grace of God takes the form of the Guru. To see the Guru is to see God. The Guru is united with God. He inspires devotion in others and his presence purifies all. He stands, as it were, upon the threshold of immortality, and bending down, raises the struggling individuals with one hand while with the other lifts them up into the imperium of everlasting joy and infinite Truth-Consciousness.

THE TRUE GURU

To be a Guru one must have a command from God. Mere study of books cannot make one a Guru. One who has studied the scriptures and who has direct knowledge of Brahman through experience, can alone be enrolled as a Guru. A liberated sage is the real Guru or spiritual preceptor. He is the knower of Brahman. A true Guru is endowed with countless psychic powers. He possesses all divine powers and all the wealth of the Lord.

Possession of psychic powers, however, is not the test of the greatness of a sage or proof that he has attained Self-realisation. True Gurus generally do not exhibit any miracle or Siddhi. Sometimes, however, they may do so in order to convince the aspirants of the existence of super physical things, and to give them encouragement and instil faith in their hearts.

The true Guru is Brahman Himself. He is an ocean of bliss, knowledge and mercy. He is the captain of your soul, the fountain of joy. He removes all your troubles, sorrows and obstacles. He shows you the right divine path and tears the veil of ignorance. Do not consider him to be only a man; if you do so, you are a beast. Worship your Guru and bow to him with reverence. Guru is God. A word from him is a word from God. He need not teach anything. His very presence or company is elevating, inspiring and stirring; his very company brings Self-illumination. Living in his company is spiritual education. Read the *Granth-Saheb* (the holy scripture of the Sikh religion). You will come to know the greatness of the Guru.

Man can learn only from man, and hence God teaches through a human body. The Guru is a help, but the actual task of practical spiritual practice falls on the aspirant himself.

THE NEED FOR A GURU

For a beginner on the spiritual path, a Guru is necessary. Some do meditation for some years independently. Later on, they actually feel the necessity of a Guru. They come across some obstacles on the way. They then begin to search for a Master.

The scriptures are like a forest. There are ambiguous passages. There are passages which are apparently contradictory. There are passages which have esoteric meanings, diverse significance and hidden explanations. There are cross references. You need a Guru or preceptor who will explain to you the right meaning, who will remove doubts and ambiguities, who will place before you the essence of the teachings.

A Guru is absolutely necessary for every aspirant on the spiritual path. It is only a Guru who can discover your defects. The nature of egoism is such that you will not be able to find out your own faults. Cases of those who had attained perfection without studying under a Guru should not be cited as authority against the necessity of a Guru, for such great men are the anomalies of spiritual life and not the common normality. They come into existence as spiritual Masters, as a result of the intense service, study and meditation practised in previous lives. They had already studied under a Guru.

Some teachers mislead their aspirants by saying: "Think for yourself. Do not surrender yourself to any Guru". When one says: "Do not follow any Guru," he intends to be the listeners' Guru himself. All great ones had their teachers. All the sages, saints, prophets, world teachers, Avatars (incarnations) and great men have had their own Gurus, however great they might have been. Lord Krishna sat at the feet of His Guru, Sandeepani. Lord Rama had sage Vasishtha who gave Him spiritual advice. Lord Jesus sought to be baptised by John on the banks of the river Jordan.

HOW TO CHOOSE YOUR GURU

If you find peace in the presence of a great soul, if you are inspired by his speech, if he is able to clear your doubts, if he is free from greed, lust and anger, if he is selfless, loving and "I"-less, you can take him as your Guru. He who is able to clear your doubts, who is sympathetic towards your spiritual practices, who does not disturb your beliefs but helps you on from where you are, he in whose very presence you feel spiritually elevated—he is your Guru. Once you choose your Guru, follow him implicitly. God will guide you through him.

Do not use your reason too much in the selection of your Guru, for you will fail if you do so. If you fail to find a first-class Guru, try to follow the instructions of a

"Guru Bhakti Yoga is a Yoga by itself."—Sri Swami Sivananda

spiritual person who has trodden the path for some years, who has purity and other virtuous qualities, and who has some knowledge of the scriptures. If you are not even able to find a second-class type of Guru, you can follow the teachings contained in the books written by realised saints like Sankara, Dattatreya, and others. You can keep a photograph of such a realised Guru, if available, and worship it with faith and devotion. In the course of time, you will receive inspiration, and the Guru may appear in dream and initiate and inspire you at the proper time.

MYSTERIOUS HELP FROM THE LORD

Just see how the Lord helped the devotees in the following instances. Eknath heard a voice in the sky which said: "See Janardhan Pant at Deva Giri. He will put you on the proper path and guide you." Eknath acted accordingly and found his Guru. Tukaram received his Mantra—*Ram Krishna Hari*—in a dream. He repeated it and had the vision of Krishna.

SIKSHA GURUS AND DIKSHA GURUS

Man has a twofold duty here on earth. First, to preserve his life, and second, to realise his Self. To preserve his life, he has to learn to work for his daily bread. To realise his Self he has to serve, love and meditate. The Guru who shows him the path of realisation is the Diksha Guru. Siksha Gurus can be many, as many as the things he wishes to learn. The Diksha Guru can be only one, the one who leads him to Moksha or God-realisation.

STICK TO ONE GURU

Do not dig shallow pits here and there for getting water, for the pits will dry up soon. Dig very deep in one place and centralise all your efforts here. You will find good water that will suffice throughout the year. Even so, try to imbibe thoroughly the spiritual teachings of one preceptor only. Drink deeply from one man alone. Sit at his feet for some years. It is useless to wander from one to another out of curiosity, losing faith in a short time.

One Guru will tell you: "Do this." Another will tell you: "Do that." A third Guru will tell you: "Do the other." You will be quite puzzled. Stick to one Guru and follow his instructions. Listen to all but follow one. Respect all but adore one. Gather knowledge from all but adopt the teachings of one only. Then you will have rapid spiritual progress.

GURU-DISCIPLE LINEAGE

Spiritual knowledge is handed down from the Guru to the disciple. Totapuri imparted knowledge to Sri Ramakrishna, and Ramakrishna to Swami Vivekananda. It was Ashtavakra who moulded the life of Raja Janaka. It was Lord Krishna who established Arjuna and Uddhava on the spiritual path when their minds were in an unsettled state.

INITIATION & ITS MEANING

A sage or saint like Sri Sankara or Madhusudana Saraswati can initiate an aspirant in any particular path for which the aspirant is fit. The Guru will find out by a study of the aspirant, his tastes, temperament and capacity, and decide which is the most suitable path for him. If his heart is impure, the teacher will prescribe selfless service for a number of years. Then the Guru will find out for what particular path the student is fit and initiate him in that path. Initiation does not mean reciting a Mantra into another's ear.

TRANSFERENCE OF POWER BY A DEVELOPED YOGI

Spiritual vibrations of the Master are actually transferred to the mind of the disciple. Spiritual power is transmitted by the Guru to a disciple whom the Guru considers fit. The Guru can transform the disciple by a look, a touch, a thought, a word, or by mere willing. This ability derives from the Guru-disciple lineage. It is a hidden mystic science and is handed down from Guru to disciple. Through touch, Lord Jesus transmitted his spiritual power to some of his disciples. Lord Krishna touched the blind eyes of Surdas and the inner eye of Surdas was opened. He had knowledge of the Supreme.

The disciple should not rest satisfied with the transmission of power from the Guru. He will have to struggle hard in spiritual practice for further perfection and attainments. Sri Swami Vivekananda was simply touched by Sri Ramakrishna. He had the immediate experience of Nirvikalpa Samadhi, but he struggled hard for seven more years, even after the touch, to attain perfection.

GRACE AND SELF-EFFORT

Realisation cannot come to you as a miracle performed by the Guru. Lord Buddha, Lord Jesus, Rama Tirtha and all other saints did spiritual practices. Lord Krishna asked Arjuna to develop dispassion and to become accomplished in spirituality. He did not say to him: "I will give you liberation now." Therefore, abandon the wrong notion that your Guru will give you the state of Samadhi and liberation. Strive, purify, meditate and realise.

The Grace of a Guru is very necessary. That does not mean that the disciple should sit idle. He must do rigid spiritual practices. All the work must be done by the student. A hungry man will have to eat for himself. He who has a severe itch will have to scratch for himself. No doubt the Guru's blessing can do everything. But how can one have his blessing? By pleasing the Guru. A Guru can be pleased with his disciple only if the latter carries out his spiritual instructions implicitly. Therefore, follow the instructions of the Guru carefully. Act up to his instructions. Only then will you deserve his blessings which can do everything.■

Inspiring *Stories*



Inspiring Story 1

YOUNG COUPLE TAKES THE VOW OF BRAHMACHARYA

By: Sri Swami Sahajananda

A young couple had just entered the life of householders. The girl had a bright, lovely complexion. Her sweet bashful smile always heightened her captivating beauty. But the husband was just the opposite. He had no attractive features. His complexion, too, was dark.

A few days after the marriage, when the girl came to her mother-in-law's home, she felt very depressed. She loved her parents, who had taken so much care of her. Her father worked and earned a little. Her ailing mother had sacrificed everything to give her daughter the best education. So the girl was pining for her mother, due to her attachment to her. So she requested permission of her husband to visit her mother just for a couple of days to ease her mind.

The husband at once said, "Yes, you can go by all means. It will calm your mind and ease your mental anguish. You can stay as long as you like. Do not hesitate to spend even a couple of months with your mother. She will be happy to see you. Then you can come back."

When she heard such sweet and comforting words, the girl felt shocked and surprised. She immediately said, "I will never leave your presence. Now I know what a wonderful husband I have. How kind and considerate you are. You have such an understanding heart. Your only concern is my happiness. You are not at all considering the inconvenience I will cause to you by my absence. Henceforth, you are my heaven on earth. You are my only comfort and solace. My depression has left me the moment you uttered your kind and consoling words."

Both husband and wife lived happily. Every weekend the husband would take his wife to a park or flower garden to give her some diversion to lighten her mind.

One day, while at a park, the husband went to a shop to purchase some eatables and the girl was left alone. A young man, approaching her with a somewhat mischievous smile, asked, "Who is that person I saw with you? Is he your brother or uncle?" The girl replied that he was her husband.

Laughing, the young man remarked, "How is it that you, who have such beautiful features are married to one just the opposite? The physical appearance of your husband even seems a little repulsive."

"Do not speak like that," the girl retorted. "I have been with him for just a couple of weeks now and already I feel that I am in heaven. My husband is so kind and understanding. His only concern is my welfare and happiness. I will be ever devoted to him. What is physical beauty after all? It decays very quickly. Look at a picture of a lovely little girl of nine, and see her again at the age of forty, then you will realise what happens to physical beauty, to which girls pay so much importance."

The girl further added, "I got such a wonderful mate because my parents wanted my husband to have a noble character. They were not concerned whether he was handsome or not, whether he came from a wealthy family, or whether he was highly educated with degrees.

"My parents were concerned only about the exemplary character of my life-partner, because this alone will contribute to my happiness. They explained all this to me and allowed me full freedom to act as I wished. I realised the wisdom of my parents and, after meeting my life-mate and getting to know him for some months, I happily acceded to the choice of my parents. I have complete faith in my parents.

"Today, there are so many conflicts in homes, where the woman is abused and physically assaulted. There are so many divorces and problems. My parents did not want this to happen to me. So, character was their main concern."

The young man, surprised and elevated to hear such wise words, said, "Couples with such noble character should take to the spiritual path and dedicate themselves to God." He invited her and her husband to the Satsang of his Guru, who was a saint of God-vision.

So the next week, both husband and wife attended their first Satsang with the saint. They had never been to any Satsang before. The moment they saw the saint, they were completely captivated. They enjoyed the Satsang with its inspiring Bhajans and Kirtans. The gentle smile of the loving saint, and the exemplary conduct of the devotees also touched them deeply.

The young man who had met the girl in the park informed his Guru of his conversation with her. So, after the Satsang the

saint called the wife and husband and advised, "Couples like you, with such noble character, should dedicate your lives to God. You should not waste it in seeking material comforts, as they often bring only pain and misery. Today, there are so many cases of crimes, murders, hijackings, robberies, etc. People witness all these, yet discrimination and dispassion do not arise in them. They do not question what the purpose of life is, where they have come from, where they are going to. They do not know that the sole purpose of human life is realisation of God.

"There is hardly any happiness even in a single home. People indulge in witnessing base scenes on TV. They violate the vows of marriage. They do not observe Brahmacharya. Their minds are not under control, so they are compelled to do rash things, like uttering falsehood, hating, cheating, robbing, quarrelling, killing, etc. But wastage of the vital force is one of the main causes of present-day problems, as its loss means loss of mind control. Kindly take to earnest spiritual practices from now onwards and, after the birth of the first child, observe complete Brahmacharya."

The couple then asked the saint to explain more fully about the benefits of Brahmacharya. So the saint went on to explain how the vital force is the most precious substance in the human body. Its wastage weakens the will and memory deteriorates. It is the main cause of ill-health, etc. If one conserves this precious force, the opposite qualities, like strong will-power, good health, better control of thoughts and emotions, etc. come to one. The saint also went on to add that today most of the married couples, even though they have children, are not practising Brahmacharya. They indulge in carnal pleasures even after the age of fifty or sixty.

The couple listened to the words of the saint with rapt attention, and returned home with highly elevated feelings. They discussed the matter fully and felt that if God-realisation was the aim of this precious human birth, they should take to earnest spiritual practices without delay, and should take the vow of lifelong Brahmacharya now itself and not wait until they brought forth a child. What if the child was malformed? What if its character was not good? What if it got into bad habits, like indulging in drugs, violence, sex, etc.? All these will bring them much pain and misery and take them away from God. So both husband and wife decided to observe complete Brahmacharya and dedicate their lives to spiritual practices and service of their Guru. The following week, approaching their Guru with a generous offering as Guru Dakshina, they begged him to grant them permission to take the vow of lifelong Brahmacharya.

Prostrating humbly, the husband said, "Master, when we left you after spending such precious moments in your holy presence and listening to your most encouraging and wise words, we at once decided to dedicate our lives to your service. We have accepted you as our Mother, Father, Guru and Guide. We have no other refuge than you. Kindly do not forsake us."

The moment he heard these words the Guru fell into silence. It went on for five, ten and fifteen minutes. The couple also closed their eyes and went into silence. They both found a strange power entering them, elevating their consciousness to great heights and filling their hearts with strength, peace, joy and comfort. They never had such an experience before.

When the Guru opened his eyes, he said, "I have now transferred my Divine Shakti to you both. Today, I appoint you as my successors. You will take care of my Ashram and all its inmates, who are very dedicated and devoted to me. Take care of them after I am gone. Remain as long as you like in the world, then join the Ashram as permanent inmates. Now I gladly give you permission to take the vow of lifelong Brahmacharya."

The Guru called all his disciples, of whom there were many who had been with him for over fifteen years, and announced his decision of appointing the couple as his successors. The most senior disciple said, "Our Guru's decision is final. How fortunate we are to have such a compassionate Guru, who is so concerned about our future welfare. He has appointed such a saintly and noble couple to take care of our spiritual and material needs. Truly, our Guru's only concern is our welfare. We will be ever loyal to our Divine Master and to his successors. They are now our divine parents."

Within a week the couple wound up everything and, offering their entire material wealth to their Guru, joined the Ashram. The parents of the couple also at once retired to the holy institution. Such are the workings of the Lord's Grace and divine Sankalpa! ■

"Do not complain to your Guru that there is no time for Sadhana on account of time spent in serving him.
Reduce sleep and tall talk. Eat a little. Then you will have plenty of time for Sadhana. The highest Sadhana is service of the spiritual Master."

—Sri Swami Sivananda, *Guru Bhakti Yoga*

Inspiring Story 2

AN INVINCIBLE ARROW

ADAPTED FROM: "MAHABHARATA"

By: Sri Swami Sivananda

There was a royal sage named Alarka who was a great Tapasvin. He did many rigorous penances. He had full knowledge of duty and morality, and was truthful. He was very firm in his vows. This is how he attained Self-realisation.

One day he was sitting at the foot of a tree and began to reflect on subtle things. He reflected within himself thus: "My mind has become unsteady and turbulent. The real victory is when the mind is conquered. The result of this conquest becomes permanent only if one gains victory over one's mind. It always wanders. It goads me to do acts for the gratification of my desires. I shall henceforth shoot very sharp-pointed arrows at the mind."

The mind said: "O Alarka! These arrows can never cut through me. They will pierce only your own vital parts and you will die. Try to find out other arrows to kill me."

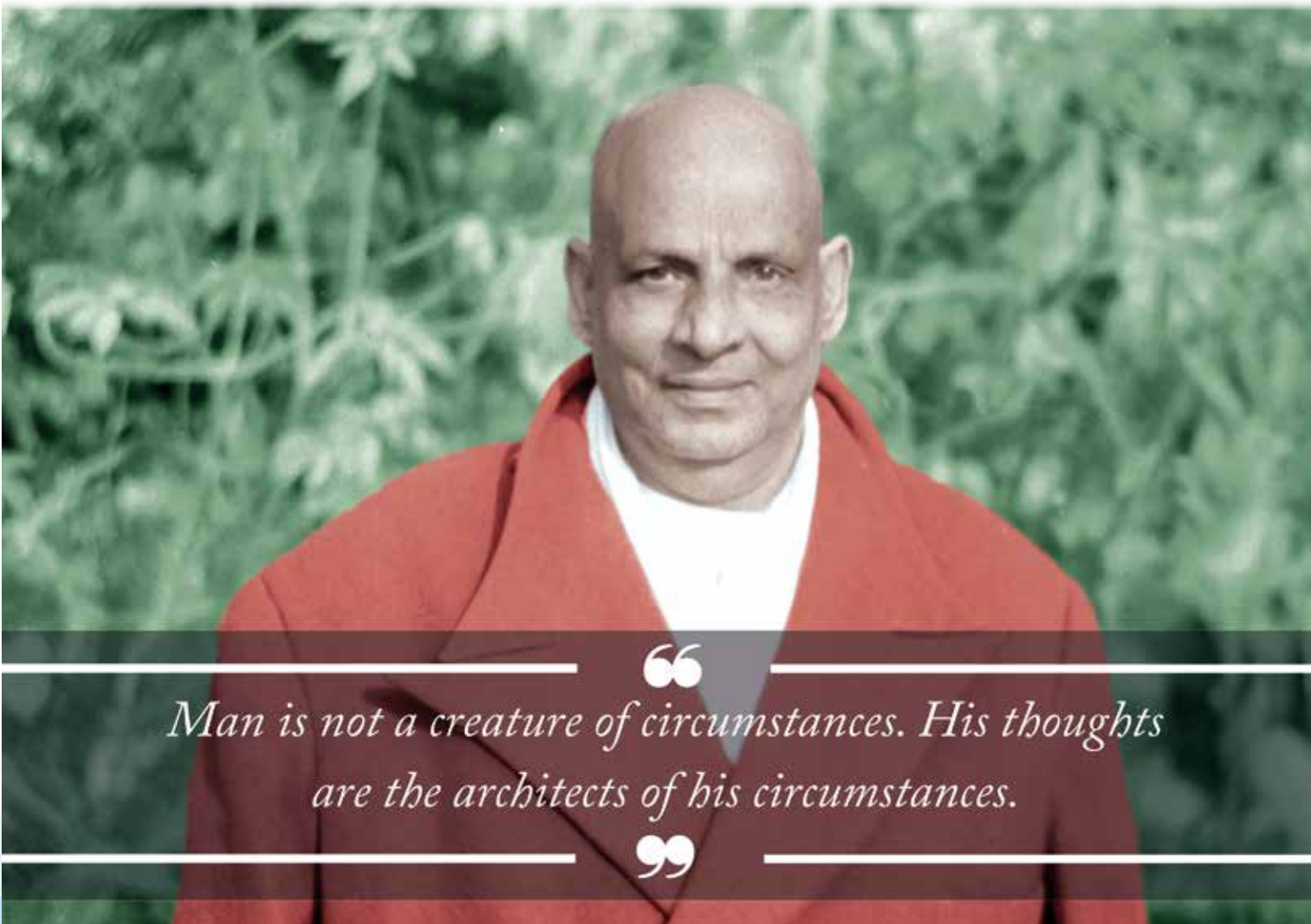
Alarka heard these words and reflected thus: "The nose troubles me. It always hankers after scents. I shall discharge sharp arrows at the nose."

The nose said; "O Alarka! These can never pass through me. They will pierce only your own vital parts and you will die. Look for other arrows to kill me."

Alarka heard these words and reflected thus: "My tongue is very mischievous and troubles me much. It always craves to taste palatable things and savoury dishes. I shall discharge sharp arrows at the tongue."

The tongue said: "O Alarka! These arrows will not cut through me. They will pierce only your own vital parts and you will die. Find out other arrows to kill me."

Alarka reflected thus: "The skin troubles me. It runs after soft



things. It always hankers after objects which are delightful to the touch. I shall discharge sharp arrows at the skin and tear off the skin."

The skin said: "O my dear Alarka! These arrows cannot pass through me. They will pierce only your own vital parts and you will die. Look for other arrows to kill me."

Alarka heard these words and reflected thus: "The ears trouble me much. It wants to hear all kinds of music. It hears various sounds and hankers after them. I shall discharge sharp arrows at the ear."

The ear said: "My dear Alarka! These arrows will not pierce me. They will pierce only your own vital parts and you will die. Find out other arrows to kill me."

Alarka reflected: "The eye is very troublesome. It longs to see various colours and beautiful forms. I shall destroy this eye with sharp arrows."

The eye said: "These arrows will not, O Alarka, pass through me at all. They will pierce only your own vital parts and you will die. Find other arrows in order to kill me."

Alarka reflected thus: "This intellect only troubles me much. It forms many determinations with the help of reasoning and in consequence leads me astray. I shall discharge sharp arrows at the intellect and kill it."

The intellect said: "O Alarka! These arrows will not pass through me at all. They will only pierce your vital parts and you will die. Search for other arrows to annihilate me."

Alarka underwent rigorous penance to overcome the seven faculties, namely, mind, nose, tongue, skin, ears, eyes and intellect. But in vain! He then began to reflect for a long time on this subject. At last he found out the real powerful arrow, namely, control of mind which would kill all the seven. He could not obtain anything better than this. He engaged himself in Yoga, fixed his mind on one object and remained perfectly still and calm. He quickly killed all the senses, the mind and the intellect with one arrow, namely, the concentration of the mind in Yoga. He entered into his innermost all-blissful Soul or Brahman and thereby acquired the highest success.

He was struck with wonder and said, "Alas! It is a pity I wasted my life trying to acquire domain over earthly possessions which are transitory. I wasted my energy in sensual enjoyments. I did not know up to this time how to control the mind and the senses. I performed acts that are external. I courted power, wealth and sovereignty till now. I had no right understanding and discrimination. I had no idea of the immortal Soul or the Atman. I had no idea of the efficacy of Yoga. There is no happiness higher than control of mind by Yoga practices. There is no wealth higher than the spiritual wealth. There is no bliss higher than the bliss of the Soul. This is the Supreme state. I have learnt this truth at last. I have realised this only now."

Arrows cannot really destroy the senses. The senses are located in the astral body or subtle physical body. Even if the external ears, eyes, nose, etc., are destroyed, the senses still retain their life, strength and vitality. What you see outside are external instruments only. The senses should be withdrawn and absorbed in the mind itself, through dispassion, discrimination, practice of Dama (self-restraint) and Pratyahara (abstraction). Then only can the senses be destroyed.

All the desires and cravings should be destroyed and the mind should be absorbed in its source, namely, Brahman. Then only can the mind be annihilated. You will have to kill these senses and the mind with the help of spiritual arrows, i.e. self-restraint, abstraction, dispassion, eradication of desires and cravings and the practice of Yoga or meditation. That is the reason why the senses and the mind said to Alarka: "You cannot kill us with these ordinary arrows. Do look for other arrows with which to kill us."

As Alarka was a Tapasvin and firm in his vows, he found out the one true arrow of Yogic concentration and killed the seven faculties with this invincible and powerful arrow.

May you all take recourse to this spiritual arrow of Yoga and enjoy the eternal bliss like sage Alarka. God bless you all.■

Sivananda's Gospel Of Divine Life

DIVINE PROTECTION: The Master was returning from his walk to the temple in the evening. As he came near the Yajnashala, one of Sri Pannalalji's little children, who was playing on the roof of the Yajnashala rooms, slipped off the terrace and fell right into one of the empty packing cases placed near the wall of the building.

The Master quickly called out to the parents of the child. They hurried down and found that the child had almost swooned. The Master also reached the spot quickly and gazed at the child for a moment. Sri Pannalalji took the boy into his arms and called his name. Lo! The child cried for a couple of minutes and then jumped out of his arms to run about again!

"Concentration opens the door to the inner chamber of love or God."—Sri Swami Sivananda



Pujya Swami Sahajananda

Speaks

Pujya Swamiji On The Master

(This speech was delivered ex tempore by beloved Pujya Swamiji at the Ashram in Reservoir Hills on 09 September 1987, during the Divine Master's 100th Birth Centenary celebrations, which went on for one week. In this speech, Pujya Swamiji addresses the Divine Master directly. We are publishing here extracts from this speech. For those wanting to read the full speech, you will find it in the Path of Divine Grace, Volume 3, Page 167)

We have gathered here to think about some aspects of our Gurudev's life. Gurudev, I will talk to you in a direct way.

You were born 100 years ago. We really don't know who you were in your past birth. All that we know is that the absolute Brahman took a name and form, like all the great saints. Saints are none other than the manifestation of the Supreme Being. The whole world is a manifestation of God. So, the whole world is really your form. We can give that form any name. We can call it Ramakrishna. We can call it Jesus or we can call it Buddha. But when that Absolute took a form this time, he took the form of Sivananda. We don't know much about your early days. But we are told that after you had taken Sannyas and had become a great saint, a number of your relatives came to the Ashram. We heard that they were always talking about your boyhood days. But being a Sannyasin and not wanting to teach the disciples that they should be attached to their family, you packed up all your relatives in two days. You gave them only two or three days to stay, and packed them off.

If there is one name that we can give to you then it is "Compassion". Love was born in your heart. Even from your childhood days, you only saw with the eye of God. When your father sent you to buy fruit for worship, you distributed some of your fruit to the beggars and told your father, "I have already worshipped God in the poor." Would we think of that? Would we share our plate of food today? You have written that when we have a cup of milk, we must think about someone else. Do we think about others? That was the vision that you had. You were very active, very intelligent in school, always coming out first and very bold. You liked to do exercise, and you used to get up very early in the morning, at three o'clock. Your father didn't like it. But you put the blankets and pillows in such a way to show that you were asleep, but all the time you were doing exercises in the morning. You were a high-class Brahmin and your parents were very orthodox. When a low caste person taught you fencing and your parents didn't like that you should associate with him, you immediately went and garlanded the person, and prostrated to him. So, even from the very early days, God shone through you. You only saw God.

You were very studious, you said that even in the first year when you were doing medicine, you could answer the fifth year papers because you had a photographic memory. Whatever you saw, you absorbed. You demonstrated this Yogic power even in later years. When you saw a person, you recognised the person even after twenty years. I was standing next to you one day when you addressed the famous evangelist—I think his name was Thompson—you said, "Oh, I saw you twenty years ago." And the person was blinking. Perhaps he was just walking in Rishikesh, and you saw him. Whatever you saw was registered in your mind.

With such love you treated everyone. Whatever you had, you shared. When *jalebi* was being prepared in the Ashram, you couldn't wait to distribute it to everyone. Whatever was ready, you gave out quickly. It had to be done now, beforehand.

So everything you shared. Today you are sharing with us the nectar of your teachings. But sharing by itself did not satisfy you. You served the Sadhus who came to the Ashram, you entertained them, and sent them off with first-class train tickets. When your cook expressed a desire to take a photograph, you dressed him in your own suit, in your own clothes, and you photographed him. You delighted in giving joy to others. You would go and talk to poor people, although you were a very influential person. When others wanted to know why you behaved in that manner, you said, "Well, they get joy. They feel joy by talking to a doctor." So your whole purpose was to give happiness and joy to others.

We are told that the Ashrams refused to give you alms because you were not a Swami, and that is how Swami Vishwananda gave you Sannyas on 1 June 1924, the very next day following the refusal of alms. Swami Vishwananda wrote all the Sannyas instructions and went away. No one seems to have known who he was and where he went. He simply disappeared without a trace. I always like to think that God came in that form and initiated you because you didn't need any guidance, but in order to follow the traditional path, you had to have a Guru. You have said that when you entered Rishikesh, a *tongawalla* threw a coin at you, but such was your dispassion that you did not even turn around and look at the coin. But still, you said that you found it difficult to

"Love makes great sacrifices."—Sri Swami Sivananda

control the palate because you were very fond of sweet things.

You gave up everything and plunged into meditation. You would go into the Ganges and stand up to the hip in ice cold water and repeat the Mantra. Today, I need hot water bottles for the whole winter. Yet you used to practise this tremendous austerity, fasting and torturing the body. It gave you permanent diarrhoea. Perhaps your whole digestive system was damaged, but because of your yogic control you were able to control the diarrhoea and you didn't let it control you.

But you didn't follow anyone. You didn't copy anyone. Everything you did was original. Your whole Sadhana was original. Your whole character was original. You didn't follow the traditional path. And we read yesterday that you would have your meals at two o'clock, and that too, only after serving all the sick Sadhus in the Kutirs. You actually carried the plates of curd and tea to them. And, after having served them, you would have Satsang with all the Mahatmas and garland them. But you would not talk. You would keep quiet. All your time was spent in meditation and serving, but later you gave up service. You plunged into meditation and meditation alone. Today, we have some of your notebooks. It is frightening to read what you have written in your notebook. All the two hundred and fifty books that you have written are the expansion of the notes that you had kept for yourself.

You made important alterations in your will, alterations that gave Dr Adhwaryoo and me independent copyright on your writings. You saw everything beforehand.

I didn't want to take Sannyas, but you gave it of your own free will. Whatever you gave, I didn't ask for. I never knew anything about Mantra initiation, but you yourself gave it. I didn't want an Ashram, you created it. You said to some visitors in Rishikesh, "My favourite devotees are in South Africa."

So when people praise us for the work, we do not feel elated at all because we know it is your creation. If they blame us, we don't feel depressed because we also know that you have created everything. All praise and all blame shall go to you.

All your devotees, many of them who have not seen you —how great is their faith! They've established you in their hearts. You protect them. Every day, we hear stories of how you protect them, how you guide them.

We hope and pray that on this auspicious day you will give us enlightenment, guide us, protect us, save us from all perils and all dangers. We pray that you will give us the strength to call you, because we know that if we call you, you will always be there, like Lord Krishna. You will never fail. But that is the condition that you have laid. You said that if we call, then you will come. You said, "If you take care of my mission, I shall take care of you."

There is a wealth of meaning in what you have said. And whatever you say will not go in vain. Sri Aurobindo has told his disciples, "I lay my unconditional seal on all those who die in this Ashram." It is so precious and sacred to belong to a saint, and belong to his mission. It is the accumulated merit of hundreds and hundreds of births —to be associated with a great Mahatma, especially a living Mahatma, like our Gurudev, and have the great opportunity that he has given us.

I pray that Gurudev showers his Grace upon all of you and I hope that you wouldn't mind the Grace that is pouring on us in the form of rain. Our celebrations are going to continue for the whole week, until Sunday and maybe, if Gurudev wants to talk through these lips, you might hear more of the wonderful tales and stories because there is no limit to the wonderful tales of Gurudev. For all our devotees of Gurudev who are not present here, and others who are overseas, we pray for Gurudev's Grace upon them.■



Whatever situation we are placed in, whatever job we are doing, we must think that it is given to us by our Guru Himself. In fact, our Guru is at the bottom of everything, right from our birth in this human form. It is His power that makes us digest our food, grow up and so on. As we dedicate ourselves completely to Him, regarding everything we do as being done by Him only, our actions become spontaneous just as we move our hands or feet, and our body-consciousness becomes diluted until it disappears altogether.

- Mother Krishnabai -

Gratitude How Can We Repay...

(This speech was delivered ex tempore by beloved Pujya Swamiji on 01 June 2001.)

Today is the most auspicious Sannyas Anniversary of our Divine Master, Sri Swami Sivananda, our Lord and Saviour, our Mother and Father. Today, we are enjoying the fruits of his immense austerity and Sadhana. Our Divine Master led a luxurious life in Malaysia, eating dainty dishes and, now and then, wearing many rings. But when he landed in India, on his way to the North, he had to live on fruit picked up on the roadside. He starved and suffered in the cold. During his early Sadhana days, we all know how he used to stand for several hours in the ice-cold Ganga in the early morning, doing Japa. You can imagine the awesome state of his mind at that time. It must have been entirely merged in God. Only the body suffered in the cold. For days he would live on dried *rotis* soaked in water. There was no need for our Master to do such Tapas, because he revealed in a poem that he was a born sage and Siddha. He performed all his Tapas for our sake, to infuse his glorious power in us.

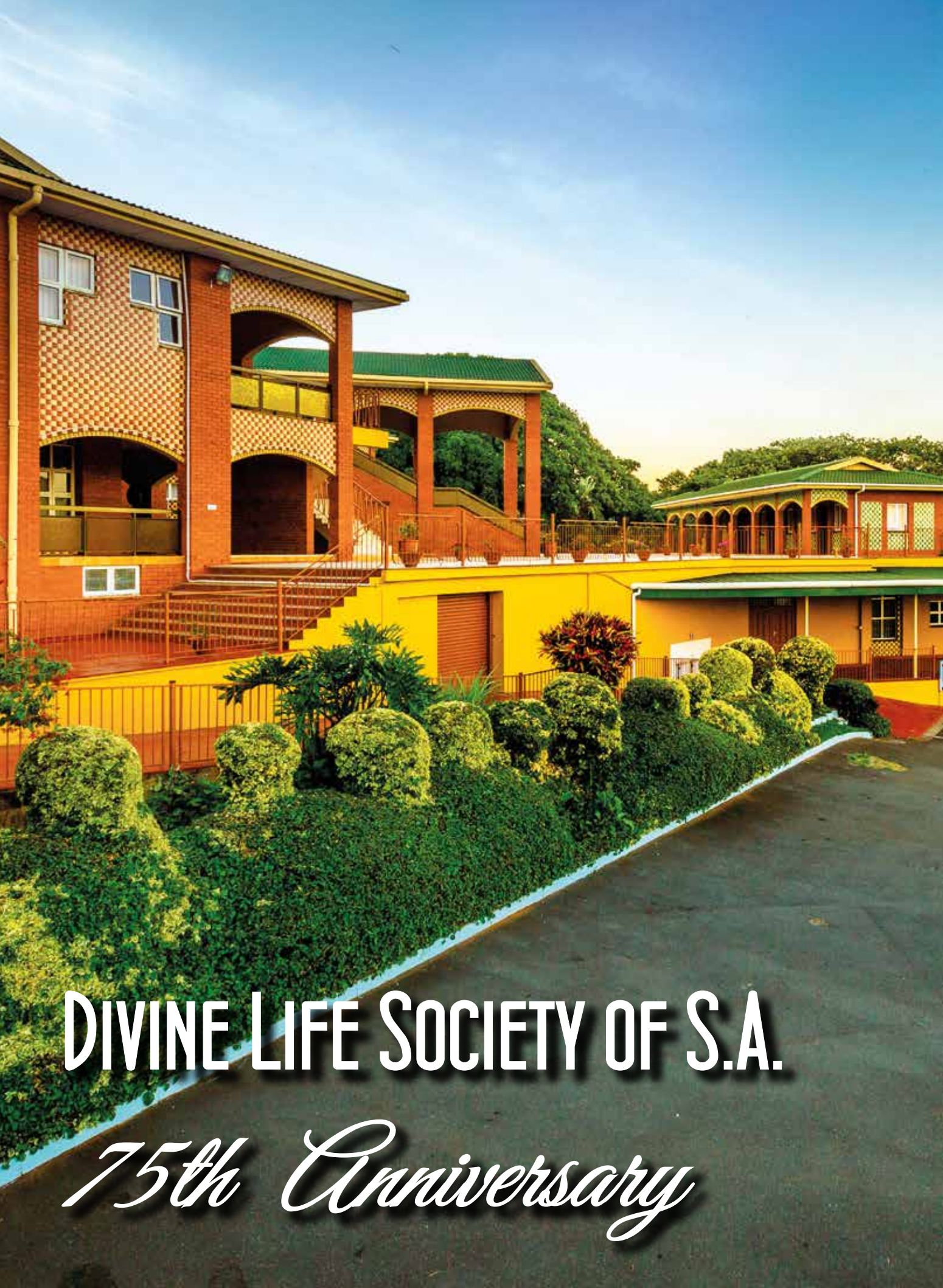
A father leaves all his material wealth to his children. Similarly, the Guru leaves all his spiritual wealth, as well as his material wealth, to his devotees. So, we are enjoying all the spiritual and material wealth left by our Master. His heart was as soft as butter. His love and compassion are rare in spiritual history. There is no doubt that our Master was the Lord Himself. How can we pay our debt of gratitude to our Master for all that he has done and is still doing for us? We can repay him in the following ways:

1. We can show love, kindness, forgiveness and tolerance to others, both at home and our place of work.
2. We can serve our Master in any of the many ways available at our Ashrams.
3. We can do regular meditation in the morning and Bhajan in the evening.
4. We can distribute our Master's literature.
5. We can attend Satsangs, Yoga Camps and Ganga Arati regularly.
6. We can spend some time daily in studying our Master's literature.
7. We can do regular charity. Where possible, our Master says that at least 10% of one's salary should be spent in charity. There is no harm in purchasing a good car, in having a beautiful home, and in keeping sufficient funds for the future, but all excess wealth should be spent in charity. Our Master states: "No one knows that that beggar walking in the street was a millionaire in his previous birth." He is now a beggar because he did not do charity in his previous birth. He hoarded wealth. Those who do charity today will be well provided for in the next birth. When we sing "Jaya Gurudev" we repeat that our body, mind and wealth should be given to the Guru. Praying like this and hoarding money will bring bad Karma. Whatever we utter is registered in the Akasha.
8. We can practise Brahmacharya and partake of a vegetarian diet. We can avoid TV, places of gambling and bad company. Without Brahmacharya, no spiritual progress can be made. Health also deteriorates greatly when much of the vital force is wasted.
9. The best gifts we can give our Divine Master are the gifts of selfless service, obedience and complete surrender to him.
10. We can open our heart to our Divine Master by avoiding the yale lock. (In *Guidance in Daily Life*, Pujya Swamiji explains what yale lock Sadhana means, "The heart is completely locked and does not allow the Guru's pure light to dispel the aspirant's darkness and effect quick transformation of his nature. If the aspirant's heart is receptive and opens quickly and freely when his faults and mistakes are pointed out, then marvellous things can happen. The Guru's light and power can then work to bring about the transformation without much struggle and effort on the part of the aspirant").
11. We can pray for those who cause us problems.
12. Now and then I get letters from women complaining about the alcohol habit of their husbands, and sometimes of their husbands associating with other women. The males also make complaints about their wives. I have explained in *Guidance in Daily Life* that individuals with such wrong habits need sympathy and love because they are mentally ill. But if the wife or husband fights, or shows agitation, it will only make the situation worse. I have also explained how one should do Japa for the person. But no one wishes to do the Japa. All want a miracle to change the person. If we show hatred, or anger, or ill-will against the person, it is not good.

Listen to what Sri Gurudev says in this respect: "If at any time you say that anybody is a rogue, anybody is ill-willed, anything is inferior, believe that you have insulted the Almighty Lord".

We all have to face conflicts, criticisms, insults, abuses, etc., in our life. I have explained in *Glory of Guru's Grace* how I dealt with such situations. Kindly read the booklet (now published in book format) and try to practise what I have written there. Even if you make a little effort to bear criticism and insults, it would be a great step forward on the spiritual path. But if you can also show love to those who criticise and insult you, then you are on the road to sainthood. Sri Gurudev has said: "Bear insult, bear injury. This is the highest Sadhana."■

"Gratitude is a warm and friendly feeling towards one who helps you."—Sri Swami Sivananda


DIVINE LIFE SOCIETY OF S.A.
75th Anniversary

Brief History Of The Society

Divine Life Society of South Africa was founded by the Divine Master, Sri Swami Sivananda of Rishikesh, India, in 1949. He instructed his illustrious disciple, Sri Srinivasan Naidoo (now Sri Swami Sahajananda), to open a branch of the Society in Durban, South Africa. The Master sent three letters, dated: 18 October 1949, 11 November 1949 and 5 June 1951, instructing Pujya Swamiji to start the branch.

Pujya Swamiji (Swami Sahajananda) is not tired of reiterating that the formation, growth and present status of Divine Life Society of South Africa is due entirely to the Grace of our Master, Sri Swami Sivananda. Divine Life Society of South Africa is unique in spiritual history, because it was founded by a spiritual Master who forced his disciple, in this case, Swami Sahajananda, to obey him and carry out his commands. Regarding the activities of the Society, the Divine Master gave his assurance in his own handwriting: "*God will look after the divine work. Lord will look after everything*".

Pujya Swamiji had a very promising academic career but the Master had other plans in store for him and his intervention came at the appropriate time. In the Matriculation examination, Swamiji obtained a second-class pass, and because he was annoyed with his performance, he refused a bursary offered to him to take a B.Sc. degree at Fort Hare University. This apparent academic failure to him, which appeared to him as a great tragedy then, turned out to be the greatest blessing.

While browsing through books at the Vedic Bookshop in Durban, Swamiji clearly remembers picking up *In the Vision of God* by Papa Swami Ramdas. Closing the book and putting it back on the shelf, he moved on. The next book he touched was the Master's *Practice of Karma Yoga*. Even though Swamiji did not know the meaning of the words "Karma Yoga" at that time, the book sent a strange thrill through him. Glancing through its pages he instantly realised that he had found the Guru he was searching for. He came to know that a God-realised Guru was absolutely necessary to guide and lead one to the realisation of God.

FIRST VISIT TO THE MASTER

Coming to know that the Divine Master, Sri Swami Sivananda, resided at Rishikesh, Srinivasan, as he was called then, at once wrote to him that he would like to come and stay at his Ashram to practise Yoga. The Divine Master, knowing that it was only a kind of "bubbling enthusiasm", advised him to remain where he was and perform his spiritual practices. But Srinivasan was adamant that he should come to be with the Master at Rishikesh. So, the Master allowed him to come to the Ashram, as experience is often the best teacher. The "bubbling enthusiast" forthwith resigned from the teaching profession and proceeded to India.

On reaching the Master's feet and remaining there only for a fortnight, Srinivasan's "bubbling enthusiasm" subsided at once! The Divine Master treated the young aspirant in the most unconventional manner. He asked Vishnu Swami to give him instructions on some basic Yoga postures, but Srinivasan had already learnt them from the Master's book. The only other instructions he gave were: "Learn to type and to make tea!" Years later, Srinivasan, now Swami Sahajananda, understood that the Divine Master's cryptic words, "learn to type and to make tea" were pregnant with deep spiritual meaning. It meant dissemination of spiritual knowledge through his literature, and service of the underprivileged.

Pujya Swami Sahajananda visited the Master at Rishikesh in 1948. Sri S.R. Padayachee, a great devotee of the Master from Umkomaas, had visited him a few months earlier and, on his return, was doing some work in propagating the Master's teachings. However, the Master wrote to Swami Sahajananda in 1949 to open a branch of the Divine Life Society.

As Swamiji was very nervous and shy, he did not feel competent to take up the task. He was a young man of 24 at the time. He did not respond to the Master's instruction and kept silent. The Master wrote a second letter, dated 18th October, 1949, with the request: "Kindly start a branch of the Divine Life Society there. I recognise you as the secretary". The Master was evidently impatient to get the branch opened, for he sent a third letter before the affiliation fee could reach him, in which he commanded: "Kindly open a branch of the Divine Life Society at once. Do some silent work". This letter was dated 11th November, 1949. It was indeed a queer situation, with the Master, the founder of the Society in India, and his secretary, Swami Sahajananda, in South Africa as the only member in this country. However, the drama did not end there, for the Master wrote a fourth letter dated 5 June, 1951: "Kindly open a branch of DLS and do some silent work."

WORK BEGINS

Pujya Swamiji commenced the publication of a quarterly journal entitled *Light, Power & Wisdom*. He used to finance it himself and distribute it free, often selecting

"Guru Bhakti Yoga is the sure remedy for the ills of life."—Sri Swami Sivananda

names at random from the telephone directory for his mailing list. Soon, two other devotees joined him and the three used to have their weekly Satsang at the Umgeni Road Temple in Durban. Often, when the other two failed to turn up, Pujya Swamiji used to go to the temple all alone and conduct the service. He used to go through the whole procedure of singing Kirtan, reading the *Gita* and performing Arati, even though there was no other soul present except himself.

When the Master was informed of this he commented, "When the Lord and the local people know that you are sincere, they will flock to you, through His Grace." This truth is evident today when thousands are following Divine Life Society of S.A.

SEARCH FOR PREMISES

A one-hectare site was purchased in Reservoir Hills, then a remote undeveloped suburb of Durban. The Master himself requested that another one-and-half-hectares of adjoining land be acquired, and also instructed that a larger cylinder printing machine and a typesetting machine be purchased. This is how the present two-and-a-half-hectare site of the headquarters of the Society was developed.

INITIATION

In 1956, while Pujya Swamiji was in Rishikesh, the Master wished to initiate him, till then known as Sri V. Srinivasan, into the holy order of Sannyas. Pujya Swamiji was hesitant to accept the offer, thinking that he was not ready for it. However, the senior disciples at the Ashram advised that it would not be wise to refuse the Master's offer. Pujya Swamiji thus had the great good fortune of getting Sannyas from the Master on 10 April 1956.

DISSEMINATION OF SPIRITUAL KNOWLEDGE

The main aim of Divine Life Society of South Africa is the dissemination of spiritual knowledge through our Divine Master's spiritual literature. Readers of our books invariably remark about their very high quality, which is enhanced further by multi-coloured pictures. The Society owns several printing presses with sophisticated equipment that are located in Sivanandashram Reservoir Hills, Durban and at the Sivananda International Cultural Centre, Sivananda Nagar, La Mercy, which is located in the north coast of KwaZulu-Natal, about 30 kilometres from Durban.

OVERVIEW OF THE SOCIETY'S ACTIVITIES

Over the past 75 years, Divine Life Society of South Africa has seen phenomenal growth, and has contributed significantly to the spiritual, religious, social, educational, moral and cultural growth of the community, through its 18 Branches, including 7 Ashrams.

Sri Swami Sahajananda gave effect to the Master's teachings in a number of ways which include:

- Printing and distribution of books containing the Master's teachings.
- Spiritual observances such as conducting daily Ganga Arati at all our Ashrams, monthly Sivananda Day Satsangs and Yoga Camps.
- Observance of all major religious festivals and important events in the Divine Life Society calendar.
- Social upliftment programmes such as daily poor-feeding at selected schools, construction of educational and self-help facilities (classrooms, schools, school halls, crèches, hydroponic gardens, etc.), medical facilities, early-childhood development facilities (crèches), youth development, substance addiction relief through our Sunlit Path Centre and Sunlit Path Schools' Programmes, establishment of sewing centres offering sewing classes for the unemployed.

ACCOLADES, TRIBUTES TO THE DIVINE MASTER AND PUJYA SWAMIJI

As we reflect on the past 75 years, the gestalt of the Society's contributions and achievements, find resonance in the words of some of our leaders. The Honourable Dr M.G. Buthelezi said, "Another great South African, Swami Sahajananda of the Divine Life Society, has greatly distinguished himself as one whose humanitarian compassion has led him to identify with the poorest of the poor around him. The Divine Life Society has succeeded in adding deed to sentiment, and it has erected monument after monument for African children in KwaZulu-Natal".

Former State President of South Africa, Nelson Mandela, said, "If people will complain less and decide to act, in order to help resolve the problem, we would be very far off now. The problem is the question of people who expect others to do things for them whereas what is important is what I can do for my country. Can I do as the Divine Life Society has done? I think if that is the approach, you will find that some of the complaints, which we have, would be minimised".

The Society has received dozens of awards in recognition of its contributions to spiritual upliftment, its humanitarian work and service activities. Notably, Pujya Swami Sahajananda was conferred an honorary Doctorate Degree by the University of KwaZulu-Natal, and also received the Martin Luther King Award for his illustrious contributions.

PIONEERS OF THE SOCIETY

On this, the 75th Anniversary of Divine Life Society of South Africa, we acknowledge with gratitude, the sterling

work done by our pioneers, devotees, well-wishers and donors. Notably, the pioneers who are the stalwarts of the Society, made tremendous sacrifices, endured untold hardships and trod on, with steadfast perseverance and commitment, in the promotion of the Master's mission in South Africa.

THE ROAD AHEAD

As mentioned in the opening paragraph, we reiterate that the growth and success of Divine Life Society of South Africa are due entirely through the inspiration and Grace of our Divine Master, Sri Swami Sivananda, and the profound vision, impeccable Guru Bhakti, dedication, loyalty and hard work of Pujya Swami Sahajananda. We find comfort in the Master's assurance:

God will look after the divine work.
Lord will look after everything.

Let us therefore translate into practical reality the Master's clarion call when he says: "Become true Hindus. Let the flame of true love fire your soul. Stand up. Gird up the loins. The hostile forces are ready to absorb you. Strengthen yourself. Unite". He advises us as follows, "Chant the Divine Name in the temple, at home, at your workplace, while driving and at all times. O man, take refuge in the Divine Name. God and His Name are inseparable. Sing the Lord's Name incessantly. Remember the Name of the Lord with every incoming and outgoing breath. In this age, repetition of the Divine Name is the easiest, quickest, safest and surest way to reach God and attain immortality and perennial joy. Glory to the Lord! Glory to His Name! Glory to Hinduism!"

The following poignant and eloquent words of Pujya Swami Sahajananda, are notable pointers to all of us in the years ahead. In *Path of Divine Grace,* Volume 1, Pujya Swamiji says, "Gurudev, grant this prayer of mine. You are an ocean of unreasoning mercy. Your love-laden eyes ever shine with tenderness. Grant me that my surrender to you will always be flawless and perfect, and that however much I might try to free myself from your divine grasp, you will not allow it. You will never release your hold on me. Grant this heartfelt prayer of mine, Gurudev. Kindly do not lay any conditions".

What does all this mean to us? It means that we should follow in the noble footsteps of the Master and Pujya Swamiji. The best way to show our gratitude to the Master and Pujya Swamiji for the bountiful gifts they have showered upon this country and upon us, is to promote Sri Gurudev's teachings, tread the path of spirituality in earnest, promote the values and teachings of the Master, practise his teachings of "Serve, love, give, purify, meditate and realise", do our daily Sadhana diligently, and become true and dedicated aspirants, like the flower that offers its all to the gardener who cultivated it. Let our lives be dedicated flowers at the feet of Sri Gurudev and Pujya Swamiji.

We thank our Divine Master, Sri Swami Sivananda and Pujya Swami Sahajananda for all their spiritual and material gifts and blessings, and we are confident that their omnipresence and omniscience will always guide the work of the Society. The road ahead has already been chartered and defined by Sri Gurudev and Pujya Swamiji. It is therefore incumbent upon us all—devotees, young, old, youth, laymen and professionals—to continue the Master's and Pujya Swamiji's legacies with sincerity, steadfastness and distinction. Let us imbibe the Master's profound teaching, usually summed up in a pithy statement: "God first, world next, yourself last." This simple yet pregnant statement, this great gospel of Divine Life which brings God into our homes, lives and into this vestment of our physical personality, should point us to the road ahead.■

Come, Come, My Friends

My Call is irresistible,
It has transformed countless lives.
Do not waste this precious life
In playing cards and idle gossiping
Give up hot debates and arguing
Destroy all pleasure centres
Abandon the desire for comfort
Set fire to the fuel of lust.
Destroy the fortress of egoism
Be quick, Be quick, friends!
Sing the Lord's Name day and night
Now take a plunge in the Ocean of Bliss
And enter the illimitable
domain of the Atma within.
Come, come, my friends,
take the plunge, be quick
Tarry not, delay not—enjoy
the Wisdom Bliss.

Swami Sivananda

Centenary And Covid-19 Initiatives

Pujya Swami Sahajananda stated, "We are not tired of reiterating that the formation, growth and present status of Divine Life Society of South Africa are due entirely to the Grace of our Master, Sri Swami Sivananda". The Society's Centenary Celebrations were launched in January 2017, to celebrate Sri Gurudev's Sannyas Centenary in 2024 and Pujya Swamiji's 100th Birth Anniversary in 2025. The theme of the Centenary Celebrations is, "Sadhana and Self-transformation". A summary of the various projects and events of the Centenary Celebrations are given below.

THE 70TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS—2019

The Society had a successful round of major functions and activities in 2019 in celebration of its Platinum Jubilee (70th Anniversary). The 132nd Birth Anniversary of our Divine Master, Sri Swami Sivananda coincided with the Sivananda Conference, celebrated on two days, 7 and 8 September 2019, at Sivananda International Cultural Centre (SICC), where papers and cultural items were presented. We also had guest artistes (Suparna Adhikary and troupe) from India. Over 2 600 persons attended the Sivananda Conference. Over 6 000 devotees, well-wishers, donors and guests attended the Platinum Jubilee celebrations during the year.

LIKHIT JAPA AND JAPA YOGA CAMPAIGN

We encouraged devotees to honour Sri Gurudev and Pujya Swamiji by intensifying our Sadhana, more especially during the Centenary Celebrations. The Society launched the Likhit Japa and Japa Yoga Campaigns in January 2017. The extent to which devotees have intensified their Sadhana is encouraging. This is evident in the statistics submitted by devotees in respect of our Likhit Japa and Japa Yoga counts. The cumulative counts from January 2017 until the time of print of this brochure are as follows:

Likhit Japa	*35 million*
Japa Yoga	*288 million*

JNANA YAJNA CAMPAIGN

The printing and dissemination of our Master's spiritual literature is the main objective of Divine Life Society of South Africa. Jnana Yajna was most dear to our Divine Master and to our Pujya Swamiji. Our Book Stores at our Headquarters, Sivanandashram Reservoir Hills, at Sivananda Ghat and at Sivananda International Cultural Centre (SICC), and our local and international online webshops, are the nuclei in terms of the distribution of our Master's literature.

Our five full-time fundraisers also play a pivotal role in the book distribution programme. Many CD's, picture frames, and books, including the books, *What becomes of the Soul after Death* and *Pathway to Peace and Happiness*, are distributed at our Sivananda Ghat on a daily basis.

In commemoration of the 100th anniversary of Swami Sivananda's Sannyas Day and Pujya Swamiji's Birth Anniversary, the Society has pledged to distribute 1 million books as a special Jnana Yajna offering.

As at the time of print, more than 800 000 books have been distributed free of charge to schools in KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng.

SIVANANDA DRAKENSBERG SECONDARY SCHOOL HALL

Since January 2017, 133 projects were completed, the major one being the Drakensberg Secondary Hall in Estcourt. This R3m project was very special since it was offered to Pujya Swamiji's former school, situated in the town in which Pujya Swamiji was born.

The Society had in 2004, received a letter from the then principal of the Drakensberg Secondary School, Mr V.C. Maharaj requesting assistance from Pujya Swamiji to refurbish the computer room with ten new computers. Interesting to note that this was the exact same school that Pujya Swamiji attended as a student and later served as an educator.

Extracts of Pujya Swamiji's response to Mr V.C. Maharaj's letter for assistance are shown below:

Om Sri Ram. Salutations and adorations. I am glad to receive your letter with a request for computers. Now that you have pinned me down to my former school, I have no option but to accede to your request and will make the necessary arrangements after visiting your school. You can let me know when I can come over.

At all the schools we are to build in the future, we are also putting up a sewing centre which can be utilised to generate funds for the school. You can also consider this project.

Our projects for the Africans, including the current ones, are now 179. We have also given financial assistance to about 40 Hindu Temples, Ashrams and spiritual institutions. In many cases we have renovated and refurbished existing halls.



In recognition of this imperative, the Society initiated the establishment of an EXPO Centre to preserve and display noteworthy artefacts that featured in the evolutionary stages of the Society.

Many years ago, Pujya Swamiji expressed to devotees his desire to set up a museum to preserve the printing machines and accessories used during the early years of the Sivananda Printing Press.

As publishing and disseminating spiritual literature were the primary objectives of the Society, Pujya Swamiji devoted a considerable amount of his time working in the Press, guiding the work done by volunteers and full-time staff.

Pujya Swamiji and the press workers preserved the printing machines so well that some

Again in 2016/2017, Divine Life Society of S.A. was approached by the same school for financial aid in the construction of a school hall. After careful consideration, the Society decided to construct a hall as part of its Centenary Celebrations' initiative.

The prestigious Sivananda Drakensberg Secondary School Hall was officially opened on 10 April 2022, the most auspicious Ram Navami Day, which coincided with the 66th Sannyas Anniversary of Pujya Swami Sahajananda.

SANDTON BRANCH: NEW ASHRAM

In recognition of the growing devotee and donor base in the north of Johannesburg, the Society acquired land in Buccleuch, Sandton, for the construction of a new Ashram in the Gauteng province.

After almost a decade of planning, on 10 July 2022, Pujya Swami Sahajananda's 97th Birth Anniversary, Divine Life Society of S.A.—Sandton branch, hosted the sod turning ceremony. Through the Grace of our Divine Master, the new Ashram will be officially opened on 9 June 2024.

EXPO CENTRE PROJECT

Divine Life Society of South Africa has a 75 year-long history, which has been preserved in written mode already; however, there is a need to preserve its history in a structured tangible manner for the benefit of current and future devotees.

DLS Sandton: New Ashram - Main Building



DLS Sandton: New Ashram - Prayer Hall



"Charity begins with one's own Guru."—Sri Swami Sivananda

printing machines on display do not appear obsolete to those unfamiliar with modern printing press technology.

On display in the EXPO Centre, amongst others, are two typewriters that Pujya Swamiji personally used to prepare literature content for printing, and a printing machine that required typesetting by carefully placing each letter manually on a tray designed for that purpose.

Significantly, the EXPO Centre is situated opposite Sahaja Kutir, symbolically representing Pujya Swamiji's constant view of the Press machines with which he worked tirelessly for decades. He maintained the Press machinery and accessories meticulously.

In addition to the printing press equipment and accessories on display, there are other artefacts, which include pictures of certificates depicting numerous awards bestowed upon Pujya Swamiji by various organisations, learner aids relating to children's Sivananda Sunlit Club programme (see page 59 of this brochure for details about the Sivananda Sunlit Club for children) and items from the Sivananda Clinic based at Sivanandashram, Reservoir Hills.

Pujya Swamiji was a strong advocate for the use of alternate and complementary methods for healing purposes. He initiated homoeopathic clinic services, assisted by Anand Swami, Swami Narayani and others. Artefacts preserved in the Clinic building for many years are now housed at the EXPO Centre. The display of the clinic artefacts plays a role in preserving Pujya Swamiji's legacy of promoting homoeopathic and other natural forms of healing.

The official opening of the EXPO Centre coincided with the Society's 70th Anniversary Celebrations and Swami Sivananda's Birth Anniversary function hosted on 8 September 2019.

COVID-19 INITIATIVES

As the world and South Africa tried to contain the spread of the Coronavirus pandemic and its economic aftermath, Divine Life Society of South Africa, through the Grace of our Divine Master, Sri Swami Sivananda and Pujya Swami Sahajananda, undertook the following humanitarian initiatives.

1. Hospital Projects: COVID Screening Centres

Divine Life Society of South Africa partnered with the Department of Health and Divine Health Forum, a Non Governmental Organisation (NGO) doing humanitarian work, on initiatives to establish COVID-19 and Health Screening Centres at three Durban hospitals, to assist in the control and eradication of the Coronavirus pandemic. The partnership erected facilities where naming rights were granted to Divine Life Society of South Africa in honour of our Master, Sri Swami Sivananda. These facilities are:



DLS Expo Centre with Monotype typewriter (foreground)

- Sivananda Wentworth Hospital Flu Clinic, Wentworth, Durban.
- Sivananda R.K. Khan Hospital Screening Centre, Chatsworth, Durban.
- Sivananda King Dinuzulu Hospital Screening Centre, Sydenham, Durban.

2. Distribution of COVID-19 Health and Tonic Hampers

A total of 276 hampers were distributed to people who were identified as being COVID-19 positive. The hampers contained Vitamins C and D, Zinc, turmeric, honey, ginger, lemons, black pepper and Vicks. It also contained an instruction sheet on how these items may be used, as well as providing useful tips on containing the virus. All these hampers were delivered to the doors of recipients.

3. Distribution of Grocery Hampers

As many families were faced with challenging financial circumstances due to the onset of the pandemic, the Society quickly responded to this need by purchasing, packing and distributing approximately 7 000 food hampers, each valued at approximately R350, across KwaZulu-Natal. For the distribution, the Society partnered with its branches, temples, Hindu organisations and other civic bodies to reach the needy and destitute families across the province.

The Society also responded to support the cries of the destitute when the province was struck with disaster during the recent unrest and floods. With food distribution centres and outlets targeted by the unrest, food supplies were in dire shortage. The Society stepped up to the challenge to brave the volatile situation in the province to acquire grocery hampers and distribute to the needy.

4. Sivananda Ghat

The Sivananda Ghat is a post cremation public facility situated in Durban alongside the Umgeni River. It is fulfilling its primary function of providing a safe and dignified facility for the disposal of the cremated ash of all race groups.

The lockdown brought with it new rules and regulations, and the Society worked with the municipality to ensure that the Sivananda Ghat was adequately safe for volunteers and the public. Sivananda Ghat provided valuable service to the public throughout the pandemic. The Society implemented strict COVID-19 protocols and put together an action plan that included screening, emergency procedures and other strict guidelines to conform with government regulations.

The average number of ash disposals per day during the lockdown increased from approximately 10 to 15 per day to as many as 30 per day during the height of the Coronavirus pandemic, requiring the Society's Ghat team to work extremely long hours, late into the night. We thank all our volunteers for their spirit of Guru Bhakti and admirable service. We are ever grateful to our Divine Master for his protection during this time.

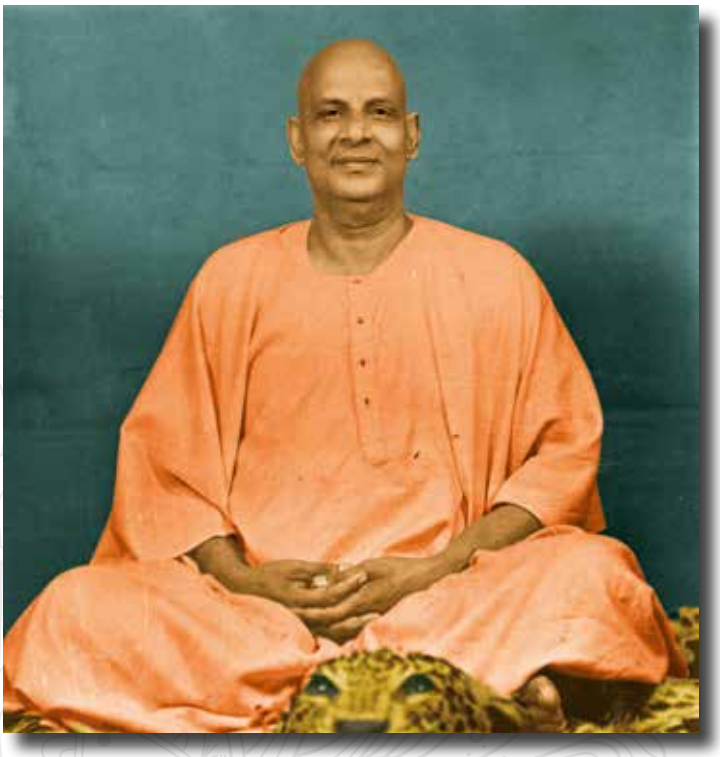
5. Face Masks

Thousands of face masks, manufactured by the Society's sewing schools staff and its Sivananda Arts and Crafts teams, were freely distributed with the grocery hampers as well as to persons visiting the Sivananda Ghat. Masks were also distributed to pensioners collecting old age pensions at the Clermont Post Office near Pinetown. Over 10 000 face masks were distributed.



6. Book Distribution

Sri Swami Sivananda's publication entitled *Glory of the Divine Name,* which extols the value of chanting the Divine Name to eradicate any difficulty or struggle in one's life, were freely distributed to thousands of homes during lockdown to encourage chanting of the Lord's Name during the pandemic.■



I Am A Born Siddha

I am a born conqueror,
I am a born Siddha,
I am a born sage;
I command the elements;
All the Devas carry out my behests;
The sun shines on account
of my effulgence;
Fire burns on account of my power;
Yama is terribly afraid of me;
Chidananda Rupa, Sivoham, Sivoham.
Thus sayeth Sivananda.

Swami Sivananda

"Doing good to others is the highest religion."—Sri Swami Sivananda

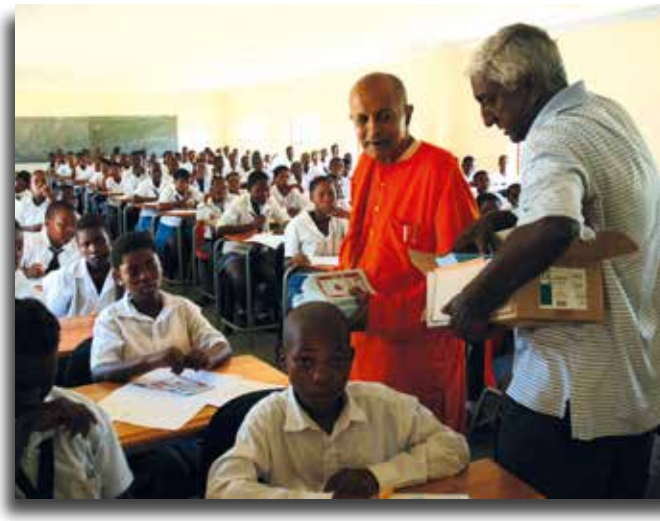
Book Distribution

In his book, *From Man to God-man*, N. Ananthanarayanan wrote the following, "This Jnana Dan or gift of knowledge possessed a characteristic which other gifts failed to have. The Master reasoned it thus, '*Give food to the hungry, after a while, they will again be hungry. Give clothes to the naked, after a while, they will again be so. Give money to the needy and after a while they will again be in want. But give knowledge to all and you would have given them the wherewithal to take care of themselves*'. The gift of knowledge was indeed the greatest gift.

"The Master began to share the wealth of his spiritual experience with others through conversations, lectures, letters, leaflets and articles in periodicals. In this regard, he utilised the printing press more than the platform. What was heard might be forgotton in a day, but the recorded knowledge would be of lasting benefit".

Pujya Swami Sahajananda said the following in his discourse on the occasion of the 58th anniversary of Divine Life Society of South Africa, "*Even if one book is sold and it transforms the life of the person reading it, the spiritual merit gained by him will also go to the devotee reading it. So valuable is the dissemination of spiritual knowledge! It is the highest service that one can render because it takes people towards God which is the goal of this human birth*".

In keeping with these ideals, the Society has been donating moral and ethical literature to educational institutions free of charge. During 1990-1991, the most informative and educational 192-page book entitled *Enlightened Education*, which covers topics such as, developing will-power, memory and eradicating negative qualities was issued free of charge to more than 63 000 students across KwaZulu-Natal.



In 2006, 2007 and 2016, this project was once again undertaken. In addition to the distribution of *Enlightened Education*, the books *Divine Life for Junior Children* and *How to get Peace of Mind* (translated into IsiZulu and Sesotho), were also distributed to thousands of children in South Africa. Sets of *Yoga Lessons for Children* and our Peace series were also donated to school libraries where these books were requested.

Some have felt that this school book distribution is not effective as the children and youth of today are not inclined to read such books. Similar comments were also made during the Master's time when he freely distributed literature. Once, when the Master gifted a valuable treatise on Vedanta to a person who looked unworthy of receiving such a book, a bystander remarked: "Swamiji is giving books to worthless persons." The Master replied, "Some worthy person will get the book from him and read it. He will be benefited. For quick dissemination of knowledge and doing useful work quickly, one should be very generous and large-hearted." Like our Divine Master, Pujya Swamiji adopted the same approach to dissemination of literature.

Since 2016, more than 400 000 books have been distributed to at least 500 schools across the country.■

> *"There is no service so beneficial and soul-elevating as that of the blessed spiritual Master."*
>
> —Sri Swami Sivananda,
> *Guru Bhakti Yoga*



Online Satsangs

In the book *Bliss Divine*, Sri Swami Sivananda writes the following on the power of Satsang, "*Satsang helps a long way in the attainment of Moksha. Satsang with a sage, even for a minute, is much better than rulership of a kingdom. It gives all that is desirable and good. It overhauls worldly Samskaras and vicious thoughts and gives a new spiritual turn of mind to the worldly man. It destroys infatuation and instils dispassion. It leads one to the right path and causes the sun of wisdom to shine in one's mind. If you can have Satsang, you need not go to any place of pilgrimage*".

Based on the value of Satsang as mentioned by the Divine Master, the Society has been committed to providing an extensive and intensive array of daily, monthly and special Satsangs and spiritual programmes over the past 75 years.

With the onset of the coronavirus pandemic, all our Ashrams and branches were closed to the public. To ensure that the spiritual objectives of the Society were still met in the face of such challenges, the Society innovatively embarked on a programme of online Satsangs, Yoga Camps and special Satsangs as from April 2020, in order to sustain devotees' spiritual growth and development.

The monthly Sivananda Day Satsangs and Yoga Camps were conducted online on the first and third Sundays respectively, of every month. The monthly All Souls' Day Satsangs were held online on the first day of each month, and with time, the Society began to live-stream All Souls' Day Havans with COVID-19 protocols being observed. The online All Souls' Day Satsangs and live-streamed Havans gave those who lost loved ones, a great amount of comfort and solace.

Additionally, all important anniversaries, Hindu festivals and events on the Divine Life Society of S.A. calendar were observed online. These included:

- Sri Swami Sivananda's Birth Anniversary
- Sri Swami Sivananda's Sannyas Anniversary
- Sri Swami Sivananda's Mahasamadhi Anniversary
- Guru Purnima
- Sri Swami Sahajananda's Birth Anniversary
- Sri Swami Sahajananda's Sannyas Anniversary and Mahasamadhi Anniversary
- Major Hindu festivals such as Mahasivaratri, Navaratri, Ramayana Week, Gita Week, Sri Ganesha Chaturti, Sri Krishna Janmashtami, etc.
- Divine Life Society of S.A. Anniversary days
- International Day of Yoga
- Youth Day

The average views for our online Satsangs were between 10 000–15 000 per month.

Pujya Swami Sahajananda reminded devotees that we should try and see Sri Gurudev's Grace even in difficult situations. It is most gratifying that although regular places of worship were not accessible due to the coronavirus pandemic, devotees converted their homes into temples and performed mass regular online Satsang and chanting.

Many who may not have been regular in attending Satsang began participating more often, within the comforts of their homes. These included devotees from many parts of South Africa, India, U.K., U.S.A., Australia, Canada, Middle East, New Zealand and Germany. Responses from participants from various parts of the globe are gratifying.■

Warm greetings to all. Thank you to DLS for the soul stirring Satsang. How lovely to hear many familiar voices singing so beautifully together. It was so spiritually comforting and uplifting. It filled me with fortitude and strength. The most precious advantage of this broadcast was that it was possible for the Master's Divine Name to be heard in various parts of the world, filling the environment with pure and much needed healing energy. Congratulations to the Satsang team for this brilliant initiative. You cannot possibly imagine how blessed and protected I feel as a devotee of Gurudev at this time when I am far away from South Africa. With much gratitude and humility.

—A Devotee's Comment from the Middle East.

"Life is short and the time of death is uncertain. Apply yourself seriously to service of the Guru."

—Sri Swami Sivananda, *Guru Bhakti Yoga*

"Prayer can work miracles."—Sri Swami Sivananda

Ashrams And Centres

Due to the Grace of our Divine Master and Pujya Swami Sahajananda, the Society has been blessed to have various Ashrams and centres across the country. Satsangs, Ganga Aratis, other special functions and events are held at these venues.

SIVANANDA INTERNATIONAL CULTURAL CENTRE (SICC)

Situated on a beautiful, picturesque site tucked between lush hills and valleys of green canefields, overlooking the Indian Ocean, SICC is one of the flagship centres of the Society. It is arguably the largest Hindu spiritual centre in the Southern Hemisphere.

The Centre was conceived in 1987, the year of Sri Swami Sivananda's Birth Centenary. It has blossomed from the first building which housed a beautiful and spacious prayer hall into a magnificent complex, eminently suitable for the Society's multifarious services and activities.

A key objective of the campus is to invoke calmness of mind and being. It is a "block of peace", said Pujya Swami Sahajananda, tucked away from the bustle of the city. Earnest seekers who visit this Centre are sure to imbibe the divine vibrations which permeate the campus. The Centre regularly hosts Yoga camps, retreats, Satsangs and other spiritual events.



Sivananda International Cultural Centre, La Mercy

SIVANANDA SUNLIT PATH CENTRE

Through the Grace of the Divine Master, Sri Swami Sivananda, the Sivananda Sunlit Path Centre, a project initiated by Pujya Swamiji, has shown steady growth and expansion since its official opening on 10 April 2011.

The facilities at the Centre include a sports hall, conference room, soya milk making library, prayer hall and peace centre, kitchen and dining room, and ample parking space, all situated on the premises.

The main objective of the complex is to host the Sivananda Sunlit Club. This non-denominational programme is designed to educate children and teenagers on how to keep away from the social evils prevalent in society today such as drugs, alcohol, gambling, sex, etc. The most important instructions for Spiritual Darlings (children) driven by the programme are how they should turn to God for protection against bad habits and that God is their true Friend, Mother and Father. The Sunlit Path Programme is also conducted at various schools across the province. Members of the club receive a quarterly publication, free of charge, which comprises inspiring stories, spiritual and moral lessons, general knowledge information and much more. To date the Sunlit Club has more than 3 000 members.

There are various other activities conducted at the centre which include:

- Sewing Centre: Sewing classes are conducted for the underprivileged.
- Soya Centre: Organic soya beans are processed to produce soya milk, tofu and okara which is used in the production of soya products such as burgers, samoosas, etc.
- Organic Gardening: On-site rainwater harvesting is used to irrigate various organic crops that are grown at the centre such as spinach, lettuce, herbs, carrots, etc.
- Counselling: Free counselling sessions are conducted on a host of problems such as substance abuse, depression, family conflicts, etc.

Shortly after the inauguration of the Centre, a devotee perceived a need for many older people living in the area to participate in workshops catering to their specific needs. To fulfil this need, she formed a senior citizen's club, which was later named Sivananda Wisdom Group

(SWG). The SWG members meet on Wednesday mornings.

The workshop syllabus is primarily based on the teachings of Swami Sivananda and Swami Sahajananda. Topics include:

- Spiritual Education
- Health Education
- How to age gracefully
- Eradicating evil qualities
- Skills development
- Yoga Asanas

Prescribed literature is all Divine Life Society's publications, which are read and discussed during the workshops. Thus, the Society's key goal to disseminate spiritual and natural healing literature, is achieved.



Sivananda Sunlit Path Centre - Arena Park, Chatsworth

Guest speakers and artistes regularly feature on the programme to present items of interest to the senior citizens group. Some of these speakers/ artistes included:

- Prof Poobhalan Pillay and Smt Mahenthri Pillay: Renowned music artists who delighted SWG members with their melodious singing of Bhajans. Smt Mahenthri Pillay also explained how music helps senior citizens to age gracefully.
- Pandit Roopnauth Sharma: Past President of the Hindu Federation of Canada, delivered a motivational talk to members of the group in February 2015.
- Dr Sherine Vie: A medical devices expert and author of several books, originally a South African citizen, now based in the United States of America, addressed members of the senior citizens' group during her visit to South Africa.
- Sri Manogran Govender: Civil engineer and author of a book entitled *Diabetes Defeated*, delivered a motivational talk to help SWG members with diabetes to overcome their health challenges.
- Professor Kriben Pillay: Performed a magic show to demonstrate how illusionary phenomenon distorts people's perception of reality.

During lockdown periods when face-to-face workshops could not be held, members received an interactive weekly circular posted on a dedicated WhatsApp group facility or through email. The circular included spiritual content, information about the Society's forthcoming events, relevant member activities and wellness guidelines.

From a small beginning, the SWG has grown and continues to grow. It is envisaged that the experience gained in conducting this senior citizen's programme will serve as a benchmark for establishing similar programmes at other branches of the Society.

DLS BRANCHES

The Society has 18 branches and prayer groups located around the country. These branches and groups serve as the spiritual nuclei of the organisation.

- Sivanandashram, Chatsworth
- Sivanandashram, Pietermaritzburg
- Sivanandashram, Richards Bay
- Sivanandashram, Stanger
- Sivananda Yoga Centre, Gauteng
- Branch, Estcourt
- Branch, Kharwastan
- Branch, Newlands West
- Branch, Shallcross
- Branch, Stonebridge, Phoenix
- Branch, Tongaat
- Branch, Verulam
- Branch, Westham, Phoenix
- Prayer Group, Rydalvale, Phoenix
- Prayer Group, Cape Town
- Prayer Group, Tinley Manor
- Prayer Group, Umkomaas
- Prayer Group, Umzinto

"Prayer frees the devotee from all kinds of fears."—Sri Swami Sivananda

Parliament Of The World's Religions

The Parliament of the World's Religions was created to cultivate harmony among the world's religious and spiritual communities, and to foster their engagement with the world and its guiding institutions for a just, peaceful and sustainable world. Thousands of delegates from across the globe convene to renew their work for the future of the planet.

Divine Life Society of South Africa has been participating in the Parliament since 1999. Pujya Swami Sahajananda advised that Divine Life Society of South Africa be represented at all Parliaments to inform the world of the divine personality of Sri Swami Sivananda, his contributions to South Africa and the world at large, and to promote and disseminate the Master's literature.

In 2021, due to the prevalence of COVID-19, for the first time in its esteemed history, the Parliament of the World's Religions, which is held every 3 or 4 years in different countries, was held online. The theme for this Parliament was: "Opening our hearts to the World: Compassion in Action". Thousands of participants attended online and over 500 presenters shared their views on religious philosophy & teachings, compassion in action, justice, climate change, women's dignity, human rights and more. This 8th Parliament provided 48 hours of interactive participation from 16-18 October 2021. The Society was represented by Dr Rusraj Bharath, who spoke on "The great sage of Rishikesh, India, Sri Swami Sivananda, whose life was one of compassion in action". His talk was entitled, "Swami Sivananda – The Practical Vedantin". In all, eight devotees from the Society registered to attend the various sessions.



DLS of S.A. bookshop at the Parliament: 2023

Excellent video clips, supporting documents and appropriate musical accompaniment lent colour and authenticity to the presentation. Dr Bharath had succeeded in successfully transmitting across the globe the message of our Divine Master, Sri Swami Sivananda and Pujya Swami Sahajananda.

As part of its programme to disseminate the universal teachings of Sri Swami Sivananda, Divine Life Society of S.A., offered via its Parliament virtual webshop, free downloadable literature which included *The Art of Bringing up Children*, *Courage*, *Glory of the Divine Name*, *Guidance to Youth, Secrets to Good Health, Facing the Challenges of Youth,* etc.

The 2023 Parliament of the World's Religions was hosted from 14-18 August in Chicago, U.S.A., where thousands convened to address the critical issues of our time: the rise of autocracy, the climate crisis, the erosion of human rights, and the ever-growing threat of hate, war, and violence. The 2023 Parliament also focused on the dignity and human rights of women and girls.

Seventeen devotees from Divine Life Society of S.A. volunteered to make the trip to Chicago at their own expense to be the ambassadors of our Divine Master, Sri Swami Sivananda, and Pujya Swami Sahajananda. They were engaged in disseminating the writings of the Master to many parts of the U.S.A. and the world, presenting workshops, chairing panel discussions and organising religious observances.

The Society had secured a well-positioned exhibition booth, at the entrance to the display area, where the Master's books were displayed and marketed. The Master's potent spiritual energy continues to nurture and sustain earnest seekers who yearn for spiritual sustenance and guidance as was also evident at previous Parliaments. The Society's participation has helped in a significant measure to promote Hinduism.

The Parliament is a constant reminder that there are many out in the world who will open their hearts and reach out to those who suffer grief, poverty and the many atrocities inflicted upon mankind. The lessons and teachings espoused at the Parliament of the World's Religions cannot be forgotten. These precious experiences must be shared with others so that they, too, can enrich and improve the quality of their lives by developing compassion and other divine qualities in preparation for the ultimate goal of life, God-realisation.■

"Religion does what philosophy can never do."—Sri Swami Sivananda

Social Development Projects

Divine Life Society of South Africa has dedicated itself to the social, moral, educational and spiritual upliftment of communities in South Africa throughout its history.

The Society has significantly contributed to the social upliftment of the less privileged citizens of South Africa. The schools, Peace & Skills Training Centres, hospitals and crèches that are described below, were built in partnership with either Provincial Departments or Municipalities. In all cases, the Society was the major contributor, contributing sometimes up to 90% of the cost of a project.



EDUCATION

The Society began its Education Projects in 1974. Our education projects include the establishment and refurbishment of classrooms, libraries, offices, etc., in various parts of KwaZulu-Natal.

HEALTH FACILITIES

Lack of suitable health care facilities is one of the major issues faced by the country. To help alleviate this social challenge, the Society has undertaken and completed various health clinics throughout the Province.

In 2010, the prestigious Sivananda-Luwamba multipurpose medical centre in the Ntambanana District of Zululand was completed. This centre comprises 11 buildings which includes two hospital wards, pharmacy, clinic, crèche and government administration block.

POOR FEEDING

The Society has participated in various poor feeding programmes since its inception and is still continuing to support this initiative.

A few branches of the Society undertake monthly poor feeding programmes. Sandwiches are prepared daily and are sent to the schools to allow underprivileged children to have access to a meal. Branches also distribute grocery hampers to indigent families monthly.

Hot meals are prepared each month on All Souls' Day for distribution to the poor and the needy. In addition, the Society provides at least 3 000 grocery hampers annually for distribution to the less fortunate.

PEACE AND SKILLS TRAINING CENTRES

Skills training is a social upliftment project that is used to empower people with an ability to support and sustain themselves and their families. The Society has recognised the need for such projects and has provided various centres for fostering skills, such as sewing, computers and hydroponics gardening around the province.

SIVANANDA SEWING CENTRES

Several sewing centres which develop skills in pattern cutting, sewing and overlocking have been built and administered by the Society. Training is provided to unemployed adults by qualified teachers who are paid by the Society.

A unique feature of the Society's centres is that trainees are provided with an opportunity of securing a free sewing machine provided that they are able to sell a minimum number of garments that were sewn in their centre. The material and cotton for these garments are provided by the Society. This requirement is to promote effort, dedication and participation by the trainees towards their

"Every good act is charity."—Sri Swami Sivananda

livelihood, thereby encouraging home industry.

To date, at least 11 000 students have graduated from the many sewing centres and received certificates, thus enabling them to get employment.

CRÈCHES

Owing to the dire need for early childhood education in rural areas, the Society decided to build crèches in various parts of KwaZulu-Natal. These crèches play a vital role in providing a haven for children left unattended by working parents, as well as children left orphaned by *inter alia* HIV/AIDS.

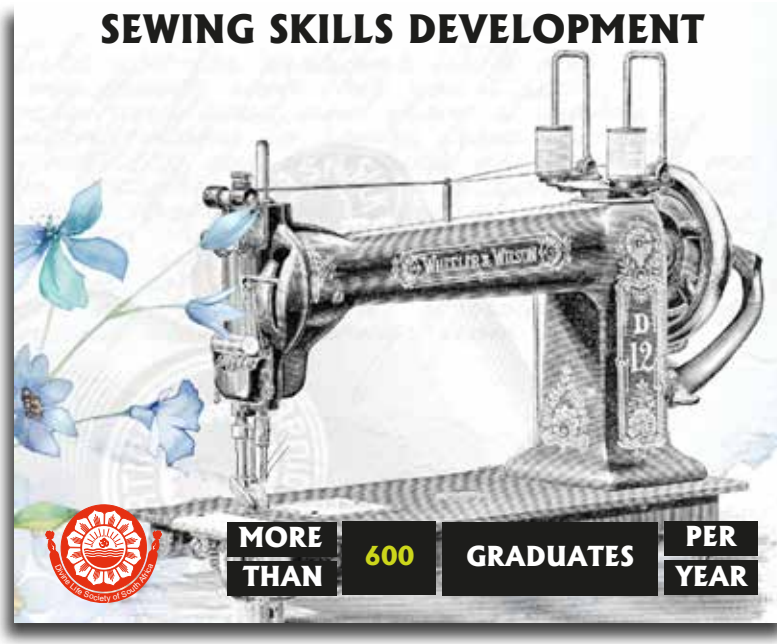
To date 223 crèches, each costing more than R500 000, have been built mostly in deep rural areas. In the last 5 years alone, the Society has completed 31 crèches in the Province.

GENERAL

Over and above the mentioned projects, the Society has also completed many other social upliftment projects, which include community low-cost housing, water tanks, halls, a youth centre, swimming pools and renovations to old-age and children's homes as well as assistance to temples.

Fifty years later, after ensuring community participation in each one of the projects, the Society has completed building 677 education, health and other projects. It is only through the Master's bountiful Grace and Pujya Swami Sahajananda's vision, hard work and inspiration that the Society has been able to make a significant difference in the alleviation of social challenges in South Africa. With the Master's Grace, it is the Society's intention to continue the social upliftment projects.■

SEWING SKILLS DEVELOPMENT





Inside a Crèche built by DLS of S.A.



Crèche in Nyezane, Gingindlovu

SIVANANDA'S TEACHINGS

CHARITY

Give, give and give. This is the secret of abundance. Radiate thoughts of goodness and love. Forgive the faults of others. Bless the man who injures you.

Disseminate spiritual knowledge to one and all. Use the material wealth, knowledge and spiritual wisdom that you possess as a divine trust.

Charity is love. It is service of the poor and needy. It is love and goodwill.

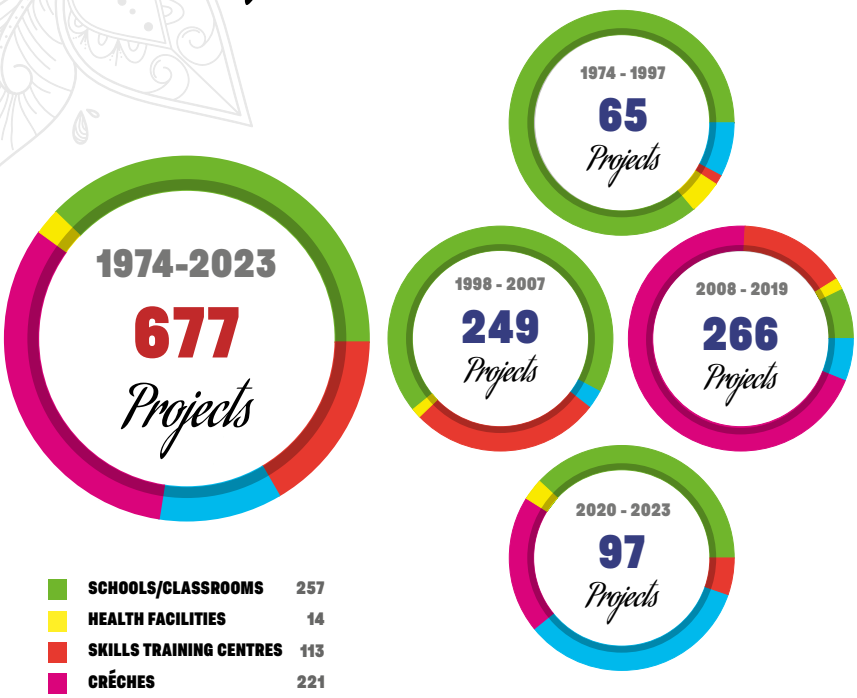
"That which is given to relieve the needy, is charity"—Sri Swami Sivananda



"What is the object of Seva or service? Why do you serve the poor and the needy and the suffering humanity at large? Why do you serve society and the country? Yes, by doing service you purify your heart. Egoism, hatred, jealousy, the idea of superiority and all the kindred negative qualities will vanish. Humility, pure love, sympathy, tolerance and mercy will be developed. The sense of separateness will be annihilated. Selfishness will be eradicated. You will get a broad and liberal outlook on life. You will begin to feel oneness and unity. Eventually you will obtain knowledge of the Self. You will realise "One in all" and "all in One". You will feel unbounded joy. What is society after all? It is nothing but a collection of units or individuals."

—Sri Swami Sivananda, *Practice of Karma Yoga*

Project STATISTICS



SCHOOLS/CLASSROOMS	257
HEALTH FACILITIES	14
SKILLS TRAINING CENTRES	113
CRÉCHES	221
OTHER*	72
Total	677

*NOTE: "OTHER" PROJECTS INCLUDE TWO HOUSING PROJECTS IN WHICH THE SOCIETY BUILT A TOTAL OF 556 LOW COST HOMES IN THE WATERLOO AND PARKGATE AREAS.

"Share what you have with others."—Sri Swami Sivananda

100th Birth Anniversary Celebrations

2025 is a milestone year in the history of Divine Life Society of South Africa, as it marks the 100th Birth Anniversary of beloved Pujya Swami Sahajananda. To commemorate this significant event, a special brochure will be published, glorifying the life and work of this colossal being who gently caressed the soil of South Africa with every step he took.

The Divine Master, Sri Swami Sivananda, drew many souls in South Africa to him, and many were evolving souls. In the midst of the darkness in which they lived and struggled, grew the lotus of beloved Pujya Swamiji, shedding Light, Peace and Bliss on all alike, exhorting souls to surpass themselves. To many he said that he would take care of them for several lifetimes, and many will attest to the fact that he has more than kept that promise in this lifetime itself, and continues to do so on a daily basis, perhaps on a moment-by-moment basis.

A visitor, meeting with Pujya Swamiji for the first time, may be forgiven if he/she saw him merely as a soft and gentle saint. To the hard-core devotees of the organisation, he represented, more often than not, the Divine Mother Kali at Her rampant best. He strove to scrub out all the dark spots from their nature, a process which at times was uncomfortable to the devotee. Those who stepped away from their pride and egoism felt the cool breeze of his joy and love and those who clung to their egos and weakness were not spared.

In this commemorative brochure, we will take you through his life, from his boyhood days when he daringly waded into dangerous waters in an attempt to save two youngsters who were struggling in a river in Estcourt, through the fifty-eight years of his spiritual ministry at the helm of Divine Life Society of South Africa. His was a life of dogged determination and fearlessness in the face of insurmountable obstacles and a ceaseless offering at every moment of his entire being, mind, heart, vital, subconscious, ego and body to the Divine Master. On the momentous day, 01 March 2007 (Day of Descent of Divine Grace), he started experiencing peace twenty-four hours of the day.

> "*Faith in the Guru is the first rung on the ladder of Guru-Bhakti Yoga.*"
>
> —Sri Swami Sivananda, *Guru Bhakti Yoga*

100 YEARS
Divine Life Society of South Africa
Centenary Celebrations

1924-2024 | Sri Swami Sivananda's Sannyas Centenary
1925-2025 | Sri Swami Sahajananda's Birth Centenary

DLS CENTRES *in South Africa*

Sivanandashram, Chatsworth
2 Ambassador Road
Havenside

Sivanandashram, Pietermaritzburg
Cnr Mysore &
Lahore Roads
Northdale

Sivanandashram, Reservoir Hills
513 Mountbatten
Drive
Durban

Sivanandashram, Richards Bay
54 Filigree Loop
Brackenham

Sivanandashram, Stanger
6 Palmhaven Rise
Glenhills

Sivananda Ghat
Clare Estate
(Next to Umgeni
Hindu Crematorium)
Durban

Sivananda Sunlit Path Centre
25 Rose Heights Road
Arena Park
Chatsworth

Sivananda Yoga Centre
369 Allspice Road
Zakariyya Park
Gauteng

Sivananda International Cultural Centre
Sivananda Avenue
(Off End Street)
Sivananda Nagar
La Mercy







Printed and Published by:

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