

GRACE OF GOD

(H.H. Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj)

The life of man in this sense-universe is a life of temptation. He is born for leading a religious life. But he is led astray by the temptations of his environments. He is influenced by the society. He has not got the strength of will to resist the temptations. He has no belief in the existence of God and His Grace.

Once an official said: "O Swamiji, the world wants bread. I want bread. I care a two pence for the soul. Who wants the soul in these days? Nobody cares for spiritual matters." I replied to him: "You cannot live on bread alone, but you can live on Om, the symbol of Brahman. The mind wants mental food. The soul wants spiritual food."

The desire to attain knowledge of the Self will dawn in these proud, egoistic people only when they meet some adversities, calamities, troubles, and disappointments. The desire to attain the knowledge of the Self dawns in a person who is free from desires for sense-objects. My heart is filled with joy to see those persons who are filled with spiritual Samskaras and who are striving for Self-realisation. Even in this Iron Age (Kali-yuga), when the vast majority of persons run after worldly objects, there are earnest and sincere seekers who want God and God alone. They are exalted personages indeed! My silent adorations to them!

Life is a great battlefield. Life is a conquest. To live is to fight for the ideal and the goal. Life is a series of awakenings. Again and again, doubt will arise about the existence and Grace of God, even after many years of spiritual practice.

To *define* God is to *deny* God. You can give a definition of a finite object only. How can you de-

fine the limitless or infinite Being, who is the source and ultimate cause for everything? If you define God, you are limiting the limitless one, you are confining Him within the concepts of mind. God is beyond the reach of gross mind, but He can be realised through meditation with a pure, subtle and one-pointed mind.

God created this universe by His own will and then entered into it. He manifests Himself in the mind and heart of everyone. He is the first among the Devas. He is the Protector of the world. God is Eternity, All-pervading Essence, or Substance.

A wicked man does a crime and enters the jail as a prisoner. He has no independence in the jail. He is a slave. Sometimes the king also enters the jail of his own sweet will to see the condition of the prisoners. He visits the jail in order to do good to the prisoners and redress their grievances. He is quite independent. If people ask: "Where is the king now?", the minister says: "The king is in the jail now." The criminal has entered the jail and the king also has entered the jail. But there is a vast difference. Even so, the little Jiva takes birth in this world owing to the force of his desires and actions. He is swayed by ignorance. He has no independence. He is a slave of passions. He is a victim of ignorance. He is tossed hither and thither by the two currents, viz., likes and dislikes, whereas the Lord takes His incarnation in this world as an Avatar, out of His own sweet will, in order to protect the righteous and to punish the unrighteous.

This body is a complicated machine. Even eminent doctors have not thoroughly understood

the functions of the different organs of the body. If you can get knowledge of the Driver of the machine (body), then only you can acquire complete knowledge of this human machine. That Driver is God or Antaryamin (Inner Ruler). The Supreme Self (God) who is the source for everything, who is the Inner Controller of all beings; cannot be seen. But you can infer His Existence by looking at the sun, the moon, the stars, and other marvelous objects of this universe, which bespeak His supreme glory and ineffable splendour. You have great love for your hair on the head. You daily comb it nicely and apply hairoil but you throw the same hair if it falls into a cup of milk. You dislike to touch it. In loving the hair, you love your own Self only. The hair appears to be beautiful and attractive because of its association with the body of the Jiva and with the Chaitanya or Consciousness that is at the back of this body.

These three things, viz., a human birth, a longing for liberation and the protecting care of a Satguru (perfected sage) are rare indeed, and one can get these due to the Divine Grace only. Through the Grace of the Lord alone can one get the four means of salvation, a realised Guru for guidance and other means such as food, abode, clothing, etc. The Grace of the Lord is an antidote to all sorts of fear. Lord's Grace is a passport to enter the Kingdom of Illimitable Bliss. Obtain His Grace through self-surrender, pure love and worship.

Self-surrender is complete surrendering of the self to God. Self-surrender makes the devotee feel the reality of divine grace and Lord's readiness to bestow on him help at all times. The divine influence streams into his being and moulds it to make it a fit medium for divine realisation and divine instrumentality.

Surrender and grace are interrelated. Surrender draws down grace and grace makes surrender complete. Surrender starts the purification of the heart. Grace completes it. Without grace the com-

plete unification is not possible. Grace divinises your being in order that the constant inflow and inspiration can be received and retained. It is through divine grace alone that his whole being is galvanised and rejuvenated.

The self-arrogating little ego persists, and resists again and again. It clings leech-like to its old habits, cravings and desires. It wages guerilla war. It resists surrender. It demands certain objects for its secret gratification. The whole being should be surrendered. That is the reason why Lord Krishna says in the Gita: "*Tameva saranam gaccha sarvabhavena bhārata*"—"Flee unto Him alone for shelter, with all thy being, O Bharata." The Chitta, the ego, the mind, the intellect and the soul should be placed at the feet of the Lord. Mira did this and so she obtained Lord Krishna's grace and became one with Him.

The vulgar, stiff, obstinate ego is harder than diamond, reinforced concrete, or steel. It is very difficult to melt it. Constant vigilance and ceaseless effort is necessary to slay this dire enemy of peace and wisdom. It keeps subtle desires for its own silent appeasement. Introspect and find out the subtle desires that lurk in the corners of your heart through the search-light of concentration and discrimination and kill them ruthlessly through regular, silent meditation.

Do not bother about taking care of your body with much effort. God will save it if He needs it for further service. Surrender it at His feet and rest in peace. He will take care of it. A real devotee says: "Let me take millions of births. It does not matter. But let me be attached to the lotus-feet of Lord Hari. Let me have spontaneous devotion to the Lord. Let me be endowed with purity, spiritual strength, spirit of selfless service and divine virtues."

If you simply say without real inner feeling, 'I am Thine, O Lord,' this will not constitute real integral self-surrender. It should come from the

core of your heart. You must be prepared for a radical change. You should not stick to your old habits, ways and motives. You should not expect that everything should happen in the way you want. You should live to carry out the divine purpose. You should not think of those ambitions which the mind likes to gratify. You should not think of using even the divine grace or the divine force for your own purposes. The irrepressible ego will assert itself in various ways and refuse to give up its old habits and ways. It will try to get everything from the Divine. It will totally decline to give itself to the Divine. That is the reason why aspirants do not make any substantial progress in the spiritual path even after doing *sadhana* for several years.

There is no loss in self-surrender. You get from the Lord everything. You enjoy all divine Aisvarya of the Lord. The whole wealth of the Lord belongs to you. You become one with the Lord. You are freed from all wants and desires and cravings. The spiritually hungry and real thirsty aspirant who yearns for the vision of the Lord turns towards the Divine and is quite willing, eager and happy to consecrate his body, life, mind and soul at the feet of the Lord. He who is endowed with burning dispassion and discrimination and is really earnest for his spiritual rejuvenation can also do complete self-surrender even though he is in the world. In and through the world he realises the Lord by complete surrender of his entire being to Him. But it is only very few who are capable of doing this. As he advances in his devotion and sincere service, his surrender becomes more and more perfect and complete. His heart becomes purer and purer and gradually the light of knowledge dawns in him and he cognises

the supreme Atman, which pervades all and everywhere.

The actions performed by the *sadhak* after renunciation do not bind him, as he offers all his actions as offerings unto his preceptor or Lord. He does not do any action which can be considered as selfish. Thus through service of one's preceptor with utter self-dedication, his heart becomes purified, and ultimately the Lord becomes his preceptor. Now he is completely surrendered to the Lord and he attains the highest intuition.

In the beginning individual effort is very necessary. When surrender has been complete, the divine Grace dawns in him and the divine Power itself does the *sadhana* for the *sadhak*. The descent of divine Grace and Power takes complete possession of his mind, will, life and body. Then the *sadhana* goes on with tremendous speed.

The aspirant must not do any action which he is ashamed to tell in public. If he does any action, this will retard his spiritual progress. The physical body and the mind are offered at the altar of the service of the Lord, who is the manifest form of every being. Ultimately his mind merges in the soul within. The *sadhak* becomes a Jivanmukta, or a liberated sage.

Sadhaks bold! The Lord loves you even when you turn away from Him. How much more shall He love you, if you turn to Him again sincerely with faith and devotion! Very great is His love, greater than the greatest mountains; very deep is His affection, deeper than the unfathomable depth of the ocean! Be regular in your *sadhana*. May you all obtain the Lord's Grace through faith and devotion! May the Lord shower His Grace upon you all! Glory to the Lord and His Grace!

See good in all. This means see God in all, for He dwells in all names. Learn to give in to others. Learn to let go of your own thoughts and views.

—Swami Sivananda

KNOWLEDGE IS MEANT TO BE LIVED

(Sri Swami Chidananda)

Radiant Immortal Atman! Beloved seekers and *sadhaks* who are gathered together here in the spiritual presence of worshipful and beloved Holy Master Gurudev Swami Sivanandaji, in his sacred *samadhisthan* at this holy hour! You have been here for a period of chanting, *kirtan*, *guru stotra*, *santi path* and silent meditation with which you have opened your new day in a very *sattvic* and holy way, so as to give it a proper spiritual direction, so that this *bhav* may be carried throughout the remainder of the day until you retire for the night. In participating in this spiritual *sadhana*, I have the good fortune to place before you an important truth about Yoga and Vedanta, an important truth about philosophy and spirituality.

Philosophy and spirituality, of which you are all students, are to be known, but more than acquiring knowledge, a student of philosophy and spirituality must also try to acquire the practical wisdom of how to fit this newly gained knowledge into his daily life, thoughts, words and actions. In short: “How can I live in the light of this philosophy? How can I base my life upon this philosophy? Whatever I have learned in Yoga, how can I turn it into a new form, into my day-to-day life and actions?” This you must know.

Philosophy and Vedanta are both for knowing and for living. If they are only known, you become a *pundit*, a scholar, a professor, a lecturer. You will be highly regarded. You will be able to teach philosophy to others, impart the knowledge of Yoga to others, but you yourself will not be a Yogi, a *sadhak*. For it is whether the philosophy, which has made you a learned person and *pundit*, is seen to manifest in your everyday life and ac-

tions, philosophy in action, philosophy in application—that determines whether or not you can be regarded as a spiritual person.

This is the special difference between secular philosophers, who have learned philosophy in order to become professors, doctors, *pundits*, writers, become world famous, and those who have studied philosophy in order to bring about a transformation in their lives. The latter have studied philosophy, not to know what philosophy has to say, but in order to know how it can “transform my life, bring me from the darkness of ignorance to the light of wisdom; how it can bring me out of *maya*, above *maya*, beyond *maya*; how I can live this philosophy and attain liberation.” Philosophy for him means attainment of liberation; it is not for *prapancha* (worldly life) but for *paramartha* (supreme value).

We all know that philosophy teaches that this is a world of *dvandvas* (pairs of opposites): *sukha, dukkha* (pain, pleasure); *harsha, soka* (joy, grief); *labha, hani* (gain, loss); *jaya, parajaya* (victory, defeat). All this we know, but if a good thing happens and we rejoice, and its opposite happens and we are shocked, then we are not true philosophers. We have not gained anything from the knowledge that the world consists of *dvandvas*. It is only when this knowledge can bring us a firm abidance in unshaken equanimity, when our consciousness is not assailed by anything, it becomes firmly fixed, unshakable, then you are more than philosopher, you are a *sthitaprajna* (one who is unshakably established in superconsciousness).

In this way, knowledge of Yoga, knowledge of *dharmā*—all these knowledges—if they are merely known, it is better than not knowing them; but if you stop short of living them, then you have committed a great blunder.

We know that this world is made up of three *gunas*—*sattva*, *rajas*, *tamas*. The Bhagavad Gita says which of them is desirable, which of them should be treated with caution, which of them should be rejected. You know that, and if your life becomes a conscious process of living in such a way as to be constantly engaged in encouraging *sattva*, rejecting *tamas* and being wise and cautious in dealing with your *rajas*, then you are a *sadhak*, you are a Yogi, you are a *jnani*.

Otherwise, even if you know that this world is made up of *trigunatmika maya* (*maya* characterised by the three *gunas*) and that *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas* are constantly present in every little thing, if this knowledge is only knowledge in you, if in your daily life there is not the careful selection of *sattva*, the rejection of *tamas* and the careful handling and directing of *rajas*, then you are only a *sushka* (dry, empty) *jnani*, a *sushka* Vedantin.

Your Vedanta will not flower; it will not give fruit. It will not keep on growing; it has no scope for expansion or growth or unfoldment, because it is dry Vedanta, *sushka* Vedanta. And *sushka* Vedanta will soon become a burden; it will cease to benefit you even though you may get admiration from the world. But, does the *sadhak* come into the spiritual life in order to get admiration from the world? Does the *sadhak* study philosophy only in order to know, or is it to understand from that knowledge “how I can live my life in a sublime way, how I can wisely direct my path towards the goal of liberation.”

What is the purpose in knowing? This has to be well thought out. The correct attitude towards all philosophy, all Vedanta, all Yoga has to be cul-

tivated, and it should be constantly, actively applied in daily life.

If we are in an Ashram, we are also in a world, and as anywhere else, the *dvandvas* are here. The three *gunas* are also here. It is up to you how you live in the Ashram. If you wish to have maximum benefit out of Uttarakhand, Ganges bank, a Guru’s teaching, spiritual life, then this process of the selecting and welcoming of *sattva*, the rejecting of *tamas* and the wise handling and channelising of *rajas*, along with constant discrimination between the *dvandvas* must be going on in your life. Then it will yield results.

Now it is up to us, each one of us to ask: “Does this very special quality, does this *sadhana* of enquiry, discrimination, selection, rejection, does it characterise my life here?” If it does, you will know the reason why you have progressed so much. If it does not, you will know the reason for not having progressed so much. The environment, the atmosphere, the surroundings, the set-up are not to blame. If you know whether you are doing this or not, then you will understand why you are progressing or why you are not progressing. You will know where to set your life right. This is a very essential study for all *sadhaks*, Vedantins and Yogis who are earnest seekers, who are *jijnasus*, who have got keen *mumukshutva*.

Yes, Gurudev has done a very special act of grace. Perhaps he knew human tendency. So ninety per cent of his spiritual writings and teachings are admonitions: “Do this, do that, think in this way, act in this way, live in this way, engage in Yoga in such and such a way, carry on *sadhana* in this way.” He solved the problem directly. He did not merely use *sushka* knowledge. Even while he gave knowledge, he immediately said, “Do it,” and showed the way how to do it. He emphasised action, emphasised *kriya*, emphasised actual *abhyasa*. Perhaps that was his greatest gift to the world of *sadhaks* and seekers! God bless you!

THE UNIVERSAL AND THE PARTICULAR

(*Sri Swami Krishnananda*)

Since Spirit is universal,—because non-universality would make it perishable—the presence of the Spirit in anything is, in fact, the Universal Existence being immanent in the particular. Spirituality, or religion, a designation that has generally been applied to signify the higher values of life, consists, then, in the measure of awareness of the extent to which the Universal Principle inhabits locations of any kind. The human body, the family, the community, the province, the nation, or the world as a whole stands before us as an example of the operation of the Universal in different degrees of particularity. Human individuality, physically speaking, is all anatomy and physiology, a combination of physical and chemical properties cohering into the pattern of a whole, vitality pervading the whole system, so that the human being is not just bone and flesh and it transcends the diversity of the physical limbs. This is common knowledge, and it becomes clear when one investigates into the fact of man remaining a whole as a self-identical entity even if some limbs of the body are to be taken away by medical operation. Here is an immediately available instance of the consciousness of oneself transcending the particulars of the bodily limbs as a basic element of the universal rising above particularised parts. So is the case with the family, which is a name that is used to indicate an integrating awareness of a total whole of which the members of the family are inseparable parts. But the family can remain a whole even if some member thereof is to die. The family is a whole, whether the members are larger in number or smaller. The quantity of the particulars does not affect the quantitative integration of the whole. Thus also is the case with the whole-

ness and particularising aspects associated with a community, a part of a country or the nation as a whole. The national unity, which is a cultural inclusiveness, can stand by itself as an unaffected whole even if individual members constituting the whole are to increase or decrease by way of some special circumstance. Institutions, organisations, governments, are all, then, principles existing as a state of consciousness, an ideology above individualities, transcending them altogether in everything and even disregarding, often, the existence or non-existence of individuals. The Universal can exist even if none of the particulars exists. This is so because the Universal is an ideal and a consciousness which acts as an integrating cohesive force among particulars and itself does not need for its existence the existence of the particulars. We come back here to our earlier illustration, that the wholeness of a human individual can continue to be there even if some fifty per cent of the physical limbs of the body were not to be there. This unconsciously lands us, in the end, in the conviction that the Absolute can exist without the relative, and God can exist even if the world of creation were not to exist.

Philosophers, many a time, have found it difficult to imagine the existence of a universal independent of particulars. This difficulty arises because it is wrongly assumed that the universal is an abstraction, a conceptual generalisation arising from some common features seen in particulars, such as the universal principle of horseness seen to be present in each individual case of a horse. But the universal need not be a quality depending upon an isolated individual as a substance. The universal is not like the greenness seen in all

leaves or the redness seen in roses. That is to say, the universal is not a quality of a substance other than itself. Such a nominalism of outlook in the definition of the universal can arise only if one is completely oblivious of the fact that even the awareness of there being such things as particulars would not be possible unless there is a prior element of consciousness-grasp which knows all the particulars in a single act of attention, proving thereby that such a consciousness is larger in dimension than the particulars, is immanent in them, by which immanence it knows them, and is also transcendent to them due to which it is none of the particulars.

Our observations made above will suffice to illustrate the priority and antecedence of the universal to particulars of any kind. Here is a hint that any sort of exclusive interest in the particulars alone would be violative of the requirements of the health of the organism which is the whole, and this rule will apply to every level or degree of the manifestation of the universal through the entire series of the evolutionary ascent, right from the individual to the highest universal, namely, the Absolute.

The meditation of life, then, is the gradual establishment of wholeness in the midst of particulars, in every level, in every stage, in every degree of evolution. Grandly has it been proclaimed

by the Bhagavad Gita, in a majestic epic fashion, that the Universal, designated as Brahman, has hands and feet everywhere, has eyes, faces and heads everywhere, and it exists enveloping everything. It is the illuminator of all the sense-organs, but in itself it is none of them. It is the support behind all diversity, but it cannot be identified with anyone of these. It is the reality behind appearances. Being above substances and qualities, relations and modifications, it cannot be said to have any attributes, though no quality or attribute can subsist without it being there as the basic substratum. It is inside and outside all things, but it has itself no inside and outside. Being the foundation for all movement and activity, it cannot be characterised by any movement or activity. Being the very Seer and Knower, as the basic Subject, it cannot be seen, heard or even thought by the mind. Being endless and infinite, it is everywhere like a limitless expanse, but as the Self of everything nothing can be nearer than its presence. Among beings that are divided it may look divided as their substratum, but by itself it is not divided, as it is the very awareness behind all possible division. Everything is absorbed into it, everything is consumed into it, as it were, and it stands unparalleled as a blend of eternity and infinity, as the Light of all lights, glorying in its radiance beyond the darkness of ignorance.

In the statement of the Upanishad, 'Existence alone was', the words Existence and Was do not denote two different things or even concepts, but convey one and the same meaning, the difference of words being introduced only with a concession to the weakness of human language which consists of sentences with verbs.

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The state of Jivanmukti is one in which desires cannot have any place because the Jivanmukta is in a definite condition, wherein established, he practises spontaneously the law of the Absolute. —*Swami Krishnananda*

 (Continued from the previous Issue)

CRITERION AND INNER BALANCE (Part 2)

(Sri Swami Shivapremananda)

EDUCATION IS SALVATION

Social peace is the result of this freedom, out of which come leadership and political responsibility and wisdom. The basis of it is education, to create a moral consciousness, a personal sense of duty, obligation and accountability, a boundless curiosity to learn whatever is under and within the sky, whatever is within oneself to tap, develop, improve upon and utilise.

Personal peace, of course, depends on the education, refinement and sublimation of the ego. It is in the ability to manage our attitude and conduct, and come to terms with changing circumstances by the philosophy “even this will pass away, so balance the mind in pleasure and pain,” that “we came with nothing and will depart the same way.” So why make a mess of yourself in between?

Raw human nature grows like a jungle. Life can be savage if our untutored nature is allowed to run wild. The idea of a noble savage is a throw-back into the myth of being spontaneous, unhampered by over-tutoring and wanting to be free from repression on account of bad tutoring, and be blissfully irresponsible. There is nothing noble in a savage who is but spontaneously expressing his brutish nature. The value of spontaneity is in what one is spontaneous about.

Life can be cultivated like a garden if the desirable plants are tended, cultivated, and the undesirable weeds removed. Like a garden, individually and collectively, it needs constant care and renewal. Otherwise, within a few generations, the descendants of a gifted people can be-

come like the Romans decadent and subjugated by barbarians, or like Germany being taken over by home-grown Nazis, as it was.

Education is a mental, moral, technological and cultural preparation of an individual for a better understanding and control and direction of his or her life. A just society makes this possible through a democratic means of its availability, on the basis of intelligence and aptitude, through autonomous institutions of knowledge and culture, without the control and interference of state or religion.

Education and personal experience are the father and mother of criterion. They should prepare the mind like a vast, frontierless region for hundreds of philosophers and evolved souls to guide and inspire; hundreds of scientists, architects and engineers to investigate, invent, innovate and build; statesmen and idealists to promote justice and our sense of worth; poets and musicians to recite and sing; painters and mystics to sketch the facets of life as it is and as it can be.

Education is to make our potentialities come alive to motivate and fulfil, for in a work well done, a duty well carried out, a love well sublimated, an ideal well realised lie our evolution. A society's progress depends on the amount of investment it makes in research for the best and the brightest, and in tapping, vocationally training and making the optimum use of the human resources in the rank and file. For the intelligent but poor, education should be accessible through scholarship as a long-term loan.

St. Paul said that truth should make us free, indeed from our capacity to harm ourselves and

others on account of the ignorance of our spiritual resources. A prayer in the Vedas urges, "Lead me on from the unreal to the real and from darkness to light." I do not like the last line, "from death to immortality", indicating the individuality-complex to perpetuate itself. This search for truth, to free the mind from ignorance is, after all, the goal of education.

Replacement of anarchy with order and passion by reason is the purpose of knowledge. Love of, and commitment to, the ideals that represent the object of devotion are the purpose of faith. Knowledge and faith are the two wheels of the cart we ride, knowledge that is understanding and faith that is a deep emotion for the best in ourselves. The failure of knowledge is in intellectual vanity and self-righteousness, and of faith in superstition and emotional theatre. The failure of philosophy and religion is in their incapacity to differentiate.

The highest meaning of our existence is in what we put into it. After birth we grow psycho-

logically by receiving from others, such as the protection of love and guidance through education from our parents, if we are lucky enough, and by the help of others in later life. What makes life's journey meaningful is not whether we have received enough or not, but what we are willing to and capable of putting into it and transmit to others.

This meaning alone transcends the inevitable death of the individual, because we continue to live in the memories of those we have associated with, left our marks on, such as relatives, companions and descendants that survive, and the more gifted among us who have left their traces in arts and literature, science and technology, social reform and welfare. Even on a modest scale, the meaning of life consists in what we have meant to each other within the family and among friends, through love and understanding, care and protection, help and consolation. Life is, indeed, what we make of it. *(Concluded)*

APPEAL FOR SPECIALIST SERVICE IN THE SIVANANDA CHARITABLE HOSPITAL

The Sivananda Charitable Hospital, of the Sivananda Ashram, Divine Life Society (Headquarters) Shivanandanagar, situated on the bank of Mother Ganga, where service to poor and suffering goes on in the spirit of Gurudev's missionary zeal, needs Medical professionals in the following fields.

- 1. Medical Officers (Physicians) with qualification M.D. or equivalent;**
- 2. Surgeons with qualification M.S. or equivalent;**
- 3. Anesthetists;**
- 4. Pediatricians;**
- 5. Pharmacists;**
- 6. Laboratory Technicians (DMLT)**

Devotees of Gurudev and *sadhaks* who wish to lead spiritual life are requested to respond to this appeal. The selected blessed ones will be provided with accommodation and food, besides monthly honorarium for their loving service. They can also actively participate in all the day-to-day spiritual programmes in the Ashram.

Persons retired from service having experience in the respective fields with sound health are welcome to apply.

—THE DIVINE LIFE SOCIETY

BEYOND SATTVA, RAJAS AND TAMAS

(Sri Swami Atmaswarupananda)

The spiritual life has sometimes been described as a gradual shift from an ego-centred life to a God-centred life. What is the nature of that shift? What is an ego-centred life, and what is a God-centred life? We don't really need to ask what an ego-centred life is because fundamentally that is what we are all living. The ego, the sense of separation, is so all-pervasive that fundamentally we don't know anything else. What we do know is different intensities of our ego. We can be aware when *tamas* is there, *rajas* or *sattva*, but we're not really aware of anything except an ego-centred life.

A question arises: "But don't we know a God-centred life at our better times—when we are worshipping, repeating His Name, studying about Him, meditating on Him? But is that a God-centred life, or is that part of the successful development of the *sattvic* ego—that is absolutely necessary in our approach to God?"

The reason that this question has significance is that many people despair of having a true spiritual life because their circumstances are so world-centred that they feel that there is no chance to think about God, to pray to Him, to meditate on Him. From a certain angle of vision this point of view is correct, especially if we equate God with a *sattvic* ego. In other words, if we equate the means—our spiritual experiences and understanding—with the end. But if we understand that God is not the *sattvic* ego, but that which knows the *sattvic* ego, then we recognise that God in all His fullness is always here and now whether *tamas*, *rajas* or *sattva* is present.

This understanding is important from two points of view. If we are fortunate enough to be filling our mind with God, either spontaneously or through our spiritual practices, we must always be aware that what we have found is the *sattvic* ego, that God is never more or less present. What can be more or less present is *sattva*. On the other hand, if God doesn't seem to be present at all, if we're overwhelmed by our worldly activities, we should also realise that in actual fact God is still equally present whether we can feel Him or not.

What then is the answer? The answer in both cases is the same. Whether we think that God is present—we think that we are just at the doorway of God-realisation—or whether we think we are an absolutely hopeless case, we're wrong in both cases, and the correct answer is the same in both cases. If we think that we're hopeless, we offer that to the God that knows the hopelessness. If we think we're next to God-realisation, we equally offer that to the God that knows that egoistic *sattvic* assumption.

This is the essence of surrender. This is why Pujya Swami Chidanandaji and all the saints say, "Offer it all to God." Whether we are *tamasic*, *rajasic* or *sattvic* the answer is the same: Offer it to God. What God? The God that we are but can never know. That is the God that never leaves us, the God of the peace that passeth understanding, the God of utter humility, the God that frees us from our minds—from *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. As Lord Krishna told Arjuna: A sage is the same whether *sattva*, *rajas* or *tamas* is present.

Sivananda's Gospel of Divine Life

CALL TO BLISS

O TRAVELLER, LISTEN!

1. This Samsara is essenceless. It is sapless like the stem of a plantain tree. It will vanish ultimately when you attain Samadhi.

2. Worldly life is Apoorna (not full), imperfect, finite and limited. It is full of weaknesses, pains, sorrows and diseases.

3. Commence your journey on the divine path from today. All anxiety and worry will end here and now.

4. Develop a correct value of life here. It is not full. It is not perfect. There is always a sense of want.

5. This world, which consists of friends, enemies and neutrals, which affects you with pleasure and pain, is only a creation of your mind which is a product of ignorance.

6. The objects of the world are intoxicants. Money is opium; man to woman and woman to man is wine; power is brandy; position is *ganja*; property is champagne.

7. Do not be deceived by the charm of an external object. It is an illusion.

8. This world is a pit of live coals, a vale of tears. You cannot expect lasting bliss here.

9. A worldly man is very busy with the toys of worldly objects. He forgets to look within and enjoy the eternal bliss of the Soul.

10. An ordinary worldly man lives in his emotions. He lives in his lower mind. He has no idea of intuition.

11. A worldly man has a perverted mind. He is intoxicated with the wine of his own ego.

12. Vain are the ways of worldly men. Vanity is the foundation of society.

13. Be thou in this world as though thou art a passer-by on the road, or like a lotus leaf in water.

14. Verily, long is the way. *Nil desperandum*, comrade! March fearlessly. Be patient. Success is sure. You will reach the goal assuredly.

15. This world is an inn. Start your homeward journey. Your original home is Paramdhama, the immortal abode of Brahman.

16. What have you to do with wealth? What have you to do with relatives? How shall your wife bestead you? All will surely pass away. Seek the immortal Atman hidden in the cave of your heart.

17. O Nectar's son! O child of immortality! Sing the song of strength. Sing the song of triumph. March forward fearlessly and reach the goal of illumination.

EGO-DECTOMY

A surgeon returned from London told the Master that he had performed a number of eye operations. The Master asked him humorously, "How many ego-dectomy operations have you done?"

By "ego-dectomy" the Master meant the removal of the ego. The doctor understood and replied, "I have not done any so far, and I am going to try the first operation on myself!"

Everyone, including the Master himself, appreciated the doctor's answer.

 REAL AUSTERITY

“The Ashram is not what it was some years ago, Swamiji. We do not have all the conveniences, comforts and facilities to serve the visitors as we used to have previously,” said a senior disciple of the Master. He continued, “Sri P., a very good devotee who is staying here for the past few days, says that he wanted to stay for some time but because he is not very comfortable and does not get his meals and coffee in time, he might leave earlier.”

“If he wants comforts and conveniences, why did he come here? This is a place for spiritual practices and austerities. Well, it is our duty to offer him the utmost in comfort and convenience. Attend on him specially. Make him quite comfortable.”

“This is also difficult nowadays, Swamiji,” replied the disciple.

“You cannot expect the Ashram to be in the same condition always. This is a world of change. The comforts you commanded a few years ago you may not get now; but you are doing more service to humanity. It is three months since I asked for a towel; I am using only a torn one. All these passing changes we must joyously endure. This is austerity. Do you think that standing on the head for a hundred years, as in Sirshasana, is austerity? Peace is the greatest austerity. Contentment is the greatest austerity. Even in such conditions let your spirit of service not flag. You may not be able to serve the visitors as grandly as you used to do, but do your best,” concluded the Master.

IS REBIRTH TRUE?

“Swamiji, what is your conclusive opinion about rebirth? Do you really believe that there is rebirth?” asked Sri Asvatthananarayanan.

Surprisingly enough, the Master’s first reaction was a bit stern.

“What! Having been born a Hindu and having the blood of the great sages coursing through your veins you still entertain this doubt in your mind?”

But immediately the Master resumed his serene, happy countenance and continued, “Yes, undoubtedly there is rebirth.

“First of all, you have several miraculous instances of young boys and girls suddenly exhibiting great knowledge. A young girl who has never studied any book recites the Gita. How do you account for it except by the fact that she had mastered the Gita in her previous birth and that through the Grace of the Lord that knowledge has come into the conscious part of her mind in this birth too.

“Further, rebirth is a necessity for the soul’s evolution. Perfection cannot be achieved in a single birth. Even to develop some cardinal virtues it might take several births. If you wish to attain Self-realisation you have to achieve perfection in all the virtues. You have to achieve perfect self-purification. So rebirth is a necessity for the individual soul’s evolution.”

“Swamiji, please explain to me how the impressions of actions and desires are transferred from one embodiment to another.”

“Have you seen a caterpillar moving from one leaf to another? It will reach the edge of one leaf and then project itself; it will catch hold of another leaf and then only will it leave the first one entirely. The soul also goes about like this. Even before it leaves one body, it has made another (gross or subtle), according to its Karmas and desires. It enters this new body with all the past impressions.

“Now please go through some of my books. You will get a clear idea. It is no use merely discussing these matters. You should study, understand the mystery, then practise *sadhana* and

attain Self-realisation. Do not yield to intellectual curiosity.”

SEE GOD IN ALL

A few distinguished visitors had come—military officials and their wives. As the Master came out of the office to give fruit to the visitors, he found a cow standing near the entrance. The first fruit was offered to the cow. Next it was the turn of a dog. Eventually, the distinguished visitors were entertained.

One of the ladies in the group could not resist giving expression to her lofty views on a subject as vital as food itself.

“Swamiji, you know that there is a great food shortage everywhere in the country and in the world. Thousands of human beings are unable to get their necessities. And here you are feeding cows and dogs with things considered luxuries by many human beings.”

Another pious member of the party interrupted her sister, “Swamiji has a large heart.”

The Master smiled and said, “All this is *sadhana* for the expansion of the heart. When you feed your children, your guests, animals and birds, try to feel that the Lord is seated in them and that He accepts your offerings. See God in all. Try, try and try again. The old notions will not disappear in a day. Go on. Gradually your consciousness will expand and you will attain Cosmic Consciousness or Advaitic realisation.”

DESIRE FOR NAME AND FAME

To a group of devotees and disciples the Master said, “Some are very anxious to acquire name and fame. They make a show of themselves. They travel in cars, build clock towers and skyscrapers. They wear fashionable dress and employ a number of servants. They pose as great servants of society but every moment they try to

acquire more fame. The slightest criticism upsets them. They cannot bear opposition. They wish that everyone should respect them. In spite of all this they do not get fame and hence get upset and restless.

“But if a man is really selfless he will not care for name and fame. He will do his work with great interest but will not expect any reward for it. Work itself is his reward. He will have no desire for fame. He will bear abuse. Only such a man will enjoy peace. He will get fame also; it will be his handmaid. But he will not be attached to it. Such a person alone can do real service to society. Therefore, give up all desire for fame. Work in a spirit of dedication. You will enjoy bliss. You will get fame also. Work with single-minded devotion and dedication.”

WORLD IS GOD

A visitor handed the Master a spiritual book written by him and humbly said, “This is a book written by a worldly man for worldly people.”

At once the Master said, “World is God. It is a book written by a godly man for godly people.”

CONTROL OF THE SENSES

Zal Mathaji enquired, “My Lord, how to control the senses?”

The Master replied, “If the tongue wishes to taste sweetmeats, take only ordinary food. If the eyes wish to see cinema pictures, refrain from visiting the cinema. See Krishna only everywhere. If the organ of speech troubles you, observe silence.”

“If the mind troubles?” enquired Zal Mathaji.

“If the mind troubles, meditate on the Lord. Do Japa. You can control all the senses by fixing the mind on the Lord.”

(Courtesy D.L.S. S.A.)

Divine Life for Children**DESTINY FAVOURS THOSE WHO PERSEVERE***(Sri Swami Ramarajyam)*

This incident has been culled from Indian History.

Preparations for a war between two states were going on. The kings of both the states were disciples of a saint—the same saint. Both of them visited the saint to seek his blessings at different times.

When the king of one of those two states approached the saint to seek his blessings, the saint closed his eyes to get an answer from God. Thereafter he told him, “You will be victorious.”

The king of the other state also went to the saint. The saint closed his eyes to speak to God and then told the king, “It is doubtful that you would win.”

The king was not disheartened. He told the commander of his armies, “We are not sure of our victory, but that does not matter. We will fight until we die come what may. Make thorough preparations. If the goddess of war wants us to sacrifice our lives to her, we are ready for it.”

The king, who was assured that he would be victorious, was extremely happy. His joy knew no bounds. He stopped thinking about war. He and his soldiers got lost in fun and frolic. They simply forgot that they had to fight a war.

One morning the war bugles were sounded. Soldiers from both the sides stood on the battlefield facing each other. The war started.

The soldiers who were sure of their victory were not worried at all as they had been blessed by the saint. They were elated by the thought of their sure victory. They were not mentally prepared for the fight. They had not even made necessary preparations for the war. They were few in

number and had only a few weapons with them. All of a sudden they noticed that a white bull appeared on the battleground on the side of the enemy. That was a ferocious bull with long horns, fiery eyes and a huge body. Shaking his horns fiercely the bull ran towards those careless soldiers and caused havoc among them. They began to fall.

The soldiers of the other side got encouraged. The morale of these soldiers, who had come prepared to win or to die, was already high. That bull boosted their morale. They too started fighting fiercely.

The king, who was blessed by the saint, was defeated. The other king who knew very much about his probable defeat bravely won the battle.

The defeated king went to the saint and said, “What a blessing you had given to me!”

The saint closed his eyes and spoke to God. After a little while he opened his eyes and said, “Dear child, you were sure to win and your opponent was sure to lose, but you reposed faith in your fate and made no efforts to fight. Your enemy had faith in his valour and in perseverance. In spite of being fully aware of their impending defeat, his soldiers prepared themselves for the war. That is why God came in the guise of a bull to help them. Who had forbidden you to make efforts?”

The king had nothing to say. He stood dejected before the saint.

Dear children, the one who perseveres can change even his destiny. Destiny favours those who persevere. Good luck of an idle man—who does not persevere—may turn into bad luck.



NEWS AND REPORTS

NEWS FROM THE HEADQUARTERS

SEVA THROUGH SIVANANDA HOME

Sivananda Home has been established by The Divine Life Society to serve the needy and the poor people. Those who require medical treatment, but have no means, no human support, no shelter, no attendant and those who are rejected by the society are served through the Home.

Though leprosy or Hansen's disease is completely curable, it is not as simple as it sounds like. Even after a full-term course of multi-drug therapy, many a patient has to live the rest of his or her life with irreversible deformities and handicaps, especially when the treatment has started only in a late stage of the disease. Loss of sensation, no feeling of pain when an ulcer appears and therefore having no urge to seek medical advice or treatment at that point, is one of the reasons. Most of the leprosy patients admitted in Sivananda Home have come in a stage when already the nerves of the fingers, toes, eyes and legs were irreversibly damaged, leading to complete blindness, loss of fingers, drop-foot and chronic ulcers of hand and feet. A patient suffering from leprosy does not feel, for example, the heat of a glass of tea, and a moment of forgetfulness can cause severe burning wounds, since the reflex to withdraw comes forth only from the pain, only after a lot of damage has already been done.

The treatment in Sivananda Home is the regular MDT medication, besides health, education, exercises, hydrotherapy to prevent sores, consul-

tation and treatment from an eye-specialist, cleaning and dressing of the wounds, and, if needed, reference to a surgeon for operation. In addition to the admitted patients, OPD leprosy patients, in initial stage are also taken care of by means of supply of medication, health education and monthly check-up.

The physical part is only one aspect of the disease. Through the centuries, people suffering from leprosy are being looked down upon, cast away, abandoned, burned, humiliated, and separated from what is called the normal society. This stigma is a heavy and unimaginable load and has left a deep scar in each and every person's heart, who is suffering from this unhideable hideous illness. The psychological pain may come out in the form of inferiority complex, depression, anger, greed, undeclared behaviour or suspicion in general, and loss of sensation, but not in the inner chambers of a heart, where more than anywhere else the pain of the broken body can be felt.

Sivananda Home has been serving and taking care of such patients, both in the Home and outside, daily, as a regular part of its humble service.

"Come unto Me ye that are heavily laden, I will give you rest. Whosoever comes unto Me, he shall not be cast out. The people of the world rejected you, I will not." (Jesus Christ)

"Feed the hungry. Clothe the naked. Serve the sick. This is Divine Life." —Swami Sivananda

**SIXTY-THIRD ANNIVERSARY OF
THE AKHANDA MAHAMANTRA SANKIRTAN YAJNA**

The Divine Life Society Headquarters celebrated the 63rd Anniversary of the Akhanda Mahamantra Sankirtan Yajna on the 3rd of December 2006. From 27th November to 3rd December there was group chanting of the Mahamantra at three different periods—morning, noon and night.

At 3.30 p.m. on 3rd December there was a grand procession carrying the portraits of Lord Rama, Krishna, Siva and Gurudev Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj to the chorus recitation of

the Mahamantra '*Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare, Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare,*' from the Bhajan Hall down to Sri Gurudev's Kutir, which wended its way along the main road to the nearby Kailasa Ashram and returned to the Bhajan Hall. Hindi booklets containing the glory of the Divine Name were distributed to those that chanced to meet the procession. The procession terminated after Puja, Arati and distribution of special Prasad.

SRIMAD BHAGAVAD GITA JAYANTI

The Ashram solemnly observed the Bhagavad Gita Jayanti on 1st December 2006. The special feature of the celebration of the Gita Jayanti was the organised group reading of the entire Bhagavad Gita. The collective group chanting commenced at 9 a.m. and concluded at 11.30 a.m. Sannyasins and *sadhaks* of the Ashram as well as guests who came for the Jayanti assembled at the Samadhi Shrine where a beautiful portrait of Lord

Krishna was installed on a specially decorated altar for the day's celebration.

The participants were seated in rows and collectively chanted the Bhagavad Gita. After this the Gita-mahatmya was read and Archana was performed to Lord Sri Krishna and Srimad Bhagavad Gita. The special function concluded at about 12 noon after Arati and distribution of Prasad.

SRI DATTATREYA JAYANTI

The Birthday of Lord Dattatreya, the Trimurti Avatara, was celebrated in the Dattatreya Mandir, situated in the Dattatreya hillock of the Ashram, on the 4th December 2006.

The function commenced at 9.30 a.m. Abhisheka was offered to the idol of Lord Dattatreya to the chanting of Rudra, Chamaka, Purusha Sukta, Narayana Sukta, etc., by the se-

nior Swamis of the Ashram, inside the little temple. Bhajan and Sankirtan was held in chorus by the inmates and devotees assembled by the side of the Mandir, in the open platform. After the Abhisheka, the worship concluded with Archana and Arati, after which all the inmates, visitors and guests of the Ashram assembled partook the sacred Prasad there.

REPORTS FROM THE D.L.S. BRANCHES
I

The following Branches have organised the special activities as mentioned below:

Ambala (Haryana): A special Satsanga on Sri Guru Nanak Jayanti with a talk on him and Bhajan-kirtan.

Badakuanl (Orissa): Paduka Puja at the residences of 4 devotees, 5 mobile Satsangas, and also a Bhagavad Gita Parayana in the last two months.

Bangalore: Special Satsangas on Vijaya Dasami and Sri Skanda Shashthi.

Bellary (Karnataka): 3-day programmes of special Satsanga, discourse and Paduka Puja on the birth anniversary of H.H. Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj (Sivananda Jayanti); special Puja on the birth anniversary of H.H. Sri Swami Chidanandaji Maharaj, special Puja on Vijaya Dasami and Dipavali; Sri Varasiddhi Vinayaka Pratishtha Mahotsava and the anniversary of opening of Swami Sivananda Building on 12th October with procession of Lord Vinayaka and a Homa; Punyathithi of H.H. Sri Swami Krishnanandaji Maharaj on 23rd November.

Bhanjanagar (Orissa): (1) Sivananda Jayanti: Shodashopachara Paduka Puja with Bilva leaves for 11 Malas (11×108) in the morning, and in the evening Havan with oblation for the Mantra of 'Om Namoh Bhagavate Sivanandaya' and discourses; (2) Chidananda Jayanti: The programmes were organised in the Prayer Hall of Sri Swami Chidananda Cultural Centre on the same pattern as on Sivananda Jayanti. 200 devotees participated in the programmes with utmost devotion and gaiety; (3) Navaratri Puja: Goddess Durga was installed in the specially decorated Prayer Hall. The 9-day worship programmes included Sri Durga Saptashati Path and in the evening, discourse on Devi Mahatmya. On Vijaya Dasami, after the Path and Kumari Puja, 150 devotees were served the Prasad as midday meals. (4) Kartika Month: The Branch conducted daily Satsanga at the residences of devo-

tees from October 4 to 27, and a 9-day Sri Ramcharit Manas Satra from October 28 to November 5. 60 members recited Sri Ramayana daily for 5 hours in the morning. The 3-hour evening programme at Sri Raghunatha Temple was Sri Ramayana Katha by Revered Smt. Kamal Kumari Panigrahi of Sunabeda. 2000 devotees enjoyed the Bhakti Rasa at the site, and another 10,000 through live telecast.

Bhimakand (Orissa): Revered Sri Swami Sivananda-Gurusevanandaji visited the Branch on 30th November.

Bikaner (Rajasthan): (1) Prabodhini Ekadasi: Sri Tulasi Puja, 108-lamp special decoration; (2) Sri Guru Nanak Jayanti: Reading from a Sikh scripture, Kirtan; (3) Somavati Amavasya: Special Bhajan-kirtan, distribution of food and sweets to the poor; and (4) Homa on 22nd November.

Khatiguda (Orissa): Srimad Bhagavat Saptaha from October 26 to November 1, a Havan, special Satsanga and recitation of Sri Vishnu-sahasranama Stotram on the concluding day of the Bhagavat Katha; A mobile Satsanga on 11th November.

Gumergunda (Chhattisgarh): Kartiki Purnima programmes at an ancient temple on the confluence of two rivers situated at a distance of 20 km: 12-hour Akhanda Sankirtan of 'Om Namoh Sivaya' Mantra, Havan, Bhandara, etc.

Gudur (A.P.): Sri Ch. V. Sheshaih, the President of the Branch gave a talk on "The Life and Message of H.H. Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj" in a special function organised by Trinidad and Tobago Branch to an audience of 800 seekers on 10th September.

Haridwar, BHEL (Uttaranchal): (1) 29th Annual Yoga and Meditation Camp: The 11-day Camp was held in two sessions—5.15 a.m. to 6.15 a.m., and 5.30 to 7.00 p.m.—under the expert guidance of Sri Swami Dharmanishthanandaji. It was in-

augurated by Sri M.P. Agarwal, the General Manager, BHEL. On 12th November various Kriyas were demonstrated and practised. Prof. Vasudev Randev had discourses on Bhagavad Gita on 14th and 15th November, and also spoke on 'The Art of Living' during the Valedictory Function. The Valedictory Function was attended by all the 100 trainees, their family members, senior executives of BHEL, and other employees and their family members. Sri Anil Sachdeva, GGM, BHEL was the chief Guest. Swamiji also gave a talk. (2) Roza Iftiyar: During the holy month of Ramzan, Roza Iftiyar was organised for the Muslim families. Families following other religions had also participated with a spirit of communal harmony and brotherhood.

The weekly Satsanga is held at the residences of the devotees on Fridays. Bhagavad Gita recitation and Swadhyaya are done on Ekadasis. In the monthly programme of Narayana Seva on the second Saturday every month, food, clothing and daily needs are provided to the inhabitants of a leprosy colony.

Langthabal (Manipur): A special Satsanga and a discourse on Srimad Bhagavatam was organised on 5th November.

Jaipur (Rajasthan): (1) Maha Rasa Purnima: Bhajan-kirtan and special Prasad of Payas (2) Kartika month: Month-long discourses. (3) Karava Chauth: Katha, special Puja, etc. (4) Dipavali: Special Puja and decoration. (5) Sri Govardhan Puja: Special Puja, Annakut, Prasad, etc. (6) Rudrabhisheka Puja: Special Puja on 26th November. (7) Spiritual Trip: 65 devotees joined the spiritual tour on 19th November, visiting holy places and saints. (8) Swami Sivananda Charitable Homoeopathic Dispensary: Dr. J.D. Saxena and Dr. S.S. Dalela treated 2516 patients during the last two months.

Jeypore (Orissa): (1) Srimad Bhagavat Saptah: It was held from October 30 to November 5th, Sri Rabi Shankar Sadangi was on the Vyasa Peetha. (2) Kartik Purnima: Similar programmes were arranged on this day also. (3) Special Satsanga: On the visit of Revered Sri Swami

Sivananda-Gurusevanandaji, his discourse was arranged in a special Satsanga. (4) New Building: A house was donated to Sadgurudev on 8th November, Sivananda Day. On this occasion, a special Satsanga, Paduka Puja, Havan, Svadhyaya, Narayana Seva and Prasad Sevan were arranged. (5) Punyatithi: On the anniversary of Punyatithi of H.H. Sri Swami Krishnanandaji Maharaj, the Branch organised Paduka Puja, recitation of Bhagavad Gita and Sri Vishnu Sahasranama Stotram, Rudrabhisheka, a talk, Bhajans, distribution of food to 32 destitutes and Prasad Sevan.

Moirang, Moirana (Manipur): (1) Sivananda Jayanti: Paduka Puja, Bhajan, Kirtan, special Satsanga. (2) Prabodhini Ekadasi: Hari Utthana Parikrama was organised. Many devotees as well as general public joined the Parikrama.

Nandini Nagar (Chhattisgarh): (1) Rural Yogasana Camp: Yogasana Training for students in a school in a nearby village on November 27-28. (2) Yogasana Training: In a local college Yogasana training was imparted on November 29-30.

New Delhi, Lajpat Nagar: The Branch has expanded its activities on the social service front: Every Sunday, Dr. Apar Jindal examines patients in Sivananda Satsanga Bhavan, on 5th of every month milk and nutritious items are distributed to 150 children, and Yogasana training class is conducted daily. The Branch also held the following activities.

(1) Swami Sivananda Yoga Kendra: Sri Swami Dharmanishthanandaji inaugurated the Yoga Centre and gave a talk on the 'Importance of Yogasanas'. Daily Yogasana class is continued thereafter. (2) Sri Bhagavad Gita Jayanti: Havan was performed with Ahutis for each Sloka of Bhagavad Gita supplemented by the Samput of 'Om Namoh Bhagavate Vasudevaya' Mantra. Sri Swami Vaikunthanandaji, Sri Swami Dharmanishthanandaji, Sri Swami Devbhaktanandaji and a large number of devotees participated in the holy ceremony on 1st December.

Panchkula (Haryana): Special Satsanga, Bhajan-kirtan and Prasad on the conclusion of the

daily study of Sikh scripture Japu Ji Sahib on 30th November.

Puri (Orissa): (1) Bhagavad Gita Discourses: From October 24 to 29. A large number of persons attended the discourses. (2) Sri Bhagavad Gita Jayanti: Parayana of the entire holy text was done in the famous temple of Lord Jagannath. This was followed by a Havan with Ahuti for each of the 700 Mantras, and recitation of Sri Vishnu-Sahasranama Stotram and Sri Hanuman Chalisa. 200 devotees from Bhubaneswar and Puri attended the programme.

Rourkela (Orissa): (1) Ashram Day: The Pratishta Day of the Ashram was on 22nd October. The programmes started with meditation at 5 a.m., followed by Prayers, Paduka Puja, recitation of Bhagavad Gita, Sri Hanuman Chalisa, Sri Vishnu-Sahasranama Stotram, collective Japa of 'Om Namoh Bhagavate Chidanandaya' Mantra and Narayana Seva—distribution of food to the poor and winter clothing and daily needs to the blind students. (2) Punyatithi: On the Punyatithi of H.H. Sri Swami Krishnanandaji Maharaj also programmes were on the same pattern. Revered Sri Swami Brahmasakshatkarandaji graced the occasion by his participation.

Salipur (Orissa): (1) Special Satsanga: The programmes of the mobile Satsanga on 26th November were Paduka Puja, 12-hour Akhanda Kirtan of Mahamantra, and 3-hour session of training and practice of Yogasana, Pranayama and meditation was arranged in the local college. Prof. Brajabandhu Chinnara, the Vice-President of the Branch conducted the training.

Sambalpur (Orissa): The Ashram had a festive atmosphere during the month of Kartika as a large number of female devotees flocked the Viswanatha Temple for Puja or Darshan, and devotees joined in large number the evening one-hour Sankirtan.

II

The regular activities of the Branches whose activities had not been published recently and of the

branches who have made some changes in the regular activities are given below.

Chandigarh: The Branch has added the important and inspiring spiritual activity of daily meditation from 5-30 to 6-30 in the morning.

Gudur (A.P.): In the weekly Sunday Satsanga, discourses on Sri Vishnu-Sahasranama Stotram were given during October and November.

New Delhi, Vasant Vihar: The young Branch has set, in addition to prayers, Bhajans, etc., a distinct pattern for its mobile Sunday Satsanga as follows: Sri Sundarakand Parayana on the first Sunday, meditation on the second, spiritual discourses on the third, and Jnana Prasad distribution on the fourth.

Puri (Orissa): The weekly Satsanga on the first Sunday of the month is held in the premises of the famous temple of Lord Jagannath. The weekly Satsanga on the remaining Sundays and Paduka Puja are at the residences of devotees as per the schedule fixed well in advance.

Salipur (Orissa): Though the Ashram has a very busy schedule of spiritual activities throughout the day, the Branch has added two more daily activities: (1) Prayer and Kirtan for half an hour, and (2) training and practice of Pranayama and meditation.

Sambalpur (Orissa): The regular activities are 2-time Puja in Sri Viswanath Temple of the Ashram, weekly Satsanga on Sundays, poor feeding on Mondays and charitable Homoeopathic dispensary which treated 230 patients in November 2006.

III

Besides as per the reports received the following Branches have continued during the month of November 2006 their regular activities as before: Ahiwara, Ambala, Badakuanl, Bangalore Balasore Barbil, Bellaguntha Bellary, Bhanjanagar, Bhimkund, Bikaner, Chandigarh, Ghatpadmur, Jagdalpur, Gopalsamudram, Gumergunda, Jaipur, Jeypore, Khatiguda, Ludhiana, moirang, Nagercoil, Nandini Nagar, New Delhi, Lajpat Nagar, Panchkula, Rourkela, Salipur, Sambalpur and Vadodara.

NEW YEAR'S MESSAGE

(Sri Swami Chidananda)

Worshipful homage to the Absolute Being, the eternal and infinite Reality that is here and now. Precisely because of Its infinitude—encompassing all things, pervading and present everywhere—and because of Its eternal nature—existing at all times—It is here, now, the unseen Reality behind the ever-changing scene, this world-play, this show. Worshipful homage to that Divine Reality. May Its divine grace be upon you all!

Loving adorations to revered and beloved Holy Master Gurudev Swami Sivanandaji who dwells within us as the light of his wisdom teachings, who dwells within our minds and intellects as the grasp of spiritual truths which he has laid bare for our benefit, who lives in our hearts as ideals of life and the living of life through his inspiring, uplifting, elevating, transforming teachings. May his choicest blessings be upon you all!

Today is the day when our friend, gifted to us by God, the old year, graciously steps aside giving place to the entry of its successor, the New Year. It is the day when the old year tells us, “It has been nice being with you. Goodbye now, God speed you into the New Year.”

The old year has been good to us, and, therefore, we may also ask, “How have we been towards it?” Because as Holy Master used to say, “This is a day for stocktaking.” It is a day for casting a bird’s eye view in retrospect, a day for asking how each month of the year has been—the plus and minus, wisdom and folly, correctness and error. It is this process that can help us to grow as good individuals in human society.

Our endeavour should be that we are a plus point, an additional enriching contribution to our contemporary social scene: “By the fact of my being in society today, what do I bring to society? Am I a factor that due to my good nature as an individual—soft-spoken, friendly, kindly, smiling, helpful—I put everyone at ease, make everyone feel happy? Am I ready to do a little good turn and to bear with the foibles and plus and minus points of others—with great grace, charity and a charitable disposition—because I know that God made them so?”

All people are not alike; they cannot help being what they are. Thus understand human foibles—not merely in a psychological way through the intellect, but in a gracious, cultured, spiritual way. If you try to approach and understand people in a psychological way, you will only gain knowledge about others; but that knowledge is not necessarily accompanied by the spiritual qualities of sympathy, tolerance, understanding, friendliness, helpfulness: “This is an erring brother or sister; I am prone to such error myself.” If you thus make your assessment in a psycho-spiritual way—psychologically accompanied by a spiritual *bhava*, spiritual attitude—then it is a totally different thing.

Thus making yourself an asset to your contemporary scene, you yourself, individually, go onwards in trying to make yourself an ideal human being which is one of the indispensable *sadhanas* of the spiritual life. We may progress in concentration and meditation, in *japa*, in prayer-

fulness, God-remembrance and devotion, in the depth of our philosophical understanding, but we must also see clearly that simultaneously with these positive and progressive things happening to us, that our continuous human culture must accompany them, keep pace with them, must also move forward into a greater and greater state of perfection, wholeness and idealism. We cannot afford to forget that, as we evolve in our spiritual dimension, we have to also simultaneously evolve upon our human dimension.

Spirituality must make us into good persons. Spirituality must make us ideal human individuals. Spirituality must help to make us benefactors of our own society. Spirituality must make us a centre of blessedness to others, a centre of help to others, a centre of harmony, a centre of everything that contributes to human welfare—individually and collectively.

I suppose that this is what the great teacher of the Middle East meant when He answered the question, “What is the greatest of all commandments?” He said, “You know what the greatest of all commandments is—a total giving of yourself in absolute love and devotion to the Divine, a total giving of yourself in dedication to the Divine.” But the most important part came at the end, as the conclusion. He added a rider: “You shall love your neighbour as yourself.”

To each human individual, himself or herself is the most important person in the world. Each one lives with this axiomatic assumption of which they are not even aware, because it is not arrived at through any purposeful, conscious process. It is just there. *Prakriti* has made it that way—all other things are around one and one is the centre. And this axiomatic feeling modifies and conditions all things for that person—everything that the person does, sees, relates oneself to.

It modifies everything, the whole of a person's life in all its details. Therefore, it is said: “You know this is so. You are most important to yourself. More than anyone else, you are very considerate of yourself. The importance of yourself to yourself is prime. Therefore, even so, let it be towards your neighbour.”

Who is your neighbour with whom you should have this special kind of attitude, behaviour, relationship? The answer is the whole world. Any person, at any given point in time at any place is your neighbour. And to generalise, everyone in this world, living in your own times, is your neighbour.

Therefore, to love your neighbour as yourself means to love all, to love everyone, to love every human individual whether in India or Japan or America or Australia or Argentina, anywhere. Anyone who is residing on planet Earth the same time as you are is your neighbour. Distance counts for nothing. Time and space have no relevance. Proximity in space has no relevance to spiritual neighbourhood, spiritual kinship, spiritual fraternity.

The spiritual vision knows something even one step further. There is not even an *other* to be your neighbour. It sees that your neighbour is no other than your own Self. Therefore, feel yourself in all beings that exist and behave towards them as you would behave towards yourself—giving special preference, forgiving little things, tolerating foibles—the little twists and turns—not minding them, forgiving them. Have a non-differential attitude towards all as though they are no other than yourself.

Such a being, who is thus able to transform oneself into all others and to regard others in the same light as one regards oneself, who, in all conditions, treats others in the same manner as one

treats oneself, such a person qualifies for immortality and liberation according to the great world teacher, Lord Krishna.

Thus, simultaneously with your concentration and meditation, with your advancing knowledge of Vedanta, with your progressive devotion and prayer, with your selfless activities, a constant, unceasing, progressive evolution of your human individual nature has to accompany and keep pace with it. You should never feel that it is something different—I need not bother about it. This is not the right attitude; human evolution should accompany spirituality.

It is that evolution of your human individual nature that makes for successful, fruitful and effective spirituality, for it is a great support of your spiritual progress, of your yoga life. Progressing ever into being an ideal human individual—kind, compassionate, tolerant, good, just and fair, a principled being, a good neighbour, a friend of all, one who identifies with all—such a person you must be. This is part of Yoga. This is part of Vedanta. This is part of spiritual life. This is part of *sadhana*.

Therefore, if your spiritual life and *sadhana* should be complete and whole, then see clearly

the need to make your own personal life and personality things of beauty. You should make your own personal life and personality undergo a progressively evolutionary process, keeping pace with your Yoga, Vedanta, *sadhana*, meditation techniques and your spiritual life as a whole.

This is the teachings of great ones. “If you cannot love your brother whom you have seen, how can you love God whom you have never seen?” You cannot be selective in your forgiveness, in your kindness, in your tolerance. You cannot be selective. The best way to exercise these virtues is to choose the worst stinker; then it becomes very easy to become a good friend, brother and neighbour to those who are less so. If you can extend this charitable nature to an impossible person, then you will know that it is possible to extend it towards everyone, because you have tested yourself with the worst one and found it possible.

May God bless you! May you commence your stocktaking and prepare yourself to say goodbye to the old year and do all that is needful to make a perfect entry into the New Year. Be grateful for all that has helped you to reach where you are at this point in time, and in light of your knowledge of the past year, make your entry into the New Year a foresighted and creative one.

The positive aspect of non-injury is the development of universal love. If you are filled with compassion, with the spirit of love, brotherhood and affection towards all creatures, you cannot hurt any creature. You can never do violence to one whom you love. So universalise your love. Love filled with compassion is the surest basis for peace, for external relationship between man and man and peace within one’s own heart.

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Compassion is the basis of spiritual life. Be kind to everyone but strict and uncompromising to yourself.

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Love is the greatest healing power in this world. Love of God really means love of humanity

—Swami Chidananda.



CHRISTMAS EVE FUNCTION AND CHRISTMAS RETREAT

The advent of Lord Jesus was celebrated in a joyous and reverent manner again this Christmas Eve, December 24, 2006. Numerous Western devotees from all over the area also participated.

From 7.30 to 8.15 p.m. the residents of the Ashram sang their daily opening Kirtans and Bhajans in which all the visitors and guests participated. Then from 8.15 to 8.45 p.m., as more residents, guests and visitors entered the quiet, holy atmosphere of the beautifully decorated Library Hall, they were greeted by light and soft recorded music specially chosen for the occasion.

The actual Christmas Celebrations commenced from 8.45 p.m. Revered Sri Swami Padmanabhanandaji Maharaj read a Christmas message of Revered Sri Swami Krishnanandaji Maharaj. After this message, Swami Vimalanandaji read a special Christmas message by Revered and Worshipful Sri Swami Chidanandaji Maharaj, the President of The Divine Life Society. This was followed by a dance by eleven-year-old Chuti.

From 11.00 p.m. to midnight devotees from the West sang many of the well-known Christmas carols in different languages punctuated by the traditional Christmas Bible readings by Revered Sri Swami Atmaswarupanandaji Maharaj. The Western devotees began this part of the programme by perambulating the Library Hall carrying candles and singing "Silent Night." There was a brief period of meditation to mark the birth of Jesus just after midnight.

Revered Sri Swami Atmaswarupanandaji Maharaj, who was the Master of Ceremonies, conducted the entire programme. The Satsanga was concluded shortly after midnight with Aarati and the distribution of holy Prasad.

From December 26th to January 1st, 2007, a special Christmas Retreat was held at the Headquarters of The Divine Life Society for devotees from abroad. Seekers from twenty different countries attended. Senior Swamis of the Ashram participated in the Retreat by giving talks and daily periods of guided meditation. Sri Swami Atmaswarupanandaji Maharaj guided the overall retreat, and brought it to a successful conclusion.

**CELEBRATION OF THE 63rd ANNIVERSARY OF PRATISHTHA MAHOTSAVA OF
SRI VISWANATH MANDIR IN SIVANANDASHRAM**

The Headquarters of The Divine Life Society celebrated the 63rd Anniversary of Pratishtha Mahotsava of Sri Viswanath Mandir in Sivanandashram on December 31st, 2006. Prior to the Celebration there was a five-day collective singing of the most sacred Panchakshari Mantra "Om Namah Sivaya."

Traditional worship was performed to Lord Vishwanath in the late forenoon of 31st of December. As the worship progressed inside the temple to the chanting of the sacred Veda Mantras, outside the devotees, residents and guests were singing the Name of Lord Siva with devotion and fervour. Exactly at 12 o'clock (midday) Aarati was waved to the Lord. After this everyone went to the Annapurana Dining Hall to partake of the sacred Prasad.