DIVINE LIFE SOCIETY OF SOUTH AFRICA

SRI SWAMI SIVANANDA'S *Ideal Disciple*



100 YEARS
Centenary Celebrations

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

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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!

Prayer to Gurudev

O all-merciful Gurudev, every thought of my mind, every emotion of my heart, every movement of my being, every feeling and every sensation, each cell of my body, each drop of my blood—all, all is yours Gurudev, yours absolutely, yours without any reserve. Gurudev, you can decide my life or my death, my happiness or my sorrow, my pleasure or my pain. Gurudev, whatever you do with me, whatever comes to me from you, will lead me to your Lotus Feet.

Gurudev, you have provided us with the best facilities in the world for our spiritual growth. May we take full advantage of this precious gift of yours, Gurudev. May we look upon the Ashram and all its contents as your body and treat them with love and reverence. This is our heartfelt prayer to you Gurudev.

Om Shanti, Shanti, Shanti!

Birth Anniversary CELEBRATIONS


SRI SWAMI SAHAJANANDA

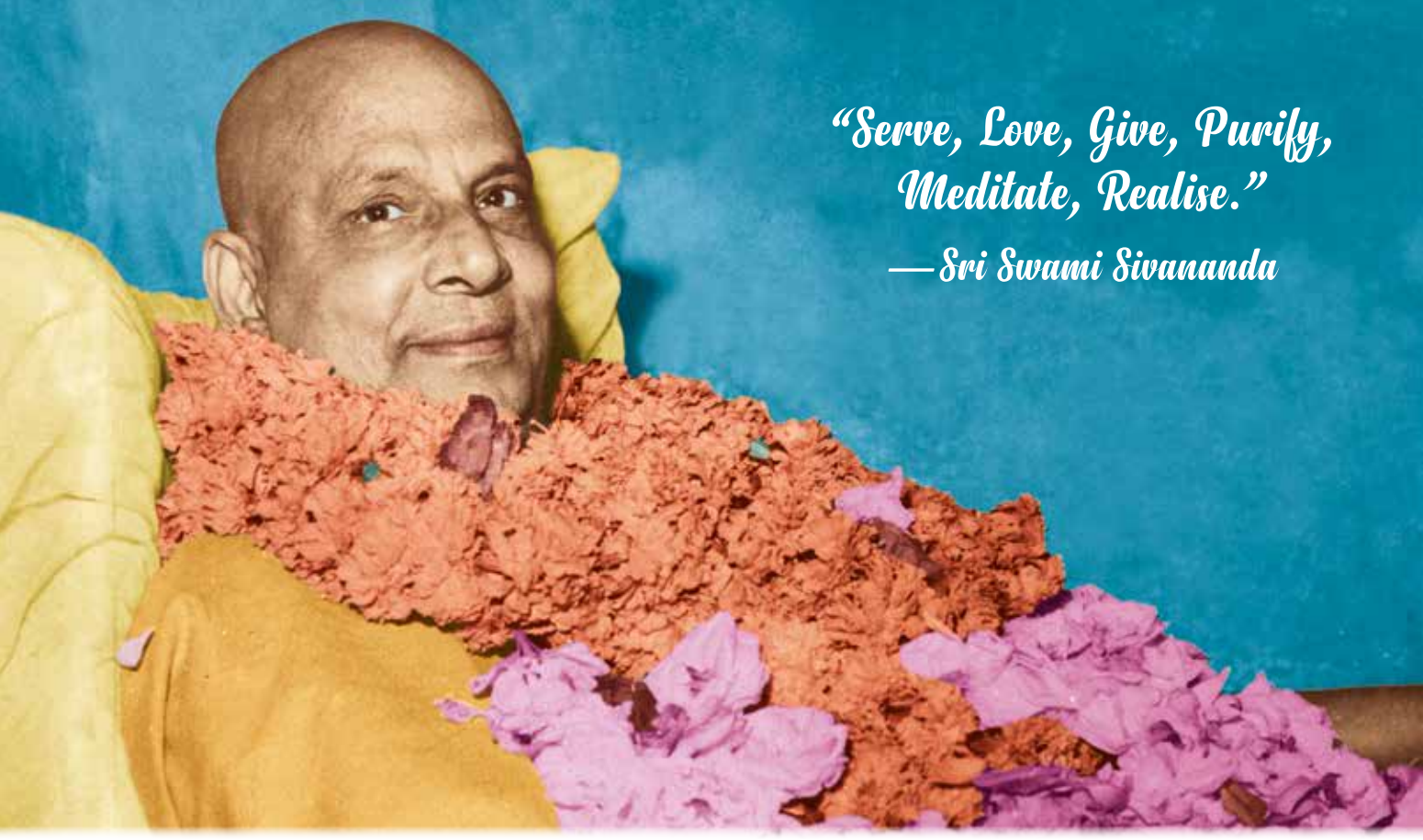
One hundred years ago, on 10 July 1925, a boy named V. Srinivasan (later Swami Sahajananda) was born in Estcourt, KwaZulu-Natal. Within a few decades, his indomitable will, tenacity and iron courage to spread his Divine Master's, Sri Swami Sivananda's teachings, saw a virtual spiritual renaissance in KwaZulu-Natal; perhaps a rare feat in spiritual history in this country, for the message of Sri Swami Sivananda, the message of Divine Life, has permeated multiple homes throughout the province and beyond, attributed to the unsurpassed efforts and committment of Sri Swami Sahajananda, and the Grace of our Divine Master, Sri Swami Sivananda.

Sri Swami Sahajananda's silent dynamism, magnetic personality and contributions are again evident in Sri Swami Sivananda's words at Pujya Swamiji's farewell after his initiation into the holy order of Sannyas on 10 April 1956. The Master said, "Swami Sahajananda is styled as the spiritual king of South Africa, Durban. He is also called African Chota Guru. He does not want anything. He is a silent worker. He is a man of renunciation, Vairagya (dispassion) and meditation. He is a very good organiser. He talks little. You have never seen him talking. He thinks much and does much. Such a spiritual Yogi is he. His devotion to his teacher is unique. He has a pure heart. So let us pray for the health of this small Yogi, full of strength. One who can transform the materialistic intellect of the whole of South Africa; what tremendous purity, what tremendous Yogic power, what tremendous meditation, spiritual aura and selfless aura".

Swami Sivananda has paid the highest accolades to Pujya Swami Sahajananda. How do we as devotees, capture Pujya Swamiji's life and legacy in a manner that will do justice to our "African Chota Guru", this spiritual dynamo of the South African spiritual renaissance? This publication highlights the life and legacy of Pujya Swami Sahajananda, his Guru Bhakti and his total surrender to his Guru, Sri Swami Sivananda.

That we celebrate Pujya Swamiji's 100th Birth Anniversary this year, and that we will be celebrating many more of his birthdays in future, makes us reminisce, and take cognisance of our own spiritual growth, our commitment to the Mission, our Guru Bhakti and our responsibility towards sustaining Pujya Swamiji's legacy beyond his centenary celebrations. We can do these, by increasing our Sadhana, serving the Society unflinchingly, and by practising the teachings of our Divine Master and Pujya Swamiji.

The following profound and eloquent words of Pujya Swami Sahajananda, are notable pointers to us all, now, and in the years ahead. In *Path of Divine Grace,* Volume 1, Pujya Swami Sahajananda said, "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". We trust that the articles herein will act as a catalyst for more intense Sadhana and spiritual growth, so that our surrender too, "will always be flawless and perfect", like that of Pujya Swamiji's to our Divine Master, Sri Swami Sivananda.



Biography of SRI SWAMI SIVANANDA

For centuries, India has fostered thousands of mystics, Yogis and saints. But the story of Swami Sivananda, a spiritual stalwart of the 20th century, stands out as a unique, inspiring and absorbing one. This is the story of a God-man who, from being a doctor in the Malaysian rubber plantations, rose to become one of India's most revered spiritual leaders.

EARLY BOYHOOD

Sri Swami Sivananda was born on 8 September 1887 in Pattamadai, in the Tirunelveli district in South India. Named Kuppuswami by his parents, he was a descendant of the great Saivite saint of the 16th century, Sri Appayya Dikshitar, who has written many authoritative works on Vedanta in Sanskrit. His saintly parents, Vengu Iyer and Parvatiammal, were simple, devout and religious.

The spirit of giving freely, of sharing without restraint, was ingrained in little Kuppuswami. A boyhood friend of Kuppuswami, Kavi Yogi Maharishi Shuddhananda Bharati, recalled how Kuppuswami, as a little lad, one day ran out with his plate of food when he heard a beggar's cry outside.

Even at that age, the intelligent lad had the gift of divine vision. If his father sent him to purchase fruit for his daily worship, the boy would often not hesitate to distribute the fruit to the poor and needy, returning home to inform his father that he had already worshipped God in the poor. What a grand vision the young lad possessed!

Kuppuswami said that he was very mischievous as a lad. But it was not the kind of mischief we see in children these days. For instance, to astound and frighten his family, he would daringly jump into a dry well!

While he was learning the art of fencing, a Brahmin standing nearby said, "Om Namah Sivaya! Kuppu, you are a Brahmin. How can you allow this untouchable to teach you?"

When he returned home, Kuppuswami pondered deeply over what the Brahmin said. In a moment, he had a mental vision in which he saw Lord Siva, whom he worshipped in his father's room, emerge from there and enter into the heart of the untouchable. At once, Kuppuswami went with flowers, sweets and clothing, garlanded the untouchable, his fencing Guru, placed flowers at his feet and fell prostrate before him.

Thus, did God come early into Kuppuswami's life, to remove the veil of caste distinction, which was very prevalent in those days, revealing his broadness of heart and mind.

STUDENT DAYS

During his student days, the Master was brilliant in class as well as on the sportsfield. He always stood first in his class. He was bold and cheerful. When Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was staged, he played the part of Helena.

As the desire to serve others was in the Master's nature, it was natural that he should choose a medical career. After his matriculation he joined the Tanjore Medical Institute.

At the institution, he worked with purpose and dedication. He utilised his leisure hours studying medical books and journals. The holidays were spent learning new lessons in the hospital. The Master, remarkably intelligent as he was, was gifted with a phenomenal memory as well. So prodigious was his memory, that he would retain whatever he read. He revealed that even during his first year of medicine he could answer fifth-year papers.

After leaving the Tanjore Medical Institute, the Master served in India for some time and ran a medical journal called *Ambrosia*. The first issue of *Ambrosia* came out in 1909. It was a monthly issue, comprising 32 pages. Kuppuswami himself wrote many articles under various pseudonyms. From various Ayurvedic doctors, he obtained articles on the ancient system of Indian medicine. Soon, the magazine began to grow in popularity and writers of distinction started contributing articles. There was a subtle spiritual touch to his articles.

AS A DOCTOR IN MALAYA (MALAYSIA)

The Master was not satisfied with his work in India and his ambitious spirit drove him to Malaysia to seek employment there. He recalled his arrival in Malaysia thus, "Immediately on disembarking, I went to Dr Iyengar, who introduced me to Dr Harold Parsons, an acquaintance of his. I was highly optimistic about getting a job. Dr Parsons himself did not need an assistant, but I was able to impress him in such a manner that he took me to Mr A.G. Robins, the manager of a rubber estate, which had a hospital of its own.

"Fortunately, Mr Robins was just then in need of an assistant to work in the hospital. He was a terrible man with a violent temper, a giant figure, tall and stout. He asked me, 'Can you manage a hospital all by yourself?'

"I replied without hesitation, 'Yes, I can manage even three hospitals!' I was appointed at once!"

Soon the Master's extremely kind and loving nature became well-known in Malaysia. He was a loving friend of the indentured labourers as well as of the local citizens.

Together with his work in the hospital, the Master also had his private practice. He never asked any fee from his patients. Often, he would give them money from his own pocket for their special diet. In serious cases he kept vigil at night at the patient's bedside. He served the poor patients with his all—body, mind and wealth.

The Master loved sport. Cycling was his favourite pastime. He read many books on Western games and attended scores of tournaments. For a certain period, he even acted as a sports correspondent to the *Malaya Tribune*.

The Master led a luxurious life in Malaysia. He had a great liking for high-class dress, collection of curios and fancy articles of sandalwood, gold and silver. He would purchase various kinds of gold rings and necklaces and wear them all at the same time!

Even during this period of his life, Dr Kuppuswami had a vague desire to secure in life something more substantial than material objects. This latent urge in him burst forth in the form of Bhajan, Nama Sankirtan, Japa and love of service. He purchased rosaries and distributed them freely to interested persons. Often, he would invite friends and neighbours to Bhajan parties. The lives of saints like Nandanar and Tulsidas formed the theme of his singing and speeches.

RENOUNCING THE WORLD

Whilst Kuppuswami served diligently at the hospital and enjoyed the luxuries, there was a silent discontentment. Despite the comforts he enjoyed in Malaysia, he felt a deep longing for permanent happiness.

Is there not a higher mission in life than the daily round of duties, eating and drinking? Is there no higher form of eternal peace and happiness than all these transitory and illusory pleasures? How very insecure is existence on this earth-plane, with all kinds of fears, worries, anxieties, diseases and disappointments. The world of names and forms is ever changing. Time is fleeting. All hopes of peace and happiness in this world end in pain, despair and sorrow.

Such were the thoughts constantly arising in his mind. The doctor's profession provided him with enough evidence of the sufferings of this world. He realised that true, lasting happiness cannot be had merely by acquiring wealth. With the purification of heart through selfless service, he had a new vision. He was deeply convinced that there must be a place—a sweet home of divine splendour, purity and pristine glory—where absolute security, peace and happiness can be had. And that was by realising God.

And so, Dr Kuppuswami abandoned the life of ease and comfort and headed for India for purposes of prayer, study, meditation and a higher form of service to the world.

When the Master reached home after many years, he was fondly received by his mother and other family members. We are told that while his goods were being taken off by the cartman, the Master was found missing. He had not even entered his home. The family thought that he had perhaps gone to visit friends. But in truth, the Master had promptly bolted away! Such was his burning dispassion and desire to seek God that at a single stroke he renounced the whole world of wealth, family and friends.

AS A MONK AT RISHIKESH

It was the end of May 1924 when Dr Kuppuswami reached Rishikesh. His joy knew no bounds. The divine Ganga, and the majestic Himalayas, clad in green forest, had a soothing effect on him.

One day, as he was sitting on the banks of the Ganges after being refused food at a local almshouse, a venerable saint, Swami Vishwananda, happened to cast a glance at him. Attracted by the young man's unusual spiritual aura, the saint initiated him into the Order of Sannyas (Monkhood) at once. The Master entered the Order on June 1, 1924, as Swami Sivananda, and settled at Swarg Ashram.

The Master's approach to spiritual matters was unique and original. He imitated none. He just allowed his natural, inborn tendencies to blossom forth and spread their sweet aroma to all those around him.

In Swarg Ashram, the Master maintained a rigorous routine. He used to be up at 4am and, plunging into the icy Ganges, stand waist-deep in the river and turn his rosary, continuing it till sunrise. Only after invoking the Sun Deity would he clamber out of the cold waters.

The Master went through prolonged periods of intense daily meditation. Gradually, he increased the meditation time to eight hours a day and, in winter, to twelve and sixteen hours. For some time, he gave up even study and medical service, and engaged himself in meditation alone.

In spite of his extremely severe austerities, the Master would find time to serve the sick monks and passing pilgrims. He would clean the rooms of the sick monks and sometimes keep vigil the whole night if the case was serious. He once carried Lek, a European monk, to the hospital. Orthodox monks of the Rishikesh colony did not believe in selfless service. So, the Master's activities were ridiculed.

Many monks were run down by malnutrition and the extreme winter cold. Most of them suffered from frequent attacks of fever and dysentery. The Master could not bear to see the helpless plight of these holy monks. He wanted to serve them, but he needed drugs and medicines.

Remembering his savings in an insurance company in Malaysia, he managed to salvage Rs5 000. He deposited the sum in the post office and utilised the interest to obtain medicine and essential food items for the suffering monks.

Within a few months, the Master felt the urgent need to organise this relief work better. So, the Satya Sevashram Dispensary was formed to serve monks and pilgrims.

One morning, the Master realised how absent-minded he was in not having given a certain very useful medicine to a passing pilgrim. The pilgrim had already begun his journey very early in the morning. When the Master started after him, he was already well on his way. Undeterred, the Master ran kilometre after kilometre—until he finally caught up with him at the eighth kilometre—and handed him the precious medicine!

It was such breathtaking sincerity of purpose and intense love of selfless service that became the crowning glory of the Divine Master's mission in life.

While at Swarg Ashram, the Master kept a diary in which he used to record his thoughts. His method of developing a virtue was to take one at a time and practise it for a month. He admitted that he, too, used to kill scorpions in the beginning.

About his own realisation of God, the Master revealed to one of his students, "I did not have any outstanding experiences during the period of my spiritual practice. There was no external or internal obstruction in the progress of my practice. That was the only outstanding feature. I made meditation—deep meditation—the keynote of my inner life. It gave me smooth and continuous progress and rapid arrival at the final spiritual experience".

The Master founded the Divine Life Society in 1936, on premises that were once used as cowsheds. It did not take long for seekers to be drawn to his magnetic personality. The Master was simple and childlike in his attitude, yet he had the bearing of an ancient sage. He prostrated to saints and scavengers and bowed to stones, bricks and donkeys. He addressed even little children with courtesy. He respected the rights of animals and showed them extreme love.

The Master's powerful, inspiring thoughts influenced people all over the world. Such was his unparalleled literary charity that most of his books were given away free. In his own lifetime, the Master received the homage of saints and holy men, of ministers and politicians, of philosophers and

doctors, of film stars and cultural artists.

The Master was an optimist. Every word he uttered, every sentence he wrote, was charged with a rare spiritual power, because he taught what he himself practised in his daily life. The Master radiated peace and serenity because he was himself filled with the peace and serenity of God. He radiated love because he was filled with the love of God. He shed the light of joy because his heart was filled with the light of God. His practical life taught us that we, too, can realise God in and through life, without having to resort to caves and jungles.

The gift of divine knowledge occupied a unique place in the Master's heart. He reasoned: "Give food to the hungry, and after a while they will again be hungry. Give clothes to the naked, and soon they will again be in need. Give money to the needy, and when they have spent it, they will again be in want. But give divine knowledge to all—and you would have provided them the wherewithal to take care of themselves".

Swami Sivananda shed his mortal coil on July 14, 1963. Today, he has disciples all over the world, belonging to all nationalities, creeds and religions.

To read his works is to drink at the fountain of wisdom and grow spiritually towards the attainment of everlasting peace and bliss, and complete freedom from all sorrows, miseries and pains. In the book *From Man to Godman*, Sri Ananthanarayanan wrote, "Swami Sivananda blasted old superstitions about God and religion. In equal measure he exploded modern fairy tales about Yoga and Yogis. By teaching and by personal example, he made it plain that there is no easy way to Moksha or liberation, no shortcut to God. The laborious, orthodox way is the only way. It is the way of service and love, of abstraction and meditation, of dispassion and discrimination".

Divine Life Society of South Africa was founded directly by the Master in 1949, when he compelled Swami Sahajananda to open a centre in Durban. The Master appointed Swami Sahajananda as the first secretary and only member of the Society in this country.

Today, Divine Life Society of South Africa, through the Grace and guidance of the Master and Pujya Swamiji, is rendering very useful and valuable service to our country regardless of race, religion and creed.

The Divine Master's teachings can be summed up in his own words: "To be a cosmic friend and cosmic benefactor, a friend of the poor, the forlorn, the helpless and the fallen, is my creed".



"God is the great purifier. A saint also is a great purifier. God incarnates as saints and sages when the need is felt most. Study the lives of saints. You are inspired at once. Remember their sayings. You are elevated immediately. Walk in their footsteps. You are freed from pain and sorrow.

Swami Sivananda



Biography of SRI SWAMI SAHAJANANDA

The story of Divine Life Society of South Africa is inextricably bound to the life of Sri Swami Sahajananda (1925-2007), affectionately known as Pujya Swamiji, the Spiritual Head of the Society, who breathed life into every facet of the Society's work since its inception in 1949, till his physical passing 58 years later. Pujya Swamiji's life was characterised by his total and complete self-surrender to our Divine Master, Sri Swami Sivananda.

At a Satsang in November 2004, Sri Swami Sahajananda shared information with the devotees on his early life and how he was drawn to the Master. In the book *Glory of Guru's Grace*, Pujya Swamiji once again divulged details of his early life. Below are extracts culled from these sources and presented to the readers.

EARLY DAYS

I was born in the railway barracks, which was not far from the present Estcourt station on 10 July 1925 (*Pujya Swamiji's pre-monastic name was Vijayaragaveloo Srinivasan Naidoo*). Later, we moved to Zaailaager farm and lived in a cottage on a hillock, about a hundred metres from the present Estcourt Primary School. From there we moved to a site over the hillock. The houses in the farm were built out of mud blocks. Our home was the first one in the farm to have glass windows.

Our home had a most beautiful garden in front with lovely dahlias and marigold flowers. The turf was very beautiful. In the evenings, the family would sit on the turf and enjoy the moonlit night. The toilet, of course, was not a sewage system.

In my young days, all the children led a hard life. I myself wore only a shirt and pants—no vest or shoes. In winter, when the frost made its appearance, the feet used to be numb on our way to school. In the classroom we had coal stoves to keep us warm. I wore shoes and a coat only when I went to Pietermaritzburg, after passing Standard 6 (Grade 8). In the frosty weather even if we kicked a stone and the foot bled, we would not feel it.

Our early life in Zaailaager farm was hard but very fascinating. During weekends we walked about 10 kilometres to and fro to gather firewood. The bundles were tied and carried on the head. We had to gather cow dung also for fuel, and sometimes made cow dung cakes. Often during weekends,

my parents would go out fishing to far away spots in the big Bushman's River. I would accompany them.

AT THE OLD SCHOOL

The first years of my school career were in the old school that was near the big Bushman's River bridge. We had to walk all the way from the farm to the school.

Our family was very poor. Lunch was out of the question. Once, while on my way to school, my shirt had no pin or button. The wife of a teacher named Gabril saw me in that state and felt pity for me. She at once went to her room and got a huge napkin pin about three centimetres long and fastened it to my shirt. I went to school in that fashion.

I remember, when I was in class two (Grade 2), I came out first.

AT DRAKENSBERG SECONDARY SCHOOL

When I came to this school, now called Drakensberg Secondary School, I was in Standard 2 (Grade 4). For a period of ten years, from Standard 2 till I passed my teacher's exam in Sastri College, I was absent from school only for half a day. I was quite punctual and regular, even as I now try to be.

I remember how one day, while in Standard 2, I felt very weak due to hunger and was just about to faint while standing in the classroom for some lessons, but I excused myself and went and lay in the bathroom to recover.

TURNING TO GOD

From Pietermaritzburg, our family moved to Durban and so I also had to leave Pietermaritzburg and went to Sastri College in Standard 8 (Grade 10).

At Sastri College I was very ambitious, and after Matric wished to go to Fort Hare University to study for a B.Sc., and later a Ph.D. degree. I got a first-class pass in Standard 8, but I did not fare well in the Matric exam, although I came out first in class. I could not solve the mathematical problems in which I was so efficient. I got a second-class pass. I got disgusted with my performance and refused to accept the bursary offered to me to go to Fort Hare. I decided to study for my teacher's exam at Sastri College to become a teacher.

After completing the teacher's examination, I came to teach at the present Drakensberg Secondary School in Estcourt in 1945. Mr M. Naicker was the principal. I remember on the first day that I went to school I had to wear torn garments as I could not afford anything better.

It was while teaching at Estcourt that my life began to change. At this time, I was taking a correspondence course to get a degree. I found that my mind was very restless. The thoughts also were not at all pure. I began reflecting how to deal with this restless mind of mine and so turned to God. There was no one to guide me. I used to spend some time praying in the church in Lorne Street. Even today, when I see this church after more than 50 years, it looks so grand and beautiful. I also attended the prayer service of an African Catholic priest, who held services behind Estcourt High School.

Coming to know from the Theosophical teachings that a Guru or teacher was necessary to guide one on the spiritual path, I began to earnestly long for one. Visiting the Vedic Bookshop in Durban, I picked up a book from the shelf entitled, *Practice of Karma Yoga*, written by the great sage of India, Sri Swami Sivananda. Although I did not know the meaning of the word "Karma" then, the book sent a strange thrill through me. I at once knew that Swami Sivananda was the Guru for me.

On reading my Master's book, my lifestyle changed instantly. It was an overnight change. I at once packed up the lectures for the correspondence course and sent them back to where they came from. Now realisation of God became the aim and goal of my life. I was thrilled to learn that by realising God, one can, not only control the turbulent mind, but can also enjoy supreme, everlasting peace and bliss. To such a God-realised person there would be no pain, sorrow or suffering.

I at once gave up soccer and tennis, which I loved very much, and in which I was quite good. I began meditating and praying but found it tremendously difficult. I realised how arduous it is to control the mind and make it still to concentrate on God within. I think it would be easier to make a trip to the moon than to control this monkey-mind, which is an expert in having its own ways and running about recklessly.

Later, I came to realise that to get a Ph.D. degree, to become a multi-millionaire, to become a world-famous personality, is not very difficult, but to achieve the state of God-realisation, it is tremendously difficult. The path is long and arduous, and full of pitfalls and dangers. One has to spend years and years in deep meditation and other spiritual practices to reach the Lord. Hostile forces are ever ready to bring about a downfall of an earnest spiritual aspirant. There have been numerous such cases, even among advanced aspirants.

During the time when I taught at the school, I used to meditate sometimes in the cave that is on the cliff near the weir. While near the cave, I used to have a strange desire to climb up the steep cliff. I had to hold my breath while climbing. It was so dangerous. One slip would mean death by falling down into the river.

Karma Yoga means practice of selfless service. This was the theme of the book I purchased from the Vedic Bookshop. Selfless service purifies the mind and enables one to develop divine qualities and purity of mind. Without these qualities,



"Saints are God's agents on earth. God reveals Himself in a saint in His full glory, infinite power, wisdom and bliss. To think of saints, to live in their company, to have good fortune of receiving their blessings, is to draw forth upon yourself a shower of purity, inspiration and divine consciousness.

Swami Sivananda

progress towards the realisation of God would be impossible.

At that time, Mr Paul Sykes, the founder of FOSA, started a care committee in Estcourt, and I was in charge of it. I also began purchasing groceries for some poor Coloured children.

MEETING THE MASTER & OPENING OF A DLS BRANCH IN SOUTH AFRICA

After engaging in prayer and meditation for some months, I wished to resign from the teaching profession and go and live with my Master in Rishikesh, India. My Master advised me to stay where I was and continue my practices. But when I was adamant and insisted on going to him, he allowed me to visit him. It was in 1948.

My father did not approve of my desire to follow the path of renunciation but he did not place any obstacles. I made sure that all the financial and other requirements for my parents were well taken care of by the other brothers. Our scriptures say that if one follows the path of renunciation, seven generations of his parents, ancestors and others before and after him acquire the merits of such renunciation. I remember how about three years before his passing away my father got blind. It was then that I went to him and asked him to repeat the *Sri Ram* Mantra. He at once gave up taking non-vegetarian food and also the liquor habit and used to spend time with the Japa *mala* in his hand repeating the Mantra. The most wonderful thing was that when he passed away, I wrote to the Master. The Master said that he conducted prayer for the peace of the departed soul. See how fortunate he was and see also the merits of renunciation!

After resigning from the teaching profession, I left for India to visit my Master at his Ashram in Rishikesh. But when I arrived there, I could remain with him only for a fortnight. I could not bear the cold near the Ganges River. The food also was different, and I was even shedding tears for my teacher friends whom I had left behind. So I had to return with my Master's permission. This is what happens when one disobeys one's Guru. It was a good lesson for me.

On my return to South Africa, I wanted to get into the teaching profession again. Mr Paul Sykes, the founder of FOSA, knowing my interest in serving the sick, offered me a post in the hospital ward to teach disabled children. I accepted the offer. That is how I landed in Durban.

My Master wrote to me to open a branch of the Divine Life Society. I was very hesitant as I was by nature shy and not used to organisational work. So I did not respond to his letter. The Master then wrote a second letter, appointing me as the secretary of the branch. It was indeed a very queer way of starting a branch, with the founder in India and his secretary in South Africa as the one and only member. After his second letter I decided to obey him. He then wrote a third one before the affiliation fee for the centre could reach him. The

drama did not end there. Later he wrote the fourth letter asking me to open a branch. All the instructions were in his handwriting.

My relationship with my Master was a unique one in spiritual history because he forced me to obey him. Saints usually do not force their disciples to obey them. Till now I have not read of a saint forcing his disciple to obey him. Being like a typical modern child, who specialised in rebelling, I used to constantly write to my Master to allow me to come and stay with him after a couple of other devotees had also joined the branch.

My all-compassionate Master was patient with me for about four years, constantly advising me not to leave the work. At last, he wrote a letter admonishing me in strong terms. It was the most precious gift that the Master had ever given me, because that letter became a spiritual treasure, not only for me but for other spiritual aspirants as well. After that my rebellious nature never arose again. I realised that obedience to the Guru was the most important quality for a disciple, and that without Guru's Grace, realisation of God was impossible.

The divine message in my Master's letter was that God had placed me in conditions that were good for my spiritual progress. He also sternly warned me that if I came to stay with him, I might encounter more difficulties. He advised me not to rebel but to try and overcome my problems by surrendering to the Lord.

SECOND VISIT TO INDIA AND DONNING THE OCHRE ROBE

After the opening of the DLS branch in South Africa, I would request devotees going to Rishikesh to obtain the Master's permission for me to visit. Once, a devotee from Mayville, after seeing the Master, returned to inform me that the Master had granted me permission to visit him. But when I wrote to the Master that I was planning to come, the Master wrote back, "Don't come!" However, in 1956, I was allowed to visit the Master with three other devotees.

One day, I went to get some treatment from Swami Venkatesananda for my suppurating sores. When I went to his cottage, I was surprised to see the Master also arriving there after some time to give instructions to Swami Venkatesananda. During the conversation, Swami Venkatesananda suggested that the Master give me Jnana Sannyas. The Master at once agreed and also decided to have a farewell for me.

I was reluctant to take Sannyas, as I felt it will be a hindrance to my work. I used to walk about in the streets of Durban and sell the Master's books. I did so much walking that the soles of my shoes had to be replaced every few months. I thought that I would have to walk about in the streets in the Sannyas garb and felt apprehensive. But, Swami Paramananda and others said that the Master's offer should not be refused. So the Master gave me Jnana Sannyas, that is, Sannyas while still continuing to be in the teaching profession. When I gave up the profession, I could take up full Sannyas. This kind of Sannyas was something unique with the Master, who gave it to several others from foreign countries.

The Master allowed me to select my Sannyas name myself. Reading a publication of the Swami Narayan movement while at the Ashram, I came across the name "Sahajananda" and thought if I ever took Sannyas, I would prefer that name. So, the Master, knowing what had already transpired, allowed me to choose a name myself.

CONCLUSION

During my long period of more than fifty years in engaging in the activities of the Divine Life Society, I underwent tremendous problems and difficulties, the likes of which few Spiritual Heads in the world would go through. I used to pray to my Master to put me through difficulties and trials so that I could develop true faith and self-surrender to the Lord. And, in answering my prayer, my Master did a good job of it.

You can read about some of the problems I had to encounter in the book, *Glory of Guru's Grace*, where I have recounted my experiences, including my numerous failures in trying to control the mind. You can read how I was inspired by my Master to deal with those who levelled criticism and insults at me and at the Society. I was fortunate that from the very beginning of my spiritual life, my Master revealed to me from within that I was the cause of all my suffering, due to the numerous misdeeds in my past lives and also in my present one. The only way to overcome the turmoil of my mind was to engage in regular prayer and meditation.

My Master taught me to have a balanced spiritual life of service and meditation. Fortunately, I am useless in lecturing and giving discourses, otherwise I also would have been caught by the lecturing habit. My meditation, although it has been interrupted during the last several months, due to diverse activities, has been fairly regular over the years. Presently I get up just after 3.30am and, after a quick wash, try to spend about three to three and a quarter hours in silent meditation. I try to keep the body perfectly still during the entire period. After meditation, I perform a couple of Yoga Asanas. It will take me about six months or more to get properly stabilised in the practice.

I give a lot of importance to daily meditation, as I know that when I leave this body, I will not take anything with me except the fruits of my spiritual practices. Name and fame and applaud do not tempt me. Over the last fifty years I have had very little respite or holiday. The only short

respite I had was when, several years ago, I went a few times to India, to the U.S.A. and to Germany. I have been working about 8 to 12 hours a day, seven days a week for the last fifty years.

The goal of life is to realise God. I still have a long way to go before I reach the goal. The bliss of God is so marvellous and stupendous that if we get just a little glimpse of it we would like to discard the whole world and seek it only. But we have to pay the full price for this. When we realise God, we enjoy indescribable peace and bliss all the twenty-four hours, even during deep sleep and the dream states. Worldly happiness is nothing compared to the happiness that one gets by realising God.

PUJYA SWAMIJI'S MAHASAMADHI

Beloved Pujya Swamiji left his body on Monday, 10 December 2007, after a short illness. The date and time of leaving proved to be extremely auspicious. News of Pujya Swamiji's Mahasamadhi spread instantly.

Thousands, including spiritual leaders, prominent political leaders, devotees, well-wishers and patrons of Divine Life Society came to Sivanandashram, Reservoir Hills to pay their last respects. On his passing, several prominent figures passed glowing tributes to Pujya Swamiji some of which are reproduced herein.

"Though he has physically left us, his invisible spiritual presence can be felt even now. He is very much present in Spirit."
—Sri Swami Vimalananda, President of Divine Life Society, Rishikesh, India

"Swamiji's contribution to Gurudev's works through his printing of the valuable teachings of worshipful Gurudev is unparalleled. The valuable books he has brought out in the name of Gurudev and distributed all over the world has immortalised His Holiness."
—Sri Swami Guhabhaktananda, President of Divine Life Society, Malaysia

"He liked to keep in the background and to promote and bring forward the Master's teachings and encouraged us to commit ourselves to that."
—Father M.G. Michaelson, Priest of the Catholic Church



"The life of a saint is plain, simple, and attractive. It is full of Grace. It is methodical. A saint is ever of good cheer. He knows no ill of life. To him, life is joy. He experiences no trial of misery. He is fearless. No monarch has sway over him. A sage has awakened from the dream of life."

Swami Sivananda



Sri Gurudev bids farewell to SWAMI SAHAJANANDA

The speech reproduced below is the one given by Sri Gurudev on the occasion of Swami Sahajananda's Sannyas initiation on April 10, 1956.

So, we rejoice today heartily, because we have amidst us a noble personality, a spiritual personality, a Bala Yogi, a Bala Swami, Sri Swami Sahajananda. Whenever a noble function takes place, the Devas are pleased. So, we had a very good shower today, and now we have a cool atmosphere. So, we are able to celebrate the function joyously. You may ask, "Why there is no rain of flowers?" That also there is. The Devas rain flowers.

Swami Sahajananda is styled as the spiritual king of South Africa, Durban. He is also called the African Chota Guru. He does not want anything. He is a silent worker. He is a man of renunciation, Vairagya and meditation. He is a very good organiser. He has organised some 20 branches of the Divine Life Society in South Africa.

There is Savikalpa Samadhi, and then comes Nirvikalpa Samadhi, and then comes Sahaja Avastha. He is established in Sahaja Avastha. He does not forget Brahman when he is working. He has got double consciousness. He is resting in his Satchidananda Swarupa and he is utilising his mind and Indriyas (senses) for the good of humanity. He likes Sahaja Avastha. He is in Sahaja Avastha. In the scriptures you will find that any man who attempts to practise Yoga is also a Yogi and a Yogarudha, who is established in Yoga, is also a Yogi. So, he who is attempting to be established in Sahaja Avastha is also a Sahaja Avastha Yogi.

He is a strong pillar of the Divine Life Society. I am Swami Sahajanandaji's rupee-eater. I want money for printing paper, art paper, for hospital, etc. Sahajanandaji supplies the money. You may think that I am exaggerating. Swami Sahajananda is the spiritual king of Durban, a great organiser, a great supporter, a pillar of the Divine Life Society.

He talks little. You have never seen him talking. He thinks much and does much. Such a great spiritual Yogi is he. He came some years before also and had remained here.

He has brought out the *Divine Life for Children* pamphlets. He is a man of invention. In letterheads and behind the envelopes, he has printed new sayings. In letterheads also the *Divine Life for Children* he has brought out. He is a thinker. He has in Durban a small press for the dissemination of

knowledge, and the *Path to God-Realisation* is his magazine, running for three or four years. What more can you expect from a small boy Swami? He has done everything. He will now go with redoubled energy, charged with Himalayan vibrations and Mother Ganga's Grace, and will work like a lion, Vedanta Kesari, Yoga Kesari. All these titles a man deserves when he becomes a Yogi. When a man becomes God, any number of titles are not enough. His devotion to the teacher is unique. He has a pure heart. Such a Yogi is now going from here and he will thrill the whole of Africa, and again he will come. He has the spirit of renunciation. He has given his whole property to me. Just see his noble qualities, devotion, discipline, Shanti & humility.

When a man comes to you and says he is a Jivanmukta, you must test him. You must ask whether he has got humility, not feigned humility, but real unostentatious humility. Then he must have compassion. If you do not find these qualities in a man who says "I am a Jivanmukta", reject him as straw. These are the two cardinal, fundamental virtues of a sage. If you do not find these virtues, even if he delivers a lecture for days together on the verse *Sarva Dharman Parityajya Mamekam Saranam Vraja*, it is useless, empty, bullet-shots in the air. If you find humility, that is a sign of a Yogi, and he must be compassionate. His heart should melt like butter when he sees the sufferings of others. If he finds a starving man, and if he has got a tumbler of milk, he will run to him and give it to him.

Of all the qualities that are enumerated in the *Gita*, humility and compassion are the most important. He who possesses these qualities is a Yogi of the first order. These are the tests of a Jivanmukta. So, we all pray for his health, long life, peace and prosperity. Such a person is a rare jewel on this earth. He who is not free from selfishness is a burden on earth, but when he becomes selfless and works for relieving human suffering, when he has dedicated his life for the service of humanity, he is a divine being on earth. Other people live in vain; they are burdens on earth. Remove this selfishness and work for the well-being of humanity, for your neighbour. Then only is he a real man.

Otherwise, though God has given promotion as a human being, he is only a horizontal being. So, try to become real men on this earth, real men, supermen, with God-intoxicated feeling always working for your neighbours. In working for other people, you elevate yourself. In praying for other people, you pray for yourself. There is only one being, one consciousness. So become absolutely selfless, courageous, bold, without attachment to this body. Timid people die a thousand times before their actual death owing to attachment to this body, which is nothing but a combination of the five elements.

You are really Atman, the all-pervading immortal Soul. Then you become Atma-Samrat, King on this earth. Nature is ready to open Her secrets to you and you enjoy the divine Aishwaryas (wealth) when you become selfless. When you work for the good of others, you become Atma-Samrat. Such a king is this Swami. Glory to him. May all follow his example!

He is a young Yogi; a Yogabhrashta (one who has fallen from a high state of Yoga). He was a Swami in his previous birth, so at such a young age his heart is full of renunciation, Vairagya and meditation, which are the keys to open the chambers of the heart, the Atmic store. It is not so easy to get renunciation and Vairagya. That man lives in vain who has got no Vairagya, no renunciation, no spirit of selfless service. God has given you in this birth a little wisdom. Yoga and Vedanta are complimentary.

There is no wisdom without Yoga. There is no wisdom without Bhakti. All are complementary. Vedanta without Bhakti is dry, and Bhakti without wisdom is not complete or perfect. So let us pray for the health, and long life of this small Yogi full of strength.

One who can transform the materialistic intellect of the whole of South Africa—what tremendous influence, what tremendous purity, what tremendous Yogic power, what tremendous meditation, his spiritual aura, selfless aura!

A selfish man cannot do anything in this world. The other people have lived in vain who have not done Atmic search, who have not done Sravan (listening to the scriptures), Manan (reflection) and Nididhyasan (deep meditation) or this Navavidha Bhakti (the nine modes of devotion) to attain God.

This should not be a mere utterance of a formula; it should enter your bones and heart. You must have a feeling that there is one common consciousness. That is your birthright. You must attain this. One Atma resides in all. He has attained this. Let us pray for his long life, peace and prosperity.

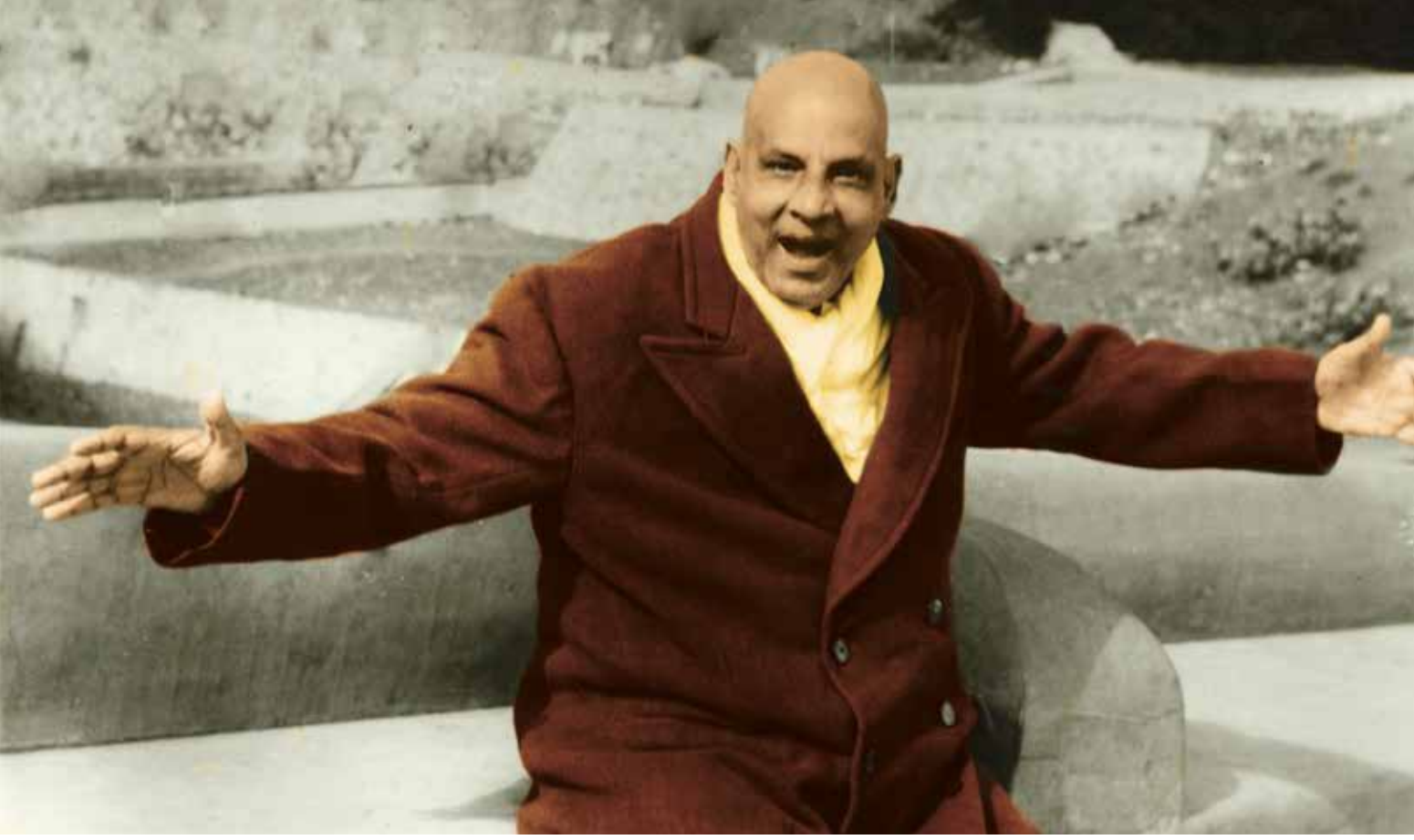
Become a great Yogi, not attached to this body, always thinking of this body. He who ever thinks of this body is a cobbler. A cobbler is not he who makes shoes, but he who always thinks of this body. You are the Atma. Do not become a blind man, a deaf man. Open your eyes and see everywhere the Self. Behind the Nama-Rupa there is Satchidananda, Asti-Bhati-Priya (the eternal qualities inherent in Brahman). This is wisdom.

May Lord bless Swami Sahajananda with health, long life, peace, bliss and immortality. May Lord bless you all!



"Obedience is a precious virtue, because if you try to develop obedience, the ego which is the arch enemy on the path to self-realisation, is rooted out."

—Sri Swami Sivananda



An Unforgettable SAINT

BY: SANTHANAGOPAL IYER (FORMER DIRECTOR OF BHARATA VIDYA BHAVAN)

I have been singularly fortunate in one respect. During the past half-century, or even more, I have had the good fortune to come across most of the spiritual personages of India. Some of them have merged with Infinity. Many are still amongst us. Some of them have built fabulous spiritual empires. Some have their headquarters outside India, with branches all over the world.

My experience with most of them has made me to realise how true is the popular saying that when one scratched any saint deep enough one can detect self-interest.

About two years ago, I visited Durban in South Africa. In and around Durban lives the largest number of migrant Indians in the world. It is there that I came across a person who shattered my skepticism about spiritual leaders.

Here was a person who turned out to be a saint in every sense of the term. A more selfless, self-effacing person is hard to find. I found him to be a person who brought dignity to the simple dress of a Sannyasi that he wore.

He is Swami Sahajananda (Swamiji), founder President of the Divine Life Society of South Africa and friend, philosopher, guide and Guru to thousands of his disciples spread all over South Africa.

I found mighty men and women, persons who wielded enormous power, influential and wealthy, among his disciples. I found them to be incredibly mixing with everyone when they participated in the various welfare and building activities, cheerfully digging, carrying loads and other forms of physical labour, without a word from the Swamiji to do so!

There is hardly anything distinguishing about the person of Swamiji. He can easily merge himself with even a small crowd without being noticed. His voice is soft, just audible. When he spoke, however, people heard him with rapt attention. All it takes is a small frown of dissatisfaction from him to make a whole congregation tremble in apprehension and anxiety. His habits are simple. His personal needs are minimal. Most of the time he slept among the printing machines in his press room, on the cold floor, with hardly anything to protect him. He is simplicity itself and shy to the core. There are many who have similar traits and attributes. What makes him different and where does the saintliness come from?

His eminence stems from and shines in brilliant incandescence, not from what he has been saying but from what he has been doing, silently, unobtrusively, always in the name of his Guru, Swami Sivananda, whom he always refers to reverentially, as "my Divine Master".

Whatever he has done, it has been for the welfare of others. His devotion to his Guru easily brings to mind the story of Dronacharya and the devotion of his pupil, Ekalavya. Dronacharya asked him to give him as Dakshina, the thumb of his right hand. The story of Swami Sahajananda and his Guru Swami Sivananda is slightly different. Swami Sahajananda's surrender to his Guru is absolute and total. He lives, breathes, eats, sleeps and does everything else—all in the name of his Divine Master. He has indeed surrendered to his Guru, his mind, body and spirit. Such Guru Bhakti in the 21st century is an incredible phenomenon!

Swamiji is a prolific writer. In simple layman's language he gently spoonfeeds members of his congregation. He never sermonises to the learned and the scholarly. He would orient his messages, either in writing or through speech, to the person with the weakest power of comprehension. He always helps people, even those who bite the hand that feeds.

He brings to mind the story of the sage and the scorpion. A sage found a scorpion struggling for life in a puddle of water on the road. He stopped to pick it and drop it on firm ground and was promptly stung on the hand. He again tried to pick it and was stung right away. He tried many times to save it but was stung everytime he picked it up. A passerby who was watching what was happening asked the sage "Why do you try to help it when it is stinging you everytime?" The sage replied, "It is the nature of the scorpion to sting and it is my nature to try and save it." He picked the creature up, was promptly stung again but managed to drop it on firm ground and walked away.

Swami Sahajananda has reached a stage where he is capable of only compassion and kindness for every living organism that shares the earth with humankind.

During the apartheid days in South Africa, the ruling Whites kept the Blacks, immigrant Indian labour and the Whites segregated. They especially kept the Blacks under their boots. The Indians built for their children schools and educated them. The Blacks were too poor and what is more, they were discouraged from building schools.

Even in such atmosphere, Swami Sahajananda built several schools for educating Black children and he had to face enormous difficulties in his effort. His pioneering efforts to help people without any distinction of caste, colour, religion or race has made a tremendous impact and many others are emulating him. His heart is so large that whenever he came across anyone trying to do such good work he would immediately extend to him generous financial and other support, insisting all the while that the name of Divine Life Society of S.A. and himself should not be mentioned at all!

When Nelson Mandela became the President of South Africa, it raised the hopes of the Black people too much and they expected things to happen too soon. There was chaos. Many Africans of Indian origin felt insecure and migrated to other lands. Concerned over the drain of talent, Nelson Mandela chided the Indian Africans for their lack of roots and for their cowardice in deserting the land of their birth. In a nationwide radio broadcast he asked people to look at the example set by Swami Sahajananda and Divine Life Society of South Africa who started to engage themselves in nation building activities even before the advent of democracy. Swamiji's only motive was to help that section of the society, which needed help most.

Swamiji's disciples adore him. They pour their affection, regard, and money in great abundance. Swamiji can easily afford to build great Ashrams of opulence, grandeur and luxury, like many Ashrams in India and abroad.

Swamiji's Ashrams are simple and functional and absolutely clean and neat. There is never any extravagance or show. One can easily see divinity in the place and the people and in their actions, all unobtrusively guided by this incredible saint who does everything in the name of his Divine Master.

I am afraid to salute him. Because I know that he would immediately prostrate towards me. If the rains fall, if the flowers bloom, if the birds sing, if children smile in happiness and in innocence, I know why. It is because there are persons like Swami Sahajananda living amongst us, for our own sake.



"Serve your Guru obediently. Be devoted to your Guru.
Obey him and have implicit faith in his teachings.
You will grow in spirituality;
You will attain Self-realisation in this very birth."

—Sri Swami Sivananda



Sri Swami Sahajananda's DIVINE MESSAGES

Beloved Pujya Swamiji spoke very little in the early years, but there were subsequent periods during which Swamiji elaborated on many spiritual concepts. Unfortunately, with the changing technology, some of his speeches were damaged or lost. A great loss indeed to posterity.

Whatever was salvaged was published in five volumes entitled *Path of Divine Grace*. The Divine Master was always the kingpin of his speeches. We reproduce in the next few pages abridged versions of some of his speeches and exhort our readers to read the original speeches in *Path of Divine Grace*, which is, to borrow a line from Sri Aurobindo's *Savitri*, "A treasure of honey in the combs of God".

QUESTION & ANSWER SESSION AT YOGA CAMP

DEVOTEE: Why do you think it is important for us to know about our culture?

PUJYA SWAMIJI: Because our aim is to realise God. We have come from God and we have got to go back. If you don't go back to God now and merge in Him then you will have to try in the next birth and the following birth and all the births to come thereafter. You can have all the wealth, you can have all the power, all the name and fame, you can be a great Yogi with psychic powers, but if you have not realised God, then you will never be happy. Why do we want to realise God? Because the bliss is so great.

I did not want to tell you but since you are asking these questions, I will tell you. In the last few months, when we were touring the Cape at the year end, I felt a very strong call coming from Gurudev. When that descent comes, the bliss is so ravishing, so marvellous, so stupendous, that I only tell Gurudev, "I'm coming, I'm coming, I'm coming." I will not think of the Ashram or what the Spiritual Darlings are going to do, or the Yoga Camp or the printing press. The only thing I can say is, "I'm coming, I'm coming, I'm coming."

The bliss is so great. The whole universe, you can just take it like this and throw it. That is what you are looking for. Not just a little peace of mind or something like that. If you want that then you can try and at least make a start now. So, any moment if the call comes, well, I am off. That is why they say that if you once taste the bliss of God you will say, "O Lord, I don't mind suffering a million years if this is what I am going to get."

It is not something small. People say that you must close your eyes and get some peace and that is God. It is not at all so. There is much more than that. I tried to find a description. So, during that period I thought of what description I could give to this experience? Is God merciful, or is God compassionate? Is God loving? Who is God? Because I had the direct experience. Then I said, "love" but love does not give the right explanation. It is not enough and compassion also is not enough. Then the word "tenderness" came and I felt that if you multiply it—suppose a mother has a child, and a mother has tender love for the child—if you multiply that a million times you will get some idea of what God is like. How compassionate and how merciful He is! So, I felt that if you multiply that word "tenderness" by a million times it gives some description of what I had experienced.

GURU-DISCIPLE RELATIONSHIP

If you read the life stories of the great Christian Desert Fathers, whose teachings are given in *The Philokalia*, you will see how they practised Yoga. It was exactly like the Indian Rishis. They had disciples and the problems that they faced were the same as the problems that the Indian Rishis faced. The disciples, too, behaved in the same way. They had great disciples, wonderful disciples and some were cheats also.

I used to wonder why we have lost these teachings. I first thought that the great aim of God-realisation was peculiar to the East. However, after reading *The Philokalia* and the stories of the Desert Fathers and the great sages who had marvellous psychic powers, I changed my mind. I asked myself, "Why did the great Desert Fathers allow the teachings to be lost?" It is only in the last fifteen to twenty or thirty years that people have started reading these books—books like *The Way of the Pilgrim* and *The Philokalia*. I came to the conclusion that the Desert Fathers, perhaps, made one great mistake. They did not hand down the knowledge to their disciples to carry on the lineage. Whereas, we in the East have handed it down.

There is always this peculiar feature of the Master handing down the wisdom to his disciple and the disciple to his disciple and it goes on. So, we have an unbroken link of spiritual knowledge.

In Greece, we have the famous Mount Athos. In the heyday of spiritual practices, they say that there were forty thousand monks practising on that mountain. Forty thousand! But today there is hardly a couple of dozen.

That is why the Eastern wisdom, our Yoga, has been perpetuated. This Guru-disciple relationship is peculiar to the East, to us, to Indian culture, to Indian religion. Sometimes it is puzzling to the Westerners, perhaps even to us Indians who are western-minded. But our scriptures have sung and sung the glory of the Guru. Thousands of verses have been sung about the Guru, his place in life, his position and his glory. Those beautiful verses are given in the *Guru Gita*. Even now, you find a number of saints who have had disciples who have composed stanzas in Sanskrit glorifying the Master. We have one that was composed by Mother Hridayananda, "Deva Deva Sivananda".

It is very difficult to explain the link between the disciple and the Guru. It is said that the link is more sacred, or more holy than the link or love between brother and sister, between husband and wife and even between God and devotee. It is something that cannot be explained—the love and devotion and loyalty that is displayed by Indians. I am using the word Indian, but today there are lots in the West also, whom Gurudev said have European bodies but Indian souls. When he sent Swami Vishnudevananda, he said, "Go to the West! There are many Indian souls who have incarnated there."

So, this love and loyalty and devotion is not peculiar to the Indians at the present moment. Many Westerners, too, have that great loyalty and love. You cannot imagine it. It is simply marvellous and wonderful, this love that the Indian disciple has for his Guru. There is nothing that he will not do. *Tana, mana, dhana*—body, mind and wealth, everything is laid at the feet of the Master. Even though he might have attained oneness with God and with the Master, but still, he is a disciple. The homage that he pays to his Guru can never be expressed in words.

There are many who say today that Gurus are not necessary —you can realise God without the Guru—but let them prattle. Only direct experience will tell you whether you need a Guru or not. No amount of talks or writings or logic will convince you of the need for a Guru. If we use simple logic and just look around, we are all playing the part of a Guru. The mother plays the part of a Guru, the manager in a firm plays the part of a Guru, the teacher plays the part of a Guru. So why deny this relationship on the spiritual path. It is just common logic.

These great saints of the past and the present were men of very high character. They could not be trying to deceive us in telling us of the important place that the Guru has. We pay our homage to the Master in different ways. The Indian fashion is to garland him, to prostrate to him, to offer him gifts, even to worship him, like we worship the Deity. We wash his feet, we drink that holy water, *Padatirtha*, and that water has tremendous potencies.

We read how Mother Krishnabai used to wash Papa's feet and drink that water. She used to gulp it down. Once, a mad boy came to the Ashram and all that Mataji gave him was the water that was used to wash Papa's feet and he was completely cured. It is not only a question of faith; the

potency is there. Perhaps it is difficult for Westerners to understand, but to us in the East, all these things are very easy to understand.

Our love and devotion to the Master arises naturally and we lay everything at his feet. Our entire being is given. Perhaps it might not be given in its fullness in the beginning, but nevertheless it goes on progressively.

Today, we are paying homage to Gurudev and all the great saints and remembering them, rededicating ourselves to them. I was trying to get hold of a copy of some verses written by Sri Shankaracharya, in which he paid tribute to the Guru. I didn't have time to look for that book, but in those beautiful verses he says:

"You might be a great Yogi with all sorts of psychic powers, but what is the use of that if you don't have love for the lotus feet of your Guru?

"The whole world might be worshipping you, you might be famous in the East and the West, but of what use is that if you have no love for the lotus feet of your Guru?

"You might be a master of all scriptures, you might be a genius in lecturing, etc., but what is the use of that if you don't have love for the lotus feet of the Guru?"

So, in our scriptures you'll find beautiful anecdotes, how loyal the disciples have been to the Master, what intense love they have had for him and what they've gained. There is no doubt that the Guru is a tremendous being. I should have brought for you again, some of Gurudev's writings. He says that the God-realised sage, if he wants, can give salvation to the whole world immediately. He has all the powers of God Himself. So, his majesty is really beyond description.

We can never understand a true Guru, what he is and who he is, his inner Being. There is no doubt that his potency is there, his power is there. We have even gone to the extent of giving a higher place to the Guru than to God. Swami Ramdas often says that Guru is greater than God. When God wants to give you something, when He wants to shower His Grace upon you, He has got to use the medium of the Guru. So, Guru can often do what God cannot do.

Our scriptures say that if God is angry with you, He can be pacified, but if the Guru is angry with you, nothing can happen for you. The Guru is the only one who can change your destiny. Sri Aurobindo says that if you are a disciple, you get special protection against death and against illness. The Guru can change your Karma.

It is true. You will find in Gurudev's books so many cases



"Never complain against bad environments. Create your own mental world wherever you remain and wherever you go. There are some difficulties and disadvantages wherever you go. Do not try to run away from bad, unfavourable environments. God has placed you there to make you grow quickly.

Swami Sivananda

where people were saved. Mr and Mrs Nulliah, who were disciples of Paramahansa Yogananda, had in the early days gone to Gurudev's Ashram and related this story. They said they wanted to go to Badrinath by bus and Gurudev said, "Don't go", when they went to him for his blessings. The bus that they were supposed to go in capsized and all the passengers lost their lives. The road winds up the Himalaya mountains, and any landslide means that the vehicle is going to land up in the Ganga thousands of feet below, and that is what happened.

So, they asked Gurudev point blank, "Swamiji, you saved our lives but why didn't you save the lives of those people." Gurudev just gave a cryptic answer, "You came and asked." That is all. It is a mystical answer and you will find in many cases like that, that Gurudev saved people's lives.

Even in his last days, when he was on his death-bed, shortly before his Mahasamadhi, Dr Sushila Nair, the Minister of Health, came to the Ashram, and in that sick state, he prayed for the health and long life of Dr Sushila Nair. It appears that when she was driving her car along a mountain path, a huge boulder came down and almost crashed into the car. She was saved.

There are many instances like that and we have also had instances here (in South Africa) of how Gurudev saved the lives of people. The Guru has that tremendous potency, that tremendous power. Gurudev was always using it in ways that were very simple.

When Swami Nischalananda went to India with a group of his devotees, there was a European lady from Johannesburg who was in the party. When they arrived at Gurudev's Ashram, she became very ill with stomach trouble. She couldn't bear the pain. Gurudev gave her some *Prasad* and said, "Send it straight to your stomach." She was completely cured. She didn't want to go on with the touring party. She said that she would spend a few more days in the Ashram.

The Guru can do anything and everything. But what is our place? What is our relationship with the Guru? That is the most important thing. If you can establish that relationship, then your progress is going to go quite fast. That is what we have to try to understand. If we get in tune with the Guru then all that he has attained, all that he has gained, he will give to us. In ordinary life, the parent or the father leaves his wealth to his children. So naturally the Guru also leaves his spiritual wealth to his children. Whatever we are enjoying today is due to the Tapas of our Master.

IMPORTANCE OF MORNING SADHANA

Many problems and difficulties are due to failure on the part of devotees to practise morning and evening Japa



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It is quite true that mere Grace of a Guru, his touch, sight or Sankalpa can work wonders, but that does not mean that the disciple should sit idle. Guru will show the path and remove obstacles, snares and pitfalls. The student will have to place his feet on the rungs of the ladder of Yoga.

Swami Sivananda

and meditation. If they are regular in this practice, their minds will become pure and calm as time goes on and their problems and difficulties will be solved.

1. Therefore, kindly start now to be regular and punctual in your daily practice. Start with about 15—30 minutes at a time.
2. Keep the spine erect and still during the Japa. Feel relaxed. Sitting cross-legged on the floor is very comfortable. I would have benefited more in my meditation if I sat on the floor instead of on a chair, which is not very good.
3. After reciting the Guru Stotras, ask Sri Gurudev to bless the whole world with peace and prosperity. This should include plants and animals. Pray for those who are in distress, like your friends, relatives and others. Then start Japa of the *Sri Ram* or any other Mantra.
4. After a while remain silent, or pray to Sri Gurudev to help you, guide you and give you strength. Try to still the mind. Then begin the Japa again. You can concentrate in the heart, in the forehead region, or above the head.
5. Do some rounds of Pranayama. Breathe in gently without any sound. Breathe out gently. The breathing in and breathing out should be long and smooth. While breathing in repeat the *Sri Ram* Mantra a few times. While breathing out repeat the Mantra the same number of times. This is one round of Pranayama. Do a few rounds and then continue your Japa. If you find difficulty in doing a few rounds, rest a little and start again.
6. Pray to Sri Gurudev to fill the body and mind with peace, calmness and stillness. It does not matter if the mind is restless and jumps about. Carry on with the Japa and meditation. It takes time to calm the mind.
7. The *Sri Ram* Mantra should be repeated as much as possible during the course of one's daily activities—while driving, working, eating, etc. It should be the last thing to repeat while going to sleep, and the first thing when one wakes up in the morning.
8. For peace to get stabilised it often takes much time. One may get it quite soon, without any trouble. Another may get it after much struggle. A third may get it only after many years. It took me 45 years to get some peace fixed in the mind. Nowadays devotees want to see a change in 45 minutes or in 45 days. So kindly be patient.
9. Those who continually grumble, lament, find fault and criticise others, who are intolerant and harsh, will lose the beneficial effects of their Japa and meditation. Says Sri Aurobindo about those who lament and complain, "This is a temperament which the gods will not help because they know that help is useless, for it will either not be received or will be spilled and wasted; and all that is Rajasic and Asuric in the world despises and tramples upon this kind of nature".
10. In the last two months I found Sri Gurudev's Grace quite active. That is why I have been asking devotees to make the best use of his power that descends in a greater measure during the period June 1—September 8.
11. Increase the period of your daily Sadhana gradually, as it suits you. As mentioned above, it may take a short while or a long time to see a change in the mind. My progress came after many years of arduous struggle. Read *Glory of Guru's Grace* and you will see the drama I went through. From the earliest years, Sri Gurudev gave me the realisation that my weak and restless nature was due to many misdeeds I had done in the past lives. Also, I had to engage in many activities and try to achieve calmness of mind at the same time. I am glad that our Divine Master made me go through all the turmoil and endless suffering, because I can now talk and give advice from personal experience. It is easy to give wonderful spiritual advice, as many Swamis do, but if such advice has not been put into practice in their own lives, it will have little impact on those who listen to it. We all know how unusual and powerful our Divine Master's writings are. This is because he practised what he preached.
12. All of us have to go through our Karmas, either in this birth or in future births. None can escape the fruits of their actions, either good or bad. The Guru can give us strength, can mitigate our Karma and, in some exceptional cases, wipe out some of the Karma. That is all. He will not wipe out all our Karmas. Referring to Gyanvati and Shantavan, who were destined to go blind after the birth of their son Shrawan Kumar, Lord Siva tells Mother Parvati, "But this is their destiny. I can effect only minor changes in their destiny and can't change it fully. Otherwise, I would be disturbing the cosmic rhythm of the world—which no one can." See how King Dasaratha had to lose Sri Rama because he killed Shrawan Kumar, the son of Gyanvati and Shantavan. Even though he shot the boy by mistake, King Dasaratha had to pay for his action. So, we have to struggle hard to purify the mind while reaping the fruit of our Karmas.
13. The reason why I am emphasising daily meditation and Japa in the morning is that most of our devotees are restless. They are full of tension. Their minds rush about. About a week ago, I especially called a devotee and asked him to do an important task. On Sunday, at the Yoga Camp, he rushed to me, prostrated and rushed away. As he was approaching me, I expected him to tell me whether he had attended to the task. He rushed off without communicating because his mind was very restless and turbulent. I see this drama daily, that is why I am trying to set an example in my own daily practice of Japa and meditation. Read the section on overcoming tension in *Guidance in Daily Life*.
14. It goes without saying that all other rules have to be

observed if one desires success in meditation, Japa and mind control. Not viewing TV, a vegetarian diet, and Brahmacharya, are the three most important rules to get success.

COMPANIONSHIP WITH GOD

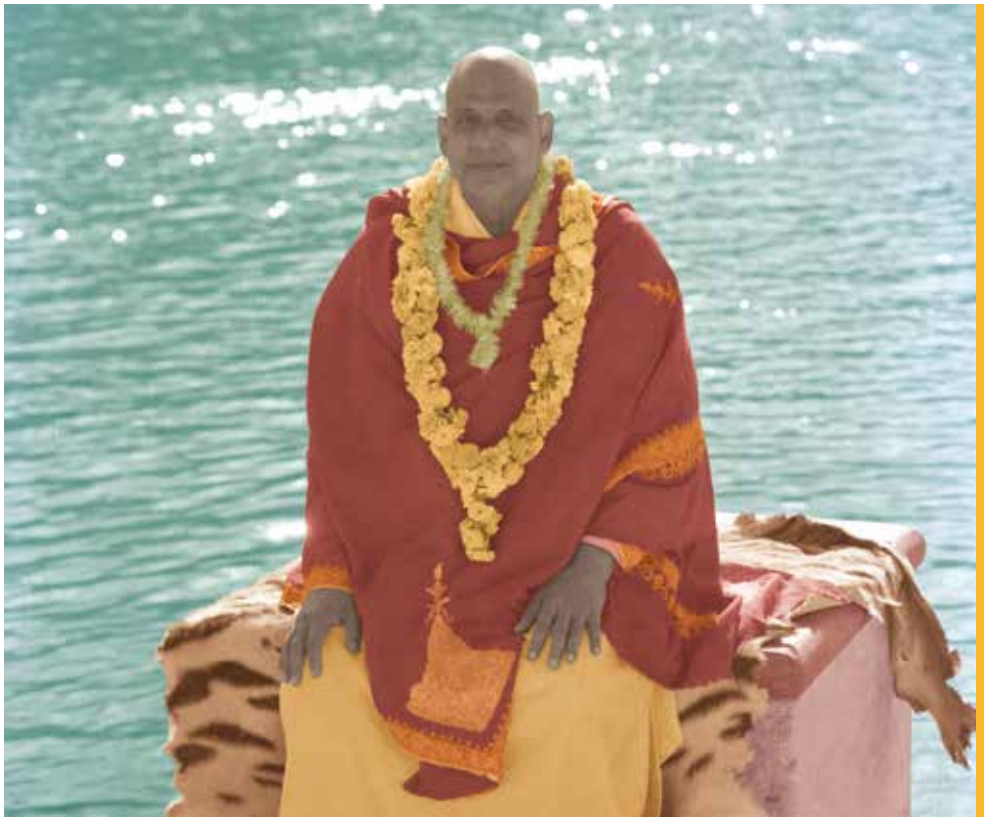
I am glad that so many of you have come. You cannot complain about the weather today, like the last time. The people who are conducting the different classes have been dealing with health for a very long time now. I think it's time now that they wound it up.

Let me conclude that part of the lesson. The last thing is the mind. We should tackle everything with the mind. I don't say that you should not take any medical treatment or homeopathic treatment or any other treatment that is recommended, but we should also tackle diseases with the mind. The physical body has a consciousness and it complains a lot. Everyday it sends complaints. If you don't have your food on time, a big complaint is sent. If there's less sugar in the tea, well, there is a very, very, big complaint from the palate. We are so used to listening to these complaints. The body takes good advantage of it. Don't listen to these complaints. Reject them just like you reject the thoughts from the mind—bad thoughts. You must be able to reject the illness that comes to the body. You must refuse to accept it. So, the last treatment is the treatment in the mind.

We have to get down to the Sadhana aspect very soon. Those of you who are coming here, don't think that you are going to have a very nice and very pleasant time. The Spiritual Diary is going to be given to you a little later, maybe in the next two months. So, you had better get ready. The Spiritual Diary strikes terror in the hearts of people, but you'll have to get ready for it. It will be a simple diary to see whether you have been getting up in the morning or whether you have been doing your meditation regularly. It is easy to find out because if you complain a lot, then you have not been doing your Sadhana properly.

If Sadhana is done properly then it will bring the desired results. If you are not going to intensify it now, well, sometime in the future you are going to intensify it. That aspiration is going to come. Satsang fans the fire of aspiration. It is the most important single factor that awakens the soul to God. The Lord says in the *Bhagavad Gita* that out of millions of people only a handful are sincere, and out of this handful very few have the full realisation of God. Many people start off with a great deal of aspiration but that aspiration starts dwindling. So you've got to keep the fire of aspiration alive.

We have quite often a problem in the householder's life, perhaps not only in the householder's life but even in the life of renunciants. I was thinking: what is the purpose of the householder's life? Why do people get married? Is it to get



"The true goal of life is to get back to the source from which we came. Just as the rivers flow restlessly till they join the ocean, the ultimate source from which they get their supply of water, just as fire leaps and burns furiously till it merges in its own origin, so too, we should be restless here till we obtain His Grace and become one with Him.

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pleasure out of each other? Is it to have a home? Is it to have children? Is it to have wealth? And the answer came from inside—companionship. People get married because they want companionship. All the other things are secondary. If we look at ourselves, we all want companionship. That desire for companionship is innate in our hearts. It is really a desire for God—the companionship with God. Now because God is not visible to us, we want external companionship. So that's what I thought that the whole purpose of married life is, that we want a companion; we want a friend; we want security; we want to be free from fear.

However, if this is not understood by both partners, then a tug-of-war takes place. Often one of the partners wants to exclusively possess and dominate the other. That, too, if you look at it, is not something unnatural. It is only a distorted form of an inner desire. That is how Vedanta started. The reason why we want to dominate over others and want to get control of others is because our soul is all-powerful, it's one without a second. So, there's nothing unnatural in that. The wife wants to completely possess, completely make the husband bend to her will and *vice versa*. If we understand the meaning of marriage, and if husband and wife discuss the matter, and have a reasonable understanding of it, both can make progress towards God.

So really, we are looking for companionship with God. We really want God. But because we cannot get God immediately, we seek the company of someone else. That is the reason also why a disciple goes to a Guru. Everyone is looking for the companionship of God. Gurudev says that we don't get peace from external things because we have not found God. Our scriptures tell us that the partners should try to feel each other within, because death is going to take one of them away, sooner or later, and plunge them into grief. But if you try to feel, if you try to use the person next to you to go towards God, then spiritual life becomes a great venture. Otherwise, it ends in disaster and more and more Karma is formed. I've seen several cases where the husband ruins the wife or the wife ruins the husband completely and the Karma they build would probably take many, many births to overcome. Whatever we give we will get. If we try to dominate today, then someone else will dominate in the next birth.

The householder's life is a marvellous opportunity for people to progress towards God. The progress also is safe but both must have a clear understanding. Even if they don't have an understanding that comes from the heart, even if they have an intellectual understanding, they will come to see how the Law of Karma works. They will understand, "If I do such and such an action, then I'll have to pay for it". God doesn't punish anyone. God is merely a Witness. Only the Law of Karma acts. Whatever we see is only the operation of this Law. All of us must have a good grasp of this Law of Karma. If we have a good grasp of it we can overcome many of our weaknesses; we can have a positive attitude towards life, "This is a part of my Karma and I'll go through it cheerfully".

You can very wisely use misfortunes and calamities to go towards God. That is wisdom. The vast majority miss the opportunity, only a rare few make use of all opportunities. What appears to be a calamity and a misfortune is a great good fortune in one who has faith in God; in one who sees the Divine Will operating. It is very important today that we continually turn towards God by repeating the Divine Name, by talking to God in all that we do, by talking to Gurudev and invoking his help and his guidance.

Wonderful things can happen and a new kind of companionship develops. You'll find that everything in life is disappointing. Everyone disappoints us, but God never disappoints. He is every ready to come to our aid, ever ready to give us strength. So, this continual talking to God, this conversation with God must go on in our work. We should ask for God's help in all that we do, in the important things and in the unimportant things and God gives us the strength. If we call sincerely, He will give us the strength, but we don't call. So, try to make this companionship with God an important factor in your life. Even if you don't do regular meditation in the morning or in the evening, but if you continually call upon Gurudev to help you, to guide you, you'll find wonderful things happening. You'll make progress. You'll find peace of mind coming to you.

We are living in very uncertain times. If you look at it from the overall cosmic point of view, from God's point of view, then it's the most marvellous opportunity to make progress in the spiritual path. When disappointments come, you don't have to do big Tapas today like the ancient Rishis have done, you can do the Tapas of self-surrender, accepting whatever God has ordained for you, as being for your good. Spiritual progress can go very, very rapidly where the surrender to God is complete. Even if you fail, even if you give way to disturbance in the mind, you should try to recover quickly. You shouldn't let it play upon you for a very long time. Even the best Sadhakas are shaken but they overcome it very quickly. Gradually the period of disturbance is lessened. The thing is that people don't ask for God's help in all the little things that they do, so they don't develop that companionship with God, they don't feel secure. If that companionship is not there, then there's fear, doubt, suspicion and all sorts of things come in the mind. So, please try to call upon God all the time—when you are doing your work, in the little things, in the big things. Those who call for God in small things will be ready to call for God in big things. Those who fail to call for God in the small things will perhaps fail also when a big test comes. There's unemployment, insecurity, floods, earthquakes and the

economic situation. But if you are a devotee of God, then everything is wonderful.

Only when you attend thousands and perhaps millions of Satsangs, then one day God will set the heart aflame.

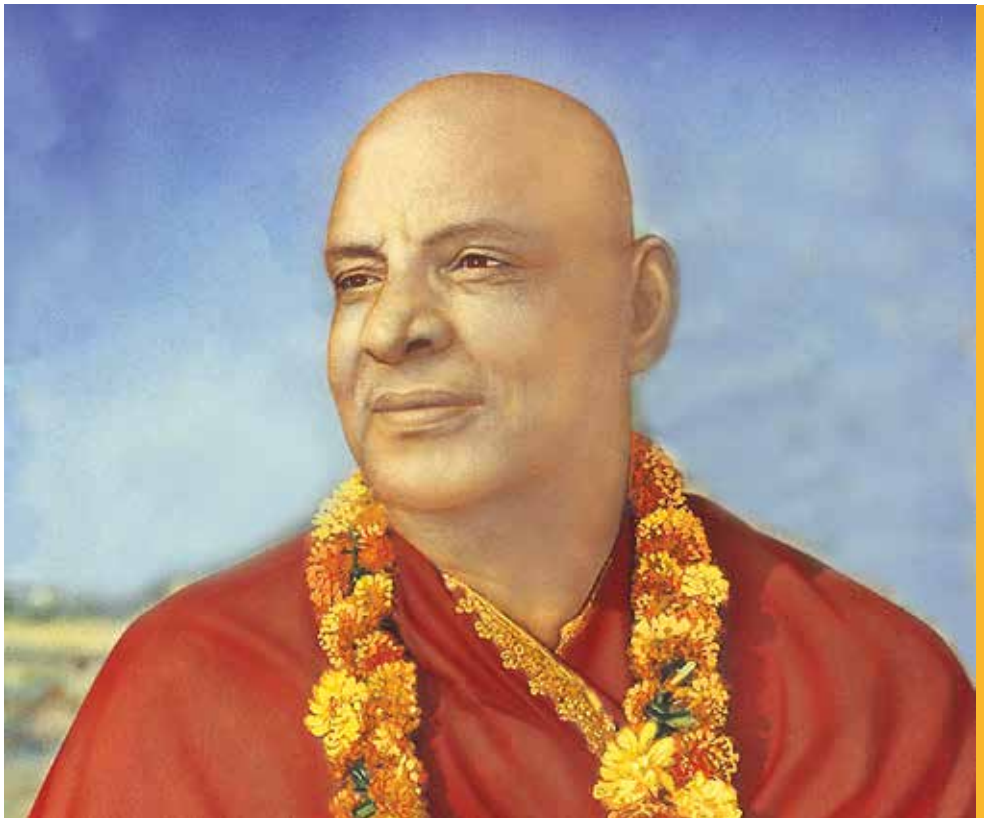
GLORY OF SADHANA

Today I will deviate a little bit from continuing with the subject that was dealt with in the last two or three camps on self-surrender. I thought that we should now get down to some real business, some real Sadhana and then perhaps take up the subject of self-surrender again a little later on. Self-surrender, faith and Divine Grace, those three terms, they are three of the most important things in spiritual life. If we can understand them with the heart then everything will go quite smoothly.

Now we all know that even though our daily life, our actions, are a form of worship, a form of meditation, a Sadhana, a spiritual practice, still we have to get used to getting up in the morning or the evening, to sit for a little period to contact God. God can be contacted through action but in the lives of all the great saints they did have to take off periods of their time so that they could sit in silence. When the body is active, the mind is also active; but when the body is still it's easier to control the mind. Later on when spiritual experience comes then it doesn't matter whether the body is active or not.

Now as you all know, there are hundreds of different approaches to realise God—to get into oneness with God, to experience God within. In the Hindu religion, we don't believe in just reading books. We want to experience God, we want to feel, we don't want to go on reading books. The books are a help, they give the mind relaxation and they inspire us but a time must come when we have to close the books and practise. Normally we get the technique in two ways. If you have practised some Sadhana in your previous birth, if you had done Japa and meditation, then in this birth you'll find it quite easy. It'll come naturally to you. If you have not done it, then you go to a Guru or a guide and ask him to chalk out a system for you.

Now one of the methods that has been advocated by all the great saints—they have been unanimous in one thing, in one method, both the saints of the East and West—that is, to take the Divine Name, to chant the Mantra. On that one point they have all been unanimous. They have been unanimous on the fact that the Divine Name is the easiest and quickest, surest and safest way to approach God in this Kali Yuga. In different Yugas, in different periods, the devotees followed different methods. In the Kali Yuga, they say it is very easy to realise God or make progress merely by taking the Divine Name. Gurudev Swami Sivananda, Swami Ramdas, Sri Aurobindo and all of them have prescribed the Name. Sri Ramakrishna practised all the Tantric Yogas. He



"Every attempt to cultivate divine virtues, selflessness, straight-forwardness, courage, serenity, generosity, mercy and self-restraint—this in reality is Divine life or life in God. Ever keep up a balanced mind in success and failures, censures and praise, honour and dishonour, gain and loss, heat and cold.

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did every one of them. In the end, he concluded that the Divine Name was the easiest and he prescribed that.

You will notice if you close your eyes and if you try to still the mind, two things are happening. One is that images are coming into the mind and secondly, you are talking in the mind or you are hearing conversations, sounds and seeing images. So, to get rid of both, and to quieten the mind, we put in a different image and we put in a different sound. That is why we are asked to meditate on the form of the Deity and to repeat the Mantra of the Deity.

The whole aim—I'll give it to you in a nutshell—is to try to make the Divine Name as continuous as possible, to repeat it continuously. That is all the Sadhana that we have to do. I'll repeat that: the whole purpose of Yoga is to remember God. Lord Krishna says in the *Bhagavad Gita*, "He attains Me easily who remembers Me constantly and daily". The way to remember God constantly is to repeat His Name. Later on, if you meditate deeply, you will find that there is no difference between God and His Name. They are both the same. The moment you repeat His Name you are in contact with God.

So, the whole aim is to try to make the repetition of the Divine Name as continuous as possible. When God is realised, the Name drops off by itself. Remembrance becomes permanent, but to get into that state we have to practise. So, during the day to help with remembrance, Swami Ramdas says, "Walking Ram-Nam, sitting Ram-Nam, eating Ram-Nam, sleeping Ram-Nam". All the time you must try to bring the mind back again and again to repeat the Mantra.

To help with the repetition during the day, you have to get up everyday and try to sit for some period in the morning or in the evening because that sitting is very, very essential. When you are sitting, you concentrate very deeply but when you are working, you are not concentrating very much. So, by getting up in the morning or sitting for some period in the evening, you are able to concentrate more deeply. By repeating the Mantra, you are also able to find out the contents of the mind. This getting up and sitting and trying to still the mind is very, very important to us. Gurudev says that if there's one thing that takes us towards God, it is regular Sadhana in the morning or in the evening and he says that if there's one thing that takes us away from God, it is discontinuing this Sadhana.

You'll find that whenever any difficulty arises, you'll automatically start repeating the Mantra. It will also come in your dreams. The last thing you should do before you go to bed is to repeat the Name and go off to sleep with it. The first thing when you wake up, you should wake up with the Name. Even the little period in sleep must be utilised. Every opportunity must be utilised.

It doesn't matter whether external conditions are changing or whether you are happy or whether you are suffering or whether you have financial troubles. They are not important in life. What is important is whether you are going towards God or not. That is the most important thing. Now you must try to make it a practice to get up in the morning or in the evening. Some people find it easier in the evening, especially after the day's work is done. Some find it easier in the morning. Some feel sleepy in the evening, some feel sleepy in the morning. Choose whatever period is suitable to you.

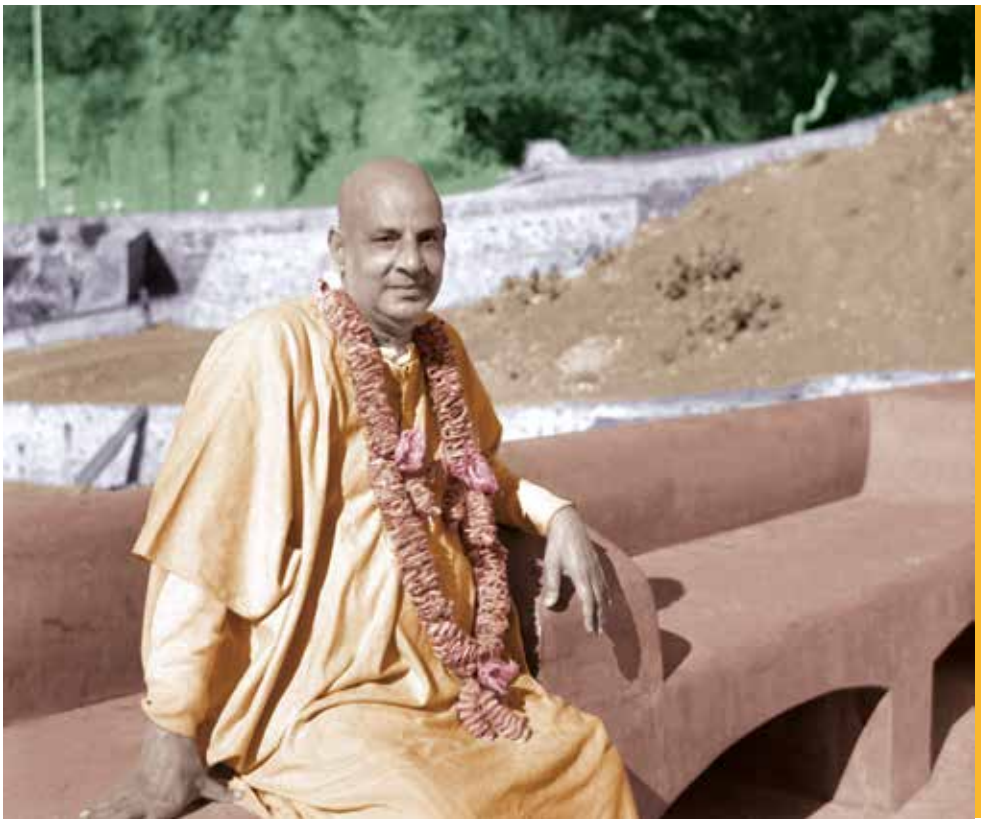
Try to sit for a short period in the beginning. Say five minutes, ten minutes, fifteen minutes or half an hour—whatever is comfortable for you. During that period you must try to sit as still as you possibly can. It does not matter what the mind does, let the mind run. Let it do what it wants to do. But try to keep the body still. At least control the physical body. That is within your control. To catch hold of the mind and change the mind is not easy, but you can at least control the body. From the gross we go to the mental. You'll find that as you go on sitting you'll feel quite comfortable.

In the cross-legged posture you can forget the body quite easily. It's not very easy to forget the body when you sit on a chair, but it is very easy to forget it when you sit cross-legged. Our Rishis were really marvellous when they devised these postures. Later on when you get experiences, often the body sways when the Shakti starts manifesting, but when you sit cross-legged you are not likely to fall. So, there are very great advantages in sitting cross-legged.

You must start straightaway, not next week or next month or next year. You must start from tomorrow morning. When you go home you must start getting down to business and practise. It doesn't matter if people taunt you or laugh at you or the family tries to put obstacles. No one can stop you from realising God. No one can stop you from repeating God's Name. You can have obstacles in your work, in making money or at home you cannot do what you want to do, but no one can ever stop you from saying God's Name because they need not know that you are saying it. You can go towards God.

Whatever Mantra we select, we should never advertise it and tell people. It is not advisable at all. It is also not advisable to tell people what kind of Sadhana you are doing. Sadhana is a personal thing. It's not meant for advertisement. It's likely to disturb others also.

Suppose you are taking a particular Mantra and you are repeating it. If you tell a second person, that person, if he does not have faith in his own Mantra, will think that your Mantra is more powerful and you'll disturb his mind. In Yoga, it is taboo. We don't tell our experiences except



"The subtle forms of lust, anger, egoism, pride, etc., can only be totally destroyed through the Grace of the Lord. However hard you may strive and do Sadhana, these subtle forms cannot be eradicated through your Sadhana alone. The Lord's Grace completely purifies your heart.

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to the Guru. It can bring danger also and it will stop the experiences. We should never tell our experiences to all and sundry, but in a family, the whole family can take one Mantra and repeat that Mantra.

The Mantra must form a very deep impression in the mind. It must come in your dreams. When it comes in your dreams, then you must know that in your waking state it is forming a very deep impression. When you repeat the Mantra, you should not repeat it for any worldly purpose. We might have worries, we might have troubles, we might have financial difficulties and we'll naturally repeat the Mantra, but we should not ask God to remove our troubles. We should ask Him to give us strength to bear it. The Mantra will give you whatever you want. Swami Ramdas put it humorously. He said, "Don't use the Mantra for worldly purposes. It is like trying to kill a fly with a machine gun!"

When you get up in the morning, have a wash, a bath if you want, and sit quietly. Normally we face east and we do some Guru Stotras. It's best to first offer your Mantra to the Deity or to the Guru. You offer everything—your body, your mind, your soul—you offer it to God. It's also good to send a thought, a prayer of peace to the whole world. Especially, you should send a prayer to the people with whom you might have had some friction. It's not good to sit for Japa and meditation with rancour in the heart, with hatred in the heart. We all have a little friction with people but it is always good to sit and pray for that person. Send thoughts of love or ask God to bless that person and then you sit for meditation. Then you know that you are quite free. But as long as we don't forgive and forget, the image of that person is going to worry you. Even if it's mechanical in the beginning, it is better to utter some words and gradually the words will have effect. Then you know that it is finished and you can start repeating the Name.

The main thing is to try to fix your mind on the Mantra or on the form, wherever you are concentrating. However often the mind runs, you should bring it back gently and fix it there. You all know that it is a very difficult thing to control the mind. Arjuna put that question to Lord Krishna and Lord Krishna has given us a classic answer, "Practice". It is practise and practise and practise, that's going to make you perfect.

DAY OF DESCENT OF DIVINE GRACE

Today, I would like to present a short message. Two of our modern sages, our Divine Master, Sri Swami Sivananda and Sri Aurobindo, have stated that if the disciple serves the Master with faith, devotion and dedication, they will take care of their spiritual progress. Our Master has said, "If you take care of my mission, I will take care of you".

I have read to our devotees many months ago how a little boy ran away from his home and joined Sri Aurobindo Ashram. He went to Sri Aurobindo and said, "Master, I

do not know anything about Yoga. What must I do?" Sri Aurobindo said, "Do the Mother's work. Take her *Prasad* of two oranges a day. We will do the rest".

The Mother gave the boy the task of taking charge of the sanitary department. He did his task with so much zeal, faith and devotion that many years later, when he sat for meditation, he had the great Cosmic Vision, the vision described by Lord Krishna in the *Bhagavad Gita*. We read out this marvellous three-page experience during Satsang. Such is the result of devotion to the Guru!

Here also, all our devotees are serving our Master with so much devotion, dedication and self-sacrifice that they are making very good spiritual progress. The Master has bestowed upon them his Divine Grace.

Here is a beautiful example of how our devotees practise our Master's teachings. This happened a few days ago. A devotee wrote to me: "I do quite a bit of work for a very big construction and civil industry company. When I received payment from them last week, I noticed that they had overpaid me by R110 000,00. I informed the accounts department of the error and returned the extra money. The company was shocked and surprised at my honesty. I told them that I was merely following our Master's teachings. I then explained to them about Swamiji and our work".

I have already mentioned in my book *Glory of Guru's Grace*, how strictly I adhere to the path of truth in my life, even up to this day. Let us all practise our Master's teachings as stated in the above manner.

I myself experienced our Master's Grace recently. There was a descent of great Grace. It happened on 1st March. It took a few weeks to get stabilised. It will take some more months to get well stabilised. Maybe in September during our Master's Birth Anniversary I will explain more about the descent of the Grace. Our devotees also can relate how the Master guided them to overcome their defects and make spiritual progress.

GEMS FROM SRI SWAMI SAHAJANANDA
IMPORTANT RULES TO OBSERVE

Many of the problems encountered in our Society are due to devotees not keeping a notebook or diary, even though I have advised them on numerous occasions. Sometimes they will come with the notebook to show their efficiency and then forget about it for months, going back to their habit of forgetfulness and carelessness in attending to tasks.

I will sum up the important points:

1. Have a small notebook that can be kept comfortably in your pocket.
2. Record your tasks and duties in the notebook.
3. If you cannot fulfil a task as promised, or at the appointed time, communicate with me or with the officials.
4. Do not postpone tasks.
5. Go through your notebook—daily or weekly.
6. Take note of instructions given to you so that you understand clearly and fulfil them properly.
7. Treat every task as worship of the Divine Master or God.
8. If you fail in carrying out your tasks and duties, do not resort to self-justification and giving flimsy excuses. In this way you will be closing the door of your heart for the inflow of Sri Gurudev's Grace.
9. All devotees should study carefully and follow the instructions contained in the pamphlet, *Some Thoughts on the Quality of Obedience*.
10. If you keep the *Sri Ram* Mantra on your lips and pray ardently to Sri Gurudev for his help and guidance, you will do the right thing at all times.

DIVINE MESSAGES FOR AN ASPIRANT

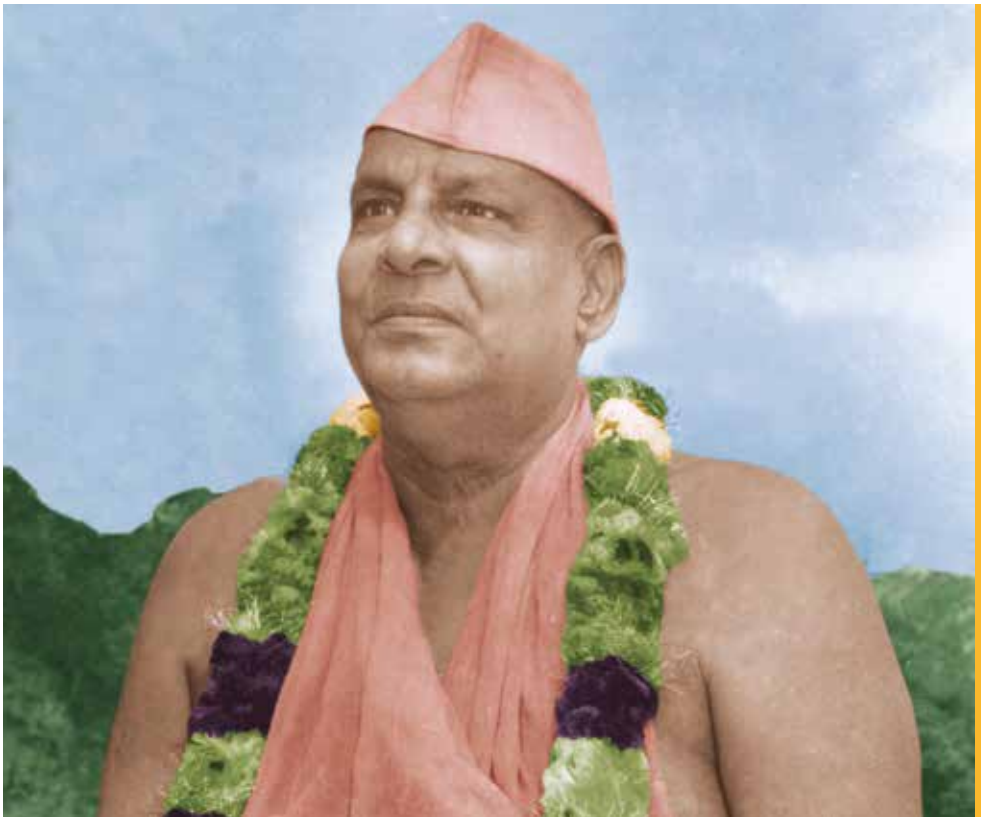
Sri Gurudev addressed two handwritten messages to me in the *Divine Life* magazine. I thought that these messages are appropriate for this most auspicious Guru Purnima.

1. What is the highest achievement? It is not wealth, power or secular learning. What then? It is Self-realisation. Self-realisation demands very great struggle. Strive, strive, strive with faith and single-minded devotion. You will come out victorious in the end.
2. Strengthen your will. Slay the slayer—mind. Crush the ego. Be like a lotus when you live in the world. Be not disheartened when obstacles come. Face life boldly. Be regular in your meditation. A glorious future is awaiting you. May Lord bless you with peace and illumination!

HOW TO TRANSFORM ONESELF

There are enormous temptations, problems and difficulties inside. First, we must master the external, all our work. That's why I lay very great emphasis on work. One should not be in a hurry at all. It is better to lay your foundation thoroughly and master your work, your nerves and your health and then go inward.

When you first start practising meditation, the Nadis, the nerve tubes, are full of Rajas and Tamas. The Nadis are the subtle nerve tubes. When you start meditating you get sudden jerks of the body. I used to get very violent jerks. If I was sitting in Padmasana and meditating, sometimes the jerk will be so violent that I'll be flat on the ground. So that's why I never used to meditate with anyone lest they get frightened. Because I read it in Gurudev's books, I knew that it was nothing unusual. Gradually I was able to control it and it passed away.



"You should not sit idle and say Lord's Grace will do everything for me. Why should I do any Sadhana? This is wrong philosophy. God helps those who help themselves. God's Grace will descend on those persons only who exert. You cannot expect the Lord to do self-surrender for you.

Swami Sivananda

For a long time now, I don't get any sort of violent jerks. You must have a thorough knowledge but guidance is very necessary at that stage. Visions and experiences are very good and encourage you but it is better to look for Bhakti and pure love, serve people and have faith, deep faith in the heart. The Mother says that faith is more important than experience. We need not try to run and jump. Let us lay the foundation and if it takes five years or twenty years or thirty years it doesn't matter. The Mother says thirty-five years is the period given to transform the human being.

VALUE OF A GURU

If you read *Guru and Disciple*, you'll find what a holy and sacred thing it is (initiation). I'll explain to you what happens during initiation. From the disciple's side he offers himself, his whole being, like Milarepa did when he went to his Guru. He offered his body, mind and soul. So, the disciple offers his entire being to the Guru so that it can be transformed. Unless this consent is given, the transformation cannot take place at all. So that is the attitude that the disciple takes.

From the Guru's side, he enters into the inner being of the disciple. He enters into the consciousness of the disciple so that he can do the transformation. The Guru will not interfere with anyone; he will not make the transformation until the consent is given. When people go to Gurudev he does not pry into the minds. Although they have the ability to know exactly what the person's inner make up is. Only if it is necessary, they try to find out. So, unless the Guru becomes a part of the inner consciousness, goes into the disciple through the permission of the disciple, it is not easy to make that transformation.

DIVINE NAME—1

Later on, the Divine Name becomes automatic. It settles in the heart and then nothing disturbs it. You are quite conscious that it is going on, your work is not disturbed and the Name is not disturbed. The work doesn't disturb the Name and the Name doesn't disturb the work. Gurudev calls that a double consciousness. It is a very, very high state but it is achievable by everyone. Whether you are doing office work or mental work, we can achieve that state but Gandhiji says that it took nearly forty years.

THE MAKING OF A SAINT

Saints are not born, they're made. Every little act goes towards the making of a saint. Every action will make us stronger. If we think big with surrender to God, not with ambition, if we think big and if we do difficult tasks, then we'll be able to grow and the will-power will also grow. We find today, not only in the spiritual field but in other fields also, people do not have a strong will-power. They give up after a little effort. They don't make a sturdy effort.

So that is why when a problem arises, when a moral crisis arises, when a spiritual crisis arises, when some problem

arises, we find that we're completely defeated by the mind. That is why we're asked to do difficult things, not just small things. There is no purpose in trying to mount a molehill. Try to climb the Himalaya mountains. Then you'll grow and then the power will come. Bliss and peace won't come unless the system is purified and strengthened and there's courage and faith. Boundless faith is required.

THE PRICE OF TRANSFORMATION

I can assure you that there are wonderful treasures awaiting you. I know that transformation is not easy. We've got to go through a lot of painful episodes, but the final fruit is so marvellous that you cannot describe it at all. You'll feel that God in His entirety belongs to you. You see, every part of God belongs to us. And it is not something that comes from the brain. It comes from the heart. And you'll also feel that every part of your being, every cell, every hair on your head belongs to God. You give yourself completely to the Guru and the Guru gives himself completely to you.

It's a marvellous relationship that cannot be described in human words. That is why they say that the Guru-disciple relationship is more sacred and wonderful than even the relationship between God and the devotee. No human mind can comprehend it. You'll feel the vastness of God. There's no fear after that, there's no anxiety about the future, but the initial price has to be paid.

BLISS ABSOLUTE

Even kings and emperors will not enjoy the happiness you will have if you control the mind and if you know that the Divine Power works. So marvellous, so compassionate God is, you cannot describe it. God is an ocean of mercy and if you ever experience that bliss, it is so marvellous and stupendous, you can't even describe it. You can never describe it. You'll feel like you don't mind tying up the whole universe and throwing it away; that bliss is so…that's what we are struggling for, that's what you'll get from God, not just a little bit of peace.

My Master gave me this experience, some of it, that's why I'm able to tell you that. Sometimes you'll feel that your heart is torn to shreds, it is so blissful and so marvellous and so stupendous, you can't describe it. That's why we say, *Satchidananda*—Existence Absolute, Knowledge Absolute and Bliss Absolute. But all are going to get it, either in this birth or next birth or after many births. You are going to get it because you'll never be satisfied until you do.

VALUE OF SATSANG

Thinking about that, I said that we should get all our children to make a start and make them do Sadhana at home. It is the most important thing. Even if you come here once a month or twice a month, it is not enough. If you don't do your daily practices, then you will not make the progress that you should. Coming here will be like coming here to recharge your battery. Satsangs are very necessary. We always ask: "How to get a longing for God? How to get a desire to seek God? How to make progress?" The saints have given us the answer. You must attend Satsang, have Darshan of Mahatmas, saints and sadhus, then you'll get that desire.

That is why you come here, so that you get inspired and your battery gets recharged. If you are depressed then it's overcome. That is a great boon. In Hindu Dharma we place a great deal of emphasis on Satsangs. Merely getting the Darshan of a saint is enough for us because his influence is there. So, we go hundreds of miles just to see a saint and come away.

DIVINE NAME—2

The Divine Master, Sri Swami Sivananda, says that the repetition of the Divine Name, called Japa, is the only sure way for all the problems of this present age. This practice of repeating the Divine Name can be done by all individuals and at all times. It can be done throughout the day, while driving, at one's place of work, and at home in the morning and evening.

Take any Name that appeals to you, like *Sri Ram, Om Nama Sivaya, Om Namo Narayanaya, Om Namo Bhagavade Vasudevaya* and repeat it constantly. Once you select a Name or Mantra do not change it. Christians can use the famous Jesus Prayer that the early Desert Fathers used, *Lord Jesus Christ, Have Mercy Upon Me*.

This is what the Divine Master says about the Divine Name: "Japa is a marvellous, divine soap for the mind. It cleanses it of its various impurities. If you are not able to form the mental image of your Deity, if you are not able to fix the mind on it, you may try to listen to the sound of the Mantra or think of the syllables of the Mantra in order. This will stop your mind from wandering.

"At any moment death may snatch you away. This life is not meant for eating and drinking. It is very difficult to get a human birth. O friend, wake up! There is no better healer in this Kali Yuga than the repetition of the Name of God".

FAITH AND SELF-SURRENDER

Our Divine Master, Swami Sivananda, was a sage of supreme love and compassion. His inspiring life-story is a practical example of a life imbued with true faith and self-surrender. Here we will give you a picture of his spirit of surrender to God and his faith in Him.

Even before he entered the spiritual path, the Master always bubbled with self-confidence and faith. This only deepened when he finally left Malaya (now Malaysia) and returned to India to enter the spiritual path and seek God.

In Malaya it was a life of hard work, but the luxury of dainty dishes and fashionable dress was not absent. Now we find him back in the Motherland, trudging the dusty Indian roads in a spirit of complete resignation to the Will of the Lord. Before he finally arrived at Rishikesh in 1924, the Master travelled on foot to many pilgrimage centres in northern India. Recalling those days, the Master later said that often he had nothing to eat except the fruit that fell from wayside trees. Often he was drenched to the skin by pouring rain. But nothing whatsoever daunted him; he bore everything calmly, in a spirit of complete surrender to the Lord.

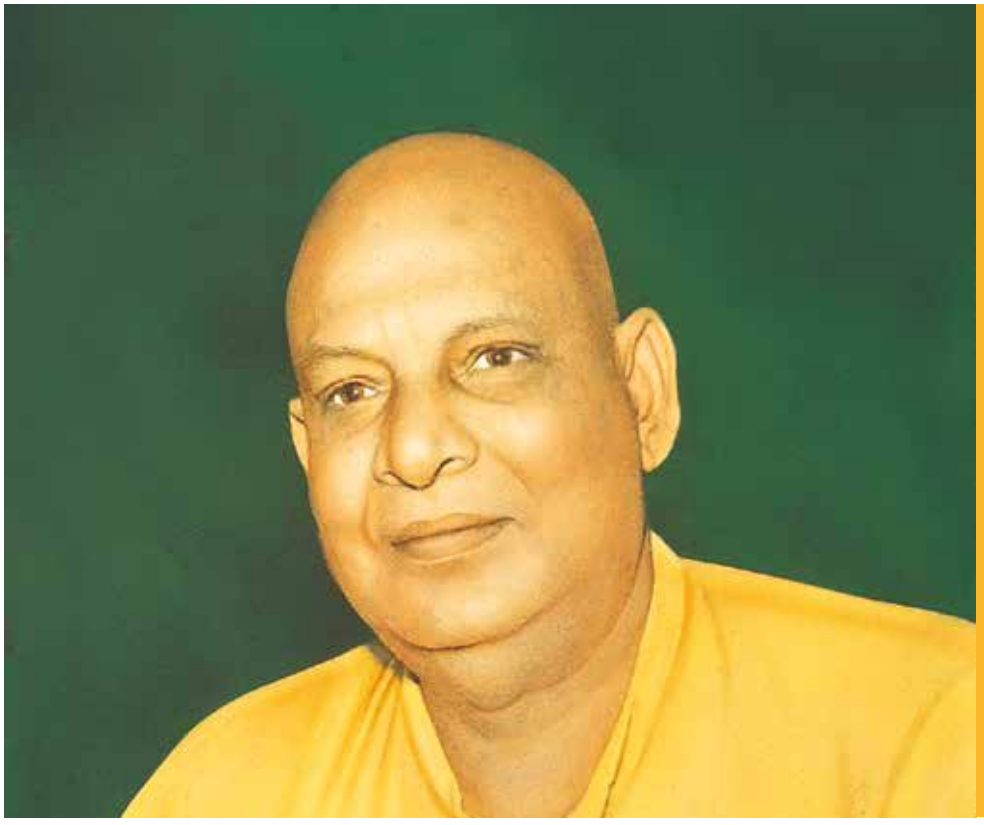
His purity of heart, strong will and intense spiritual practices took him to the summit of God-realisation within six years. When the Master started Divine Life Society in 1936, the same joy, unbroken serenity and surrender to God shone in his daily activities.

Till the time he left his mortal frame in 1963, the Master ran the Society without a budget. Whatever funds came were at once utilised in serving the sick, in providing for his disciples, and in printing his books for distribution. He never thought of the morrow. Often the food for the next day had to await the donations that came by that day's post. The Master never appealed for funds, for he had complete faith that God would always supply his needs. And God never failed him. Once, the Ashram was burdened with debts. The local shopkeepers would not extend further credit facilities. An unknown stranger, who had only casually heard about the Master, suddenly turned up and placed a bundle at his feet. When it was opened there were Rs20 000 in notes. The situation was saved. On another similar occasion, a lady of royal birth came to him at 4am and gave him a large donation.

The Master was never known to become flurried or agitated even if something serious happened at the Ashram. Once, a disciple working in the government post office set up at the Ashram, absconded with a large sum of money. The Master refused to have him arrested and took the loss calmly. In another instance, thieves broke into the Ashram temple and removed the jewels from the Deities. The Master made light of the incident, remarking, "What an expert thief he must be! We must give him a certificate for his cleverness!"

A blind man once appeared in the Ashram with an associate, and was lodged in a room where musical instruments were kept, as there was no other accommodation available at the time. The next morning he left with the Ashram harmonium. When he came back after some time, the Master said to him, "The harmonium you took without permission; now you can take the tabla with permission!"

Such was the Divine Master's spirit of self-surrender and compassion! Because of the light of God that shone in his eyes, he could only see God everywhere, even in those who did harm to the institution.



"The worldly duties are not ties. The world is the best teacher. You are not required to renounce the world and take shelter in the Himalayan caves to claim back your lost divinity. The world cannot stand in the way of your God-realisation. Live in the world but allow not the world to live in you. He who living in the midst of temptations of the world attains perfection is the true hero.

Swami Sivananda

SWAMI SIVANANDA ON FAITH

Listen to what our Divine Master, Sri Swami Sivananda, has to say about faith:

"Faith in God elevates the soul, purifies the heart and emotions, and leads to the vision of God. Faith is the soul of every religion. It creates new hopes and awakens in one the Presence of God. Faith is the eye that sees the Lord, and the hand that clings to Him. Faith is power. Faith is strength. Faith is abundant energy. He who has faith is strong. He who doubts is weak. Strong faith precedes great actions.

"Faith illumines the spiritual path, builds a bridge across the gulf of death, and takes one to the other shore of fearlessness and deathlessness".

TRUE FAITH

True faith must come from the heart. It must be rooted deep within the heart. The faith that comes from the mind only—what we might call mental faith—is not real and lasting. It is faith only when things go well. But when adverse conditions prevail, this kind of mental faith breaks down. It is not strong. It is a kind of faith with expectation.

Faith and self-surrender both mean the same thing. If there is faith in God, then one will surely have perfect surrender unto Him. If one has surrendered to God, one will have perfect faith in Him.

Most of us have a faith and surrender that is tinged with some kind of selfishness and expectation of results. Our faith is not pure and taintless. As is our prayer, so is our faith. If the prayer is for petty things and rewards, the faith also will be weak and faltering. If the petty things and rewards are not granted by God, our faith very soon evaporates. We lose faith in Him, and even go to the extent of turning against God.

Only that faith is true, which is pure, lasting, and taintless, and which meets all trials and challenges with a perfectly calm mind.

A strong faith meets all tests, trials and challenges with courage, cheer and confidence. Such a faith has a true knowledge of God's Grace, knowing that all that He does is for our good only. A strong faith meets sorrow with strength, suffering with fortitude, disappointment with optimism, loss with calm cheerfulness and failure with repeated perseverance. True faith turns every situation into an opportunity for progressing Godward. In it there is no such thing as failure, no such thing as disappointment, no such condition as difficulty. Every difficulty and trial is an opportunity, every failure is a stepping stone to success.

Whatever type of Yoga one practises—whether it be Raja Yoga, Karma Yoga, Bhakti Yoga or Jnana Yoga—faith and self-surrender play the most important part. We are told by the saints that even though one might go deep within in God, one is always likely to get disturbed by external conditions if the element of faith and self-surrender is not strong.

TRUE SELF-SURRENDER

Self-surrender implies a deep, inner acceptance and knowledge that the whole universe has been created by God from His own Being; that the universe is activated and controlled by Him; that not an atom or molecule can move or vibrate without His Will; that God's Will is supreme; that whatever happens, happens for the best; that whatever happens, happens by His Will.

Self-surrender is the inner certitude that God is an ocean of compassion and mercy; that the aim and object of His Grace is to take us towards Him and grant us supreme peace and bliss; that pain, sorrow and suffering are nothing but signs of His Grace in order that we may be purified and made fit to receive His peace and bliss; that the entire manifested universe, with all its creatures and beings, is His form; that our true nature is free from all defects and one with God; that all is well, because all is in the hands of God.

Self-surrender is the foundation of spiritual life. It is the foundation of every Yoga, whether it be Jnana Yoga, Karma Yoga, or Bhakti Yoga.

True self-surrender is the knowledge that our body, mind and soul belong to the Lord; that all our talents and gifts come from Him; that it is through His Grace and power that we think, feel, act, breathe, sleep and digest our food; that all we possess belongs to Him. One who has attained this self-surrender through divine knowledge is one with God and enjoys unbroken peace.

FAITH IN THE GURU

Faith in one's Guru or spiritual preceptor is the most vital factor in spiritual life. Not an iota of progress can be made without faith in the words and in the guidance of the Guru. The Guru's words are gospel truths. His glory and greatness have been sung in hundreds of verses in our scriptures. The famous *Guru Gita* sings the glory of the Guru in eloquent verses. A study of these verses will give one marvellous faith in the Guru.

The Guru has attained union with God. Hence, his words are the words of God Himself. They should not be taken lightly. The Guru's power can work wonders in the disciple who has faith in him. God's Grace flows to the disciple through the Guru. All the great saints, including our Divine Master, Sri Swami Sivananda, had great devotion and faith in their Guru. Their spiritual progress was therefore rapid.

Faith in the Guru and obedience to him are one and the same. The disciple cannot claim to have faith and at the same time disregard the commands of the Guru. Where there is perfect faith, there you will find perfect obedience. Where there is perfect obedience, there you will find perfect faith also.

No virtue on the spiritual path is so glorious and beautiful as faith and surrender to one's Guru. It is the heart and kernel of all spiritual endeavour.

Faith in the Guru enables the disciple to tide over all trials and difficulties successfully. Through his divine inner vision, the Guru clearly sees the defects and weaknesses in the disciple. Due to the impurities clouding his mind, the disciple is unable to perceive his own defects with a clear vision. It is here that his Guru comes to his aid, prescribing suitable practices to remove his defects. If the disciple has no faith in his Guru's instructions and teachings, his progress will be slow, and hampered by many a pitfall and setback.

It is because we see a greater power and knowledge in the Guru that we go to him for guidance. It is also because we are aware of our own weaknesses and defects, and need the guidance of one superior to us, that we resort to a teacher.

The importance of obedience to the Guru and faith in his words and teachings, cannot be over-emphasised. All will agree that even in secular life we cannot attain success in any venture without faith and obedience. It is faith that draws the all-merciful Lord to the devotee. It is the devotee's wonderful faith that makes the Almighty Lord his slave! Did not Lord Krishna Himself wash the feet of His ardent devotee, Sudama?

Surrender to the Guru means surrender to God. It means surrender to one's higher Self. Surrender to the Guru means protection from hostile influences. It brings inner spiritual strength to the disciple. It grants him wisdom and right understanding. It brings him peace of mind and endurance. The disciple's spiritual progress is assured if his surrender and faith in his Guru are strong.

FAITH & DIVINE GRACE

A faith that is not tested and tried is no faith. A surrender that is not put to trial is no surrender. Let us now ponder over some of the important aspects of faith and self-surrender.

Faith can be strengthened only through repeated tests and trials. We pray to God for faith. God answers our prayer by putting us into such trying situations as will increase our faith and make it strong and enduring. Do we recognise His Grace at such times?

The body can be made strong and muscular by taking part in games and gymnastics. We cannot develop a healthy, muscular body merely by wishing for it, or by just thinking about the matter. We require vigorous exercise in order to achieve the desired end. In the same manner, we can increase our faith and surrender only if we are repeatedly tested in the crucible of difficulties, setbacks, disappointments, failures and losses. Then only can we see to what extent we have faith in Him, and to what extent our surrender has developed. That is how God's Grace works. Often, what appears to be a great calamity in the beginning, turns out in the end to be a great blessing. Is this not a common experience?

God's ways are most wonderful and mysterious. His only aim is to make us pure and perfect so that His marvellous bliss, peace and joy will be ours. God's bliss, peace and joy are so great and stupendous that if we get just a taste of it even for a second, our mind will stagger. We cannot become fit for this joy and happiness if we are not strong and pure in mind.

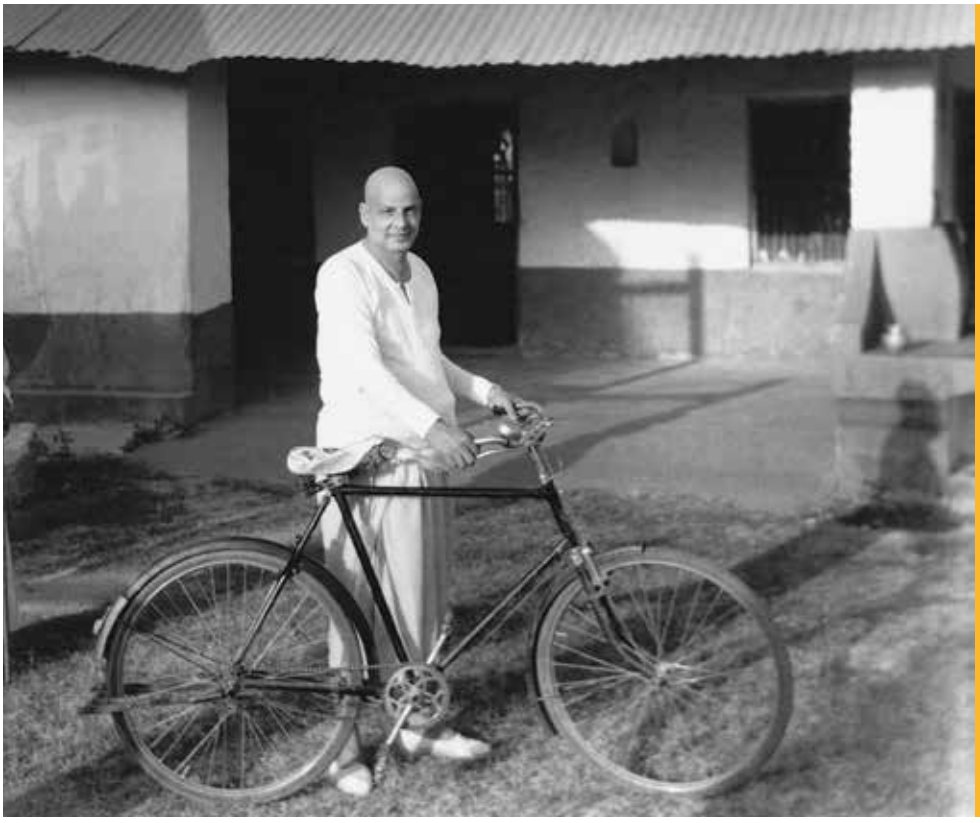
The mistake made by aspirants is that they do not allow God to test their faith and surrender so that they may become pure, strong and enduring.

The secret workings of Divine Grace are understood more and more clearly as our faith and self-surrender become stronger and more enduring. In the beginning, we see Divine Grace working behind a veil. We understand it only now and then. Gradually, when our mind and heart become pure, when our confidence, faith and trust in Him increase day by day, we see more clearly how His Grace works. Then losses, failures, sorrows, pains and sufferings have little meaning. We now take them as opportunities for making our contact with God closer and more intimate. Our faith and surrender do not waver under any condition. At this stage we cannot help crying out: "O Lord, I understand now that Thou art an ocean of mercy and compassion, as whatever Thou doest is for my good only. A loss on one side is a gain on the other."

The mysteries of Grace cannot be understood by those without faith. It is truly said that only Grace can make one understand the workings of Grace.

Life becomes a song only when we truly understand and accept the workings of Divine Grace, and not until then. There is a beautiful story narrated by our Divine Master, Sri Swami Sivananda, to illustrate how Grace works. Listen to this most inspiring and instructive story with rapt attention.

Once, Lord Krishna and Arjuna visited the home of a rich and haughty man. Not recognising the Lord, the rich man turned them out with many an insult and abuse. While they were departing from him, Lord Krishna said: "May this man's wealth increase a hundredfold!"



"Difficulties come to test you and thereby to help you by strengthening your will, patience and power of endurance. Be bold. Be cheerful. Be calm, cool and collected at all times, even in the face of difficulties. God sends consolation, encouragement at every step to the sincere aspirant.

Swami Sivananda

Then the divine couple arrived at the home of a very poor man, who was a great devotee of the Lord. The poor devotee welcomed them with great love and affection and entertained them graciously. A single cow was the only wealth of the poor devotee. While they were departing, the Lord said: "Let this man's cow die!"

Arjuna was surprised and indignant. How could the Lord bless the haughty man and curse the poor man! Lord Krishna smiled and answered: "Arjuna, you see, the haughty and rich man, on growing richer, will become more proud of his wealth. This pride will lead him to much pain and suffering. Eventually, this pain and suffering will turn him to Me. In the case of the poor man, his only possession is his cow. He is greatly devoted to Me, but his attachment to the cow is a hindrance to his devotion. Now that it will be removed, he will be fully devoted to Me and he will enjoy eternal bliss and peace."

AIDS TO DEVELOPMENT OF FAITH & SURRENDER

We have already said how important the Satsang with saints and devotees is, in order to make progress on the spiritual path. Satsang is the best and most effective aid in developing faith in the Lord. The powerful thought currents and vibrations of a sage or true devotee of God, cast a spell on all those around him. It is said that Lord Buddha's spiritual currents could be felt within a radius of about six miles (9.65 kilometres).

One can feel the peace, serenity and love of God in the presence of a saint. His day-to-day life is a practical example of how to surrender to God and have perfect faith in Him. A saint maintains a calm and serene attitude under all conditions. He welcomes both friend and foe, seeing only God in them. He showers his Grace upon the so-called sinners. His love for all beings, even for animals, insects and birds, is simply boundless. How can one not be influenced by such a personality?

Hindu scriptures place a great deal of importance on Satsang. By regular attendance at Satsang, dispassion for the things of the world arises in the mind, our faith and devotion get strengthened, and knowledge of God's Grace dawns in us.

If the positive company of God-realised saints is not available, we can resort to the company of true devotees of God. We can seek their Satsang and listen to their talks. We can study the scriptures with them. All this enables us to increase our faith and get closer to God.

A marvellous change will take place in our hearts if we listen regularly to the stories of God's glory and power. The thrilling tales of Lord Krishna and Lord Rama even now stir the depths of our hearts and awaken in us a greater desire to realise God. So, the reading of scriptures, and books written by saints, is a must for seekers. When we read the book

written by a particular saint, we are then having Satsang with him, even though he might have left his body.

Satsang is a very powerful factor in helping us to develop faith and surrender to God, especially when our faith weakens and our surrender falters.

Regular prayer, Japa and meditation purify the mind and give us contact with God. The final realisation may take a long time, but it does not matter. We must go on with faith and confidence.

Feel the presence of God in all beautiful things. A glorious sunset, a beautiful flower, the delightful songs of happy birds, the silence of a moonlit night, the smile of a little child, the placid waters of a lake, wooded mountains, soothing instrumental music and sweet devotional songs, a noble, generous act—all these elevate the mind and remind us of God's glory. They increase our faith.

HINDRANCES TO FAITH & SURRENDER

Nothing is so disastrous as evil company in destroying one's faith and devotion to God. The first thing that the spiritual aspirant must shun is evil company. Aspirants seeking God must avoid the company of those who take liquor, who gamble, who utter untruths, who engage in gossip and slander, who talk ill of scriptures and saints, who take recourse to drugs, who talk on sex and love matters, etc. Such company is disastrous and will destroy the little faith that the aspirant has developed through hard struggle.

Criticising, fault-finding and gossip hinder development of faith. One should also be careful of the literature that one reads.

In the beginning, it is advisable to stick to one method of Yoga practice and to one spiritual institution. Though the teachings of all the saints have the one common goal of God-realisation, there are often slight differences in their methods of approach. If the aspirant continually changes from one Guru to another, from one teaching to another, from one institution to another, his faith is sure to get diluted. He may get confused and may even abandon the spiritual path altogether.

There are numerous teachers today, all claiming to have exclusive possession of spiritual truths. Each one claims that he alone possesses the truth, and nothing but the truth. A wise aspirant will study the different Gurus and institutions carefully, to see if they have all the divine qualities given in the scriptures. Then only will he make a decision to place himself under a particular Guru or institution.

FAITH IN THE DIVINE NAME

Every spiritual aspirant longs to have unshakeable faith in the Divine Name. The Divine Name has miraculous powers. Once the faith in it is fully established in the heart, then the spiritual progress goes on at a rapid pace. The Divine Name not only grants spiritual progress by freeing us from worry, fear, anxiety, sorrow and pain, and filling us with peace, joy and bliss, but it brings material progress as well. It helps and protects us in numerous ways.

Faith and surrender come quickly to one who repeats the Divine Name constantly. So, cling to this priceless jewel with all your heart and soul.

Once, there was a spiritual aspirant who was taught to chant the Divine Name from his early childhood. When he reached manhood, he began to lose faith in the Name, thinking that it had brought him no benefits, although he had repeated it for such a long time.

When this thought arose in his mind, God appeared to him in his dream and said: "My dear child, you are now saying that My Name has brought you no benefits. Do you remember how when you were a child, you and your companion were playing in a little cart and it crashed while going down a little slope, and your friend was seriously injured while you were saved? Do you remember the time when your whole town was struck by an epidemic and hundreds fell victims to it, but you were saved?

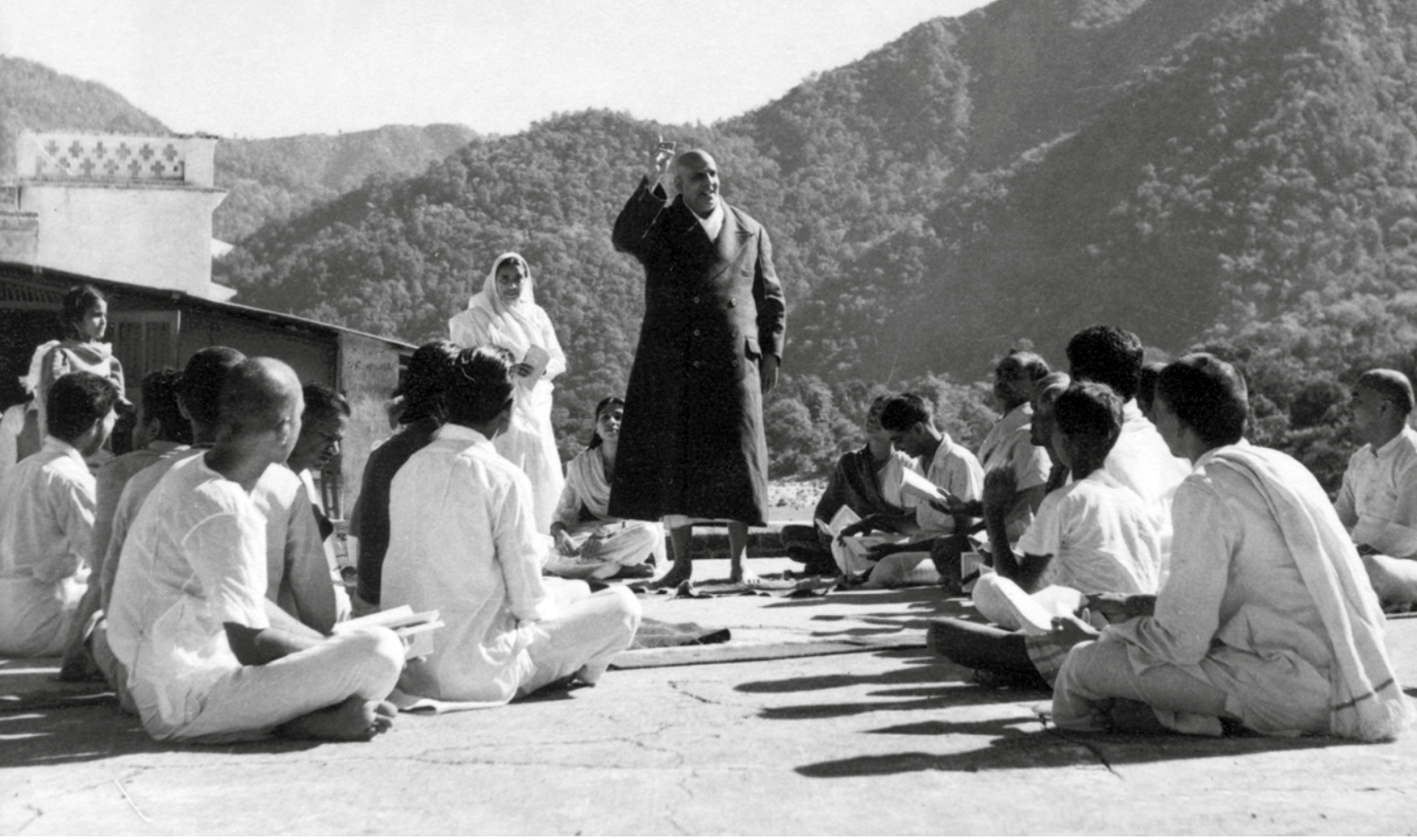
"Do you remember how a severe storm destroyed many homes while yours was saved? All this was due to your repetition of My Name. And now you say that you have received no benefits from it!"

On hearing this admonition of the Lord, the aspirant repented for his doubt and began to chant the holy Name with increased faith and devotion.

Saints have never been tired of telling us the glories of the Divine Name. They showed in their own lives its power and greatness. What a marvellous faith they had in it! They kept it on their lips, day and night.

The Name was their refuge and solace, their guide and Guru, their strength and joy. They extolled its glory to such an extent as to declare that it was even greater than the Lord Himself! To prove it, they said that while Sri Rama gave liberation to only a few of His followers, His Divine Name has liberated countless devotees.

Let us conclude by reminding you that faith in God means faith in your own higher Self. Self-confidence and faith mean the same thing. But one's self-confidence should be born of humility and trust in God. It should not be the outcome of one's strong egoism and pride. Self-confidence and optimism are aids to the development of faith.



Conversations with GURUDEV

INTRODUCTION

There is no doubt that the life of beloved Pujya Swami Sahajananda will be remembered through the ages, not merely for the printing and publishing of the Divine Master's works, or for his poverty alleviation and school-building projects, or for his leadership and leadership-building skills, but wholly for being a colossus of Guru Bhakti. These "Conversations with Gurudev", a snippet of which appears in this article, can be read in its complete form in *Guidance in Daily Life*.

His life and work in general, and these "Conversations" in particular, are the "Vedas" on Guru Bhakti. We pray that this article will inspire you to read the original version and open yourself to both the Divine Master's and Pujya Swamiji's Shakti and Grace.

MYSTERY OF GURU'S GRACE

SWAMIJI: Gurudev, you gave me everything without my asking. You gave me Mantra initiation in 1948, and in 1956, when I visited you at the Ashram, you gave me Sannyas even though I did not want it as I felt I was not ready for it. But you made sure, Gurudev, that I returned to South Africa. In fact, during the first week of my arrival at the Ashram in 1956, you questioned me as to when I would be returning to South Africa!

Gurudev, I am always intrigued by the way you dealt with me. You did not force any of your disciples—even the advanced and senior ones—to obey you. If they desired to go on pilgrimage or to retire to some place away from the Ashram for spiritual purposes, you would try to dissuade them at first, but would finally give in and allow them to act as wished. But in my case, you never relented, Gurudev.

Till now I have never come across a similar case, where a Guru forced a disciple to obey him, as you did in my case. Gurudev, I shudder to think what my fate would have been had I disobeyed you.

GURUDEV: Even if you had tried your best, you would not have succeeded, as I had a certain mission for you to fulfil.

SWAMIJI: Gurudev, when I think of it now, I marvel at my great good fortune in having been protected by you. I feel that even in millions of births I will not be able to repay my

gratitude to you for the way you guided and cared for me.

GURUDEV: You will always be under my protection.

SWAMIJI: When you so graciously granted me permission to come and have your Darshan in 1956, I thought that I should take the opportunity of praying to you to fulfil my deepest spiritual aspiration. Many go to saints and temples to have their worldly desires fulfilled, but this was not my wish. So when you graciously granted me a personal interview, it was with a trembling heart that I put my plea to you. All compassionate that you are, without hesitation and without laying any conditions, you assured me that my wish will be fulfilled. Since I was like your child, the thought whether I was qualified or not to make such a request did not enter my mind at all.

Gurudev, the Grace that you poured upon me in those few minutes in your kutir did not end there, as before leaving India, I had Darshan of Papa Swami Ramdas in Bombay (Mumbai). Beloved Papa also assured me with great emphasis that my aspiration "must and will" be fulfilled in this birth.

Gurudev, it is a mystery how I so readily received such wonderful assurance from two great saints, an assurance that aspirants rarely get. Still, Gurudev, I know that I have to perform intense Tapas in the form of prolonged periods of Japa and meditation to achieve what you wish me to achieve.

WORKINGS OF GURU'S GRACE

SWAMIJI: Gurudev, when we ask for material things you fulfil our wishes quickly, even without thinking, like Lord Siva. But when we ask for spiritual transformation, you are very hard on us, Gurudev. Again, like Lord Siva sitting with His closed eyes on the Himalayas, you seem to ignore us.

GURUDEV: This is because spiritual treasures are valuable and more lasting. They are not like things that perish.

SWAMIJI: Gurudev, you remarked to one of our devotees who came to you from South Africa, "I know when to give and what to give". Your Divine Grace works in mysterious ways, Gurudev. It is unpredictable, especially when it comes to spiritual transformation.

GURUDEV: Yes, the mystery of Divine Grace can only be understood through Divine Grace.

SWAMIJI: Gurudev, parts of my nature resisted transformation for many years. I was in despair and always had a lurking fear that it will never be possible, because I had heard that even some great spiritual personalities did not achieve a complete transformation of their external nature. They did



Your thoughts should agree with your words, and the words should agree with your actions. In the world, people think of one thing, say another thing, and do another thing. This is horrible. This is nothing but crookedness. You must carefully watch your thoughts, words, and actions.

Swami Sivananda

not achieve the integral transformation as described in your books and teachings.

GURUDEV: Yes, it is a transformation amidst all the distracting and frustrating situations of daily life. Such a radical transformation is possible only through the Guru's Grace.

SWAMIJI: I can well believe it, Gurudev. No amount of vows and resolutions helped me to overcome some of my cardinal defects. When I gave up every effort and felt helpless, your Divine Grace manifested. Gurudev, I woke up one morning with the distinct feeling that I was a changed being, that some great power of yours had descended upon me and was effecting the transformation.

GURUDEV: Only when the disciple is ready will such a transformation take place. You have been preparing for many births.

SWAMIJI: Gurudev, when I realised what was happening, tears of gratitude began pouring for several weeks, as I felt I was not worthy to receive such Grace. I marvelled to note with what precision and perfection your power was working. The higher knowledge seemed to be descending.

GURUDEV: For this stupendous experience, God Himself will guide you and help you to stabilise it.

SWAMIJI: Yes, Gurudev, from time to time you were giving me a formula to repeat, together with my Mantra, so that what you were giving could be stabilised. Gurudev, the distracting external conditions did not change a bit. The attitude of those around me was the same. But the miracle I noticed was that it was I who was changing. Gurudev, kindly permit me to add something more. Over the years I knew all along that those around me were all your own forms, and that their frustrating actions were meant to help me in my spiritual progress. However, this intellectual acceptance did not help me much, Gurudev. But when your divine power descended upon me, the positive results were at once noticeable.

GURUDEV: Yes, that is how Divine Grace works. Its ways are mysterious. It will work according to its own way and not the way you want. Perfect faith and self-surrender will allow it to work unhindered.

SWAMIJI: Gurudev, I regret to state that as the months went by, I found that sometimes I was losing the marvellous gifts that you were so graciously bestowing upon me, even though I was so unworthy of it. At such times, I would feel downcast and think that death would be preferable than to lose what you were giving. Gurudev, I also found that Divine Grace or Guru's Grace is not only difficult to get, but once got, it is even more difficult to maintain.

GURUDEV: Yes, such precious spiritual gifts need special care and vigilance to protect them.

SWAMIJI: Gurudev, thanks to your boundless love and compassion, the transformation became more stabilised after about three years. This you made possible through the formulae that you gave me to repeat from time to time. Still, Gurudev, I need your Grace and protection at every step to keep vigilant at all times.

GURUDEV: Yes, my Grace shall be ever with you.

THE YALE LOCK SADHANA

SWAMIJI: Gurudev, this attitude of disobedience also seems to infect devotees belonging to spiritual organisations and those residing in Ashrams. They are supposed to set the best example in discipline and obedience.

GURUDEV: The spiritual loss caused by lack of obedience on the part of those trying to lead the divine life is indeed very great. To lead a spiritual life by disobeying the Guru and the discipline of his institution is like trying to row a boat that is firmly anchored to the shore. There will be no progress.

SWAMIJI: Gurudev, it seems that disobedience has become the lifestyle of many spiritual aspirants. Even simple rules laid down for the efficient running of the institution are broken without the least thought and without any kind of regret. Negligence of duties, too, goes on all the time.

GURUDEV: The breaking of minor rules and negligence of one's duties is not just a simple matter. There will be serious repercussions later on. The Samskaras created by such acts will prove to be formidable obstacles as time goes on.

SWAMIJI: Gurudev, as soon as the aspirant's mistake or fault is pointed out, self-justification at once comes forward in defence—like output from a computer! He puts forth a dozen excuses to justify his wrong action. Or he may use a more polished and dignified form of self-justification—by just remaining perfectly silent—like the Egyptian Sphinx!

GURUDEV: Self-justification is a very serious hindrance on the spiritual path. It prevents the aspirant from making use of the purifying light of God and the Guru.

SWAMIJI: Yes, Gurudev. It is like putting on the yale lock. 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.

GURUDEV: 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 work to bring about the transformation

without much struggle and effort on the part of the aspirant.

SWAMIJI: Gurudev, together with the use of the yale lock, there is no repentance either, when the aspirant's faults and mistakes are pointed out. Instead of repentance there might even be a faint radiant smile, or the repentance might take the form of a half-hearted "sorry", followed by the same mistake within hours.

GURUDEV: If there is no repentance, the aspirant has not brought much spiritual Samskaras from his previous birth.

SWAMIJI: This defect of putting on the yale lock is indeed a great stumbling block in the lives of devotees, Gurudev, as many of them possess admirable qualities like spontaneous charity, kindness, love, hospitality, spirit of service and self-sacrifice, etc. that could be well utilised to make rapid progress on the spiritual path. They could become saints in this very birth, Gurudev.

Also Gurudev, many aspirants perform their tasks in a careless, half-hearted manner. There is no sense of perfection in what they do. Quite often their duties are neglected and the institution is hampered in its activities.

GURUDEV: Yes, what you say is perfectly true. If aspirants perform all their duties with the attitude that "service is worship", they will become saints quickly. Neglecting duties is a sin. Know also that performing the Guru's work carelessly is very detrimental to one's spiritual progress. It is like performing ritual worship of the Deity in a careless manner and getting up before it is fully complete. Will this not be showing disrespect to the Deity? The same is the case with spiritual aspirants who neglect their duties, or perform them in a careless manner. It is disrespect of God and the Guru.

SWAMIJI: Gurudev, why is it so difficult to open the heart quickly and confess one's mistake?

GURUDEV: This is because there is no great urge for God or for spiritual transformation, so the stiff ego comes in at once and puts on the yale lock, as you say. Suppose his employer points out an aspirant's mistake or fault, the latter will at once apologise profusely. He will go on his hands and knees, begging his employer for forgiveness, promising never to commit the same mistake again. The reason for this attitude is simple—the family fortune is at stake. If he is dismissed, his wife and children will have to starve. Similarly, if the urge for spiritual transformation is strong in a devotee, he will never put on the yale lock, knowing that his progress will be greatly hampered thereby.

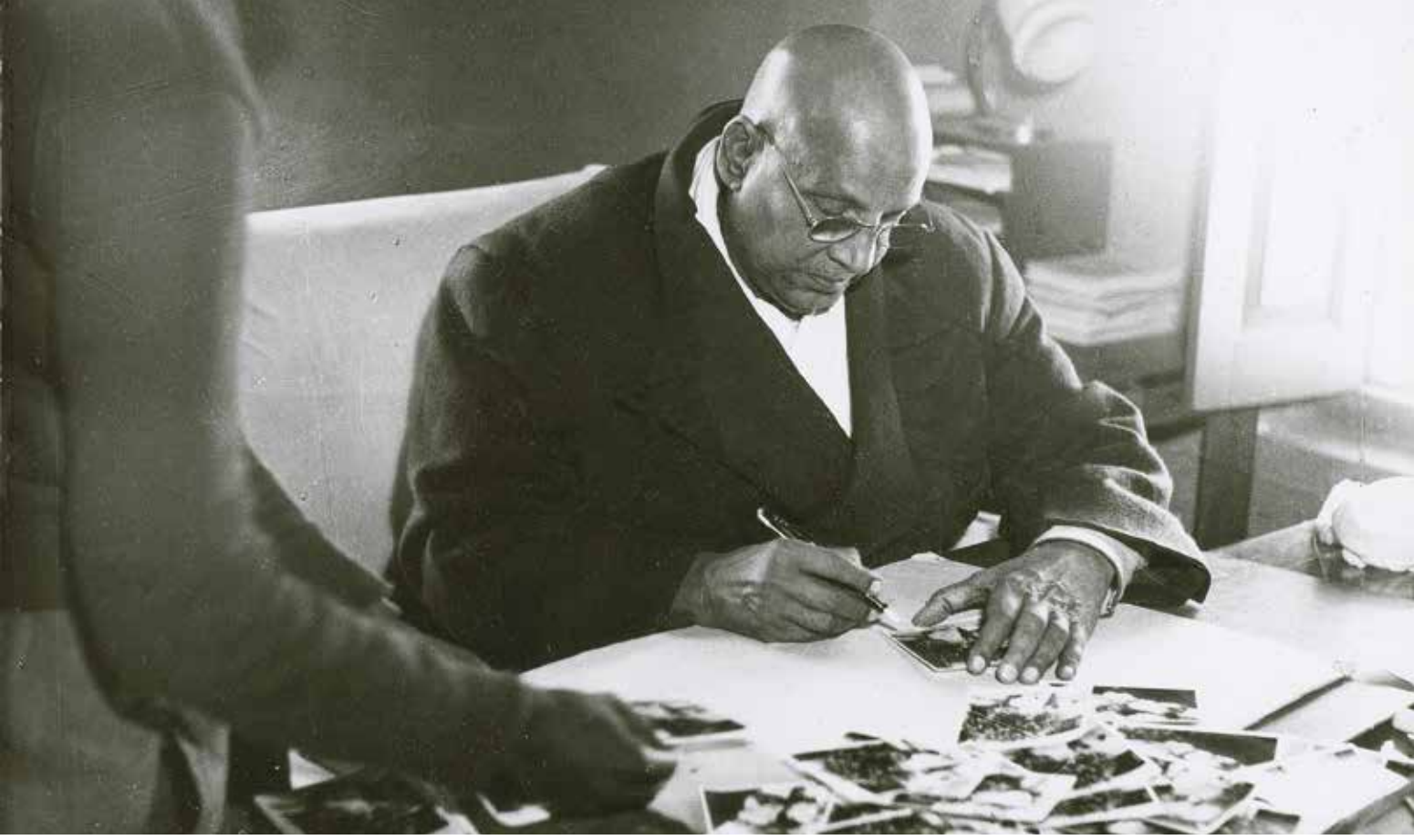
SWAMIJI: Gurudev, why don't you help them get rid of this yale lock Sadhana?

GURUDEV: I am ever ready to effect the transformation, but they are holding tight to their yale key.



"Be steadfast. Stand firm like a rock—unshakable by emotional storms, frustrations and defeats. A spiritual aspirant is backed up by the whole spiritual world. All saints lend their invisible help and support to such a struggler.

Swami Sivananda



Learn to Type and TO MAKE TEA

When Pujya Swami Sahajananda visited our Divine Master, Sri Swami Sivananda, for the first time in 1948, the Master gave the following instruction: "Learn to type and to make tea!" The youthful seeker accepted this advice passively and did not question why the Master was giving him such instructions instead of teaching him how to do Japa, meditate and practise other aspects of Yoga. Only years later did Pujya Swamiji understand 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. This formed the foundation of Pujya Swamiji's future spiritual life.

In 1956, when Pujya Swamiji went back to India, the Master said to him, "See this hospital is half-built. All the money I am putting in the press".

"This was a clear hint to me", said Pujya Swamiji, "that production of spiritual literature would have to be the primary aim of the Master's Mission in South Africa".

"Work is worship!" the Master exhorted. And so, Pujya Swamiji plunged into this Sadhana for more than five decades, in obedience to this priceless instruction. Pujya Swamiji wrote in *Glory of Guru's Grace*, "Over the last 50 years, I have had very little respite or holiday. The only short respite I had was when, several years ago, I went a few times to India, to U.S.A. and to Germany. I have been working about 8 to 12 hours a day, seven days a week for the last fifty years". What rare dedication! No small wonder that Pujya Swamiji attained such great spiritual heights.

This article focuses on the dissemination of spiritual knowledge (Learn to type). A separate article in this issue will detail the service of the underprivileged (Learn to make tea).

SIVANANDA PRINTING PRESS

Sivananda Printing Press was started in the 1950's by Pujya Swamiji, when the Society was still in North Street, Durban. Pujya Swamiji, who was new to operating printing equipment, through the Grace of the Master, gained mastery in all aspects of book production, namely, typesetting, filmsetting, printing and binding. The early days of typesetting was a laborious process involving the placement of each type (letter) in a sentence by hand.

The typesetting of a single page took Pujya Swamiji and his volunteers about two hours of painstaking manual labour. Then came the hot metal typesetting machine, with a hot metal linked typewriter. The typewriter punched holes in a roll of paper, which was read by the hot metal typesetter, which typeset one full page at a time, overcoming the need for the manual compounding of every single word and sentence.

Years later, came the Monotype filmsetter, which overcame the need for hot metal typesetting. The Monotype typewriter still punched holes in a roll of paper which was read by the filmsetter and output a film with the text on it, which had to then be proof-read and manually corrected on the film. This was a very time consuming process in which Pujya Swamiji laboured for many years.

Finally, the computer processes arrived in 1975. The output was no longer punched on a roll of paper. Typesetting was done on a screen, corrected on screen, printed on long sheets of paper for proof-reading and then finally output on film. The need to correct mistakes on film was obviated.

What is the purpose of establishing the Sivananda Press? It is to glorify the life and teachings of the Divine Master, Sri Swami Sivananda, to sow seeds of spiritual aspiration in readers, to reveal the secrets of the scriptures, to provide readers with coping skills to meet the challenges of life, to learn to enjoy radiant health and most importantly, to take them closer to God. With this in mind, in October 1949, Pujya Swamiji brought out the first publication of the Master's works, a pamphlet entitled, "Twenty Important Spiritual Instructions".

In July 1950, Pujya Swamiji started a quarterly journal entitled, *Light, Power & Wisdom*, which later changed to *Path to God Realisation* and now to *Divine Life*. Pujya Swamiji used to finance it himself and distribute it free of charge, often selecting names at random from the telephone directory for his mailing list. When the Master first received a parcel of *Light, Power & Wisdom*, he gave high praise, stating: "It is exquisite. It is grand. It is precious. It is a treasure for every aspirant. It is a boon to every seeker. I shall have it advertised in our journals. How do you maintain it? I think it would be advisable to charge a nominal subscription for it".



PUJYA SWAMIJI'S TYPEWRITER FROM THE EARLY DAYS

In the book, *Glory of Guru's Grace*, Pujya Swamiji wrote, "When the first Conference of Divine Life Society was held in Durban, it was decided to purchase a Heidelberg Platen machine to speed up the printing work. At that time, a small hand-operated Adana and treadle machine were being used at North Street. Accordingly, an order was placed for the Heidelberg, without even having the required funds and the premises to house it. The machine arrived at the agent's warehouse and was to be delivered on a Monday. On Sunday, Pujya Swamiji was searching for premises to house it. The Sanathan Dharma Sabha came to the rescue and provided the Society with a spacious balcony at Beachen Hall in Crabbe Street. The next day, the machine was hoisted upstairs; it fitted exactly in the space available, with no room to spare! Such was the Master's Grace!"

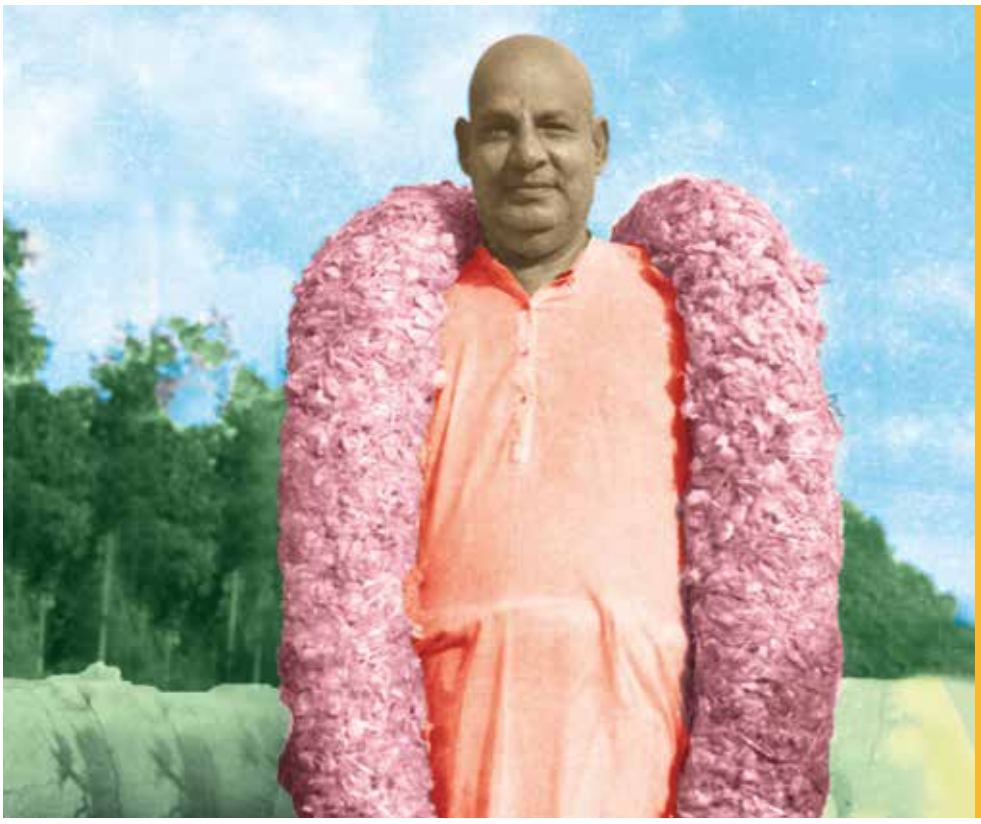
YOGA LESSONS FOR CHILDREN

In 1983, the Society's *Yoga Lessons for Children* appeared in 26 soft cover booklets. Pujya Swamiji clearly remembers how, while he was in the office with his editorial staff, the topics began pouring into his mind from above. They were coming from the Master himself. Practically all the matter for the lessons was taken from the Master's writings. Only a few topics like Indian Science, Indian Music, etc., were written or compiled by the editorial staff. They compiled all the articles very methodically and skilfully.

The success of the soft cover booklets made Pujya Swamiji expand the lessons, with the result that they appeared in a revised form in six hardcover volumes. These volumes were an instant success worldwide. They were sold out within a short period, and were in great demand after that. It was decided to bring out a reprint of the six volumes with multi-colour pictures of birds, flowers and animals. This required an enormous number of editorial changes. When everything was properly edited with pictures, the six volumes expanded to nine.

Pujya Swamiji relates the following experience in the third person in *Glory of Guru's Grace*: "At last the day came—a Monday. Swamiji's expectancy received a shock. The output unit (*of the typesetting machine*) would not work! It took a whole day to get it right. The next day, another tragedy struck: there was some format error and another whole day was spent in getting it corrected.

The typesetting started on Wednesday. Because of the lost



"From a doctor, you get a prescription. From two doctors, you get consultation. From three doctors, you get your own cremation. Even so, if you have many Gurus, you will be bewildered. You will be at a loss to know what to do. One Guru will tell you: "Do Soham Japa". Another will tell you: "Do Japa of Sri Ram". You will be puzzled. Stick to one Guru and follow his instructions.

Swami Sivananda

days, Swamiji was getting frustrated and began overworking, spending about 18 hours daily outputting the text matter on film. He would be reluctant even to take meals or have a sip of tea. There was no need for such tension, but his impatience got the better of him. He was always advising devotees to be calm and here he was, giving them a fine demonstration of how to practise the Yoga of Tension!

"All the nine volumes were output on film and the work was complete. It was something like attaining Samadhi or Moksha! Perhaps the Master took pity on Swamiji at this stage and decided to reward him with the gift of transformation. A short time after that, about the end of May, just over four years ago, Swamiji woke up one morning with a distinct feeling that he was a new person, that some great change was taking place in him. Because it was so sudden and overwhelming, he was struck with awe and wonder. Swamiji can only say that the Master came to him in the form of the all-compassionate Divine Mother and began pouring into him some great power. For several weeks copious tears began pouring from his eyes as he felt that he did not deserve such boundless Grace. He knew that some great change was taking place. How the Divine Mother worked cannot be revealed. As the process of transformation was going on, the Master was also giving Swamiji a formula to repeat from time to time, in order to stabilise it".

The following extract is from an audio recording that was played on 1 March 2013 at Sivanandashram, Reservoir Hills in which Pujya Swamiji states, "When I first found Gurudev and he rescued me from that life, to a life of Sadhana, I made one resolution and I said that in this birth, I would try to serve him with all my heart and soul in repayment. I felt that I should express my gratitude to him. And that is what I am trying to do. Gurudev does not expect us to do spectacular things. We have not done anything spectacular at all.

"I asked Gurudev how and why did he give me this knowledge. Am I worthy of it? What have I done? And I found that there is nothing spectacular that I have done. Nothing that could be called great! But I felt that whatever I did, I did with all my heart and soul. I thought of the books and I said, 'Gurudev, this is all that I have given you'. I didn't even print fifty or a hundred books. All that was printed was about thirty books. But in those thirty books went every drop of my blood, every fibre of my being. My concentration went into that. So perhaps, that is what made Gurudev grant me."

Today the Society owns an advanced Computer to Plate (CTP) typesetting system that allows for the text and images to be directly captured on a software system. This system then burns the text and images directly onto the printing plates. What used to take weeks, if not months to do with the previous generation of equipment, is accomplished in a

few hours or days with this CTP system.

FROM MAN TO GOD-MAN

This book is the inspiring life-story of Sri Swami Sivananda written by Sri N. Ananthanarayanan. Wrote Sri Anantha-narayanan in the preface, "In the remarkable life of this man of God, Sadhana and service were inextricably mixed up, preaching and practise were intertwined, work and worship both mingled in a harmonious whole".

In this publication, Pujya Swamiji included the most beautiful pictures of birds, animals and flowers. It was Pujya Swamiji's wish that this inspiring edition be distributed to all parts of the globe.

ENLIGHTENED EDUCATION

During 1990-1991, with the permission of the Department of Education & Culture, a most insightful and educational 192-page book entitled *Enlightened Education*, which covers topics such as developing will-power & memory, thought power, concentration, sublimating the sex urge, health, diet, fasting and eradicating negative qualities was issued free of charge to more than 63 000 students across KwaZulu-Natal.

In the Publisher's Note, Pujya Swamiji wrote, "We have included in this volume a wide variety of subjects. The instructions are simple to understand and intensely practical in their application. Each student will no doubt select such matter as will suit his particular temperament, taste and inclination".

Many letters of appreciation poured into the Ashram in grateful acknowledgment for this gift of knowledge.

PEACE SERIES

In 1994, originally appearing in five volumes and later in four volumes, the immensely popular Peace series contained in a nutshell all the sublime teachings of our Divine Master. Pujya Swamiji stated in the Publisher's Note, "The burden of these volumes is simple—peace, the priceless commodity that you are all searching for is locked within your own heart, in the Divine dwelling there in all His splendour and majesty. Search for it there and enjoy everlasting happiness".

During these violent and turbulent times, the ultimate personal endeavour is the achievement of peace. This magnificent collection has helped scores of people in their quest for inner peace. Even some Christian Churches use these books. More than 160 000 copies have been distributed since its first appearance in 1996.

The following response was received from one reader, "On a scale of ten, I will give the book nine points. It is the greatest book that I have seen outside Islamic literature. It crystallises all that the *Koran* teaches; for in the *Koran* submission to the Will of God, is the cornerstone of spiritual life. The book will make me a better Muslim".

BOOK DISTRIBUTION PROGRAMME

In 2006, 2007 and 2016, the School Book Distribution 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. Reverend Sikakane was the first to translate the Divine Master's book, *Bliss Divine*, into isiZulu. The book also has chapters on Jesus Christ and Prophet Muhammed. Writings from our famous Peace Series have been translated into isiZulu. They are having a tremendous impact on Africans. The Society gets many letters of appreciation from them.

Since 2016, more than 400 000 books have been distributed to at least 500 schools across the country. An extract from a letter that the Society received from Doringkop State Primary School is given: "I wish to record my sincere thanks and appreciation to your Society for the donation of religious books to my school. The books will be used very effectively in our 'Right Living & Guidance' lessons for years to come. I must compliment the Society for the publication of these useful books. The stories and quotations contained therein all have a moral lesson, so much needed in our sick society today. We need to imbue in the young minds of our pupils a feeling of hope, courage and dedication, especially in these times of moral decay and widespread violence. It is our duty to teach them to lead righteous and honourable lives. Your books will help to achieve this noble goal".

In commemoration of the 100th Anniversary of Swami Sivananda's Sannyas initiation and Pujya Swamiji's 100th Birth Anniversary, the Society has pledged to distribute another 100 000 books as a special Jnana Yajna offering.

In *Path of Divine Grace,* Volume 1, Pujya Swamiji states, "Dissemination of spiritual knowledge is extremely important to our Master. If devotees take up the task of distributing this valuable book (*Swami Sivananda in Pictures*) to as many as possible, they will without doubt earn our Master's Grace. …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 selling the book. So valuable is 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".

OTHER PUBLICATIONS

Prayer Book: This book which has gone into more than 10 editions, is used by a very large section of the Hindu community of this country. Pujya Swamiji arranged for the

Society's singing team to record Bhajans and Kirtans from this book so that devotees may learn to sing them. These audio CDs are very popular locally as well as abroad.

Mother Ganga: After Pujya Swamiji attained Mahasamadhi in 2007, the Society published the inspiring book, *Mother Ganga* by Sri Swami Sivananda, honouring Pujya Swami Sahajananda who, like the Master, had great love for Mother Ganga.

The Publisher's Note, dated 8 September 2008, contains the following words of gratitude, "Pujya Swami Sahajananda, too, had great love for Ganga. Just as King Bhagiratha's penance brought Ganga to earth, similarly Pujya Swamiji's Sadhana and love for Her brought Ganga to South Africa, in the form of Ganga Ranis in different parts of the country. Also included in this publication is, *The Eternal Ganga*, a compilation by Pujya Swami Sahajananda which contains inspiring sayings from various scriptures glorifying Mother Ganga".

Compassion Series: On 1 June 1992, Pujya Swamiji wrote, "We are extremely grateful to the Animal Welfare Board, Madras, for kindly giving us permission to reprint articles from its journal, *Animal Citizen*. *Compassion the Crown of Life*, and its companion volumes, *Call of Compassion*, *Compassion in Action* and *Heart of Compassion*, contain delightful animal stories and fascinating notes on natural science. The purpose of these books is to inculcate in the hearts of all a reverence for life, a love and compassion for all living creatures".

Swami Sivananda in Pictures: This article would be incomplete if we do not include Pujya Swamiji's last publication, *Swami Sivananda in Picture*s. Wrote Pujya Swamiji, in September 2007, "We are pleased to produce this book with lovely pictures of our Divine Master, Sri Swami Sivananda. The sixty-eight most beautiful and colourful pictures are sure to captivate the hearts of all our devotees. They will certainly love to gaze again and again at the Master's pictures".

Sri Aurobindo Ashram Publications: In the early 70's, Pujya Swamiji typeset to film two books by Sri Aurobindo and sent them to Sri Aurobindo Ashram. One in 1978 (*Gnostic Man*) and the other in 1979 (*Ilion*). Later, Pujya Swamiji also printed and distributed the booklets *Ideal Parent* and *Ideal Child*.

Divya Jivan (Divine Life): A large number of donors based in Gauteng were Gujarati-speaking Hindus. Many of them were not literate in the English language—unlike the present day. Pujya Swamiji, who never missed an opportunity to serve, was eager to impart the Master's teachings to them in the only language they knew—Gujarati.



"

It is the vanity of man that goads him to reform society without first reforming himself. Vanity rules the world; when two vain people meet, there is friction and quarrel. Your heart should expand; you should cultivate cosmic love. That is the secret of peace, harmony and unity.

Swami Sivananda

It was divine coincidence that brought a devotee, fluent and educated in Gujarati, to make the Ashram her home. Pujya Swamiji trained her as a typesetter and soon she was able to produce the magazine and a book series, both entitled *Divya Jivan*, much to the delight of Gujarati devotees, not only in Gauteng but throughout South Africa. Numerous accolades poured in from all parts of the country in appreciation of this wonderful initiative from Pujya Swamiji.

Publications from Anandashram: Through the gracious permission and blessings of Mother Krishnabai of Anandashram, India, Sivananda Press brought out the following publications: In 1970, Mother Krishnabai's autobiography entitled, *Guru's Grace,* was printed. This is the life-story of a simple but profound soul, narrated by herself in her own rare and charming manner.

In 1975, Swami Ramdas' books, *God-Experience* and *Divine Life* were printed and published by Sivananda Press. These books comprise the teachings of Beloved Papa based on the fullness and richness of his spiritual experiences.

In 1979, the Society also printed *In Quest of God* by Sri Swami Ramdas, courtesy of Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan.

Additionally, in 1982, 4 000 copies of the book *In the Vision of God* by Sri Swami Ramdas were also printed.

Other Publications: In 1978, *The Soul of Omkar* by Sri Swami Omkar was printed at the Sivananda Press.

WEBSHOP

Divine Life Society has grown from its humble beginnings at the Shree Sanathan Dharma Sabha in Crabbe Street where the first Heidelberg platen printing machine was installed to one of the foremost publishers of Hindu spiritual literature in the world.

In recent years, we have seen a need for web-based purchasing of our Master's literature, especially from abroad. During 2017/2018, the Society successfully launched its much-awaited online bookshop which allows people from all over the world to obtain the Master's literature, in keeping with Pujya Swamiji's divine wish that our Master's books should go to all parts of the world.

A FITTING TRIBUTE FROM DLS, RISHIKESH

In *Glory of Guru's Grace*, (page 195), we find the following fitting concluding remarks which appears in *Wisdom Light*, 1988 by Divine Life Society, Rishikesh. After paying tribute to Divine Life Society of S.A. for its extensive service activities in South Africa, the article went on to add the following, "In this context it may be appropriately mentioned too, that Swami Sahajanandaji's interest in Jnana Yajna is not of recent vintage. It goes back to Gurudev's time. It has been his mission, one might say, even an obsession, to propagate the teachings of the Divine Master through print.

"The Yoga-Vedanta Forest Academy Press where this magazine, as well as numerous publications of Gurudev, Swami Chidanandaji, Swami Krishnanandaji, etc. are all printed, itself owes a never-repayable debt of gratitude to Swami Sahajananda's munificence. But for him, this press would have been hobbling along with some antediluvian machinery. Is there any wonder then that he was conferred the title of "Chota Guru" by Sri Gurudev himself? Apart from this, over 30 titles of books by Gurudev, published in our press and others in India were financed by Divine Life Society of South Africa, Durban, under the aegis of Swami Sahajanandaji Maharaj. Such is his ardour for Jnana Yajna!"

CONCLUSION

The simple, cryptic, yet potent instruction, "Learn to type", by the Divine Master, has been translated into practical action by Pujya Swamiji. This catalyst of an instruction, has transformed the lives of thousands in South Africa and abroad. Had it not been for Pujya Swamiji's ingenuity, diligence, steadfast self-surrender to Sri Gurudev, and sheer hard work, this instruction may have been dissipated and lost.

Sincere devotees continue to sustain Sri Gurudev's and Pujya Swamiji's unique legacies of printing and distributing the Master's literature, thus transforming many other lives. The Society aims to produce all publications in the spirit of the lofty goals set by our Divine Master and Pujya Swamiji. We cannot but marvel at their unseen guiding hands at every moment. The ongoing operation and maintenance of the Society's presses is possible only by the Divine Grace of our Master and Pujya Swamiji.

The Society is most grateful to our volunteers, donors and patrons, whose valuable contributions in the form of press consumables, machine spares, pictures, monetary donations, technical assistance, etc., allow the Society's presses to continue to run to this day. May our Master, Sri Swami Sivananda, and Pujya Swamiji, bless them abundantly.



"Great things have small beginnings. All growth is gradual. To be perfectly unperturbed by anything, in all circumstances, looking upon all things as passing phenomena, ever feeling a distinct, silent witness to all the experiences of life—these are the marks of a spiritual aspirant."

—Sri Swami Sivananda



Centenary 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 is given below.

Several of the Centenary initiatives have already been reported on in the Sannyas brochure released on 1 June 2024. These initiatives are listed below:

1. 70th Anniversary Celebrations: The Society had a successful round of major functions and activities in 2019 in celebration of its Platinum Jubilee (70th Anniversary).
2. 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. At the time of printing this brochure, the cummulative count for Likhit Japa was 36 million while the total for Nama Japa stood at 310 million.
3. Sivananda Drakensberg Secondary School Hall: A multimillion rand project which saw the construction of a school hall by the Society, was officially opened on 10 April 2022. Incidentally, Pujya Swamiji was a student and later, a teacher at Drakensberg Secondary School.
4. Expo Centre: A museum that preserves and displays noteworthy artefacts of the Society's history, especially related to the printing presses, was established.
5. Annual distribution of more than 3 000 grocery hampers valued at approximately a million rand.
6. Jnana Yajna Campaign: 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. At the time of print, more than 800 000 books have been distributed free of charge to schools in KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng.

A number of Centenary celebration initiatives unfolded in

2024 and 2025. These include:

BRANCH SATSANGS: These special Centenary Satsangs were conducted at most of the Society's Branches with the objective of taking the message of Divine Life, Sri Swami Sivananda's teachings, legacies and messages to all parts of the country. The work of Divine Life Society of South Africa, directed by Pujya Swami Sahajananda, Spiritual Head of Divine Life Society of South Africa, also becomes known. These special Satsangs were held in KwaZulu-Natal, Gauteng and Western Cape.

In partnership with other Hindu organisations, the Sivananda Tour, featuring Satsangs, Havans and Ganga Arati have been conducted in various regions in the country namely Port Shepstone, Howick, Kimberley, Pretoria and Newcastle. The messages and items in the Satsangs highlight salient features of our glorious Hindu Dharma as well as Sri Swami Sivananda's message of Divine Life.

SIVANANDA BOOK FESTIVAL & HEALTH WORKSHOP: This unique event was held on Sunday, 28 April 2024 at Sivanandashram, Reservoir Hills, Durban. The Sivananda Health Workshop comprised a variety of presentations on health topics, namely: Yoga Asanas, Lifestyle diseases such as diabetes, cardiovascular and pulmonary issues, Homeopathic management of COVID-19 syndromes, Coping with grief and depression post COVID-19—a holistic approach to mental well-being, How to approach and manage common infections, Post-COVID respiratory complications, Acupressure, Vascular health, and Pranayama & Meditation.

The Sivananda Book Festival, exhibited Sri Swami Sivananda's books on various topics necessary for spiritual, mental and holistic growth and development. The programme comprised book reviews, overviews of the different categories of books, quiz contests and a guest speaker.

In addition, a variety of help-desks provided information on topics such as Dental care, Homeopathy, Ayurveda, Acupressure, Medical issues, Pharmaceutical issues and Veterinary Sciences.

CONSTRUCTION OF A 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 years of planning, construction commenced on 8 September 2023 and Sivanandashram, Sandton, was officially opened on Sunday 9 June 2024, with almost 1 400 devotees, donors, well-wishers and members of the public in attendance.

A majestic facility in the busy metropolis of Gauteng, Sivanandashram, Sandton will fulfil an important role in the lives of Hindus in Gauteng, for we hope that many will attend Satsangs, Yoga Camps, programmes and Hindu festivals here, and lead a Divine Life.

SIVANANDA CONFERENCE: The Sivananda Conference was held at Sivanandashram, Reservoir Hills on Saturday, 1 June from 1pm to 6pm, and at Sivananda International Cultural Centre (SICC) on Sunday, 2 June 2024 from 6am until 3pm. The programme for the two days comprised Kirtans, Bhajans, musical items, guest artistes, branch cultural items, messages on Sri Swami Sivananda's teachings and cardinal doctrines, youth presentations, children's items, Havan, keynote speakers, meditation and Mantra Chanting. Approximately 1 850 devotees, well-wishers, donors and members of the public graced the event.

SRI SWAMI SIVANANDA'S 137TH BIRTH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS: The Society celebrated Sri Swami Sivananda's 137th Birth Anniversary on Sunday, 8 September 2024 at its beautiful Sivananda International Cultural Centre (SICC) in Sivanandanagar, La Mercy.

This celebration coincided with the culmination of the 41-Day recital of the Sri Hanuman Chalisa which commenced on 30 July 2024. The day's programme began at 6am, with the final recital of the Sri Hanuman Chalisa 11 times and a sacred Havan.

A mass march past on the Sivananda Stadium, a "Lap-of-Honour", as an expression of deep gratitude to the Divine Master and Pujya Swami Sahajananda for their bountiful gifts, protection and spiritual direction, ensued. The Satsang programme on the Sivananda Stadium, comprised: Kirtans, Bhajans, our ever-popular Sivananda Gymnastics Drill Display performed to Ram Bhajans, and a guest speaker.

SPECIAL CENTENARY PUBLICATIONS: In keeping with its primary objective of dissemination of spiritual literature, the Society produced several special publications to commemorate the auspicious Centenary celebrations. These publications are elaborated on below.

A 64-page, *Sannyas Centenary* brochure, was released on 1 June 2024, the 100th Anniversary of Sri Swami Sivananda's Sannyas. This publication highlighted the Master's life, teachings, legacies and his magnanimous contributions in the fields of spirituality, Hinduism, religion, spirit of service, education, health-care, moral and ethical education. It also covered the Society's social upliftment projects over the past 75 years.

A 50th anniversary *Service Activities* brochure was printed and distributed, as part of the Society's 50th Anniversary

since the inception of its poverty-alleviation programme. To date the Society has built more than 697 school infrastructure projects, crèches, hospital wards, early-childhood learning centres, hydroponic gardens, school halls, clinics, as well as refurbishments and assistance to scores of temples.

To commemorate the 100th Birth Anniversary of Pujya Swami Sahajananda, this souvenir brochure, highlighting the life and works of Pujya Swami Sahajananda as Spiritual Head of the Society was published. This brochure also presents the herculean work done by Pujya Swamiji, and his contributions to South Africa, more especially, the poor and downtrodden.

A small, 48-page book called *Prayers and Affirmations* will be released in 2025. This book contains prayers that have been extracted from several of the Divine Master's writings. It also includes some prayers by beloved Pujya Swami Sahajananda, extracted from *Path of Divine Grace*, *Guidance in Daily Life* and *Faith & Self-surrender*.

A reprint of *Sivananda's Gospel of Divine Life* was also completed. As per Pujya Swamiji's recommendation this new edition which was done in paperback, split the original material across two volumes. This publication will be released on the most auspicious centenary birth anniversary of Pujya Swamiji on 10 July 2025.

Wisdom of Sivananda Vol.4, a DVD containing Sri Swami Sivananda's most inspiring talks and delightful songs was released on the Society's 75th Anniversary Satsang on 18 October 2024. The 15 tracks that constitute this volume contain some of the spiritual injections that the Master administered to his disciples and the many thousands who flocked to him at his Ashram at Rishikesh, India. The Master's audio messages, many of which have taken the form of conversations and songs, bring out beautifully the Master's Godlike personality and his simple teachings.

A DVD entitled *Yoga Asanas for Daily Practice* was released on 8 September 2024. This DVD demonstrates basic Yoga Asana postures and elaborates on the benefits of each pose.

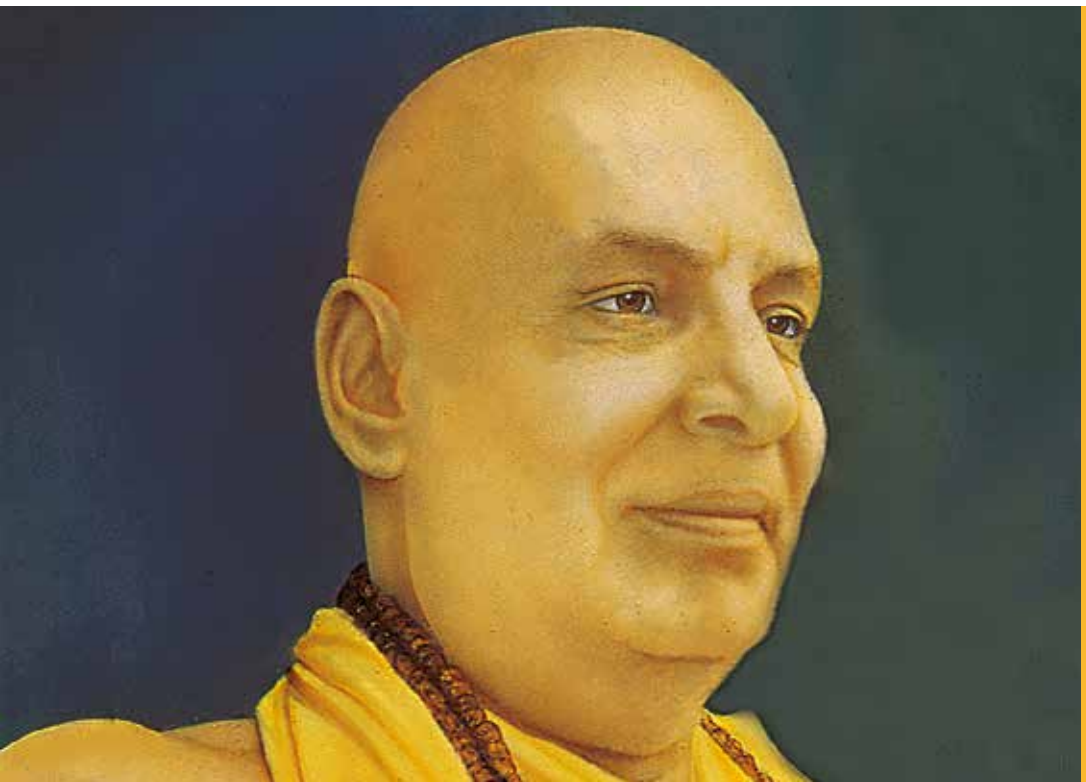
MAHA KUMBHA MELA: The Maha Kumbha Mela will be held in Prayagraj, also known as Allahabad, in January—February 2025. Millions of devotees pay reverence to Mother Ganga at the confluence of the sacred Ganga, Yamuna and Saraswati rivers. Divine Life Society of South Africa will host a Kumbha Mela at its Sivananda International Cultural Centre (SICC) in La Mercy on Sunday, 2 February 2025. The day's programme will commence at 6am with prayer, a Havan and Ganga Arati at its four sacred pools, namely, Ganga Rani, Bhagirathi, Yamuna and Saraswati. A special Satsang for this unique celebration will comprise Kirtans, Bhajans, musical and cultural items, a keynote address, guest artistes, readings and items glorifying Mother Ganga.

BHAJANS AND KIRTANS—INTEGRATION ONTO DIGITAL PLATFORMS: As part of its Centenary offerings, the Society successfully integrated its Bhajans and Kirtans onto digital online platforms such as Apple Music, Spotify, and Amazon Music. This initiative allows international access to the Society's spiritual music. The QR codes to access these digital platforms are shared below.

SPOTIFY

AMAZON MUSIC

APPLE MUSIC



"Remove suspicion, hatred, ill-will, jealousy, selfishness. Establish peace in your heart by meditating on the ever peaceful Self or the Atman that dwells in the chambers of your heart. Then alone will you be able to establish peace in the world. Individual peace alone can lead to the establishment of universal peace."

Swami Sivananda



We thank thee PUJYA SWAMIJI

In the 58 years of his spiritual ministry, Pujya Swamiji initiated various spiritual activities and programmes and built many facilities for the devotees of Divine Life Society of South Africa in particular, and for Hindus and the greater community in general. In this, the hundredth year of his Birth Anniversary, we pay humble obeisance to a great Jivanmukta.

What is most profound is that our Divine Master, Sri Swami Sivananda stated that he is working through Pujya Swamiji and, in turn, Pujya Swamiji offered every thought, word and action as worship to the glory of the Master.

Pujya Swamiji understood the Master's instructions and implemented them to the letter. Printing and publishing our Master's literature accounted for the most time and energy spent by Pujya Swamiji. The state-of-the-art printing presses were not only immaculately clean, but produced a continuous stream of literature that found their way to many parts of the globe.

We pray that, just as Pujya Swamiji caressed the soil of this country, he will also chalk out a path within the heart of each devotee and seeker. A path that is most suitable for their spiritual growth and realisation!

We highlight some of his many great advances, that transformed the lives of thousands of devotees and seekers, often going beyond the boundaries of the organisation he so ably led. In each of these initiatives, we use Pujya Swamiji's own words in many instances, taken from his written and *extempore* speeches in *Path of Divine Grace* (PODG) (Vol. 1 - Vol. 5) as well as from his autobiography, *Glory of Guru's Grace* and from some of his other writings.

1. VOW OF BRAHMACHARYA (PODG, VOL. 2, MARCH 2001)

"Today, the practice of Brahmacharya (celibacy) is extremely difficult. More and more people are resorting to birth-control practices for longer and longer periods. All are aware of the disturbing external conditions that make the practice of Brahmacharya extremely difficult, almost impossible.

"Our all-compassionate Divine Master was one of the few saints who wrote a whole book on the subject of

Brahmacharya. He has given us many simple, practical and valuable instructions to enable us to practise Brahmacharya successfully.

"Those who are devotees and who practise Sadhana have to clearly understand that without strict Brahmacharya not an iota of spiritual progress can be made. Both our Master and Swami Ramdas have advised devotees that after one or two children, they should observe Brahmacharya if they wish to make spiritual progress.

"Divine Life Society of S.A. has been emphasising the importance of Brahmacharya for many years. Several workshops have been conducted. Now it has become absolutely necessary to ask devotees to observe complete Brahmacharya. We are pleased to report that 65 devotees have signed the pledge form to observe lifelong Brahmacharya. There can be no greater offering to our Divine Master than this. We all know how flowers rained from heaven, when Bhishma took the vow of Brahmacharya. All this shows the glory and splendour of the great vow of Brahmacharya. We are sure that our Divine Master also must have showered flowers on those who took the courageous step in spite of the extremely adverse conditions prevalent today.

"I will end with the words of Dhanwantari, who taught the details of Ayurveda to his disciples. When they enquired about the keynote of the science of Ayurveda, the sage remarked, 'I tell you that Brahmacharya is truly a most precious jewel; it is the one most effective medicine to destroy diseases, decay and death. For attaining brightness, peace, knowledge, memory, health and God-vision, one should observe Brahmacharya. It is the greatest and highest Dharma. Saluting Brahmacharya first, the cases beyond cure, I cure! Aye, Brahmacharya can undo all signs that are not good!'

"May our Divine Master give our devotees and all others strength to observe Brahmacharya."

(Brahmacharya pledge forms may be signed on our website: www.sivananda.dls.org.za)

2. HARMFUL EFFECTS OF TELEVISION (PODG, VOL. 2, OCTOBER 2000)

"Whatever we see, whatever we hear, whatever we do, leaves a subtle impression in the mind. In Yoga, this impression is called a Samskara. The Samskaras remain in the mind and manifest later on in the form of appropriate thoughts, words and actions. So, if undesirable Samskaras are lodged in the mind, we will perform undesirable actions. If pure, good Samskaras are formed by daily Bhajan, attending Satsang and reading spiritual books, then good actions will be the result.

"Scenes of violence, sex and love will have disastrous effects on children, as their minds are highly impressionable and easily absorb whatever they see, hear and do. It is no wonder that children today are more rebellious and give vent to their passionate nature more easily.

"Besides the above very harmful effects of TV viewing, prolonged fixity of the vision on the screen also has other deleterious effects on the viewer. He lacks the ability to interact successfully with others. He is not able to communicate effectively, and his power of attention and concentration, too, are affected.

"From the above, it is left to the individual to choose the type of vibrations he wishes to have in his home—that of peace and serenity, or that of sensuality and violence. Because of the seriousness of the problem, on Guru Purnima Day in July 1997, we requested our devotees to take a vow of giving up TV completely. The results were quite gratifying. Parents and Spiritual Darlings reported that there was now more peace and serenity at home. There was more time for study, and concentration was better. The performance at school also improved."

3. DAILY GANGA ARATI (PODG, VOL. 2, MAY 2001)

"It is very encouraging to note the response of our devotees to the daily Ganga Arati and the Sri Hanuman Chalisa recital. About 125-150 devotees attend regularly. All these devotees are highly blessed because they have opened their hearts to the inflow of our Divine Master's Grace. That is why they are attending Ganga Arati regularly, and with such devotion and enthusiasm. I did not realise that my appeal to our devotees to make a sacrifice will meet with such response. There is no doubt that many of them are making a substantial sacrifice, because they have to attend to other activities at home in the evening and be at work the next morning. Our Ganga Arati Spiritual Darlings—what a wonderful sacrifice they are making by performing Arati daily with such love and enthusiasm! They are also making a great sacrifice for our Ganga Mata. You must hear how they do Namaskars when I make my appearance. It is something like an explosion! The whole of Reservoir Hills can hear them!

"When we note the Bhakti of our devotees for our Divine Master and for Ganga Mata, we immediately realise that the numberless verses singing the glory of Ganga Mata are really true. Ganga Mata definitely has tremendous power. Otherwise, why would seventy-three million attend the Kumbha Mela during the recent festival, with thirty million attending on 24 January. At Reservoir Hills also, our hall was full on that day. This phenomenon is also an eye-opener to all those who are trying to convert Hindus to their religion. With the power of Ganga Mata in our Motherland, Vedic Dharma will always flourish. Nothing can hamper it. This is

the declaration of our modern saints and sages."

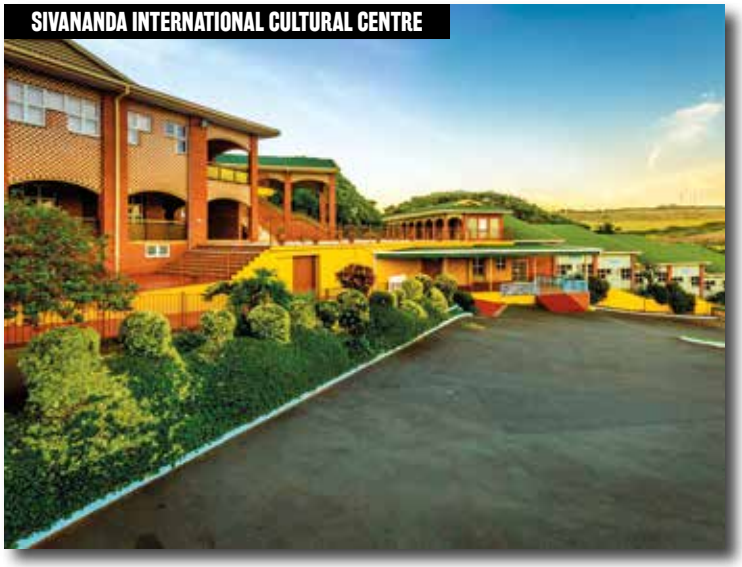
4. SIVANANDA INTERNATIONAL CULTURAL CENTRE (PODG, VOL. 2, SEPTEMBER 2000)

"I feel strongly that the Ashram at SICC, Sivananda Nagar was also inhabited, and it is perhaps even now being inhabited, by some Rishis or Divine Beings. The 1.6 original hectare site was given for a school. This could not be built as there were no residents in the area in the sixties. We could not sell the site either, because of the conditions in the deed of donation. I offered it to Sri K. for his Blind Society. He refused it. I then offered it to Mother X. and Swami Y. They also refused.

"The story of the expansion of the complex at Sivananda Nagar has been recounted in *Glory of Guru's Grace*. Everything came about naturally without any kind of pre-planning. When we were about to officially open the swimming pool, now Ganga Rani, I thought that for years no one has given me some Ganga water. How nice it would be if we had some now to pour into the pool on the function day. Just a couple of days prior to the opening, the sacred Ganga water was given to me by someone, and we poured it into the pool on the official opening day. Can this be an accident or just a coincidence? Definitely not, Ganga Mata wanted to come here for some occult reason.

"The unusual manner in which the rest of the 18 hectares came to us is also related in *Glory of Guru's Grace*. If we had waited just one week more, the site would have gone into the hands of the North Local Council for the expansion of its cemetery. Such is the manner in which the Master operated!

"After typing the above, I read the following in a book entitled, *The Origin of Human Past* by V. Lakshmikantham. The book which was kindly sent to me by Sri Ramakrishnanji of Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan was received a few days ago. The passage appears on an auspicious page also (page 87). Sri Gurudev was born in 1887.



SIVANANDA INTERNATIONAL CULTURAL CENTRE



VAIKUNTHA DHAM, SICC



AERIAL VIEW OF THE SICC COMPLEX

"'The *Vedas* sing the glory of the Saraswati to impress upon us its greatness. Until the Arabian Sea came into existence about 50 million years ago, Saraswati was the greatest river on earth. It had its source in the Himalayan mountains, flowed downwards, took a westerly direction, passing through the land that is now the Arabian Sea and Africa, and emptied itself in the then-existing south-western ocean at 47 degrees west of Sri Lanka or 30 degrees east of Greenwich. South-western oceans mean the sea lying below the Equator as it was then known. As the Arabian Sea did not exist then, there was a continuous stretch of land from the eastern end of India (Bharat) to Africa. The length of the Saraswati was more than 4 500 miles (7 242 km), making it the largest and longest river on earth. It was the holiest of all rivers, according to the *Vedas*, since no other river ever so holy contained so many Ashrams of Rishis and holy places to perform Vedic rites. By the time of the *Mahabharata*, the Saraswati was already in decline and was said to flow into

a desert, not even reaching the ocean. Ganga became the holiest river after the Saraswati'.

"In view of the above there might be a lot of truth in what I have written, that our Ashram at Reservoir Hills and the Sivananda International Cultural Centre, must have been very sacred places, inhabited by Rishis and holy men.

"This being the Kali Yuga, spiritual and moral values have deteriorated greatly. Some spiritual personalities that are world famous have lowered their values considerably. They have even denied their Gurus. Prominent Swamis are discarding the rules of Sannyas Dharma.

"It is therefore our sacred duty to uphold the high spiritual ideals set by our Divine Master. A few days after writing the above and impressing upon some devotees that both our Ashrams, being sacred places, whatever indiscipline and disrespect, we display in their precincts are sure to bring very adverse Karmic effects upon one. I received the *Divine Life* magazine from Rishikesh, in which a saying from a scripture is quoted: 'Sin committed at other places is destroyed in a holy place, but the sin committed in a holy place becomes firmly attached'. All this is clearly our Divine Master's mysterious way of instructing and teaching his devotees.

"May his Grace give us the strength and wisdom to follow his teachings strictly with devotion!"

5. SIVANANDA GHAT

Sivananda Ghat, located alongside the Umgeni River next to the Clare Estate Umgeni Hindu Crematorium, serves as a post-cremation public facility. The inspiration for this project came primarily from the teachings of the Divine Master, Sri Swami Sivananda, who emphasised the importance of rituals for the deceased. He introduced the observance of 'All Souls' Day' on the first of every month at the Ashram in Rishikesh, involving special prayers for the peace of departed souls. Pujya Swamiji initiated this practice in South Africa at the Sivananda Ghat in 2005. Thus, Havan, Satsang, and feeding of about 2 000 poor people are conducted on this day at the Ghat.


SIVANANDA GHAT

Managed by Divine Life Society of S.A. and devoted volunteers, Sivananda Ghat provides a dignified facility for the disposal of ashes of the departed from various race groups and religious affiliations. The disposal is done via a basin leading into the Umgeni River, with more than 40 810 disposals recorded by the end of 2024. The Ghat also facilitates Shraddha and Tarpana rituals, offering a divine atmosphere for families coping with loss.

Sivananda Ghat has a spiritually uplifting effect on visitors, who often describe its serene and tranquil environment as "heaven on earth." It serves as a place for solace and reflection, offering literature on overcoming challenges and answering questions about the soul after death. The facility's impact is evident in the tributes and comments from visitors.

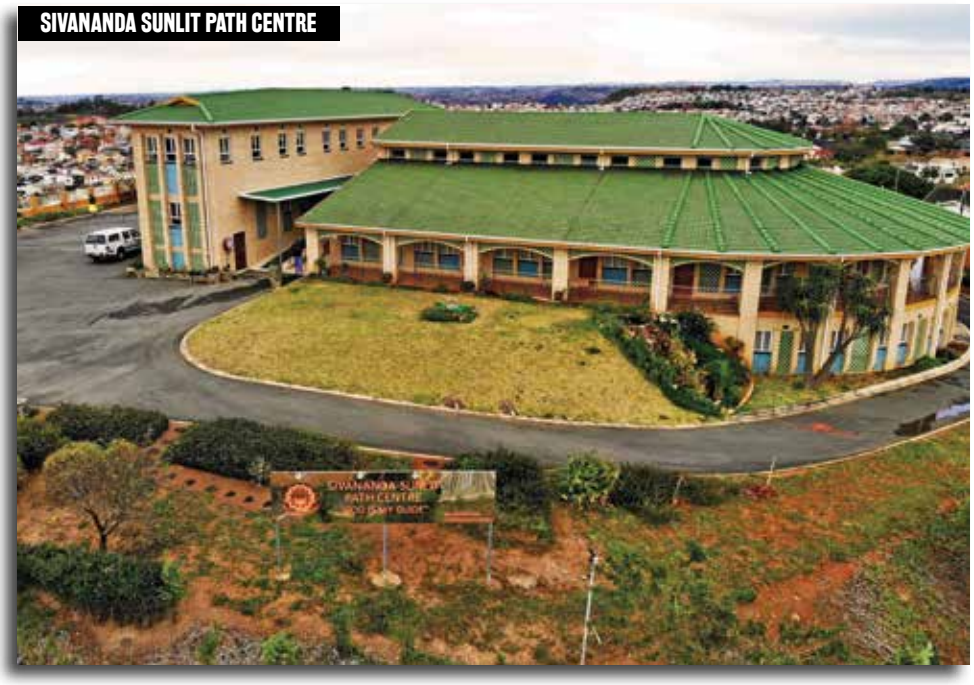
6. SIVANANDA SUNLIT PATH CENTRE

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

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

- Sewing Centre: Sewing classes are conducted for the underprivileged.


SIVANANDA SUNLIT PATH CENTRE

- 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).

7. HEALTH INITIATIVES

Swami Sivananda, originally trained in allopathic medicine, was also a strong advocate for natural healing practices. He authored numerous books and articles on the subject and established a hospital at his Ashram in Rishikesh. Pujya Swamiji continued Sri Gurudev's legacy by initiating the construction of the Sivananda Clinic at the Sivananda Ashram in Reservoir Hills in the mid-1960's. The clinic was established to provide both allopathic and natural healing therapies. Its construction was made possible by a generous donation from Dr M.K. Naidoo, a devoted follower of Paramahansa Yogananda. In recognition of Dr Naidoo's spiritual dedication, a portrait of his revered Guru is prominently displayed in the clinic's reception area.

This article explores the history and current status of the wellness initiatives introduced by Pujya Swamiji. These initiatives primarily encompass homeopathy, Ayurveda, Tulsi plant healing, and allopathic primary healthcare, along with various other complementary practices. The article also outlines the healthcare and wellness literature he advocated, published, and disseminated.

HOMEOPATHY SERVICES AT SIVANANDA CLINIC

Homeopathy, a system of alternative medicine, was developed by German physician Samuel Hahnemann in 1796. The Homeopathic Association of South Africa explains that "Homeopathy is a therapeutic medical system based on the observation that substances capable of causing diseases of the mind or body in healthy people can be used in diluted form as remedies to treat similar disorders in someone who is ill". This principle is also expressed as "Let likes be cured by likes".

Homeopathy was first introduced to South Africa in the late 1820's by European missionaries. Over the years, it gained popularity, leading to an increasing demand for homeopathy driven by a growing public interest in alternative medicine, recognition of homeopathy as a valid healthcare option, and the perception of homeopathic treatments as safe and effective for chronic conditions. In 1982, homeopathy received official recognition through Act 63 of Parliament, which led to the establishment of a five-year homeopathy training programme at the Durban University of Technology in 1989 and at the University of Johannesburg in 1992. This shift marked a transition from classical lay-homeopathy to a more medically integrated approach, establishing a new standard for homeopathic education in the country.

This encouraging development prompted Pujya Swamiji to recommend that Ashram youth seeking a career should pursue this vocational path. Consequently, several youth took Pujya Swamiji's advice, and after five years of intensive training and one year of internship, qualified as homeopaths. One of them later became the Head of the School of Homeopathy at the Institute, where she lectured, conducted research, and published articles in academic journals on the subject. Now in private practice, she also serves as a part-time healthcare consultant at the Ashram's clinic. A former student of hers, a qualified homeopath and devotee, serves on a part-time basis at both the Ashram's clinic and the Sivananda Sunlit Path Centre in Arena Park.

Encouraged and supported by Pujya Swamiji, Swami Narayani, along with several volunteers, established a Homeopathic clinic at the headquarters of Divine Life Society of S.A. in 1975. During the mid-1980's, four homeopathy clinic sessions were conducted weekly: one on Wednesday evenings, another on Saturday mornings by Sohum Sanctuary volunteers, a session on Sunday mornings, and the fourth session after the Sunday evening Satsang. Over the years, the Sunday evening clinic was the only session remaining after other clinics were discontinued. With the introduction of Sunday morning Satsangs at the Sivananda Ashram, in addition to the existing Sunday evening Satsangs, consultations now take place after the morning Satsangs to enhance patient convenience. Consequently, Sunday evening consultations have been discontinued.

Prior to the formal recognition of Homeopathy as a method of healing in South Africa, a co-authored book by Swami Narayani and Girdarlall (later Swami Anand), entitled *Handbook on Healing* (1981, published by Divine Life Society of S.A.), was used as a reference at the clinic for prescribing homeopathic remedies. The same authors wrote a follow-up to the original publication, entitled *Handbook on Healing Part II* (2000). In addition to these texts, the clinic possessed a copy of *Homeopathy Materia Medica*, a comprehensive source providing detailed information about all known homeopathic remedies at the time.

When Pujya Swamiji required treatment for his health issues, he advised the homeopathic staff at the clinic to refer to *The Prescriber* by John Henry Clarke to identify an appropriate prescription for him. This book, available in the Ashram's library, is an invaluable resource for homeopathic practitioners.

Pujya Swamiji also created an awareness about Bach remedies (can be prescribed by homeopaths), a healing method developed by Dr. Edward Bach. Bach established that negative emotions are the root cause of many physical ailments, and that addressing these emotional issues could lead to improvements in overall health. Where appropriate, Bach remedies are prescribed to patients receiving treatment at the clinic.

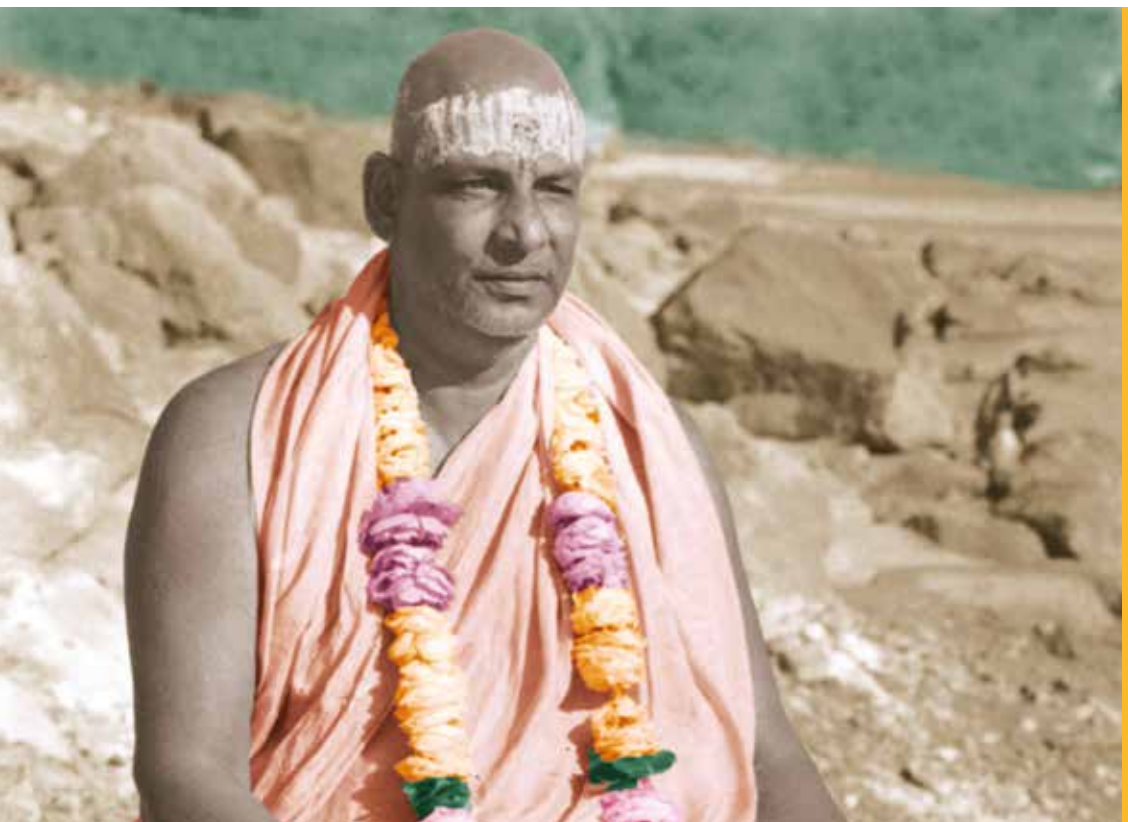
ADDITIONAL THERAPEUTIC SERVICES

Over the years, depending on the availability of practitioners, physical interventions such as acupressure, physiotherapy, and foot massage were also provided. Massage therapy, facilitated and instructed by trained practitioners using simple guided techniques, played a vital role in enhancing the well-being of individuals of all age groups, from infants to children and adults.

Although chiropractic treatment was not offered at the Sivananda Ashram clinic, Pujya Swamiji was a strong proponent of this healing method. If deemed necessary by the clinic staff, some patients were referred to private chiropractic practitioners for additional treatment.

AYURVEDA CONSULTATIONS

Sri Gurudev advocated various natural healing practices, including Ayurveda, and authored a book entitled *Practice of Ayurveda*. Pujya Swamiji also advocated Ayurveda for healing purposes. As an example, in the late 1980's, he recommended *Chyavanprash*, a well-known Ayurvedic remedy, to devotees. The primary ingredient in *Chyavanprash* is Amla fruit (Indian Gooseberry), which is characterised by its sour, bitter, and astringent flavours, along with a fibrous texture. Amla is rich in vitamin C and antioxidants, serving



"

Peace is not an external object. Peace is not in accumulation of wealth. Peace is not in erudition. Shanti or peace is in that man who has given up mine-ness and I-ness, who has given up Trishna, desires, longing for objects. That man alone will have peace.

Swami Sivananda

as an immunity booster. The Amla trees can be seen at the Durban Botanical Garden. To enhance understanding among devotees about the therapeutic properties of Amla, Pujya Swamiji requested a member of the clinic team to give a presentation on the health benefits of the fruit during a conference at the Sivananda International Cultural Centre.

Around 1999, the former University of Natal launched a certificate programme in Ayurvedic Primary Health Care. Seven members of the clinic team enrolled in the six-module part-time certificate programme. After successfully obtaining the qualification, Pujya Swamiji advised them to teach this healing method to others. Additionally, a few devotees pursued various Ayurveda courses offered by different organisations over the years to learn about this ancient healing method.

Upon completing the certificate programme in Ayurvedic Primary Health Care at the University, a graduate of the programme won an Indian government scholarship to further his studies in Ayurveda at the esteemed Jamnagar University in India. He accepted the scholarship and went on to qualify as an Ayurvedic doctor. He offers his consulting services at the Sivananda Ashram Clinic in Reservoir Hills and the Sivananda Sunlit Path Centre in Arena Park.

TULSI'S HEALTH BENEFITS

Pujya Swamiji promoted understanding of Tulsi's benefits. He distributed copies of a booklet entitled *Medicinal Properties of Tulsi*, published in *Bhavan's Journal* in October 2000, to several devotees, highlighting the health advantages of Tulsi leaves. He encouraged devotees to share information regarding the healing properties of Tulsi.

While practising medicine in Malaysia, Sri Gurudev kept this sacred plant at his home and provided its sacred water to his patients, resulting in miraculous cures. Pujya Swamiji advised the clinic team to grow a Tulsi plant near the clinic's front entrance, so that patients who visit the clinic would benefit from the plant's healing vibrations. Acting on this advice, the clinic team grew a Tulsi plant near the front entrance of the clinic.

Pujya Swamiji also encouraged devotees to consume Tulsi tea for its health benefits. Since it was unavailable locally, he arranged to import the Tulsi tea leaves from India. However, despite initial success, the logistical challenges associated with importing the tea leaves made this effort unsustainable over time. Through these initiatives, Pujya Swamiji's unwavering commitment to highlighting the healing traditions of Tulsi continues to inspire both devotees and the wider community.

FOOT MASSAGE THERAPY

Pujya Swamiji regularly relied on the homeopathic remedy *Phenosleep* to induce sleep, while also requesting foot massage as a supplementary technique when he was particularly tired. He also recommended foot massages for children to help them overcome restlessness. He made us aware that incorporating foot massages into our daily routines not only promotes relaxation and restful sleep but also serves as a simple yet powerful healthcare method beneficial for individuals of all ages.

DIVERSE HEALTH CARE PUBLICATIONS

Pujya Swamiji repeatedly highlighted the necessity of consuming tonics to maintain good health. In the mid-1980's, he published a booklet entitled *Aids to Good Health* (30,000 copies). In this publication, he touched on the health benefits of five tonics: apple cider vinegar, torula yeast, molasses, honey, and lemon juice, as well as the topics listed below:

- Purity of food (such as a vegetarian diet and avoidance of refined products).
- Daily practice of physical exercises or Asanas.
- Pranayama exercises.
- Purity of mind.
- Observance of Brahmacharya.

At the time, the HIV/AIDS epidemic was prevalent in the country, so Pujya Swamiji decided that the 16-page booklet should in future carry the title *Tonics for Health* (*circa* late 1980's). This subsequent release was published multiple times in the same edition to meet the ongoing demand, necessitating the printing of thousands of copies over the years.

Shortly after the initial publication of this informative booklet, Pujya Swamiji mobilised over a hundred devotees (referred to as 'Bag Sadhaks' by Pujya Swamiji) who distributed health tonics and spiritual literature to the public. The community response was very encouraging, with numerous people writing to the Ashram to express how the tonics had significantly improved their health. We quote one example below:

"I suffered from arthritis for two years. No doctor or Western medicine could cure me. I was introduced to your literature and tonics (molasses, apple cider vinegar) by one of your members. Since taking the tonics and following the diet recommended by you, I have found tremendous improvement in my health. I also introduce the tonics to everyone I meet."

— S.P., Asherville

On 10 December 2016, coinciding with the Mahasamadhi Day of Pujya Swamiji, a new edition entitled *Secrets to Good Health* was launched. This 64-page edition explores various health-related topics and includes content from the earlier booklet, *Tonics for Health*. Topics include, among others, the application of castor oil packs for pain and ailment relief, the importance of physical exercises and Yoga Asanas for maintaining good health, self-healing

through acupressure techniques, and the therapeutic benefits of Agnihotra Havan ash.

The healing properties of Super Biomin are also outlined in this publication. Recognising these health benefits, Pujya Swamiji ensured its availability to devotees at the Ashram; however, logistical challenges in importing the product led to its discontinuation.

Ambrosia—A Journal Dedicated to Health promotes physical, mental, and emotional well-being through educational articles and advice. It was originally edited and published by our Divine Master during his medical practice in South India from 1909 to 1912. Around 1989, Pujya Swamiji revived this publication by printing several issues under the same journal title. The revived issues incorporated a blend of previously published health and wellness articles authored by Sri Gurudev, along with newly written contributions from devotees who served as volunteer doctors at the Ashram's clinic during that time, among others. As a celebratory gesture, the articles from these journals were collated into a 305-page book also entitled *Ambrosia—A Journal Dedicated to Health* on the special occasion of the 70th anniversary of the Divine Life Society of South Africa in 2019.

Laughter is a powerful tool for promoting physical and mental well-being. Sri Gurudev and Pujya Swamiji recognised the connection between laughter, joy, and overall wellness. The book *Humour for Health* (July 2004), authored by Sri Gurudev and adapted by Pujya Swamiji, comprises a collection of tales, stories, and anecdotes that are both witty and spiritually meaningful, aimed at enhancing our health and happiness through humour.



Pujya Swamiji also directed plays written by Sri Gurudev, which evoked side-splitting laughter during the performance staged in various parts of the country.

In addition to laughter, practices such as Yoga significantly contribute to overall well-being. Released on July 10, 2018, *Yoga for Health* by Sri Swami Sivananda explores various aspects of wellness, including Hatha Yoga, Pranayama, Yogic diet, bathing, sleep, and relaxation for both body and mind. This comprehensive guide offers valuable insights into health, wellness, and spiritual matters, emphasising the importance of a holistic approach to well-being. Pujya Swamiji integrated training in Yoga Asanas and Pranayama into the monthly Yoga Camp programmes, thus advocating a holistic approach to well-being.

Recognising the need for an integrated approach to wellness, Pujya Swamiji requested the clinic team to draft guidelines for a balanced vegetarian diet and effective stress management techniques. The clinic team developed these guidelines, which were subsequently approved by Pujya Swamiji. By combining the principles of Yoga with sound nutritional practices, these resources support individuals in achieving optimal health and harmony.

COMMITMENT TO NATURAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS EDUCATION

Inspired by Pujya Swamiji's healthcare initiatives, numerous health and wellness workshops have been conducted over the years. A workshop held in April 2024 at the Sivanandashram, Reservoir Hills serves as an example of this ongoing commitment to his legacy of healthcare education. Selected members of the clinic team, along with external speakers, have actively engaged in presentations at these workshops, reinforcing the mission of promoting holistic health and well-being.

ADVOCATING VEGETARIANISM AND ETHICAL TREATMENT OF ANIMALS

Pujya Swamiji consistently discouraged the consumption of meat, citing both ethical reasons and health benefits, aligning with his advocacy for natural healing methods. This stance was reinforced by the publication of the Compassion series in 1992, a four-volume collection featuring articles on natural science, vegetarianism, animal cruelty, and insightful perspectives on animal life.

He condemned the severe cruelty inflicted on innocent animals in the fields of medical research and pharmaceutical drug development. To devotees involved in healthcare Sadhana at the clinic, Pujya Swamiji recommended a book entitled *Slaughter of the Innocent* (1983) by Hans Ruesch. This book not only exposed the brutal vivisection methods inflicted on animals but also discussed the detrimental effects on human health from drugs developed through such practices.

PRIMARY HEALTH CARE – ALLOPATHIC CLINIC

In the early days (*circa* the early 1980's), a single general practitioner would be on duty, occasionally assisted by a pharmacy student. Up to the mid-1980's, fewer than twenty patients visited the allopathic clinic for treatment. Over time, due to urbanisation and other developments, the number of patients increased, reaching an average of around 60 per week. As the clinic's patient numbers grew, patients began to queue from around 12 noon to await the clinic's opening at 14:00. Although a state Primary Health Care facility is open Monday to Friday nearby, many patients still preferred to attend the clinic at the Ashram on Saturday afternoons.

Most of these patients come from severely impoverished backgrounds and face chronic unemployment. To meet the ever-increasing demand for the clinic's medical services, additional devotees with medical training, including nurses, pharmacists, general practitioners, and specialist doctors, volunteered to assist with patient care. Their dedication was complemented by other devotees who undertook administrative duties, ensuring the smooth functioning of the clinic.

In line with Pujya Swamiji's guidance, the clinic staff often prescribed and provided patients with a small quantity of diluted apple cider vinegar alongside allopathic medicines. This practice was rooted in Pujya Swamiji's belief that patients should be educated about the benefits of health tonics, as outlined in the *Tonics for Health* booklet. Occasionally, a few drops of Ganga Jal were offered to patients in conjunction with their medication. Despite many patients being Christian, they accepted the Ganga Jal with reverence. One patient even made a special trip to the clinic to report that the acute sores on her lips, treated the previous week, were rapidly cured by using the Ganga Jal. She was convinced that it was the Ganga Jal, rather than the prescribed medication, that had cured her ailment.



VOLUNTEERS IN THE ASHRAM CLINIC IN THE EARLY DAYS

Over the years, the clinic's functioning has been sustained by generous in-kind donations from devotees and others. These contributions include medications, bottles, medicine packets, medical cards, benches, chairs, and shelving. The Society was particularly grateful to the R.K. Khan Charitable Trust for providing funds for the purchase of medicines during the 1980's and 1990's. Pujya Swamiji emphasised to the clinic staff the importance of educating patients about maintaining a healthy diet, particularly the benefits of adopting a vegetarian lifestyle. Consequently, depending on the availability of sufficient voluntary staff during the clinic sessions, patients were informed about these advantages.

During patient consultation sessions, Pujya Swamiji's occasional visits to the clinic were especially cherished. He personally distributed fruits, pictures of animals, flowers, and birds to the children of patients. These thoughtful gestures brought joy and comfort to the children, reflecting Pujya Swamiji's deep commitment to nurturing their well-being.

In a memorable instance, a patient inadvertently left without taking some of her prescribed medications. Inspired by Sri Gurudev's example when he ran a long distance to deliver much-needed medication to a patient, the clinic team responded by locating the patient on her way home and ensured that she received the medication. The clinic team's swift action to locate the patient and ensure she received her forgotten medication, inspired by Sri Gurudev's selfless act of running to deliver medicine to a patient, illustrates how our Master taught through his example.

GIFT FROM ANANDASHRAM

In 1994, Pujya Swamiji entrusted the clinic team with a small metal container sent from Anandashram, India, with strict instructions never to open it. According to Pujya Swamiji, those seeking treatment at the clinic would benefit from the healing aura of the container's contents. The box remains unopened in the clinic to this day.

HEALING AND SUPPORT SERVICES AT THE SIVANANDA SUNLIT PATH CENTRE

Since the early 2010s, Ayurveda, acupressure, and homeopathic services have been offered to patients at the Sivananda Sunlit Path Centre in Arena Park. Additionally, a devotee with specialised allopathic medical qualifications provides counselling services at the Centre. He offers spiritual and healing guidance to people of all religious backgrounds, addressing various health and social challenges, including depression, drug addiction, and alcoholism.

THE ENDURING LEGACY OF HEALING AND COMPASSION

Professional medical and support staff, all of whom are devotees, are committed to serving patients while ensuring

the cleanliness and maintenance of the clinic's infrastructure. Through their dedication and sacrifice, they reflect their devotion to the Guru by practicing Karma Yoga.

Our Master's guiding principle of "Serve, Love, Give, Purify" remains a cornerstone of the clinic team's community outreach efforts. Initiated by Pujya Swamiji and supported by dedicated devotees over the years, countless patients have benefited from both allopathic and natural healing treatments. Of the hundreds of service projects inspired by Pujya Swamiji, numerous projects are dedicated to community health. Comprehensive details of these projects are reported in our other brochures and publications.

As we carry forward Pujya Swamiji's vision of compassion and holistic care, we are deeply grateful for the lasting impact he has made on countless lives and the community at large.

8. SIVANANDA GYMNASTIC DRILL PROGRAMME (PODG, VOL. 2, NOVEMBER 2001)

"The drill programme caters for children from pre-school age to senior citizens and is extremely beautiful. Although our Spiritual Darlings have still a long way to go, they are all very enthusiastic to do their best.

"The Kirtans and Bhajans accompanying some of the exercises give a beautiful touch to the drill. Drill is an excellent means of learning a variety of disciplines simultaneously. The type of gymnastic drill we have introduced has manifold benefits, especially in these stressful times.


SIVANANDA DRILL DISPLAY

Drill practice requires a lot of concentration to enable the participant to harmonise his/her movements with those of others in the group. Participants learn to interact and work in harmony with others, and develop their co-ordination abilities.

"Drill strengthens the body and mind and develops the will. The various movements, many of which have their origin in Hatha Yoga, give flexibility to the body and make it supple. Many minor ailments can be cured through drill practice. One can note from the benefits mentioned above that the drill practice will certainly improve and enhance one's lifestyle."

9. SPIRITUAL CONFERENCES

Pujya Swamiji utilised every opportunity to spread the glory and power of the Divine Name of God, the glory of our Divine Master's teachings, and to promote the Glory of our sacred Hindu Dharma. To this end, and amongst other initiatives, various Satsangs, seminars, workshops, camps, and major conferences were initiated. Two such conferences are elaborated on below.

THE WORLD HINDU CONFERENCE

This event, held in July 1995, was arguably the largest single Hindu rally on the African continent, ever. Guided by its theme, "Hinduism Vision for the 21st Century", the World Hindu Conference was a triumph for the South African Hindu community. Over forty independent organisations participated and contributed to this massive international event which drew delegates from 20 countries.

Divine Life Society of South Africa was actively involved from the early planning stages. Pujya Swamiji lent strong support in terms of finance, accommodating international guests at Sivanandashram, Reservoir Hills and sponsoring, preparing and serving all meals at the function. One of the international guests was Mahamandaleshwar, Swami Brahmananda of Nepal, a disciple of Swami Vishudananda, who was a disciple of Jagatguru Sri Swami Vishwananda, our Gurudev's Guru. During his stay at the Ashram in Reservoir Hills, Swami Brahmananda gave Pujya Swamiji a painting of our revered Param Guru, Sri Swami Vishwananda who initiated our Divine Master, Sri Swami Sivananda into the Holy Order of Sannyas. This holy picture now holds a pride of place on our new shrines.

The conference was inaugurated at the University of Durban-Westville's elegant new Hindu Centre with a Havan conducted by two South African Swamis. Forty national and international Swamis, sadhus, scholars and a devotional crowd of 1 000 gathered at the stunning hilltop setting for Vedic blessings.

Pujya Swami Sahajananda was accorded the honour of lighting the lamps which signified the official opening of the Conference. India's Prime Minister, P. V. Narasimha Rao sent a congratulatory message.

Some of the subjects discussed and analysed were: "Religion and Philosophy," "Ethical Issues and Hinduism" and "Hindu Youth and Strategies for the 21st Century". The Saturday Youth Conference was particularly well-attended. The youth of Divine Life Society of South Africa were well represented, not only at conference deliberations but also at the book stall, in the kitchen and the dining room. As the function commenced on a Friday, a few DLS youth obtained

permission from their respective schools to be present at the function. Pujya Swamiji was pleased at their keen interest. A few of these youth are now holding responsible positions in the Society.

Pujya Swamiji never missed an opportunity to serve and to enlighten. The 64-page booklet, *Glory of Hinduism* was distributed free of charge to all attendees. It contained articles and poems on Hinduism by Sri Swami Sivananda, Sri Aurobindo, Mother Mirra, Swami Ramdas and Swami Vivekananda. Our Divine Master, Sri Swami Sivananda also wrote articles on Hindu Scriptures, Hindu Dharma and Hindu symbols.

Whilst the conference took place during the day at the University, in the evening, Divine Life Society of S.A. arranged soul-stirring Satsangs and talks by the international guests who resided at the Ashram during this period. It was a spiritual sight to behold a few of these great Mahatmas, dancing on the stage in "Bhava-Samadhi", to the accompaniment of Bhajans & Kirtans.

Twenty thousand people attended the main event at the Chatsworth soccer stadium. First came a colourful parade of local and international delegates representing Hindu organisations from 38 different countries. Pithukuli Murugadas, one of Tamil Nadu's most beloved singers, enthralled the 20 000-plus crowd with his tri-lingual Bhajans and golden voice. The mood was exuberant as South Africa's ever-popular president, Nelson Mandela, arrived with his entourage.

The esteemed magazine, *Hinduism Today* states, "The president ascended the stage and greeted each of the forty orange-robed saints and swamis, after the Hindu fashion. Sri Swami Sahajananda, a South African and senior monk of the well-established Divine Life Society, unexpectedly prostrated to the statesman, after reverentially placing the welcome garland around his neck. Some foreign delegates were taken aback, but the Swami's countrymen were not. "He sees the Divine in all," said a devotee. President Mandela said, 'Our land is graced by temples and shrines built by indentured labourers who brought Hinduism to our shores some 135 years ago and sustained it under difficult circumstances.'"

WORLD SRI HANUMAN CONFERENCE (2003)

In *Guru Bhakti Yoga—32*, we find the following article written by Pujya Swamiji, "Through the Grace of Lord Rama, Sri Hanuman, Sri Ramakrishna and our Divine Master, Sri Swami Sivananda, we are happy to report that the World Sri Hanuman Conference, held at the Sivananda International Cultural Centre, Sivananda Nagar, La Mercy during the period Friday, 18 April to Sunday 20 April 2003, was a great success.

"The opening ceremony and programme with drill and gymnastic performances were held in the magnificent Sivananda Stadium. On the first day, 5 000 attended, on the second about 4 000 and on the third and final day over 6 000 came to the function.

"We received several letters from our devotees and others, and also phone calls from individuals, expressing their gratitude and thanking us for the beautiful and spiritually elevating function. Most importantly, we offer our heartfelt gratitude to our all-merciful Lord Rama and Sri Hanuman for the lovely weather during the three days. Our profound gratitude goes to our most beloved Sri Swami Saradananda, (now Swami Saradaprabhananda) of the Ramakrishna Centre, without whose guidance and inspiration, the conference would not have been such a grand success.

"Our overseas dignitaries included Pandit Lallan Prasad Vyas (Chairman, International Ramayana Conference), Sri Swami Shivapremananda (President of Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Centres of South America), Prof. A. Rambachan (U.S.A.), Dr M.N. Nandakumara (U.K.), Smt Sushmita Banerjee (Kolkata), Prof Sundari Siddhata (India), Ms. Svetlana R. Dinges (France), Dr Sarka Litvinova (Czech Republic,) Dr Jawahar Karnawat of India and others.

"The entire conference went off with precision and excellence. It was a pleasure to see the two teams, Divine Life Society of S.A. and The Ramakrishna Centre of S.A. work so tirelessly, efficiently and harmoniously".

In his address on the last day, Pujya Swamiji said, "On this final day of the conference, I would like to pay my tribute to all the dignitaries who so kindly graced this conference. Today, at this most auspicious World Sri Hanuman Conference we are highlighting the divine qualities of Sri Hanuman, who has been a constant source of inspiration to Hindus for generations and generations. Among all his divine qualities I would like to mention the intense faith and devotion he had in the infallible power and glory of the Name of Lord Rama".

Pandit Lallan Prasad Vyas, Chairman of the International Ramayana Conference, wrote a report for the International Press of India. We quote excerpts from this report, "I must compliment the coordinating committee of South Africa for the most efficient and harmonious manner in which the 3-day conference was conducted. Over these 3 days, more than 15 000 devotees from 154 spiritual organisations came to the conference and were served three meals a day (free of charge), listened with rapt attention to academic papers of a very high standard and were inspired by cultural programmes par excellence—all within the allocated time limit and done without a hitch—truly a miracle! We in India can learn a great lesson from this".

10. SPIRITUAL INSTRUCTIONS
SRI HANUMAN CHALISA

In *Glory of Guru's Grace*, Pujya Swami wrote the following, "Swamiji had quite a lot of experience with hostile forces and black magic. Once, someone was practising black magic and this was affecting some devotees at the Ashram. In the beginning, when unusual signs began appearing in their behaviour, Swamiji did not pay much attention. But when it became serious, he began to take action. That is how he got from Mother Krishnabai, the Sri Hanuman Chalisa to ward off the forces. It was a critical period in the history of the Ashram and the problem continued for several months until the forces were driven off by means of the Sri Hanuman Chalisa and Havan. Swamiji remembers that during these trying times, he and all the Ashramites were very cheerful".

In the Society's publication *Prayer Book*, Pujya Swamiji stated, "The Sri Hanuman Chalisa is very powerful and very effective for the removal of all mental problems. It brings good health, success and prosperity. It cures diseases, counteracts evil forces and the effects of 'black magic', which are so prevalent today. It was recommended to us by Pujya Mata Krishnabai of Anandashram, one of the greatest of living saints".

Those who wish to recite it for the purposes stated above, must follow these instructions for the performance of the 41-day Puja. These guidelines are contained in the *Prayer Book*.

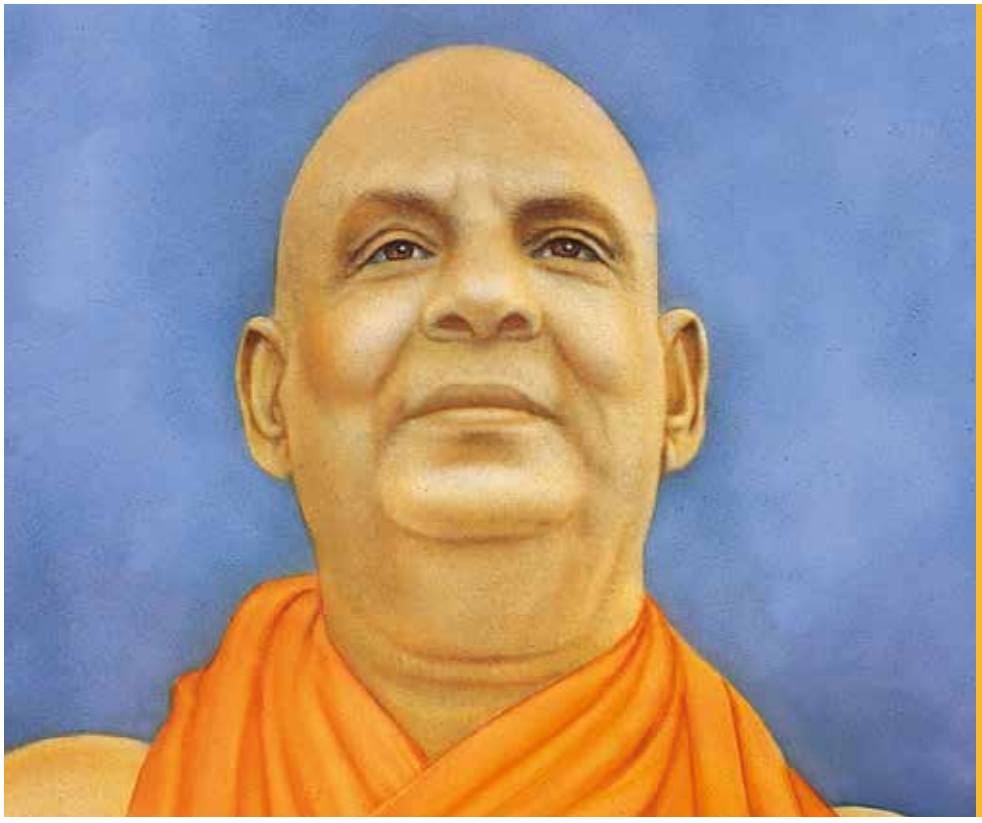
AGNIHOTRA (PODG, VOLUME 2, JUNE 2001)

"For many years I have been advising devotees and others to practise Agnihotra daily for their physical and mental health. Through the devoted efforts of one of our devotees, we also imported a good number of Agnihotra kunds from India.

"I have been receiving the *Satsang* journal from the U.S.A. in which I read of a number of people whose physical ailments were cured by doing Agnihotra daily. The ailments covered a wide range. Agnihotra not only cures physical ailments but also mental problems. It is a very good remedy for those addicted to smoking, alcohol and drugs. Many victims have been cured. We all know how, when the chemical disaster took place in Bhopal, India, many years ago, only those homes where Agnihotra was practised were saved. Agnihotra brings great peace and serenity in the home.

"If we practise Agnihotra daily and at the same time take pure vegetarian diet, observe Brahmacharya, repeat the *Sri Ram* Mantra as much as possible during the day and do some Asanas or simple exercises regularly, all our mental and physical problems can be solved. Regular attendance at Satsangs should also be a must.

"I would advise many of our devotees to perform Agnihotra, take the tonics and the right type of food because a lot of hormones are injected into meat. Meat is affecting people's



"If you annihilate selfishness, greed and egoism, nature will work for you. You will have to co-operate with nature; then nature will carry your burden of life on its head. You can remain quite at ease. You will be free from cares, worries anxieties, responsibilities and fear.

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minds and making them do all the wrong things."

MAHA MRITYUNJAYA MANTRA

Pujya Swamiji states, "This is a life-giving Mantra. In these days when life is very complex and accidents are an everyday affair, this Mantra will come to our rescue. It wards off death by snake-bites, lightning, water accidents, motor car accidents, air accidents and accidents of all description.

"Besides, it has great curative power. Diseases that are pronounced incurable by doctors are cured by this holy Mantra, when chanted with sincerity, faith and devotion. Repetition of this Mantra with faith and devotion at least 108 times daily, frees us from accidents and grants us a long and happy life. This takes only about 12 minutes daily. You may repeat it also at the bedside of ailing persons. It will bring them great relief".

Pujya Swami Sahajananda concludes, "The Maha Mrityunjaya Mantra should be repeated all the time while driving. If you cannot repeat the Mantra all the time, then repeat it as much as possible. It will help to prevent accidents, robberies, hijackings and other calamities".

11. PUJYA SWAMIJI'S OTHER INSTRUCTIONS

1. Keep a picture of Sri Gurudev at a place where it can be seen when entering the front door. Whenever leaving home, pray to the Divine Master for protection, ending with, "Whatever comes to me from you will lead me to your Lotus Feet".
2. Keep a Tulsi plant, install the Home Shrine and have daily evening Satsang without fail.
3. Conduct daily Satsang at home for at least half an hour.
4. If you have not signed the pledge form to do Nama Japa, please do so at once. The Divine Name is the surest and quickest remedy for all problems, both physical and mental. Carry out the instructions given in the pledge form. Ask Sri Gurudev to give you faith and strength to do so.
5. Do not get discouraged if results come slowly. Call for Sri Gurudev's power to act at all times. There must be perspiration as well as aspiration.
6. Follow the health rules for physical ailments. You may write to me of your health problems, but must go to the Clinic and get all the advice and remedies from our doctors. Health problems are due to past Karma, tension, worry, fear, hatred, anger, jealousy, wrong diet, lack of Brahmacharya, etc.
7. Try your best to observe Brahmacharya. This will give you tremendous physical and mental strength. Lack of Brahmacharya will weaken the will and cause physical and mental problems.
8. Read *Guidance in Daily Life*, *Sivananda's Gospel of Divine Life*, *From Man to God-Man* and other books of Sri Gurudev. You will then be having Satsang with Sri Gurudev all the time. You will develop Bhakti. You will also understand how the divine and hostile forces work.
9. Distribute our spiritual literature as widely as possible, also in factories if this is possible.
10. Communication is the most important rule for all those engaged in the Society's service activities. Discords, arguments and self-justifications arise due to lack of communication. In this respect, the rules given in *Guru Bhakti Yoga* have to be strictly followed. Please remember that there is no leniency in this respect.
11. Keep away from TV, bad company, social visits that lead to gossip, fault-finding, etc. Do all your duties at home and at your place of work with a sense of perfection. Offer same to Sri Gurudev. See Sri Gurudev in all beings.
12. At our Ashrams, devotees should not cut or trim trees without permission and guidance.
13. At our Ashram and also at home, all the security rules should be strictly followed.
14. Guns cannot offer real protection. They pose more harm to kith and kin than intruders. We are strongly advised to get rid of them.
15. Remember that every time you give way to worry, fear, etc. you have failed in self-surrender. The "Prayer to Gurudev" that you are always repeating at Satsang will have little meaning. Forgive and forget quickly any unpleasant or harsh words from others. Pray and do Japa for those giving you trouble at home and at your work place. Repeat Ram-Nam throughout the day.
16. Regular daily home Satsangs and attendance at all Satsangs and Yoga Camps at the Sivananda International Cultural Centre, at Reservoir Hills and at our different Ashrams are a must. Without such attendance you cannot hope to make rapid progress and overcome your problems.
17. During Satsangs, there should be no loitering and silence must be observed during meals.
18. When at the SICC, make the best use of your time. Spend some minutes in silence in Ganga Rani, Guru Kripa, Vaikunta Dham and Bhagirathi. Call for Sri Gurudev's power. Open the heart, then his power will flow. If you do not know how to open the heart, pray to Sri Gurudev to teach you how to do so. Keeping the mind quiet after calling is one way of opening the heart. Make sure to attend all workshops at the SICC and at Reservoir Hills.
19. Please note that all the above instructions must be carried out fully. If one or two are not, then there will be a leakage and spiritual progress cannot be made. Without strong will-power, Sri Gurudev's Grace will not be easy to get.
20. If you carry out all the above instructions perfectly, it will be the most fitting and beautiful way of showing your gratitude to our all-merciful Divine Master for the boundless gifts he has given us in South Africa.

12. NEW SIVANANDA SHRINES

In the DLS of S.A. Annual Report for the period ending March 2002, Pujya Swamiji stated, "In redesigning the Prayer hall at headquarters, Swamiji converted the shrine into one of resplendent beauty. Duratrans of the Master, Param Guru Swami Vishwananda, Mother Saraswati, Lord Ganesha, Lord Siva, Lord Rama and Lord Krishna, lit from below, are at once colourful, inspiring and captivating.

SHRINE OVERLOOKING GANGA RANI AT SIVANANDASHRAM



Garlanded by orchid and roses, also in duratrans, the Deities radiate a marvellous deep blue spiritual light. Blue is the colour of peace and they are certain to increase the devotion in the hearts of devotees".

These shrines have subsequently been built at all our Ashrams throughout the country. Pujya Swamiji also made these shrines available to devotees in smaller sizes for worship at their homes.

13. SAHAJA KUTIR

Our Divine Master, Sri Swami Sivananda, instructed Pujya Swamiji to build a kutir for the purpose of protracted meditation. He himself named it "Sahaja Kutir". On 8 January 1963, six months before the Master attained Mahasamadhi (14 July 1963), the Master wrote the following handwritten message to Pujya Swamiji, "I will always dwell with you in your heart and the new Sahaja Kutir. May Lord bless you".

Earlier, on 2 February 1960, the Master encouraged Pujya Swamiji as follows, "I will stand by you and work through you. Be ever cheerful and cheer all. Let periods of intense and extensive campaigning alternate with periods of seclusion and meditation".

Accordingly, soon after the Master shed his mortal coil, Pujya Swamiji engaged in hours of meditation, sometimes even spending days there. He would not even come out for food. Sri N.C. Morris, one of our pioneer devotees, informed us that during this period of intense meditation, he used to take food and leave it in the aperture of the Kutir door. When he returned to collect the plate, the food was left untouched. This went on for days. Pujya Swamiji must have been absorbed in deep meditation and surely attained great spiritual heights during this period. All these periods of Sadhana coalesced into the stupendous experience described by Pujya Swamiji in *Path of Divine Grace,* Volume 1, "I myself experienced our Master's Grace recently. There was a descent of great Grace. It happened on 1 March (2007). It took a few weeks to get stabilised". So clearly, after all this Sadhana, a great power must be emanating from the Kutir.

Pujya Swamiji asked devotees to refurbish the Kutir. After his passing, the Society upgraded the external fixtures and surroundings of the Kutir, and recently placed benches around the precincts of Sahaja Kutir. Devotees who have mental and physical problems should come and sit there quietly. If they have a receptive attitude, they will not go empty-handed.

Following Pujya Swamiji's advice, devotees gather at Sivanandashram in Reservoir Hills, on all auspicious days for a short morning Sadhana session from 6am to 6.25am, and thereafter go to Sahaja Kutir where they circumambulate the precincts whilst chanting the sacred *Sri Ram Jaya Ram Jaya Jaya Ram Om* Mantra. Numerous devotees visit Sahaja Kutir throughout the week, especially after Satsangs, to offer their prostrations and seek blessings.

If we are sincere and receptive, we would surely imbibe some elements of the great spiritual power that is stored in Sahaja Kutir.

DEVOTEES CIRCUMAMBULATING SAHAJA KUTIR



14. 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 as much as 90% of the cost of a project.

To date, the Society has completed more that 697 social development projects for the people of South Africa.

A. EDUCATION

Inspired by Sri Swami Sahajananda's vision and proactive initiatives, Divine Life Society of South Africa has been a powerful force for decades, tirelessly dedicated to addressing, among other priorities, the pressing unmet needs of schooling facilities, spiritual education, and initiatives to shield children and youth from temptations leading to harmful habits. In response to specific requests, the Society has undertaken the construction of schools, directly addressing critical educational gaps within communities. Additionally, the proactive dissemination of spiritual knowledge, the launch of Sunday School programmes, and the provision of guidance for individuals grappling with drug addiction, alcohol abuse, and other undesirable habits underscore Pujya Swamiji's commitment to the overall well-being of children and their communities. Two of these notable initiatives—the school construction projects and the Society's Sunday School—are outlined below.

HISTORY OF THE SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS

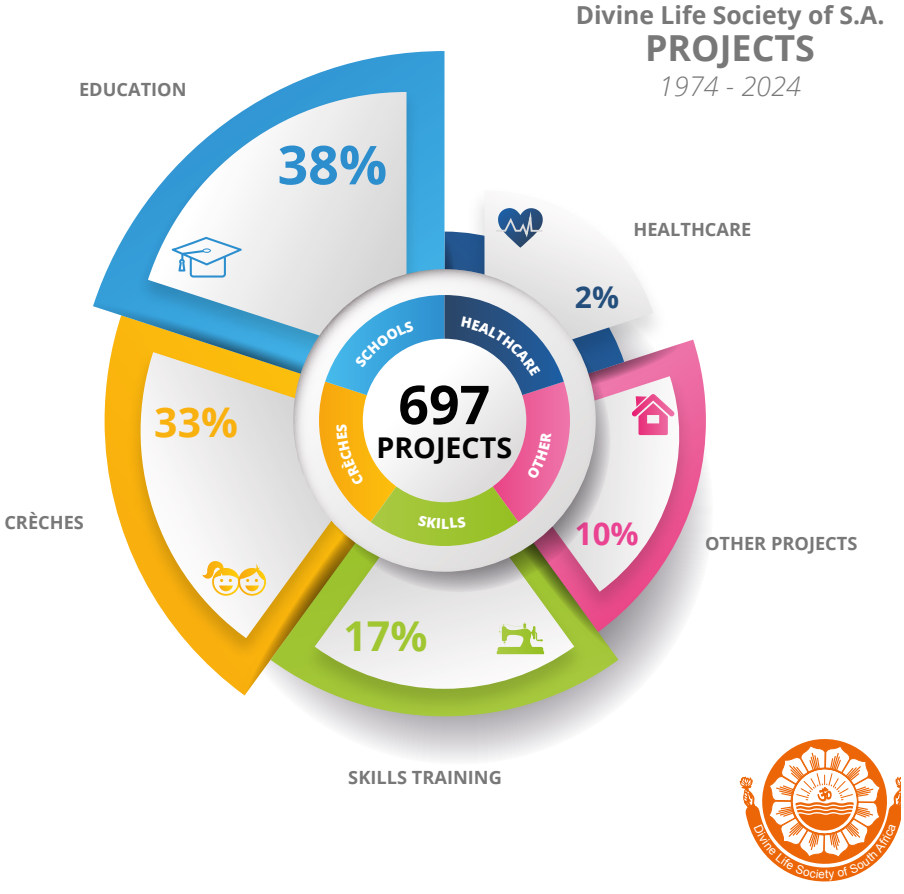
From 1974 to 2024, Divine Life Society of South Africa completed 268 school facilities projects out of a total of 697 community projects, with a focus on uplifting disadvantaged communities, while also contributing to the development of other communities.

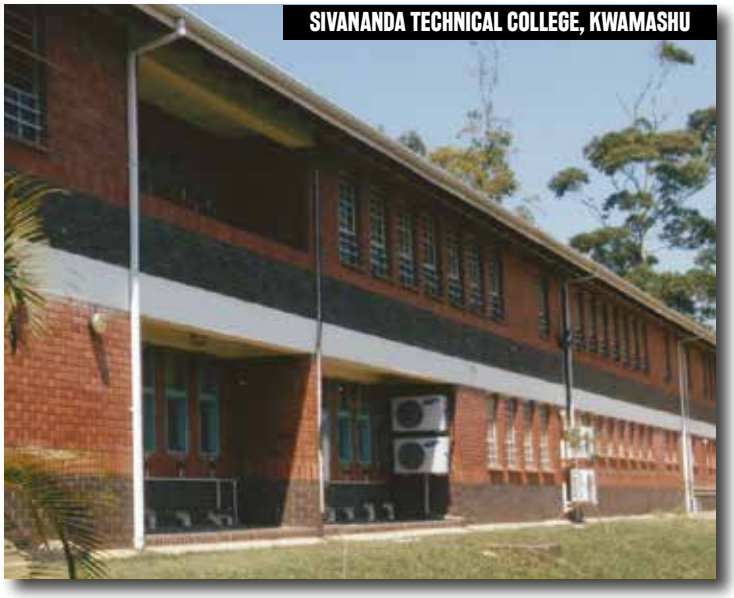
School facilities projects constitute 39% of the total projects completed; it reflects the emphasis Pujya Swamiji placed on building schools for the disadvantaged. Most of the projects are in the deep rural areas of KwaZulu-Natal. They are undertaken in partnership with Municipalities or Government Departments. Some have been funded entirely by the Society.

Pujya Swamiji outlined how the school construction projects for the Africans commenced. He relates, "The projects we started about 1974 were ordained by our Divine Master. It happened like this. I went on a pilgrimage to India around 1974. In many places, like Chennai, I saw street children begging. I would buy some eatables for them. It was a pathetic sight to see these poor children. So, I decided that when I returned to South Africa, I would send money to India to feed these children".

Upon his return to South Africa, Pujya Swamiji felt a profound new urge that led him to reconsider his decision to send money to India for charity. He shared, "On returning, when I began reflecting over the matter, I sensed my Master telling me that God, in the form of the Africans, is suffering in this country. Why not do something for them first instead of sending money to India? It was not a voice that I heard. It was just a strong urge I felt coming from our Divine Master. So, we decided to send R25 000 to Dr M.G. Buthelezi to have a school built in Mahlabatini. We had contact with him because his daughter, Mandisi, stayed at our Ashram for several months".

Dr Buthelezi expressed the belief that the Society was better equipped to handle the school building project. Pujya Swamiji narrated, "Dr Buthelezi asked us to build the school ourselves. That is how we started our first school-building project in 1974. Most of the material had to be transported by us from Durban to Mahlabatini, a distance of 300 km. All enjoyed the work. Often, we used to spend




SIVANANDA TECHNICAL COLLEGE, KWAMASHU

the night at Dr Buthelezi's residence. We used to be treated with great hospitality".

Encouraged by positive community response, Pujya Swamiji decided to continue with the school building projects, stating, "People heard of our work and contributed funds. So, after building the first school, we decided to continue our projects".

Pujya Swamiji responded to concerns raised by some people about the school building projects. "One of the questions put to me by individuals some years after the commencement of the school building projects was whether Africans appreciated what the Society was doing. I would answer that as the Society was serving God and its work was worship of the Lord, it did not seek any kind of appreciation".

Commending Divine Life Society of South Africa for its exemplary efforts in advancing education within disadvantaged communities, former President Nelson Mandela exhorted in a radio broadcast, "What can I do for my country in the field of education? Can I do as the Divine Life Society has done? I think that if that is the approach, you will find that some of the complaints which we genuinely have would be minimised".

SIVANANDA PRIMARY SCHOOL

In 1974, Divine Life Society of S.A. commenced school-building projects by constructing Sivananda Primary School in Mahlabatini, KwaZulu-Natal. Subsequent expansion led to the institution being renamed Sivananda Higher Primary School, now known as Sivananda High Primary School. It is heartening to read the following inspiring quote taken from the School's Facebook content: "It's nice to be one of us here at Sivananda Primary. We work, learn, teach, play, laugh; everything is available while we are 0% disrespectful, not listening to each other and all things that are not priorities in life. FORWARD WITH Sivananda, FORWARD, join us. You will see and experience for yourself".

Over the years, the school experienced a need to expand its facilities to meet the growing demand for primary education in its area. In 1998, Divine Life Society of South Africa reaffirmed its commitment by initiating an upgrade project overseen by Mr Sipho Nkosi, the school principal.

This phase involved transforming the institution from its modest origins as a 5-classroom school with minimum facilities into a fully-fledged technical institute. The expansion project underscores the ongoing dedication of the Divine Life Society of South Africa to the educational advancement of the community.

In expressing his gratitude, Mr Nkosi wrote to Sri Swami Sahajananda: "We have been much encouraged and highly motivated, the way you have been helping us. It has been quite an experience to go through certain problems which we just could not cope with. We also noted how careful you are with little things we might overlook. Thank you for teaching us how to save by doing most things on our own. We thank God so much for solving the problems day by day".

Building on these sentiments, we share excerpts from a speech delivered by Dr M.G. Buthelezi, the then Minister of Home Affairs, during the official opening of the Sivananda Technical Institute at Sivananda High Primary School on June 15, 2001.

"It is a pleasure for me to officiate on this joyous occasion as we come together to officially open the Sivananda Technical Institute of the Sivananda High Primary School. With the help of the Divine Life Society of South Africa, the sacrifices made by the construction company, the assistance of parents and the support of many community members, the Sivananda Technical Institute has become a reality today.

"I have been associated with the Sivananda High Primary School since 1977 when I had the honour of declaring it officially open. Since that time, I have watched it grow from a handful of classrooms into the structure we see today. It warms my heart to see this project showing tangible results and finally fulfilling the potential it held from the very beginning.

"The Divine Life Society enjoys respect among the people of KwaZulu-Natal because it is seen to take note of the plight of our people and act according to visible needs. With

its help, the Sivananda Technical Institute may now begin meeting the needs of this community through the practical application of teaching.

"The Divine Life Society has been meeting needs in this Province for several years and has established itself as a patron of the upliftment of our people".

SIVANANDA TECHNICAL COLLEGE—AN AMBITIOUS PROJECT.

The most ambitious project of the African Education Programme undertaken by the Society was the construction of the multimillion rand Sivananda Technical College and High School in KwaMashu in 1991. The College has two divisions: Elangeni TVET College and Sivananda Technical High School.

The College achieved a 100% pass rate in Matric for the three-year period spanning 1995 to 1997, followed by a 98% success rate in 1998. In the 2023 matric examinations, the College achieved an 83.2% pass rate, slightly surpassing the national average of 82.9%. With 134 learners passing, 39% achieved a Bachelor's level pass, a figure comparable to the national average for a Bachelor's pass, which was 40.9%.

This marked a significant improvement compared to the 2022 pass rate of 70%, where 161 learners passed. Recognising this much-improved matriculation pass rate, the Provincial Department of Education honoured the institution with a Certificate of Achievement. (A Bachelor's level pass enables one to pursue studies at tertiary institutions in South Africa). We extend our congratulations to the educators and learners for this remarkable accomplishment.

Presented below are extracts of letters from learners who successfully completed their studies at the College and went on to further their studies at other institutions. These individuals, now active in their respective vocations, share their experiences and express their gratitude in their heartfelt letters of appreciation to Divine Life Society of South Africa.

My name is Thembisile Mngadi, yet a candidate architectural technologist, a tennis player and a mother to a 3 year old son, a blessing. My favourite reading of the book, *Englightened Education*, is the Cultivation of Virtues, and among these virtues, the one that stands out for me is cheerfulness, which states that it is a joyful frame of mind. I no longer have parents, and that took away something from me. I lost my self-motivation, lost courage, lost faith even lost gratitude, but because I had *Enlightened Education*, I went back to it, read it again until I remembered who I was, and from there I became unstoppable again. I am forever grateful to Sri Swami Sivananda for writing this book, for building Sivananda Technical College and for reaching out to millions to change their lives and bringing out the best in us. May we always and forever celebrate Sri Swami Sivananda.

— Thembisile Mngadi

I was in the institution for 5 years and it was the best years of my life, with incredible growth. I joined a girls' club, Acacia Girls Club in 2014 where we would meet a few times a week with an astounding teacher (Miss H.P.P. Mthiyane). We would attend Swami Sahajananda's (Spiritual Head of Divine Life Society) yearly anniversaries in La Mercy where we would grow spiritually, we get taught lifelong lessons like keeping right (I would never forget that), meditation and so much more. I hold a Diploma in ICT: Application Development. It all started as a dream. To Miss Mthiyane and Divine Life Society thank you for everything you have done for me. I do not take it lightly.

—Ntando Shezi

SUNDAY SCHOOLS: BEYOND THE SCHOOL WALLS

Knowing the significance of education beyond conventional school settings, Pujya Swamiji initiated a Sunday School programme at the Ashram to nurture children's minds through teachings from our Master and Pujya Swamiji himself.

In 1984, Pujya Swamiji appointed two senior devotees to establish a Sunday School at the Reservoir Hills Ashram. The devotees formulated the syllabus with a focus on Hinduism, using content from the *Yoga Lessons for Children*. The sincerity of their efforts bore fruit as the number of children attending the Sunday School programme grew steadily, peaking at 230. Consequently, they organised the children into age-defined groups for customised lessons. The teaching team expanded with the appointment of more teachers; devotees approved by Pujya Swamiji, all committed to contributing to a vibrant learning environment. The Sunday School operated with a level of professionalism comparable to secular schools. Registers were diligently maintained, and proactive measures were taken, such as contacting parents if a child was absent for an extended period. This commitment ensured the spiritual well-being of each child.

To inspire the children attending the Sunday School programme, Pujya Swamiji designed captivating stamps featuring birds, animals, and scenes. These were given to children as a reward for good conduct. Pujya Swamiji personally trained the young minds, teaching them, among other things, silent sitting, chanting, Japa, providing Asana charts, and maintaining a spiritual diary specially designed for them. He coined the term "Spiritual Darlings" to refer to these children affectionately.

Pujya Swamiji also introduced fun elements in the Sunday School programme. Aside from the regular sessions, the Sunday School held an annual picnic at the Japanese Gardens

in the Durban North area. An event was also planned to provide an opportunity for spiritual darlings to bond and showcase their talents during the yearly Parents' Day, where they performed activities to demonstrate their learning.

Over time, all branches of the Society introduced the Sunday School model, and the concept was also incorporated into the monthly Yoga camps, where a dedicated programme is structured for children and youth.

Pujya Swamiji's vision for Sunday School has left an indelible mark on the lives of countless children. The programme instilled a deep understanding of Hinduism and spirituality. Some Spiritual Darlings who participated in the Sunday School programme as children are now actively involved in various activities of the Ashram and its branches.

The Sunday School, now called the Sivananda Academy, is still being held at the Society's headquarters in Reservoir Hills on two Sunday mornings in the month. Academy classes are also conducted at the Society's other branches. Details can be obtained from the Society (info@dls.org.za).

B. 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. It is by far the most ambitious project undertaken by the Society.

C. 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. Some branches also distribute grocery hampers to indigent families on a monthly basis.

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.

D. 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.

E. SIVANANDA SEWING CENTRES

Five sewing centres which develop skills in pattern cutting, sewing and overlocking are administered by the Society. They are located at our ashrams in Chatsworth, Merebank, the Sunlit Path Centre and Pietermaritzburg. The fifth is at the Shree Veeraboga Temple in Tongaat. 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 not only is the training provided free of charge, but that trainees are also 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 livelihood, thereby encouraging home industry.

To date, over 11 900 students have graduated from the many sewing centres and received certificates, thus enabling them to get employment.

F. CRÈCHES

Owing to the dire need for early childhood education in rural areas, the Society undertook the building of a number of crèches in various parts of KwaZulu-Natal.



CHILDREN AND CAREGIVERS OF A CRÈCHE BUILT BY DLS OF S.A.

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 228 crèches, each costing approximately R500 000,

have been built mostly in deep rural areas. In the last 5 years alone, the Society has completed 25 crèches in the Province.

G. GENERAL

Over and above the mentioned projects, the Society has also completed many other social upliftment projects, which include construction of 556 low cost homes in Waterloo and Parkgate, Verulam, provision of water tanks, constuction of halls, a youth centre, swimming pools and renovations to old-age and children's homes as well as as well as helping to refurbish or extend at least 31 temples.

Fifty years later, after ensuring community participation in each one of the projects, the Society has completed building 697 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.

15. AWARDS

In recognition of exemplary humanitarian work and contribution to nation building, numerous prestigious awards were conferred on Pujya Swami Sahajananda and the Society over the past seven decades.

SOME AWARDS RECEIVED BY DLS OF S.A.



Swamiji always intimated that the Society was initiated by our Master and it is only through his Grace that the Society has succeeded in completing the vast number of projects; thus all awards were humbly accepted on behalf of the Master, the founder of the mission.

A significant award conferred upon the Society was the "Martin Luther King Jr. Nonviolent Peace Prize". This prestigious accolade was awarded to Pujya Swamiji in 1994 by the Centre for Nonviolent Social Change in Atlanta, U.S.A. This award is annually presented to persons who exemplifies the nonviolent philosophy and promotes peace and harmony.

In addition to the many awards for humanitarian work, in 2007, Pujya Swamiji was conferred with the degree, *Doctor of Theology*, posthumously, by the University of KwaZulu-Natal. In his tribute speech at the graduation Satsang, Professor Dasarath Chetty (Head of Department, Public Affairs and Communications) said, "Sri Swami Sahajanandaji Maharaj was a rare and unique individual whose selfless work in the cause of social and spiritual upliftment is of historic significance. His work is unparalleled in the history of this country".

CONCLUSION

One can see from these initiatives, that Pujya Swamiji, as Spiritual Head of Divine Life Society of South Africa, was steadfastly focused on spiritual transformation and realisation for all devotees and seekers. Every ounce of his energy, every drop of his blood, every thought, every feeling and every sensation, every fibre of his being, went towards the achievement of that goal. We owe him a deep debt of gratitude for this shower of Divine Grace and for making manifest in this country the spiritual writings and vision of the Divine Master, Sri Swami Sivananda.

Pujya Swamiji reminds us, "We are living in difficult times but we are also living in good times because we have a Guru and we have his literature. We have everything to help take us towards God. So, it is left to you, which way you want to go. Even if you have a great Guru by your side, if you don't follow his teachings then you won't make progress".

There is no doubt that our Divine Master, Sri Swami Sivananda, and Pujya Swami Sahajananda are inspiring, guiding and looking after the Mission in South Africa. This assurance was given in the Master's own words, which Mother Hridayananda, direct disciple of the Master related in 1971:

My favourite disciples are in South Africa. Even if my mission fails elsewhere, in South Africa it will not. God Himself is looking after the work there.



"A disciple is he who follows the instructions of the Guru to the letter and spirit, and who propagates the teachings of the Guru to less evolved souls on the path till the end of his life."

—Sri Swami Sivananda

DLS of S.A. 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

- *Sivanandashram,*
  Sandton
  73 Parkville Place
  Buccleuch

- *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







A TRIBUTE

On this, the Birth Centenary Year (2025) of H.H. Pujya Swami Sahajananda, Spiritual Head of Divine Life Society of South Africa, we acknowledge, honour and pay tribute to our Divine Master, H.H. Sri Swami Sivananda and to all our pioneer devotees for the supportive role they played in helping Pujya Swamiji with the formation, growth and development of the Society since 1949. They played a pivotal role in the growth of all spheres of the Society. Theirs' was a life of hardship and toil in the face of many challenges. It was their indomitable will, Guru Bhakti, discipline and love for Pujya Swamiji that saw the successful emergence of Divine Life Society of South Africa.

Their love, devotion, loyalty, sincerity and spirit of obedience to the teachings of our Divine Master, Sri Swami Sivananda, laid the foundation for the future. Let history record that in recognition of their great dedication and untiring efforts, Sri Gurudev and Pujya Swamiji, through the Society, is able to make significant contributions to the harmony, peace and goodwill of the country in particular and the world at large.

This colossal spiritual Being, who caressed the soil of South Africa for 82 years, "gave every drop of his blood and every fibre of his being" to shaping the mission and earnest spiritual seekers. It is our fervent prayer that generations to come will follow in the noble footsteps of Pujya Swami Sahajananda and the dedicated souls who gathered around him to promote the mission.

Of course, many noble souls, still in body, also contribute to the growth of the Society. In "Path of Divine Grace, Volume 3", Pujya Swamiji states, "I want to offer my gratitude to all our devotees who are running the different sections. The poor feeding section is running smoothly. All the Ashram activities are running smoothly. Our householders are playing a magnificent part and Divine Life Society of South Africa is in a very good position because we have a very fine set of devotees".

On the occasion of his 61st birthday celebrations on 10 July 1986, Pujya Swamiji stated, "Now coming back to the Security Police—they take your name down and they have an idea of your physical features and they keep an eye on your movements. Perhaps your name goes down in a special book. So, I also have my category. I have a number of people that I have booked. There are quite a few of them, about 200 or 300. The booked people are the people that I will give my eternal friendship to in the Name of Gurudev and try to take them towards God. Maybe in this birth some may come along, maybe in the next birth, maybe in future births. So, amongst you sitting here, a number of you are in the 'booked category'. If you are not willing to come now, well, it does not matter".

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