

SAINT SIVANANDA

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By
Sivaprasad



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PREFACE

*Ye, travellers in the desert! Come,
yonder is an Oasis!*

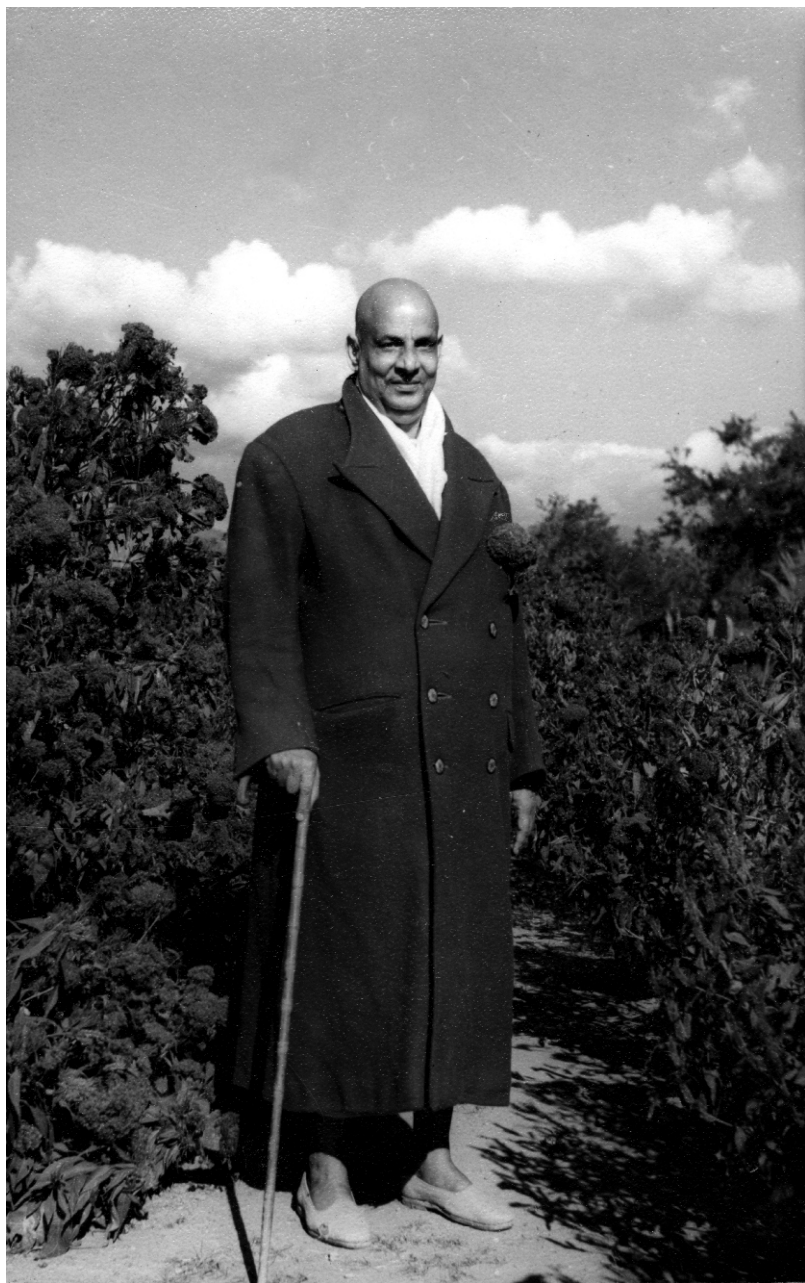
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—**SIVAPRASAD**

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SAINT SIVANANDA



OM NAMAH SIVAYA

“Excuse me, I cannot afford to believe you,” I said to my friend.

“That is but natural. I am not surprised at your doubt!” came his sharp reply with a proud smile.

We were having a discussion about the various present-day saints and sages of India. My friend went on with a lecture, as if inspired, dashing out brilliant phrases and ideas. He was attributing all those words to a certain Sannyasin, without mentioning his name. I thought that such a sage was perhaps living in a no-man’s land. After some time he finished his torrential speech, jumped out of his chair, went to his book-shelf and came back with a book.

I had been patiently watching him, with indifferent mirth. He began to read a passage from it:

“To be a cosmic friend and cosmic benefactor, to be a friend of the poor, forlorn, helpless and the fallen, is the creed of Siva. To serve the sick persons, to nurse them with care, sympathy and love, to cheer them up, to infuse power and joy in all, to feel oneness with each and every creature, and to treat with equal vision, is the creed of Siva . . .”

—p. 32 “Life and Sayings”

Here followed my deep doubt and my friend’s sharp reply.

I snatched the book from my friend. There were numerous photos of Swami Sivanandaji. Each photo seemed to ask me, “Look at me. Don’t you get an inexpressible joy and tranquility on seeing me? Touch your heart and say, don’t you feel an abstract pleasure by looking at me?” Yes; it was truly so!

I have seen thousands of portraits and photos of saints of different countries. I was, for a short time, a hunter after such photos, out of which rarely five per cent, was able to impress me. But Swamiji's photo! To be frank, I fell in love with it. I wanted to kiss it, I wanted to dance with it, and my heart heard a heavenly song from it.

Thus began my acquaintance with Swamiji, which, some months later, blossomed in my complete surrender unto his fragrant Ashram—fragrant not by the sweet-smelling flowers or smoky incense; but by the sweetest odour of love, tolerance and joy. Such is the intensity of Swamiji's love and care for all that, at times, we are likely to be suffocated. If the smoke of incense becomes denser, do we not feel so?

No; not so. We do not suffocate. It is not Swamiji's intention. He is always trying to saturate everyone with all the virtues of his. Who else in this world will do so? Who else will dedicate himself like that? Swamiji's impersonal ambition is to shape the human beings, if not all creatures, on the model of "Sivanandaji."

One cannot dream of a larger family man than Swamiji. The ants, the dog, the wretched and the condemned, the prince, the illiterate person, the literate arrogant scholar, the despondent householder with blinking eyes, all are his. No father can be more loving and affectionate than he. One who lives or moves with Swamiji will think, "this world is worth living; can anything be better than Ananda Kutir? Why should, then, people think of Vaikuntas and Swargas, if at all they exist?"

Swamiji is one who cares not for what is called formality. He does not even allow anyone to prostrate at his feet. If one does so, he will immediately reciprocate the prostration. He is able to see God everywhere and in every one. He is a dynamic worker with detachment and dignity. He works with love and courage, on select lines of Dharma to suit the time-spirit and the roll of life. The

rules of his philosophy and Dharma, as we shall study in a subsequent chapter, spring forth from the womb of cosmic good; that which is good for all at all times. His philosophy reiterates individual refinement and through that, collective good.

How pleasant it is to think of his smiling face wherein one can ever find the glittering, lustre of Advaita Bhava! He takes the first opportunity in saluting or talking to others, both known and unknown. Sage Valmiki wrote "*Poorvabhashee cha Raghavaha*" ("that Raghava, who-speaks first..."); Swamiji is a living example of this description.

What is the secret behind him? It is pure and crystallized love of a supremely high degree. Meet him face to face and you will agree with me.

In the small hours of the day, while you are having a walk alongside the Ganga bank, you hear a sweet, gentle voice from behind; "Om Namah Sivaya!" You look back and see the tall, charming and radiant soul of Ananda Kutir, Sivanandaji! He is saluting you in those words. You do not believe your ears, and begin to wonder at his way of moving and mixing with ordinary persons, in his own artless simplicity and unassuming air.

There is a subconscious desire in you to repeat that divine phrase and salute him. But you have, at the same time, a psychological hesitation, and unable to utter any other foreign words of salutation, you simply bow down your head in reverence. Swamiji then passes on his way. Yonder, a few yards off, on the roadside, you again hear the same melodious voice: "Om Namah Sivaya!" That means, he is offering salutations to another incarnation of Lord Siva.

Swamiji sees Lord Siva in every one of us and how can he refrain from offering salutations to his Lord?

* * *

If one wants to have details about Swamiji's history, one has to enquire about Dr. P. V. Kuppuswami, M. R. A.

S., M. R. L P. H., of Singapore, Federated Malay States. For, in his Poorva Ashram Swamiji was he.

Dr. P. V. Kuppuswami was born as the last son of P. S. Vengu Iyer at Pattamadai on Thursday, the 8th of September, 1887, at the time of sunrise, when the auspicious star Bharani was in the ascendant. Pattamadai is a lovely village situated ten miles away from Tinnevely in the southern-most part of India. His father, Vengu Iyer, belonged to the family of that famous philosopher Sri Appayya Dikshitar. He was a Tahsildar of Ettiapuram Estate. He was a virtuous, pure soul, a Siva Bhakta and a Gyani. People used to say, "Vengu Iyer is a Mahan, Mahapurusha!"

While a boy, Kuppuswami was very smart, intelligent and extremely mischievous. He was a gymnast and had possessed a wonderful physique. Being a brilliant student, he was awarded proficiency prizes almost every year. In 1903, he passed the Matriculation Examination from the Raja's High School at Ettiapuram. Thereafter he joined the S. P. G. College, Trichinopoly, and studied under Rev. H. Pakenham Walsh, the then Principal. He also passed creditably the Tamil Examination held by the Tamil Sangam of Madura. Later, he joined the medical line, edited a journal for nearly three years and in 1913, proceeded to the Straits Settlements, where he took up profession as a Doctor first in Negri Sembilan, and subsequently in Singapore.

South Indians, in particular, who have to leave their motherland and go to the Straits Settlements and Malay States, desirous of securing a lucrative profession or earning, find a new atmosphere there. They are far off from their relatives. They are separated from their kinsmen. Perchance they are even obliged to be separated from their sweet-hearts. And, in those far-off lands, they go on with their routine business cheerfully for some time. Gradually, they begin to feel their separation and lose that healthy enthusiasm in work, without which it is impossible to pull on in life.

Consequently their ideas become flat and they run after some momentary stimulation or pleasure.

To give such momentary pleasures, there are various organised night-clubs and day-clubs! Theatres and tournaments! The tired foreigners take refuge in one or other of the above and try to forget their exhaustion. No wonder, therefore, many get themselves spoiled in the quagmire of immoral intimacies with a number of foreign drugs, wine, women, etc. So is the atmosphere that even a strong-willed pious man has the likelihood of losing himself into the dreary slough of immorality.

Dr. Kuppuswami was not in the least affected by such an atmosphere. He was oak and rock. He was, rather, a peculiar type of man. He knew nothing about the outside world. Then? He knew these things only: going to the hospital in time and attending to patients and singing God's names or devotional songs. His doors were kept open to all and no one went away with disappointment from his house. He gave in plenty to those who approached.

Unlike many in his profession, Dr. Kuppuswami delighted, from the beginning, in serving the poor and the sick and in relieving human sufferings. He loved to be in the company of the suffering patients to understand their feelings and difficulties, and to do all he could to cheer them up.

He used to purchase the newspaper, because by that other people were persuaded to buy it and this gave livelihood to a struggling news vendor. Though he was never interested in the daily news of the world, occasionally he used to go through the editorial and tried to strengthen his command over English! He was not, as he is now, interested in politics. Football, cricket and such games were, to him, beneath the horizon, he had no knowledge of any of them. Why should he know? Was not destiny preparing him to play and win the supreme game of Brahmajana?

Endowed with these rare qualifications, of not knowing anything about particular subjects, the Doctor easily became a good journalist! He was the sports correspondent of the *Malay Tribune*. And he wrote a number of interesting and skillful articles, sitting, as he was, in his room. However, he took, later on, laborious pains to understand the science of those Western games. He studied a number of books, attended tens of tournaments and equipped himself with a fairly thorough understanding of them all.

Though he was not, then, interested in Vedanta, he had a vague urge to secure something better and substantial. The desire was latent in him. That latent Samskara was budding in the form of Bhajans, Nama Sankirtans, and love of service, etc. Often-times, he invited all the village folk and curious friends to Bhajan parties. Stories of Nandanar, Ramadas, Tulasidas, and such devotees were the themes of his speech, song, performances on such occasions. Songs came bursting out of his heart, and words from his mouth. Dance and humour followed automatically.

He thought of learning harmonium so as to sing and dance with scientific perfection. He got hold of a musician and engaged his services for a few weeks. He fed him, provided him with all amenities, and learnt to play on the harmonium within a month. He gave two hundred dollars to the musician as remuneration. The tutor was surprised; for twenty or twenty-five classes of half-an-hour's duration each day; he had never expected such a large remuneration. This sort of lofty-minded generosity was a common affair in Dr. Kuppuswami's life. Years passed; and the elder brother of that musician came to know that the Saint of Ananda Kutir was the very blossom of that joyous and kindly Dr. Kuppuswami. He paid a visit to Swamiji and said, "O Maharaj! My younger brother is no more. He was always telling us about your generosity and large-hearted kindness. Though all of us, the closest relatives, were by his

deathbed, he was pronouncing your name only, and never, for a moment, remembered us. With your name only, he gave up his breath!"

Dr. Kuppuswami was also ready to appreciate and encourage artists. If he found a rare gift in anyone, he used to do his best to lift him up. We shall come across very many like instances of help later on.

Shall we approach the doctor and understand his life? Come on, then, let us have a visit to him on a Sunday or on any other holiday. As we enter into his compound, we hear thundering laughter and pleasant hurrah of a few little boys. We go in: what do we find? The doctor is a green-room master! Seven or eight boys stand around him. He is just creating Rama, Sita, Hanuman, and a host of others. Need I say, he is arranging for a devotional drama? To one, he is adjusting the mustache; to another he is draping the Saree. He turns to the right and teaches the dialogues to Rama; and turning to the left, tutitions songs to Sita!

Can we imagine a doctor, with stethoscope and waist-coat, to be like this? But he was. So deep was his devotion to the Lord.

The so-called gentries and officials; who were Dr. Kuppuswami's friends, should have hesitated very much before sending him invitations for marriages, tea-parties, or such social functions. Whenever they heard the name of the doctor, they dreaded so much! For, they knew pretty well that he would march forth, in right earnest, with his army: Harmonium, Tabla, and Nama-Sankirtans! Not only that; he would even invade the lecture halls or marriage houses, an hour or two earlier, and 'open the shop'. I mean, he would begin his Divya Nama Sankirtans.

If he missed to get invitations, occasionally, from any of his close friends, he used to straightway go to the friend and say, "Have you forgotten me? Anyhow, you are my friend and I am bound to attend the Abdapoorti

celebration of your child! ...” And, in all his majestic boldness, Dr. Kuppuswami would begin Rama-Rama Namavalis. No sanction, no introduction, no formality did he need. He issued the licence himself.

Could it have been possible for anyone to fail from falling into the net of such a loving and affectionate figure? He had his own singularly joyful and pushing nature.

In the hospital, where Dr. Kuppuswami began work as a doctor, one would find very often things dislocated. The scavengers and other low-paid workers of the hospital used to run away as a result of the Chief Doctor’s strictness or ill-treatment. Most of the menials were either Burmese or Chinese people. They had the confidence that wherever they went they could earn their livelihood. So, if the European doctors said anything insinuating they used to flee. But Dr. Kuppuswami was there; he knew how to set matters right. He would immediately cajole them, encourage them with soothing words, and bring them back. He would then argue with the Chief Doctor, convince him and get for the menial staff all reasonable concessions.

His way of purchasing books was very strange. Every now and then he would go to the bookstalls and simply ask, “Please let me have a copy in each of the Vedantic books that you have with you.” He would give the shopkeepers a list of books saying, “These books, I have already got with me; whatever is not in the list, you may send along with your bill to my house.” Any philosophical or yogic book that was out had a place in the doctor’s book-shelf.

Hark! A person is just entering the doctor’s house. Let us follow him.

“I am awfully in need of two hundred dollars. Whom else can I approach, if not you, at this critical juncture? You must save me” says he to the doctor. The doctor does not speak a word in reply. He rushes into his room and

pulls out the bank pass-book. His eyes show signs of disappointment, as there is only the minimum balance in the bank. He is standing motionless for two or three minutes, perhaps, trying to solve the problem.

He then throws away the pass-book and comes to the person. "Friend! Pray, wait for a short while". So saying, he goes out. How can his friend know that the doctor is going with a jewel to be pledged?

Very soon the doctor returns with a smiling face, and gives the money, in all loftiness of heart, to his friend. How many such friends in need are there in this world?

To everyone who came in contact with him, he was a family friend. How many youngsters were helped by him! How many persons were rescued in times of emergency! Even as a doctor, he lived for others: he used his influence, wealth, and knowledge for the uplift of the suffering folk. In short, Dr. Kuppuswami was one with the radiance of godly virtues. Money was nothing to him. Service and joy were his inborn treasures.

In the year 1923, there came a sudden lightning in his vision and a vigorous glow of spiritual flame in his heart. He gave away all his household belongings to whomsoever he thought fit, renounced all worldly desires, and started on his spiritual quest.

He looked around his house. The doors, the pillars, the water buckets, all seemed to him to be the incarnations of Lord Siva. In man he saw the Lord. In woman he saw Him. In friend and foe alike, he saw the same Lord. His lips began to chant, effortlessly, that angelic spell, "Om Namah Sivaya! Om Namah Sivaya!" He had no idea of whither to go and what to do! But the gigantic desire for Brahmajnana bliss was hanging heavy upon him and how could he be at rest?

THE HOLY ORDER

*“Lead, kindly light, amid the encircling gloom
Lead thou me on!*

*The night is dark, and I am far from home.
Lead thou me on!*

*Keep thou my feet; I do not ask to see
The distant scene; one step enough for me!”*

—**Newman**

The cosmic dance of life had its merry play around him. He witnessed silently nature’s tireless energy with rapture at heart and wonder in mind. His thoughts began to soar aloft and coerced him up to go afar; but where to go, he could not decide.

A truth entered into him and giggled: “Dear Soul, fie upon the worldly factions! For, has not civilisation taken away forever from all of you, the virgin joy of life in its primitive beauty?” The doctor wondered and wondered and never before had he felt such intense comradeship with nature: earth and water, wind and rain, sun and star, the first-born of the Lord. He wanted to embrace the sweet and gracious gifts of Nature: the land and the river, the sea and the sky, the gentle breeze and the evening calm.

He was alone and unfriended in finding out the way to calm down the spiritual eruption in his heart. His mind ached to think of the final waste and sadness of prolific life. He felt sick of its barren fertility. Many a night he sat on the open terrace, alone and awake, pining for things which he felt, but could not define or understand.

To many who noticed the sudden turn of events with him, the doctor became a serious cause for anxiety. They wanted to rescue him! They used their friendly privileges to save him from the muddle! One called him a gullible fellow; the doctor cheerfully nodded off that sympathetic rebuke. A friend mocked at his superstition; he smiled and sent him away. Another close colleague asked him, in the name of God, to define the texture of his faith and ambition: the doctor pointed out the star-lit sky and the temple corner of the town and said, "You cannot understand!" Yet another well-wisher rushed in and tried to beguile him into a metaphysical talk as to the appetites of the mind and the revelations of psychology. There was no reply; but there was a passionate gleam in his eyes and a blossoming mirth in his heart.

Nothing could block his way. He spent many sleepless nights in pondering over the Self and the beauteous bounties of the Lord. It seemed some force was pushing him from behind to quit the urban life and be an aimless wanderer renouncing every bondage. He realised that only in the slow, alchemic fire of renunciation could man cleanse the sins of ages, could rid himself of all scum and dross; then only could he have a gradual, atomic change and become quite a new being, wholly pure, selfless and bright.

There was a resolute will and who could stop him? He liquidated all his doctoral activities, gave away in charity most of his furniture and other belongings to some of his worthy friends, and secured a passage from Singapore to Madras. His tentative idea was to be an aimless wanderer at the will of God visiting all religious places in India; shrines, rivers, and epic spots.

He reached Madras, with the remaining 'luggage' of household things. With about a cart-load of *samans*, the doctor called at a particular friend's and asked the cart-man to transfer the *samans* into the house, himself standing at the gate and watching the transfer.

His friend was not in the house at that time; the housewife was inside looking after the routine cooking. In South India, women do not come out to receive or to talk to any male guest. And, it is also considered not proper for a male guest to enter a house when there is no male member to receive him.

The cart-man was paid and sent away. Dr. Kuppuswami, standing as he was at the gateway, said, "Tell him, I am going!" and started on his quest after the divine joy. After a few minutes, his friend came back from the market, and hearing from his wife, of the doctor's arrival, ran to find him out. Within a few furlongs he met his good old friend, Dr. Kuppuswami.

The doctor was astonished at the sight of his friend, for, just a few minutes earlier, he had been praying to God that he should be enabled to meet someone known to him, so that he might leave a word with that man, to be conveyed to his friend, as regards his decision. He wondered at the Lord's mercy.

Dr. Kuppuswami told his friend all that he had to say and *bade adieu*: "Friend, keep all the things with you; I think I have kept a few hundreds of rupees in a certain trunk; let everything be with you. If an occasion demands I shall communicate with you." He had renounced all connections with those remnants of his belongings also, and had no idea of treating anything as his own. Yet, to be consistent with the wise man's way of doing things he said so, though later on, as you will read, he had very many critical moments of suffering, he never thought of the Trust left with the said friend. Aye, how could it be a "Trust"? Was it not intended to be a "Gift"?

The doctor, thus, surrendered himself to the will of God and straightway proceeded to Benares. He spent there all the pocket money he had and made his surrender a complete one.

By foot and by train (if any one offered to secure for him a railway ticket), in sun and rain, on rough track and

metaled road, legs carried his body. I am right: the doctor was little by little forgetting his body! He visited Nasik, Poona, Pandharpur and many other holy places. He stayed for a short period with a great Yogi near the Vindhyas. As he could not arrive at any decisive plan, he went on wandering.

He came, on his way, to Dhalaj, a village on the bank of the Chandrabhaga. It was a beautiful evening. Seating himself upon a small piece of rock, he was listening to the graceful, silent voice of the calm river. Joy was in the air, riding merrily heavenwards, as if to invite the stars to open their eyes and enjoy the charming beauty of the Chandrabhaga.

Dr. Kuppuswami became so mesmerized that he wanted to remain there for a few months meditating upon God. But he knew nobody there, and who would feed him for a number of days together? The next moment, he dismissed that anxiety out of his mind. Had he not disbanded his mind and placed himself completely at the will of God?

A gentle touch on the shoulders from behind disturbed his musings. He turned back. Seeing a pious, elderly face, the doctor uttered "Om Namo Narayanaya!" and bowed down courteously.

"Dear Sir, why are you sitting here, in a lonely place? It is already half past twilight.....Are you a pilgrim?" asked the new-comer.

"Yes I am a pilgrim" replied the doctor. He hesitated for a minute, and again said, "No, I am not a pilgrim! I am a wanderer. I am nature's child!"

The strange reply and the firm but charming facial appearance of the doctor impressed the new-comer very much. He at once understood that the doctor was a highly evolved soul. Without putting any further queries, he took him to his house. And after the night meal was over they had a long talk about the Lilas of God.

The host was a Post Master of that place. We have no details as regards his life. He was living alone and had, we have to infer, no dependents. He was a very pious and austere man too. Naturally he requested Dr. Kuppuswami to remain with him. The doctor had never expected this. He simply wondered at the mercy of the Lord!

He remained there for about four months, singing and chanting God's names and glories. He found pleasure in making himself useful to others. He helped the Postmaster in cooking, in bringing water from the adjacent well, and in ever so many other ways.

The postal peon used to start from the Post Office, with the daily *tapals*, at nine o'clock and, after finishing the day's work, would return at about three o'clock in the afternoon. Have you any idea of the tiresome nature of the postman's work? Follow a postman for one day from start to return, and you will understand. The doctor had observed everything very keenly and no wonder, he was easily able to understand others' difficulties and sufferings.

As soon as the postman came back in the afternoon, the doctor used to give him cool water to cleanse his feet; he would give him fine butter-milk; and on many occasions, when the postman seemed to be very much exhausted, he would shampoo his legs, saying, "Don't object. Take me to be your son or brother; I cannot see you suffer like this!"

Such a tender-hearted person was he! The Post Master found in him a worthy companion, a worshipful Tyagi, and an ideal Karma Yogi.

Later on, the doctor expressed a desire to settle down in a calm and solitary atmosphere so that he could do rigorous Tapascharya. His host suggested to him to go to Rishikesh; and gave him twenty-five rupees for his train fare. The doctor, then, straight-away proceeded to Rishikesh, on the bank of the Ganga.

He saw the hills and the valleys; and heard the songs of the nearby forest birds. He saw the gentle Ganga and the lovely splendour of the heavenly Himalayas. He felt the kiss of the reckless wind, the warm embrace of the summer weather, and the strange music of the yonder mountain stream.

It was the latter half of May, or the first half of June, 1924. Only a few weeks had passed since his arrival at Rishikesh.

One day, as usual, he went to the Ganga for bath. Whistling a note to the winds that played with him, singing a song to the birds that greeted him, and chanting a mystic hymn to the rising sun, he stood on the Ganga bank. He was about to take his dip into the holy river.

Just then a Sannyasi came there. Brahmatejas emanated from him. He looked very austere. At the very sight of such a great soul, his own decision was made to become a Sannyasin. Here again, he realised the mercy of God.

The next moment that radiant sage said to him "Your face shows that you are born to fulfill a great mission. How I wish to initiate a person of your type, to be enrolled in the holy Order of Sannyasa! Where do you come from, pious Sir?"

The doctor was wonder-struck, for had he not, then, been thinking of taking Sannyasa?

"Blessed am I, O, venerable Sage, I am anxious to be initiated!" replied he.

"I am also fortunate! Though you are unknown to me physically, my Inner voice says that I cannot find a better and a more worthy disciple than you. So come on, I shall initiate you!" the Sage exclaimed. And he continued, "I am known as Vishwananda and I live in Benares. I am from Sringeri Mutt, and I belong to the Paramahansa Order."

The doctor's joy knew no bounds. He felt he was a Kritartha. The religious rites and rituals were performed reverentially; he cast off the householder's clothes and put on the holy garb of a Sannyasin. The Preceptor named him as "Sivananda Saraswati", and initiated him in the Order of Paramahamsas.



TAPASCHARYA (1)

*“The look of sympathy, the gentle word,
Spoken so low that only angels heard.
The secret act of pure self-sacrifice,
Unseen by men, but marked by angel’s eyes—”*

— **Coolidge**

So he became a solitary philosophic bird soaring high above the spiritual ocean, with no shelter to rest. The sea bird has a ship’s mast to rest; but our Siva-bird had not even that.

He was full of joy and heard a voice addressing him “Oh thou! Beauty and joy, peace and bliss, await thee who hast the vision and faith to labour selflessly for the human race. March on and plunge thyself into Tapascharya!”

Rishikesh is a pilgrim centre and the constant rush of incoming and outgoing visitors generally disturbed the stillness of the Himalayan solitude. Swami Sivananda, as we may now call the doctor, was so mad after solitude that he had to go in search of a quiet place. And fortunately, he was able to select an excellent spot, within three miles from Rishikesh on the left bank of the beautiful Ganga, known as Lakshmanjhula.

Ganga is about a furlong broad here with a zigzag course. Walking a couple of miles from Rishikesh to the north, up along the river bank, we see the splendid Manikoot Range, and on its slopes, the isolated calm village of Lakshmanjhula, replete with scattered Kutias and a few buildings.

Legends say that Rama and Lakshmana, the heroes of the Ramayana, were directed by their Guru Vasishta

to do rigorous tapas on the bank of the Ganga and get themselves absolved from the sin of killing Ravana. Being the son of Vishravas, a Brahmin, Ravana belonged to the Brahmin caste; and Rama killed him. Kumbhakarna and Indrajit, brother and son of Ravana, in order, were killed by Lakshmana.

“According to the Hindu scriptures, killing a Brahmin, be it for any reason, is one of the deadliest of sins. Anyone who kills a Brahmin incurs Brahmahatya Patakam. So Rama and Lakshmana approached their Guru, Vasishtha, for advice, and the Guru asked them to go to the Himalayan regions and perform Tapas on the Ganga bank.

They found a particular spot very charming, quiet and beautifully suited for meditation. It was on the right bank of the river. Lakshmana said to Rama, “Brother, I shall do my meditation here, on this side; and you may go to the other side of the river. Complete solitude is necessary for Tapas”. There was no bridge to cross the river and hence Lakshmana constructed a bridge. Rama went to the other side to perform his Tapas.

Lakshmanjhula means “Lakshmana’s Bridge”. There is no trace of that legendary bridge now. But the name is yet there. Of late, a causeway has been built up to cross the Ganga and pedestrians can go to Lakshmanjhula without waiting for the boatman.

Swamiji crossed the river by boat and reached Lakshmanjhula. The gentle breeze welcomed him with the scent of forest perfumes, kindling in him rich thoughts of a newer life. The singing of the mountain birds revealed simple tales of lofty peaks and river valleys. Enjoying the nature’s grandeur, Sivanandaji wandered in the village for some days meditating and singing. In the afternoons, he got some food from a Kshetra (Choultry) and when night fell, he slept in any Kutia or the outer verandah of a building.

Within a week, he was able to secure a place to rest his body. It was an old dilapidated small Kutia. Bushes and ant-hills were the neighbours of that 'aged' Kutia. The scorpions and the lizards that had their quiet homes in the deep cracks all over the walls, seemed to whisper to one another: "Are we to believe our eyes? Even the ghosts feared this rotten Kutia and ran away! See that young handsome Sannyasi—has he no eyes, or, is he mad?" Despite such low estimation in the eyes of those co-tenants, Swamiji lived there quite normally.

North and south he would go in the forest tracks, singing and chanting 'Om'. Either a ballad from a folk-lore or a devotional song in praise of the Almighty stood always on his lips, when he walked through the village lanes.

He saw many Yogis and Sadhus. Having been subjected to extreme cold and malarial weather, most of them had frequent attacks of fever, dysentery, etc. People who take to constant practice of yoga ought to take sufficient nutritious food as otherwise their health will be spoiled. Wherefrom could those Sadhus get ghee, curd or milk? Or, who was there to help them with medicines, when they suffered from dysentery or fever?

As a keen observer of others' difficulties, how could Swamiji keep quiet? He was, further, a doctor. He wanted to place his medical knowledge at the disposal of the Sadhus. He thought of securing some essential chemicals and medicines.

Destiny had worked everything in favour of Swamiji. When Swamiji was a doctor, he had invested some money in the Post Office Savings Bank, and had a matured (endowment) Insurance policy. He made arrangements to realise those sums, and with the money so got he started the Satya Sevashram Charitable Dispensary. He worked there for one year whole-heartedly and served all Sadhus, Sannyasins and villagers.

Gradually Swamiji began to become popular among the Sadhus. His kind enquiries about their health, his sympathetic words to soothe their ailments, his smiling jokes and charming songs—all these singled him out in the Sadhu colony. All the Sadhus at Rishikesh and Lakshmanjhula (Swargashram) had so much reverence and regard for Swamiji that whenever they met one another, they talked about his kind and loving nature. Many induced the pilgrims to have a Darshan of him.

A great Sannyasin, who had much influence with the Swargashram authorities, came in contact with Sivanandaji and he found out the greatness of the latter. He provided Swamiji with a fine, compact Kutia, just on the bank of the Ganga.

Every morning he used to visit Kutia after Kutia and look to the welfare of the Sadhus. To some Kutias he would go unnoticed and gently place inside, a cup of milk or curd or ghee. He had invested a nominal capital, out of the Insurance money, in Bank and with the interest accrued, he conducted his medical activities.

He was vigilantly looking for sick persons and the moment he heard of any complaint, he would run, literally, to the patient and serve him. He would shampoo his feet; he would wash his clothes; he would give him medicines; and he would beg alms and provide food for him.

On one occasion, while Swamiji was having a walk on the Ganga bank he met a Sadhu who was on his way to Badrinath. The Sadhu was very weary, exhausted and suffering from a chronic fever. Swamiji studied his bodily symptom and offered him a few effective medicines with necessary instructions. The Sadhu, then went on his way. After a short while when Swamiji was attending on some other patient, there was a flash of thought. He felt, “What an absent-minded fool I am! I have forgotten to give this *Amrit-dhara* medicine to the Sadhu. This will be of great help to him.”

Not a moment he lost. He had the presence of mind and the sincerity of purpose. He had the fatherly love and at once followed on the heels of the Sadhu. He ran and ran and at the fifth or the sixth mile on the rugged path, he met him. With rays of love beaming forth from his eyes Swamiji handed over the medicine to the Sadhu and tears of gratitude bubbled in the latter's eyes.

Swamiji has shampooed and served many hundreds of Sadhus. He finds joy in serving the sick and the lame. Very often we come across his emphatic declaration: "Serve the sick with Atma Bhava. There is great joy in selfless service. Serve with the Bhava as if you are serving the Lord. Feel that the energy of Hiranyagarbha is flowing through your hands to quicken the patients' recovery."

For a number of hours daily Swamiji remained in seclusion practising Yoga and Tapascharya. Service to the Sadhus and meditation weighed equally with him, and they were intermixed with each other. His spiritual Sadhana was more inward, deeper and more practical than that of the Yoga Pundits.

Like an angel away from heaven, amid the human world, Swamiji shone with a characteristic splendor, all his own. In the early hours of the morn, he would wend his way through the rough path to reach the bathing Ghat, shouting in a high pitched voice divine names and songs. Breaking forth from the Ganga bank, the exquisite tenderness of his tone had something of the fugitive beauty of the dawn.

Hearing that melodious voice which pierced right up into the skies, all Sadhus and villagers got up from their slumber to enliven the quiet place. Swamiji was the clock-man of the village.

Finishing his bath in the Ganga, Swamiji would return to his Kutia and sit at meditation. At about eight or nine in the morning, he had his usual 'go-round' inspecting and in search of the ailing Sadhus. On most of

the days, his medical services took a pretty long time, till two o'clock in the afternoon. Afterwards he would go to the Swargashram Kshetra with his bowl to get his share of food.

There were many Sadhus in the Swargashram, Kutias: as many as eighty or ninety. As soon as the bell-call for food was heard, all of them had to go to the Kshetra and stand in a line holding up their bowls. Honouring the traditional Olympian airs of superiority the feeders of the Kshetra had a natural sneer at the penniless Sadhus and treated them as if they were mere beggars. They made them wait from half to one hour in the hot sun.

After finishing his meal, and taking a few minutes' rest, if not asleep, the man in charge of food distribution would come out like a prince. On seeing his contemptuous face, the Sadhus would stand at 'attention'. They would then go to him one by one, and get their food.

Swamiji's Kutia number was eighty-three and so, he had his turn only after eighty-two numbers! Were they not called by numbers? When the call for "eighty-three" came, he would, walk gently like a swan and get his meals.

Later on, the Kshetra authorities realised the worth of Swamiji and made special arrangements to supply him sumptuous food, with ghee, curd and butter. Though he accepted the special treatment thus offered, he took only the ordinary food as others did and kept the ghee and other things in his Kutia to be distributed among those whose health required such nutrition.

Often-times, Swamiji congregated all the yogis of the locality and delivered Upanyasams (religious discourses) explaining his own spiritual experiences. He requested others too to speak. There was Bhajan and merry divine dance of joy. Where there was dull monotony and isolation before, lively joy began to play.

In the afternoon, one would see Swamiji absorbed in writing. All the good thoughts or new experiences he had, he used to record then and there. He had no paper, nor sufficient money to secure it; and even if he had some money, there was no shop nearby to supply him note-books or paper. Headed by Swamiji, many Sadhus invaded Rishikesh and penetrated into the various parts of the locality to loot the waste-paper heaps with a view to secure small sheets of paper or used envelopes. The blank pages of the sheets and the back side of the envelopes were then stitched as note-book wherein Swamiji inscribed his thoughts. Even now a few of such note-books are with Swamiji. Those rubbish sheets have the honour of keeping in them valuable spiritual thoughts recorded by Swamiji in all freshness of his experience.

In the evenings Sivanandaji would shut up his Kutia doors and sit for meditation. He used to be in Samadhi till late at night.

At about dead of night, when the breeze steals through the low bamboo trees with a hissing tune, singing the song of mankind's sleep, a Sadhu hears a distant melodious voice singing in the sweetest metre. He goes to another Sadhu in the adjacent Kutia and gently whispers: "How fortunate we are to move with such a great soul! He is an angel! Let us think of him and go to bed." The other Sadhu says, "He wakes us up with his morning music, and makes us sleep with his nightly songs! He is all kindness and love!" Then both the Sadhus retire to bed, thinking and wondering at the virtues of Sivanandaji Maharaj.

Such was his daily life in the early days of his spiritual Sadhana.

TAPASCHARYA (II)

*“Ponder well and know the right;
Onward then and know thy might.”*

—Goethe

Sri Valmiki’s Rama was the ideal man who lived. Lord Krishna, with his popular slogan “Do as I say and not as I do” preached the ideal life. In India there are several Sadhus, amongst whom a few are definitely known to the world, who live like Rama. Lord Krishna is more fortunate. He has millions of admirably loyal disciples to play His role tirelessly with cent-per-cent perfection; saying as he said and living, too, as he lived! How perfectly devoted to Krishna they are!

Saint Sivananda is neither a silent Rama, nor merely a theorist-Krishna. He is a roaring prophet, living like Rama and preaching like Krishna. “The teachers of mankind are few. A thousand years may pass by without the advent of such a one; but when the true teacher does appear, the distinguishing feature by which he is known is *his life*. His conduct is different from other men and his teaching is never derived from any man or book, but from his own life. The teacher first lives and then teaches others how they may likewise live. The proof of his teaching is in himself, *his life*. Out of a million preachers, only one is ultimately accepted by mankind as a true teacher and that one who is thus accepted and exalted is he who *lives*.” Swamiji lives first and then only teaches.

Prompted by a desire to see the places where Swamiji had his solitude and Tapascharya, I crossed the Ganga at Lakshmanjhula, and wandered hither and thither in the solitary woods, forgetting myself at the sight of so beautiful a scenery. There were many yogis

and Sadhus living in quiet Kutias. Most of them seemed to refuse contact with worldly people, for; their looks were so indifferent and isolated. There were some who talked very good English.

The friend who was accompanying me had a thorough knowledge of those parts; and having lived with Swamiji for a long time he knew much about his life at Swargashram. He proved a useful guide.

Like the slender waist of a charming maiden, the Ganga bed is beautifully narrow. The high mountains on both sides seem to protect the virgin charm of her gentle flow. With a sudden turn here and a rushing drift there, she makes a merry laughter, the distant echo of which rings in our ears day and night.

My friend took me to the rushing drift, where huge pieces of rocks lie scattered across, competing with one another to kiss the clear waters of the blossoming Ganga.

“Friend, it is very dangerous; I have not insured my life yet! Pray, excuse me; I cannot come there!” I cried.

“You shy creature! See that tiny bird and the small monkey. How fearlessly they jump from rock to rock and play! Do they dread like you...What if you have a slip and get drowned into the drift? One should be proud to have his death at this beautiful place! Come on...” he said and dragged me on. I walked after him carefully following his steps. On one of the rocks we sat trying to understand the tale the foaming drift was telling us in such noisy words.

My friend pointed to a nearby rock which was almost in the midst of the river, where the current was very fierce. He said, “On many days, Swamiji sat there for evening meditation. Occasionally, to escape the swarm of visitors, he used to hide himself in the hollow angular cut in that rock and after sunset, he would steal his way back to the Kutia.”

The pilgrims who visited Rishikesh and Lakshmanjhula, hearing about Swamiji and desirous of

having his Darshan, began to approach “Number Eighty-three” and knock at the door. Siva came out and the visitors had his blessings. But on some days, the flock of visitors became a nuisance. Siva’s meditation or writing was disturbed. And he had no alternative but to abscond for some time! He had three or four such ‘hide-outs’, to reach whither involved great risks—two dangerous rocky edges amid the Ganga and two bushy forest ranges on the Manikoot slopes.

One should not think that Swamiji wanted to run away from the visitors. In fact, he liked them very much. He wanted to move with them and give them spiritual lessons. If visitors were to come at a time when he had a desire to dive deep into meditation or any other spiritual pursuit, he preferred to absent himself for a short while.

The Maharanee of Singai, a very pious lady, had great reverence for Swamiji and used to visit Lakshmanjhula often to have his Darshan. She owned a fine building just near the Swargashram temple. Whenever she came she used to remain there for at least a month or two. During such days, she would send fruits and sweets daily to Swamiji. Swamiji, in his turn, distributed them to others. He was doing rigorous spiritual Sadhanas and he tabooed many items of eatables.

He remembered the Garden of Eden and the sweet fruit which spoiled Adam and Eve. By and by he tried to keep himself aloof and wanted to avoid close movements with the royal disciple. Even then, the Ranee Sahiba would not stop sending fruits and milk to him. One day she arranged for a feast (Bhandara). She personally went and invited all the Sadhus. And she very anxiously expected Swamiji to dine with her.

But what happened? Swamiji realised that he should overcome all those temptations. He made his stiff conclusion, and called one of his two disciples; and asked him to lock up the Kutia doors from outside and go away. The disciple was perplexed. Swamiji sternly

commanded him "Look here. Lock me up here in the Kutia for two or three days. Do it!" The young student carried out his Guru's orders.

Though disappointed, the Ranee was yet obstinate and she sent the various dishes through a servant, with instructions to wait at the Kutia doors and give them to Swamiji. The servant found the doors locked, and awaiting Swamiji's arrival (he thought that Swamiji might have gone out) sat at the Kutia Payil. He waited for long hours but to no avail. He then went to Swamiji's disciples and enquired. They coolly advised him to return to his mistress!

Swamiji did not stir out of the Kutia. No one knew that he was locked up there. He had an earthen vase which he used as 'bed-pan'. When it became night he gently opened the Kutia window and threw away the pan. Without water or food he was meditating during those three days. On the fourth day, as per his instructions, the disciple opened the doors. Swamiji took a long breath on being told that the Ranee Sahiba had left the place the previous evening.

During the period of rigorous Tapascharya, one must not move closely with anybody. If he does so, his mind might get distracted and then he can do no serious Sadhana. Swamiji kept this always in mind and successfully faced all the trials that came to him in the shape of comforts, offerings and invitations.

By such constant Nivritti-Sadhanas, he perfected himself, attaining (shall I say?) the 'world-proof' stage. The state of mind in which the worldly influences will have no effect is the 'world-proof' stage. Once a person attains that, he has no fear. He is above all temptations. Even the fruit plucked out of the 'forbidden tree' will not affect him.

The supreme wisdom lies in detaching oneself from every outward thing, and in resting securely upon the inward virtue. Having this wisdom one will be the same

whether in riches or in poverty. The riches cannot add to his strength, nor can poverty rob him of his divine joy. Gaining that wisdom, the philosopher interprets everything as good and utilizes all opportunities to make himself wiser, and to make others also wise. If they happen to commit any mistakes, they at once accept them as lessons of intrinsic value, and rectify. Herein lies the strength of highly evolved souls.

A great mind will always be great of purpose. Men who have moulded the destinies of humanity have been men mighty of purpose. Like the Roman laying his road, they have followed along a well-defined path, and have refused to swerve aside even when torture and death confronted them. The great leaders of the race are the mental road-makers, and mankind follows in the intellectual and spiritual paths which they have carved out. Hindrances stimulate such wise men of purpose. Difficulties and trials nerve them to renewed exertion.

Understanding the Inner Truth of nature, Sivanandaji, later on, seized all opportunities and set upon his mission.

Swamiji had an urge to wander about and instill in the peoples of different parts his religious thoughts. Circumstances were not favourable for some time. The local chief began to pile obstacles in the path of Swamiji's efforts to settle himself.

He felt he could no longer remain at Swargashram. He wanted to move away to some place. There was, besides, an idea to go-about and lead a Parivrajaka-Life.

ANANDA KUTIR

Leading the life of an itinerant monk, Swamiji slept many a night in dilapidated public buildings. On many days he starved and walked in the hot sun and the cold weather. He liked to suffer and even rejoiced in it. He travelled up to Rameshwar, delivering lectures, and demonstrating Yoga Asanas and Sankirtans in many places on his way. He had a trip to Mount Kailas and Manasarovar Lake, covering on foot a distance of four hundred and eighty miles from Almora. Swamiji himself has written a booklet on his visit to Mount Kailas, which is very interesting to read.

After such wandering life for about four years, Swamiji came back to Rishikesh and settled on the right bank of the Ganga, just a mile away from the town. Can a honey-comb escape the sight of men? Devotees and disciples began to gather around and gradually the necessity for an Ashram became inevitable. Swamiji's Ashram, Ananda Kutir, thus had its birth. The place since then is being practically called '*Sivagram*'.

The calm air and the blue sky, the green meadow and the smiling hills, the silent forest and the distant Palace, mountain glades and water-falls, greet us the moment we alight from the train at Rishikesh railway station.

The crude fashion of dividing beautiful lawns into ugly lanes, and the ethics and economics of perverted urbanity, are far from us. Creepers greet us at every step with colourful flowers. Trees on the river bank bend with fruits. Birds sing and make merry on the boughs.

Sadhus and seekers who pine for solitude and salvation have their huts throughout. As we pass along

the lonely road, we hear the tireless singing of godly Kirtans from many quarters.

Walking two miles along this beautiful road, we reach *Sivagram*, the saintly place of Ananda Kutir, where Swami Sivanandaji, the Power-House of spiritual wisdom, lives. This small village, named after Swamiji, is on the bank of the Ganga. The high Tehri hills behind, the charming flow of the gentle Ganga and the grand majesty of the Manikoot range in front, the splendid sight of the holy Rishikesh in the west and the green forests in the east: these are the presents of Nature to *Sivagram*. The melodious songs of the stealing breeze and the distant laughs of the river-drift take us all to the angels' land.

Ananda Kutir, as its name suggests, is the abode of bliss for one and all. The sinner and the saint, the dreamer and the devotee, the rogue and the recluse: all melt into divinity the moment they enter the aura of this paradise and the lord of this paradise is Swamiji. Sweet is Swamiji's face, majestic his appearance, and lustrous his looks.

In the early morning, at about four, we hear a long bell from up the hill where the Bhajan Hall is situated, and following it, the high melodious chants of "Om...Ohm...mohm...", "Jai Shankar", "Hari Om". The Ashramites, then, repeat the same names and get up from their slumber. Some take their bath and some wash their faces. With a lantern in his hand, one of the senior inmates leads the other disciples to the Bhajan Hall. In such a cool hour they have a prayer-class.

Stotras in praise of the Almighty, reading of a chapter in the Bhagavatam, studying a portion from the Upanishads, recitation of an Adhyaya from the Gita, and meditation on Om, comprise the morning prayers. After the prayers they practise Yoga Asanas for a short while.

Now a devotee enters the hall with flowers and milk for pooja. Abhishekam, Archana and Arathi, are all done

perfectly. Prasadam, Kichadi and milk are then distributed, and the disciples disperse to their Kutias either for study of books or for other works.

Vanaprasta Hermitage, Kailas Kutir, Yoga Sadhana Kutir, the Sivananda Elementary School, the Kaivalya Guha, the Bhajan Hall, and the Temple for common worship—all are at about forty feet up the hill. Students of philosophy and yoga have their shelter in one or other of the Kutias.

On the very banks of the Ganga, in an old Dharmasala building, are situated the offices of the Sivananda Publication League and the Divine Life magazine, a free dispensary and a free feeding Kshetra.

As soon as the Morning Prayer and Pooja are over, we come down to the League Hall. Swamiji is there attending to the correspondence and distribution of typing work to his various disciples. In the middle, he sings a song in a homely tune—making a mixture of English, Hindi, Telugu, Tamil and whichever language he knows. He has the boldness and piety to compose such novel songs. And we follow him unconsciously, repeating what he sings. Not only that: we begin to tune the 'mixture-song' silently in our hearts and admire the originality of Swamiji.

At about twelve o'clock, Swamiji goes back to his Kutia to have his mid-day food, after which he takes a little rest and sits again for writing. He keeps seven or eight note-books, with different captions. Whenever new ideas flow he writes them down in the particular note-book to which those ideas suit most. This is one of the secrets of his successive voluminous production.

Well, in the afternoon visitors might loiter here and there in the Ashram, or they might take a book from the Sivananda Library and spend the time. Or, they might have a happy talk with some of the Ashramites who have some free time. The inmates are so kind and wise that worldly men have got a lot to learn from them.

A few disciples are attending to some typing works. Some others are looking to the proof-corrections. Here some are reading in the Library Room. There a few others are engaged in looking after Ashram requirements. Every now and then some of the inmates make kind enquiries as to the requirements of the visitors. How courteous and simple they are!

Listen! Do you hear the sweet music that comes from a visitor's Kutia? Shall we go and enjoy the heavenly hymns? Who sings so charmingly?

Swamiji's songs and lectures have been documented and the world is fortunate to enjoy his thirteen gramophone records, which are very inspiring.

After whiling away the time pleasantly for two or three hours in the afternoon like this, the visitors again wait at the League Hall. At five Swamiji comes again into the Hall and looks at the letters and the typed matters, of course, with his intermittent 'mixture-songs'!

It is now six. Some of the Ashramites take the visitors to the Bhajan Hall for the evening Prayer-class. We see a tall figure with a long staff in the right hand and a hand bag in the left, talking to a stranger on the road-side, very near the steps of the hill. It is none else but Swamiji. He is conversing with a distressed man who has been waiting to have his Darshan.

"Swamiji! I am a poor Sadhu...I am in need of a Kambal. The cold wind is freezing me....."says he to Swamiji.

"Acha Maharaj!.....Kindly sing a Kirtan....you have a very good voice....." so saying Sivanandaji turns back and asks his disciple who stands nearby, to get ten rupees from the Office.

The Sadhu sings or chants the divine names of Ram Ram Ram, or Radhe Shyam for a few minutes. Soon the disciple returns with a ten rupee note, and Swamiji quietly gives it to the Sadhu, with his compliments "*Kirtan bahut acha hae!*"

Almost on all days, Sadhus and Yogis come to Swamiji to get some monetary assistance to purchase this or that. Swamiji helps them all. By mere sight he discerns the bona fides of such persons and helps them accordingly. And never, does he send any one disappointed.

Swamiji then ascends the hill, and though we are young and are supposed to be stronger than he, we are hardly able to keep pace with him. He reaches the Bhajan Hall five minutes in advance of us.

All the inmates of the Ashram and the visitors are assembled in the Hall. Pooja, Purusha Sooktam, Ashtothara-Sata-Namaarchana and Arathi, follow one after the other; and the prayer-class begins. Nama Sankirtans, reading of the Bhagavatam, a portion from Shrutis, and a chapter from a high philosophical treatise take an hour and a half. Then one of Swamiji's disciples gives a short speech on his experiences or gives a summary of worthy Vedantic literature. After this, Swamiji sings one or two Kirtans and reads his 'spiritual lesson' for the day. Very often he gets inspired and delivers a lecture. Whenever any scholarly visitors attend the prayer-class, they are also asked to address the Ashramites.

It is generally in the proximity of nine o'clock at night that the prayer is over. The inmates one by one walk back to their Kutias. Swamiji addresses the new-comers and the visitors and asks "Do you feel at home here? Did you get hot water and milk this afternoon?" He turns to his secretary disciple and instructs him to provide certain other amenities that the new-comers seem to need. He accompanies them to their Kutias and satisfying himself that they are provided with lanterns, blankets and water-buckets, he slowly walks back to Ananda Kutir.

WRITINGS (I)

Saint Sivananda is a prolific writer. His subject matter ranges from Bazaar Drugs to Brahma Vidya, from Asanas and Pranayama to Upanishads and Raja Yoga.

Much of his fame, too, came of his inimitable conversation. When we see his pretty round face, with his singularly charming personality, we see his 'sheer intelligence transmuting anger into fun and fire into light.' In him there is artless simplicity and divine flame. He is composed of more ethereal and more vigorously throbbing atoms than other men.

A machine to transcribe his thoughts instantaneously in writing and get them prepared in the form of books; another apparatus to pack those books properly; and yet another one to carry those books to be delivered to worthy aspirants on the spiritual path; a fourth machine that can float, run and fly without petrol, to sit and travel throughout the universe so as to disseminate spiritual knowledge among the tired commercial masses—these seem to be the ultimate necessities to Swamiji!

He is too impatient to wait even for a moment. Unlike many who are said to be great Yogis, he wants to have a 'wind-horse' to proceed wherever there is illiteracy, ignorance, confusion, trouble and distress. Though he possesses extraordinary Yogic powers, he moves like a child with everyone.

Now that there are hundreds of Divine Life Society branches, and tens of scholarly disciples going about on missionary works, Swamiji has settled down at Ananda Kutir itself as the fountain-head of spiritual inspiration.

He wishes for a day of forty hours! So much of work he has to do daily.

Swamiji took to Sannyasa Ashrama in the year 1924 and, side by side with his meditations and medical activities; he used to write articles to various journals. Now let us have an idea of his writings.

A certain pilgrim, who visited Swamiji in the year 1926, gave him five rupees saying, "Maharaj! I am anxious to supply you milk at least for a month. Kindly utilize this small amount towards that." That was the time when Swamiji had just attained Brahmajnana-saturation. He wanted to cry out to the world all the beauteous glories of the Immortal Self. But how could he? The said five rupees came in search of him, as if a friend-in-need. With that money he printed a small leaflet and distributed the copies freely to many.

That was the first printed matter of Swamiji. Since then he has been writing and most of them have been printed either in the form of books, or booklets or pamphlets. Up till now, December 1943, his printed volumes run to 38,750 pages. And yet, he says he has to write a lot!

Without money for postage, without money to secure writing paper, he suffered very much in the early stages. Whenever he got small change for postage, he used to send articles to journals. People in the journalistic field know how manuscripts from unknown persons, living in remote places, are being viewed. Swamiji had not, then, become popular. Was he not just blossoming?

There was fire and force in Swamiji's writings. At the very sight of the manuscripts, the divine laugh of Swamiji was audible to everyone. And his articles were offered a prominent column. Later on, a number of monthlies and weeklies became his 'clientele'. Even now he is contributing to those journals.

In public libraries we find voluminous works on all religions in all languages. Earnest students get confused after a study of such big books. They enthusiastically read volume after volume and at the end, if they close their eyes and reflect, they realise that the knowledge derived is not conducive to spiritual elevation. They become an additional burden to a burdened mind. They do not find anything practicably written in most of such books.

Swamiji took great trouble to write a series of books on the different aspects of Yoga Philosophy, with easy commentaries suitable to the changing times. We find highly useful practical lessons in his books and pamphlets. In every sentence there is something for us to learn and practice. Throughout his writings, we find nothing very difficult to understand or practice. He never indulges in highly intellectual verbiage to create bewilderment among the ordinary people, thereby showing his great ability and command over the subject. He is very simple and easy to follow.

In all his works, we find a combination of the different paths of Philosophy. He deals with the most important aspects of every school of thought, to make his books useful to all classes of people. Mere perusal of a leaflet or casual reading of a paragraph in any of his books will tempt one to follow it up and read his other works! There is a peculiar charm and power in his writings.

When a Bhakta reads a copy of Swamiji's lessons on Bhakti Yoga, he understands not only Bhakti Yoga, but is taught to understand a little bit of Yoga, Vedanta and Karma Philosophies also. He mixes allied subjects with the main subject very ably, and presents them in such a way as to make the subjects interdependent. His instructions are so universal that even Yogis, Vedantins and all types of people, even men of other religions like the Muslims and the Christians come in direct touch with him for further guidance. While reading a particular

portion of a book, one is apt to feel, "Swamiji has understood me and has given the right lesson that would suit me. He has perhaps written this book for me."

The moment some new ideas come to him, which he feels as highly helpful to the masses, he wants them to reach the aspirants without any delay. He writes, very often, the same matter in all the letters, leaflets, pamphlets, books, newspapers and magazines and gets his ideas propagated widely. To make his lessons attractive and charming and to cater to the tastes, temperaments and qualifications of the public, he gives the same ideas in the form of simple stories for the sake of ordinary people, in the form of Kirtans for the Bhaktas, in the form of illustrations and essays to the students, and in high-class philosophical treatises and poems for the intellectual. He wants to bring Peace, Joy and Bliss to one and all as immediately as possible.

The speeches and writings of Swamiji have been so inspiring that a wave of spiritual awakening has swept over India and its benevolent effects have been felt even in some centers of Europe and Africa. In his writings there are no dry theories or intellectual gymnastics; His masterly and forceful expression in simple yet poetic words is unparalleled in the philosophic sphere. His cosmopolitan and modern outlook, recognition of truth and wisdom in all religious faiths, and inner knowledge of philosophy, render his exposition of different subjects highly convincing and appealing to modern educated men of the East and the West. His writings are inspiring and the style is very simple yet grand, so that they never bore the reader in spite of the abstruse nature of the subjects, and form exceedingly interesting reading constantly arousing the thirst for more knowledge of a similar kind.

WRITINGS (II)

Swamiji's vast contribution to spiritual literature is the outcome of his assimilation and rumination of personal experiences. Even the good ideas heard from others are first thought over and practised for a long time and then only served to the aspirants so as to aid their quick progress. This far-advanced nature of benevolence in serving the world urges him to cling to his pen. The most subtle points of Vedanta Philosophy, he explains in a few simple words that can be understood by all.

The charming lucidity of language is indicative of the simplicity of his heart. There is something penetrating and extraordinary in it. Even those who have a wide grasp of the scriptures take great delight in going through Swamiji's books again and again.

Practice of Vedanta: This book contains many valuable practical instructions. It contains the gist of Vedanta. The abstruse philosophical ideas of Vedanta are given in a sugarcoated, compressed tablet form to the readers for easy assimilation.

Practical Lessons in Yoga: Swamiji seems to have prepared this book more for Europe and America than for the East. The twelve lessons that are offered contain lucid and clear descriptions of the different Yoga Philosophies.

Sure Ways for Success in Life and God-realisation: Swamiji fully believes in the theory of Maya, like Sri Sankara, and yet does not ignore the subject of success in life on the material plane. Lucidity, spiritual force, and impressive practical lessons are the striking features of this volume. The wisdom of our ancient Rishis who scaled the heights of knowledge unknown to and

undreamt of by the greatest of the Western scientists has been presented through this book.

Mind—Its Mysteries and Control: This treatise, in two volumes, contains practical hints and methods of controlling the mind. The equivalents, in English, of Sanskrit terms have been given side by side. Technicalities have been kept off as far as possible. Various systems of Yoga that tend to control the mind have been brought out in a simple style. He who has control over his mind will reach the goal safely, as the senses which draw this chariot-body will behave like the horses of an expert coach-man.

Practice of Yoga: To spiritual aspirants, this book is really a gift from the 'land of Gods'. It is my sincere conviction that this book will be of immense help to all types of men. Students of Karma Yoga and Hatha Yoga will find a wealth of information and knowledge. The two volumes, covering over eight hundred pages, provide a happy reading.

Vedanta in Daily Life: Matter, mind, intellect, senses, names and forms are all apparent manifestations of that Supreme Being called in Sanskrit, Brahman. These may appear as real, but in truth they have only relative reality. The essential purpose of Vedanta is to show the absolute oneness that exists between the individual soul and the Supreme Soul on the highest plane of spirituality. This oneness of life or unity of consciousness is hidden from our vision by the darkness of ignorance, or Avidya. By extricating ourselves from its tenacious clutches, we can regain our lost consciousness and realise the Para-Brahman. The method of accomplishment of this task is given in this book.

Practice of Karma Yoga: This book Swamiji has carefully designed for the benefit of those who are intricately placed in life and who cannot tread the path of renunciation. In the Gita, Lord Krishna says to Arjuna that the path of work (Karma Yoga) is better than the path of renunciation (Jnana Yoga). The same Vasudeva,

in another place in the Gita, says that Knowledge alone is the means to final liberation. No less a scholar than the late Bal Gangadhar Tilak, author of the *Gita Rahasya*, says that the gist of the Gita is action only. It is not for me to pronounce any verdict on the controversial subject but this much I can say: that the two paths are complementary and that the one is preparatory to the other. Unless one cleanses the Augean stables of one's mind and expurgates all impurities through selfless and disinterested service while living amid the toil and moil of the world, one will not find spiritual elevation. Such an elaborate and masterly treatise on Karma Yoga, no other author has written.

Philosophy and Meditation on Om: This gives the secret meaning of Om, which is the name of Brahman. It gives an analysis of the three states of waking, dream and deep sleep. Through a study and clear grasp of these states, through proper understanding of 'Om' and its right significance, one can find out the way to approach and realise Brahman.

Ten Upanishads: Upanishad means that which destroys Avidya or ignorance, and takes the Jiva to sit near Brahman, i.e., to get established in one's own Swaroopa (Brahma-Sthiti, Brahma-Nishta). To attain this goal, the guidance given in this book will be of immense help. Swamiji has accomplished the most original and daring service by publishing this book. Undoubtedly this is one of the standard literatures of the world.

Philosophy and Yoga (in Poems): Man finds no time to go through big philosophical works. He finds it difficult to go through pamphlets even. Swamiji thought it would be useful to present before the public a book on Philosophy and Yoga as concisely as possible. This book contains the quintessence of all Swamiji's writings, in the fine prose poems.

Yoga in Daily Life: This is a book with a message of hope, of success in life, of peace, of bliss and of the secret

of life itself. Herein will be found the way to Knowledge and Peace. This is a very valuable companion to householders who are apt to fall into moods of pessimism.

Srimad Bhagvat Gita: (Text, meaning and commentary). In the world literature, there is no book so elevating and so inspiring as the Gita. It expounds very lucidly the cardinal principles or the fundamentals of the Hindu Dharma. It is the source of all wisdom. It is our great guide. It is our supreme teacher and an inexhaustible treasure. It is the fountain of Bliss and Knowledge. And it is full of divine splendour and grandeur. Sri Sankara, Sri Ramanuja and Sri Madhva have given their masterly commentaries on the Gita. The late Bal Gangadhar Tilak has left us the brilliant *Gita Rahasya*. A few other eminent scholarly annotations are also available. Yet, Sivanandaji's edition has its own charm and simplicity of expression.

Practice of Bhakti Yoga: All the four hundred pages of this book ring with a sublime note, the dire need of the cosmic love. Says the author: "A life without love, faith and devotion is a dreary waste. It is real death. Love is the greatest power on earth. Love is Divine. It is irresistible. It is Love that can really conquer the enemy. Its power is infinite. Its depth is unfathomable. Its nature is ineffable. Its glory is indescribable. The essence of religion is Love." Swamiji exhorts all his readers to develop love, which, if possessed even to the magnitude of a ray, can cure all ills and bestow real joy and happiness. The book contains many practical hints and instructions on Bhakti Sadhana. The text, with translation and commentary on Narada Bhakti Sutras, is a valuable addition to this book.

Easy Steps to Yoga: In this short treatise, Swamiji gives us useful lessons on the practice of Yoga. According to the temperament and capacity of the Sadhaka, different paths of Yoga are arranged. Special instructions given in the seventh chapter will be of great help to one

and all. There is a chapter containing simple lessons on the practice of Asanas, with photos.

Lord Krishna—His Lilas and Teachings: It is very difficult for busy people to go through the whole book of Bhagavata. Therefore, this condensed English version in a palatable and tasteful form is highly helpful.

Principal Upanishads: It is said that Schopenhauer, the renowned philosopher of the West, always carried with him a book of the Upanishads, and was in the habit, before going to bed, of performing his devotions from its pages. He said: “In the whole world there is no study so beneficial and so elevating as that of Upanishads. It has been the solace of my life; it will be the solace of my death.”

The Upanishads give a vivid description of the nature of the Supreme Soul in a variety of ways and expound suitable methods to attain that status. They are metaphysical treatises which are replete with sublime conceptions of Vedanta and with intuitions of Universal Truth.

In the preparation of this book Swamiji has very closely followed the commentary of Sri Sankara and has explained his views in regard to the usage of certain technical terms which are often misunderstood. The views of other commentators also have been included here and there.

Stories from Yoga Vasishta: Yoga Vasishta deals with the subject of effecting union of the individual soul with the Supreme Soul amidst all the trials of life. It prescribes various directions for the union of Jivatma and Paramatma. Those whose minds are turned from this world, who have become indifferent towards the objects of this world, and who are thirsting for liberation, will be really benefited by a study of this precious book. They will find in this a vast mine of knowledge and practical spiritual instructions for their daily living. Yoga Vasishta first enunciates a doctrine in its various aspects

and then makes it very lucid through interesting stories. This book is undoubtedly worthy of constant study.

Inspiring Messages: The twenty-two inspiring messages contain frank and bold pieces of advice of Swamiji to worldly men. This book is one of the most original productions of Swamiji. If an institution is started to train up students for public service and social reforms, this book may unhesitatingly be prescribed for detailed study.

Philosophical Stories: There are forty-four short interesting stories in this small book. Swamiji's talent in writing stories is highly wonderful. Will the angels possess the heads of educational institutions and persuade them to prescribe this book for study by boys and girls?

Brahmacharya Drama: Let alone the literary standard of the drama. It is meant more for propagating his Philosophy than as a piece of literature. Many suitable inspiring philosophical songs, in soul stirring homely tunes, beautify the production. The drama contains the essence of Yoga, Bhakti and Vedanta.

Gems of Prayers: Sivanandaji is a saint who has a universal outlook. This book contains not only gems of prayers but the lofty philosophy of Swamiji, too. Hindus, Christians, Parsees, Jains, Mohammedans and all others find their inspiring prayers in this book. This compilation is of international worth.

Family Doctor: "Endeavour to qualify yourself as your own doctor. Keep a small medicine chest. Serve your neighbours also. Serve with Atma Bhava or Narayana Bhava. Here is a great field for service. This is the highest Yoga. Friends, never lose this opportunity. Purify your heart through service of the sick and prepare yourself for the descent of the Divine Light. There is intense joy in serving the poor with free medicines. There is immense happiness in relieving human sufferings." With this exhortation Swamiji (who was once the famous

Dr. Kuppuswami of Singapore) has presented this masterly treatise to the men at large.

Japa Yoga: This is one of the rarest philosophical works, throwing much light on the important subject, Mantra Yoga, and the method of obtaining perfection through Japa. The definition of Japa, the different kinds of Mantras, practical instructions to proceed with the Sadhana, and short life sketches of some of the saints who have realized God through Japa, are to be found in this book.

Some orthodox people used to object to Swamiji's spreading these Mantras to all. But how could they know the largeness of Swamiji's vision who sees no difference between man and man?

Students' Success in Life: Future destiny of the world rests with the students. If they are trained well in the path of righteousness, the world will be filled with ideal citizens, scholars, philosophers, yogis, and sages. There will, then only, be peace and prosperity. The correct way of thinking and understanding one another can come only then. Youngsters cannot dream of a worthier companion than this book.

Hatha Yoga: There are now-a-days many systems of physical exercises. Among all the systems, yogic exercises or Yoga Asanas stand unrivalled in their results. Yoga Asana is the most perfect system of joining up and energising the brain, the muscles, the nerves and all the different organs and tissues of the body. All chronic diseases are rooted out. In this book Swamiji has given a description of important exercises that are suitable for both men and women. The technique and the benefits derived are given for each exercise in detail.

How to Get Vairagya: True, the subject of Vairagya has been dealt with in the sacred books of India by ancient sages like Vasishta, Vyasa, Yajnavalkya, Bhartrihari, and nowhere will the reader get a clear, concise and compact knowledge of the subject, suited to

modern tastes and requirements. While emphasis was laid on ruthless renunciation, mental as well as physical, by the ancients as a precondition to self-realisation, it is quite refreshing and heartening to hear from Sivanandaji that “Vairagya is purely an internal state” and “a man may remain in the busy world amidst various luxuries, women and wealth and yet he may possess perfect Vairagya; while a Sadhu who lives in a cave in the far-off regions of the Himalayas’ may not be able to achieve real Vairagya.” Some inspiring stories, and essays on body, women, world and Vairagyasatakam, are given in this book. The teachings of Lord Buddha, and Sri Sankara, which are conducive to the path of Vairagya, have also been included in the book.

Sthree Dharma: Swamiji herein gives valuable lessons for women to attain success in spiritual life. Instructions on Ideal Womanhood, Education of Ladies, Marriage, Chastity and so on, are very helpful to us. Dialogues between Draupadi and Satyabhama, and the life sketches of Savitri, Nalayani and such ideal ladies are highly inspiring—Household Remedies, Care of Pregnancy, Care of Babies, Training of children, all these chapters are studded with useful advices. Philosophical and devotional instructions given in this book enable us all to lead a happy, successful life.

The Science of Pranayama, Yoga Asanas, Lives of Saints, Ananda Lahari, Bhakti and Sankirtan, and Stories from Mahabharata are amongst the valuable volumes Swamiji has so far offered to the world.

MISSION

*"We are made for friendship, not for hate;
My hand to you, and with it all my heart,
My brother!"*

—**Tagore**

In those days the condition of Sadhus was pitiable. They all lived in a disorderly manner. Swamiji desired to reorganise the whole Order and to make it useful for the world in a variety of ways. This, he felt, was possible only by training a band of students on proper lines. The desire to serve the world forced him to accept disciples.

During one of his spiritual campaigns in the Punjab, Swamiji was prevailed upon by a couple of his friends and some devotees to start an institution to cater to the spiritual needs of his disciples, and make an organised effort through it to spiritualise the whole country. Thus was started the Divine Life Trust Society in the year 1936. The work which the Trust Society did in the first few months attracted devotees of Swamiji from far and near, and according to their desire, started the Divine Life Society so that those who desired to come in closer touch with him might gather together under one banner. The branches of the Society in the course came to be opened in almost all important places in India and also in foreign countries like Europe, Africa, Burma and others.

Swamiji took, as he does now, great trouble in moulding and guiding the disciples in the mysterious science. As there was no arrangement for board and lodging for many students, he had to keep them for some time and then send them to some other place to continue their Sadhana, thereby giving a chance for the newcomers.

If people pleaded for staying on with him he sanctioned their request. After some time he used to send them away to other institutions to work whole-heartedly for the benefit of the public. This clearly shows detachment from any particular society. His one object is to serve the world and help all aspirants.

Very shortly, Sivanandaji's Divine Life Society blossomed into an up-to-date Ashram. Funds and followers came in search of Swamiji. Kutias and hermitages were built for the sake of aspirants. He started the Divine Life, a monthly devoted to the spiritual awakening of the public, and began to issue, free pamphlets.

There is a general opinion among the people that Mahatmas do not accept easily any one as 'disciple'. With great hesitation, some write to Swamiji: "Kindly accept me as your disciple". When they receive a reply, "I have accepted you as my beloved disciple", they are wonder-struck. They take great joy in following Swamiji's easy instructions. When the aspirants show slackness in their meditation, they unexpectedly receive a letter from Swamiji. "How is your Sadhana? The difficult period is over. The remaining portion is very easy. Be steady, Maya is powerful. Mind and senses will dupe you. Be ever vigilant and diligent." Thus Swamiji creates a desire in those who have no taste at all for the spiritual path and glides them to the last by taking care of their progress and keeping a close watch.

Swamiji has given sufficient spiritual lessons through his various books for quick progress in the spiritual path. These lessons will guide one at every step.

At the very sight, Swamiji is able to find out whether the students are fit for the spiritual path; and the sincere aspirants do get initiation in a moment. Some orthodox Sannyasins suggest that Swamiji should not give initiation to any applicant before testing him as to his fitness. He might be a rogue; he might be a thief. To such people Swamiji calmly replies. "I am a Guru for the

thieves and the rogues. I want to mould them in the proper way and to change their nature entirely. I want to guide them in the spiritual path so that they may be useful to the world. Even if they happen to go back to the world due to poor spiritual Samskaras, the initiation itself will make them virtuous. If they do not succeed in Sadhana, the initiation will confer on them a good birth.” How large a heart!

As per the traditional rule, the disciples, out of extreme devotion to Swamiji, often approach him to pay their respects. But Swamiji never allows anyone to touch his feet or shampoo his legs or even to offer Sashtanga Namaskars. When the disciples and admirers approach him, he is ready there with flowers and fruits to worship them. He immediately runs to arrange for their comfortable stay, food, etc. He takes great delight in serving them personally.

He is not pleased when people address him as ‘World Teacher, Jagat Guru, Sadguru, etc.’ He is highly joyful when he signs his letters as “Thy humble servant”. When people praise him, he says, “*Bahut acha*”, and immediately adds, “Praise and censure are jugglery of Maya.” He is unmoved by criticism or praise.

He teaches his disciples and admirers not so much by regular classes, books or personal talks, as by his own daily actions. In the case of dull aspirants, he has his usual way of humour, wit, Kirtans or stories. Every move of his limbs, every twinkling of his eyes, and every word he speaks, reveal always something new to us.

People, who come in contact with him through a few minutes’ talk, or a letter of a few lines, feel a new happiness, joy and power in them. They are drawn towards him through a mysterious force. Everyone feels that Swamiji loves him and him alone. Swamiji creates such a feeling! Like the moon, he is looking at everybody who looks at him, and sheds his light.

The relationship between Swamiji and his disciples is indescribable. The inmates of Ananda Kutir are all well trained in Nishkama Karma Yoga. If they leave the Ashram, they can get definitely more comforts, conveniences, respect, honour, nice board and lodging arrangements. In the Ashram, board and lodging amenities are rather insufficient. On certain occasions when the inmates are invited for feasts in other Ashrams, they do not like to attend them. They do not feel at home anywhere else. The very company of Swamiji is a lively feast for them all. Through a mysterious power, he draws all towards him and confers Joy, Bliss and Love on them.

Sages of olden days hesitated even to clear some of the doubts of the aspirants. But Swamiji volunteers to give spiritual lessons and prescribes a routine for all, according to their tastes and temperaments. He never likes to wait and desires to do everything immediately. Even in running trains, when he travelled, he used to demonstrate Yoga Asanas and Pranayams to the passengers and teach them the methods of concentration, meditation, Japa, etc. He cares not to revise his articles, matter for books, or letters. The moment they come from his hands, they are dispatched. With a lot of mistakes all letters and articles are sent out. Sometimes letters are not signed in proper places. When such mistakes are pointed out, he says: "I do not pay much attention to the beauty of the language, or the rules of grammar. Ideas are important. To revise, correct, and improve the language is the job of scholars, Pundits and grammarians."

Whenever a visitor comes to Rishikesh for simple sight-seeing, he visits Ananda Kutir also to have Darshan of Swamiji. Swamiji asks all such casual visitors too to stay at Ananda Kutir for a few days to learn his Kirtans, to study some books and to meditate on God. When they leave Rishikesh, he asks them to continue the meditation and to send a report at the end of every month regarding their spiritual activities. In a short period, he

wants the students to learn to concentrate, to meditate in a solitary cave for a long time, to control the senses and mind perfectly, to serve the world in some way or other, and to become masters in singing Kirtans, in demonstrating yogic exercises and in delivering lectures. He wants perfection in all items. After attaining these, he expects his disciples to do selfless service for the world.

He has beautifully chalked out his daily routine. He sticks to it tenaciously. No work can upset his routine. Not a day passes without his usual prayers, meditation, Asanas, Pranayams, brisk evening walk, physical exercises, classes, Kirtans, attending to the sick, correspondence, study, and writing articles for books or journals. All items are carried out at the appointed time. He asks even his advanced disciples: "Do not give up your Sadhana, thinking that you are a Jitendriya Yogi. Even if you become a Jivanmukta, you should continue your Sadhana. You must be very careful when you mix with worldly-minded persons. Downfalls will come at any moment. Be cautious. Scrutinize your motives always."

Generally when aspirants get initiated, they feel that they are Mahatmas, far superior in position to Grahasthis and that they should be adored and worshipped. Such curious ideas enter the mind of all Sadhus. Swamiji teaches them to develop true humility. He asks everyone to recognise the greatness in others and to see the Lord in all beings.

He found that those who live long in seclusion become Tamasic (dull) and lose their capacities. They take Tandra state for Samadhi and begin to build castles in the air. They have a natural hatred for the world and say that the world is "Mithya." Swamiji asks them to purify themselves through service of humanity before taking to complete seclusion. He teaches them to see the world as the manifestation of the Lord.

For men of the world, too, he suggests, methods for material progress and prosperity. He is well versed in all branches of science. He never claims any Siddhis, but all

aspirants are able to see clearly extraordinary things happening. They experience a sort of rapidity in their spiritual progress.

Such aspirants who have no control over the senses and who lack in virtuous qualities are advised to live in Satsanga. When they become free from evil thoughts by such contact, Swamiji sends them to seclusion for deep meditation. If they happen to develop Tamasic nature, he prescribes selfless service in some form or other. If they make good progress in meditation, he asks them not to come out of seclusion and gives instances of Lord Buddha and Jesus Christ to enthuse them in the attainment of higher knowledge. For people who have many ties in the world and poor spiritual Samskaras, he prescribes a course of easy Sadhana and asks them to remain in the world to free themselves from all responsibilities by saying, "The world is the best teacher." For sincere aspirants, who have good spiritual Samskaras, though they may have some ties, Swamiji says: "Take to the path of renunciation. Throw away your worldly burdens."

To the Mahatmas who have had wonderful spiritual powers in seclusion, Swamiji sends the request: "O Sages! Come out to share your knowledge and experience with the people who are thirsting for the spiritual knowledge!"

Swamiji has trained himself to lead a very simple life and expects strict control of mind in all the aspirants. He says "Without perfect control over the senses, you can do nothing in the spiritual line." To have such control of the senses, he prescribes various kinds of diet in Ananda Kutir. "Control of tongue means control of all senses." So we find saltless food, sugarless milk or tea for the students on many days. To give strength to the mind and to keep up the system perfect, he shows a remedy: "If milk and ghee are not available, take a spoon of *dal* more. Thus nicely adjust the diet. Don't murmur when there is more, or less, of sugar, salt or chillies, on a particular

day." This is the method how the students are trained in Ananda Kutir.

When visitors come for meditation, during Sadhana Weeks, Swamiji runs to arrange for delicious dishes. He understands their difficulties, for they are not trained in such a way, and provides them good fruits, milk and butter.

He has adopted one uniform policy throughout, and that is, to love all, to share with all, to give his all, without caring for his own comforts or conveniences, without expecting anything in return, and without consideration of the financial status of the Ashram. Through divine grace, at the most appropriate time, he gets all that he wants. His requirements are supplied and his wishes fulfilled precisely at the proper time.

He says: "I live to serve you all. I live to help you all to destroy ignorance. I live to make you all happy." Whenever people approach him for help, he never hesitates to give them what he can. He does not care whether such men deserve his help or not.

He is very miserly to himself. He is fond of using the torn clothes after stitching them in many places. He takes great delight in sleeping on a rough plank. He enjoys nicely the stale *rotties*. Though his admirers often send him money for his personal comforts, he feels happy when he spends the entire amounts in serving the Sadhus, in nursing the sick, and in providing amenities to his disciples.

A great nationalist who visited Ananda Kutir asked Swamiji: "Why do you wear foreign clothes?" Swamiji replied: "For a Sadhu, a gunny bag, silk or cotton, whether Indian or foreign, is no concern. I use with great joy the things given by sincere people." And he continued, "Wearing Khaddar alone is not the sign of true patriotism. Spin the thread of Viveka, weave the cloth of Santi, wear the Khaddar of Brahma-Jnana and become a true patriot!"

All worries, anxieties, troubles and difficulties of aspirants are removed in a mysterious manner by Swamiji. He uses various methods. His usual smile, wit and humour are quite sufficient to elevate the people who are before him. For those who are far away, he has his prayer, Bhasma, or a short letter or a Japa Mala with his blessings.

There are thousands of persons who correspond with him. He clearly remembers the full addresses of most of them. He can clearly recognise, identify and recollect all particulars of a man whom he has seen several years back, and that too for a few minutes.

If you have a capacity for delivering lectures, you are prompted to proceed to America for collecting money through lectures. If you have a band of disciples, you wish to move from place to place as a Mandaleshwar. If you are inclined towards Sadhana, you naturally hate the world and take shelter in a cave in the Himalayas. If you are trained to live with a Kowpeena, you are puzzled when you look at a piece of silk. If you have good command over your pen, you begin to write several volumes of your own. If you have a desire to serve all, you undoubtedly neglect the practical side of Sadhana and open a big shop in a city in the name of service to humanity.

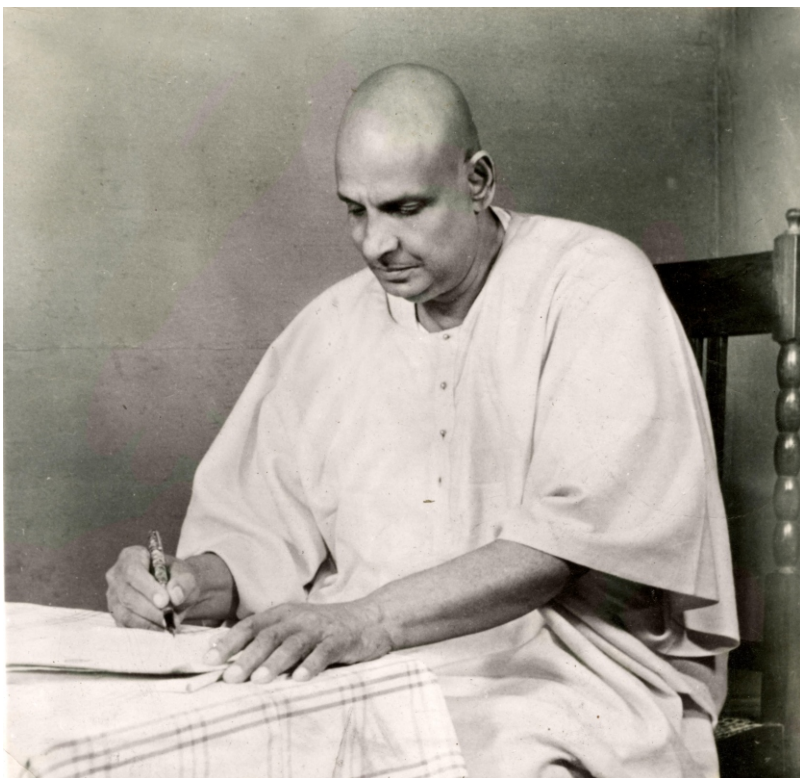
These are the natural ways how people are driven in particular directions in which they have capacity or ambition. It is quite easy to live in Gangotri and be ever absorbed in deep meditation, to do Tratak in the scorching sun and to stand on Shirsasana for days together. Even in ancient days, the saints worked in one direction only for which they were best suited, and neglected other sides.

A European admirer of Swamiji wonders "how it is humanly possible for one man to have capacity and to work in all directions, to live in a cave and to penetrate into the hearts of people who are far away." But is Swamiji a human being? Is he not something else?

Is he not working wonders and miracles without the title of “Siddha Purusha”? Is he not firm in his determination that the world is Mithya?

Swamiji’s greatness lies not in these; it lies in the spirit of selfless service to humanity. He serves all, seeing invisible Presence everywhere.

He is the Prophet of Karma Yoga!



STUDY OF SIVA'S PALM



STUDY OF SIVA'S PALM

'Life lies in the lines of your palms. Trifles tell us of Truth. You see the infinite in the atom. There is nothing trivial in this world. Everything has a language—either of the senses or of the soul.

A believer of chiromancy and a devotee of 'Siva', I was interested in looking into his hands. The study of the palm of so rare a saint helps the students of palmistry by tracing the lines and formations of the hand that exhibit each in its' own way exceptional characteristics. Though I eagerly sought for it, I hesitated to make a request. However, one fine morning the privilege was offered to me. It was quite as unexpected as it was welcome.

I am in a way acquainted with the life and philosophy of the sage. My reading of the hand, particularly with reference to the past, cannot be valuable since its owner is too well known. But the past, present, and the future lie pledged in the lines of the palm and without a reference to these, my reading will be incomplete.

Ancestry: Man is not only the life of two lives but a myriad of lives. He represents his race. Siva was sprung from pious progenitors. Some of them were of parochial popularity, others were provincial idols of purity and adoration, and Siva's love and labours have attracted universal reverence and recognition. There are no coincidences or accidents in life, provided one can pierce through the veil of ignorance and perceive the cosmic plan. The law works; whatever happens along has been well regulated and anticipated. If you develop a second sight many a manifest thing will reveal the secrets to you which otherwise remain mysterious or matters

unnoticed by man in his march towards Mammon worship. So be it.

Early Life and Education: It is but natural that Siva has inherited a philosophic hand. There is no legacy greater than light. It does seldom go with lucre. If it does, the twain must part. Prince Siddharta left the patrimony of empire and his purple robes in search of Truth. Siva's inheritance and inherent thirst for the highest often immersed him in the ecstasies of infinite nature.

Let us have a peep at Pattamadai, the cradle of Siva's childhood and the parent-place of his philosophy. Beauty lies in a blade of grass. And when tipped with a diamond drop of dew, it is the delight and darling of the dawn. You find in it the art and architect of the whole. What then about that palm-fringed Pattamadai?

The sylvan surroundings of this place are wound round by a silver belt of sparkling stream — a generous gift of the sacred river Tamraparni. This island village is full of life and legends. All Indian villages are. After a brief and brilliant education, both academic and professional, Siva entered life. Let us not tarry long; off to the lines of his hand. Hark what they speak!

Siva's person and personality is unique. A man of dignified dimensions, he draws you at a glance. His palm, as I see it, is a paradise for a palmist. Look at that row of fingers. These off-shoots of the hand are a congenial combination of squares and cones. They spell religion and mysticism. They are characteristic of Siva's patience, austerity and love of self-sacrifice.

The angular formation of the hand, the developed joints and long nails indicate distinction and power. The proper pursuit of men of similar possession is the study of mankind. They will discard all material wealth and transcend other types of persons and play on the harp of life and tune themselves to the symphony of the soul. The majesty of the mountains, the music of the spheres, the mimicry of birds, the vapourish and delightful draperies

of the sky, the procession of the sun and the moon and the sheen of the silver streams keep them in harmony with nature. The clang of silver and gold has no appeal for them. Siva is a thinker. He loves silence and solitude into which he dives with delirious delight. He comes up from the divine depths with glittering pearls of Truth. Thoughts provoke thoughts.

Off to the hand now. Let us climb the Mounts in his palm and have a look at the valleys of the lines that lie below. They seem all quite fertile. All Mounts are well moulded and merged in a happy blend. Let us mount one by one.

Venus: It is the vein-centre of the palm. This Mount is small compared with others. But it is well developed. It is benevolent and shows less sex impulse. It slopes gently to the lines to join them. This speaks of universal love and affection and an aesthetic sense. He renounced his home and profession and wedded himself to the larger world. Celibacy is a cult for him. I must be brief.

Jupiter: I see distant visions from the top of this Mount. It shows ambition and power. He left the shores of India and sailed for the Far East spurred by an ambition and enthusiasm, there to seek a wider field for service.

Saturn: This Mount leans towards the Mount of Jupiter indicating a love of the solitude and the sublime, earnestness in work and devotion to music of a sacred strain. Sincerity is the soul of life Siva is nothing but that.

The Sun: It is well defined. The distinguishing feature of its developed size reveals his appreciation for all things beautiful. He is getting old gracefully and he loves Art, Poetry and Literature.

Mercury: The Mount is well set. It speaks of the love of change, ready wit and repartee and it is favourably inclined towards the other Mounts.

Mars: It is found lying between the Mercury and the Luna and it denotes self-control which nothing can Mar. He is always tranquil and serene. He has the courage of his convictions and he will resist all contrary influences in correcting what is wrong.

Mount of Luna: Last but not the least Luna flies above the hollow of the hand. It indicates his profound imagination and spiritual idealism.

As already anticipated the Mounts lie merged leaning towards one another. This unity is very unique in Siva's life. He has without the least distinction identified himself with all the religions extant in this earth. He has strung all faiths from Shintoism to Sikhism in one chord and you will hear him chant a real universal prayer.

Let us descend to the lines and hear what they speak. The reading of the lines by themselves does not constitute any forecast.

—*Yet in these lines great legacies lie
Of light, love and wisdom that never die.*

The Line of Life: This is quite clear and well-marked as all other principal lines are in his hands. It starts from the Mount of Jupiter and is closely connected with the Head line. This effectively indicates that he is guided: by reason and intelligence in his undertakings. It also spells extreme sensitiveness. None but the sensitive can soar to the subtler regions of the inner world. A gross mind is generally governed by the senses. It cannot penetrate the crusts of the physical world.

The Line of Head: Rising from Jupiter it touches the line of Life and steadily slopes to the Mount of Luna. This shows the power of control over others without directly exercising it. Further, it is a sign of talent, energy, and purposefulness combined with reason. A nervous and sensitive temperament can also be noticed. The sloping of the line speaks of idealism, imaginative work and literary attainments. A leaning towards mysticism and things occult crown the above characteristics.

The Line of the Heart: Let us now examine this. The line starts with a fork on the Mount of Jupiter. An honest nature, an unfading love and tenderness are prominent features of the life of the individual. The qualities of Siva's head neither science nor art can tell. He loves for Love's sake.

The Line of Fate: It is as it ought to be in a philosophic palm. It reveals a great struggle. Rising up to the Mount of Jupiter it commands unusual distinction and power. Siva stands today head and shoulders above the common run of men. He reached this height and keeps the light after he had gone through great austerities and a vigorous vigilance over the vanities and vexations of Spirit, covering a period of more than a decade.

The Line of the Sun: Viewed with the line of fate, it denotes success. Success is not in the possession of the good things of the world. There is success in life far higher than this—attainment of Peace.

The line of Health foreshadows no illness. It promises robust health but for intervals of abdominal irregularities which can, however, be ignored. Read with the Life Line, it foretells lasting good health.

The Fingers: They figure well. The developed joints define the meticulous care and mastery over details, and insight into human nature and a distinction in literature. If further declares an extraordinary power for analysis of men and matters. Knowledge comes from analysis and wisdom from knowledge. Siva shines in the knowledge and the vision and wisdom of the Upanishads.

I foretell! I foretell that Siva will seek the stronghold of further seclusion and silence within four years from date. Dates do not count. Events matter. He will remain so for a period of four years with occasional spells of speech. This will break an otherwise continuous silence.

In his sixty-fifth year he will come out of his seclusion as a greater light and guide for humanity than before. His activities will be such that the world shall have never seen the like before. His force will have the smack and twang of elemental things. There will be a new message for the world. Thus a period of six years from sixty-five to seventy-one will mark a new epoch in the spiritual history of the world. At seventy-one he retires from active life. At eighty he might perhaps seek a greater abode of Bliss! But Siva can captain his soul and master fate. May he live ever so long!

No study is exhaustive. Thus far with the heritage of the hermit's hands.

Dear reader, Hail to Ananda Kutir! Have a look at the Whole-man-Siva in his lovely environs. Nestling on the brink of the bank of the beautiful Ganga and lapped by her holy waters there lies the abode of Bliss, an unassuming tenement with a terrace for its roof. Sage Siva works and worships here. He is a dynamic spiritual force of the times; over fifty books of sacred lore have already seen the light of day from his pen. Many more are yet to come. Pamphlets, messages and inspiring letters are but the routine of his daily life.

New centers of 'Divine Life' spring up the country all over to promote and propagate his philosophy and erstwhile self-seekers do selfless service to their fellow-men.

Siva holds converse with such of those who go to him on a votive visit. He is a votary of Truth and it shines on his face. The visitors-have their 'Vision of Life' and doubting Thomas' feel the divine flame. Siva attends to the needs of the guests in person. He serves his disciples and aspirants in a hundred ways. No day passes in the Ashram without the aspirants receiving, something from his hands. The fruits placed before his feet by his

admirers are distributed amongst all. Occasionally he himself serves the meals to the Ashramites. Sometimes he feeds them himself with some delicacies as mother bird feeds its fond young ones. He is anxious about the health of all but himself. O Love! Can you ever find a better vehicle or sweeter nature for your marvelous manifestation!

In his ecstatic moods Siva all abruptly starts a Kirtan! Those that are around him are taken unawares but they join in chorus. A few minutes are thus passed without count of eternity! He stops! The congregation comes to!

I happened to be one among the crew of disciples, devotees, admirers and stray seekers present at the Ashram on the last Guru Poornima day. From ancient times to now it has been the custom for the disciples 'lay or robed' to worship at the feet of their Guru. All had gathered with fruits and flowers to have his Darshan and worship him. But the Master was reluctant. He likes emulation better than adoration. Siva had however to come out of his Kutia. It was eleven in the morning, we crowded round him but he escaped our attention, briskly walked to the Dharmasala a few yards up. We followed. He left the place and tripped over to Ramashram quite close by. There we went. Again he retraced his steps and went to the verandah of the Dharmasala. Here we besieged him. And helpless like a child Siva stood with, his back to the wall. What a heavenly embarrassment, and gleam in his glistening eyes, and a liquid look into the vast beyond, while we worshipped him with offerings of flowers on his head, and feet! In spite of myself I could not resist a few tears trickling through my eyes. Siva identifies himself with the dust. He saw the worshippers and the worshipped as one!

What was formerly a tree-clad hill top, steep, inaccessible and uneven, is today a beauty spot and the healthiest habitation of the locality. Here amidst imposing Kutias and a Bhajan Hall the new temple raises its lofty dome dominating, the scene. So Ananda Kutir can now be aptly termed as Anand Nagar and the once obscure Muni-ki-reti as *Sivagiri*. But what is there in a name? Siva lives forever.

Om Santi Santi Santi.

