

SRI RAM



AS I UNDERSTAND

SWAMI RAMANAND

Dedicated
at the feet of
Swamiji
in memory of
our parents

- A Sadhak Parivar

--- 1 ---

PREFACE

I have great pleasure in bringing out the reprint of the Swamiji's booklet 'As I understood' which gives introduction to his views on various current problems faced in the society.

His remarks about communism on page no. 50 'The philosophical foundations of communication are shaky' are completely true today and nobody can deny that.

I am thankful to all those who have helped me in printing of this book.

I offer my sincere thanks to the family which has dedicated this book to Swamiji in memory of their parents. May Swamiji bless the family.

O.P. Sekhri

--- 2 ---

FOREWORD

The booklet reproduces abstracts from a few letters written in reply to lengthy questionnaire and from my diaries. I have made a few additions to make it rather comprehensive.

I am permitting its publication in the hope that it will stir intelligent minds to think and broaden their outlook.

It should not be difficult to follow the matter without the queries. I have dropped them as unnecessary.

Should I express my thankfulness to friends who have brought it out? I hesitate because I think that it belongs to them and the readers and not me.

Ramananda

Harsul, Distt. Nasik 11.12.1951

--- 3 ---

TO OUR READERS

The booklet can be regarded as an invaluable legacy of Shri Swami Ramanandji Maharaj because it is his last gift to us. Before printing of its first edition was completed and it could be put into the hands of sadhaka brothers and sisters. Shri Swamiji's brief sojourn on this planet came to an end at Haridwar on April 15, 1952, at 5 A.M.

Great though the blow of his bodily demise was, as it deprived us for all time of his spoken words and the inspiration of his bodily touch, we have been constantly feeling his blessings after his passing away. He has been guiding and illuminating our path. He came to this planet with a mission and is still helping us on in our spiritual evolution.

This booklet (which is a revised edition of the previous one) should prove very helpful as an introduction to the teachings of Sri Swamiji. It is hoped that those who read it would be inspired to read his Evolutionary Outlook on Life and Evolutionary Spiritualism which present the essence of the philosophy of sadhana from a new angle, and his Adhyatmik Vikas and Adhyatmik Sadhna-Part I and II (in Hindi) which are incomparable as an introduction and guidance to actual sadhana.

May this booklet and other works of Sri Swamiji inspire us all.

Kashi Nath

Sri Ram

AS I UNDERSTAND

-1-

1. SADHANA

Sadhana for one's own self is losing its meaning. Sadhana is Mother's task, a universal task and humanitarian task. It is service. It is missionary work. To the degree you yourself live in the light and love and in Her consciousness, will you be able to become an instrument of Her work. To that degree will She work through you. Live and your words will have exceptional potency. They will draw Mother's fold. It is the propagation of the higher life, which is the ideal; and by living, by sincerely aspiring to live it, by becoming a living embodiment of Mother's grace can this be successfully effected. We are all co-workers to that end. Let us march ahead with benedictions from on high.

Our Sadhana implies an outlook on life. The entire life is to be looked upon as a school of Sadhana and so have we to accept every event of life. For this you would do well to read Adhyatmik Sadhna part II and my letters published in the 'Sadhana'.

We honour all people and their traditions. We should not injure the susceptibilities of others. Live your life and let others live their own. Help them on if you can, without imposing your views or yourself on others. Love and serve.

-2-

Higher life and love should emanate from you as fragrance does from a flower. The bees are automatically drawn if there is anything worthwhile therein.

I am out to establish no new creed or dogma. Nor do I have the consciousness of having been entrusted with a mission. What consciousness I have at the most is that of the Mother enacting Her play

through this person, it all looks like a play. It is devoid of any momentous meaning or purpose for me. I just play, or better still She plays in me.

To have my help and guidance in Sadhana, the Sadhaka has to agree with me on a few points only. They are **(1) the existence of the Divine Power (2) that the Divine is gracious and (3) that we can be linked up with the Divine through the name.** This much of agreement is enough and we can go ahead. I demand no more agreement.

From truth to higher truth have I grown; so do I expect others to do. The sadhaka as he goes ahead begins to understand what he could not in the beginning. To force agreement or belief, to my mind, is unspiritual. It is to stop him from growing in the mental world.

-3-

What I advocate is a spiritual ideal, an outlook on life. If the present age needs it, if the Mother wills it, it will draw people. Organizations will, of necessity, spring up in accordance with the ideal, and the momentum will carry on for as long as the Mother wills.

But the time is not ripe for any such movement. Each and every Sadhaka should himself live the ideal, rather than try to spread it. Live the ideal wherever you are placed and as best as you can. Grow in oneness with the Mother. She will make you an instrument of Her work, however, humble an instrument if be.

I wonder if we can call it a movement. It is more like a school, which advocates an outlook of its own on life and a specific way of Sadhana in accordance with it.

-4-

I would not like our Sadhana to be turned into a missionary movement, or into an organized institution. When Sadhana comes to be so circumscribed it gradually becomes lifeless. Selfless service - the spirit of

it - is a necessary element of our Sadhana. It is this spirit which is required to permeate us through and through. It may find expression in missionary service in the case of some individuals, but it is unwise to tie it down.

I want every Sadhaka to become an embodiment of selfless service and love wherever he be in life. I want him to be an instrument of service in the hands of the Divine in his ordinary walk of life. Those who may be called to live whole time for service should be exceptions.

-5-

The world is a tremendous limitation. Society by itself is a limitation and is based on half-truths - averages which hold perfectly true in the case of very few persons, if any at all. But that is inevitable. Similar is the case with missionary creeds. That again is unavoidable and none is to blame. We have got to climb down from the spiritual and living conception of truth to be able to work in this material plain.

What do you mean by 'stand on independent footing'? We take our stand on experience and reason. We quote no texts as authorities for what we believe and do. We assimilate all that is in accord with our view, be it from anywhere or anybody.

Behind us is the experience of ages and of saints who have loved and lived for the Lord. There is our own experience the validity of which we believe even in the face of any attempts at coordination based on immature reasoning or lack of experience.

-6-

We take but stand in the grace of the Divine Mother. She is all in all in our school of Sadhana. The name is the carrier of Her grace.

Our gates are open, and we shall welcome all who care to step in our lives to prove the worth of our Sadhana. We shall adapt ourselves, and our teachings to suit the age. Yet ours is but to do. Results lie in Her

hands; Cosmic and human evolution is not a negligible, but is rather the most determining factor. We play our part and bid good-bye and walk off. All cares are HER.

It is a school of Sadhana. It is a school of life.

-7-

Spirituality loses hope of its grandeur if it is known as a fact that it is for a few souls in our present stage of evolution. Nor does Sadhana lose its importance if it is found that crowds do not respond.

I claim no originality for anything that I advocate. I only try that I advocate naught, which has not been assimilated by me thoroughly.

I live and learn. So do others. I profess no infallibility and hence curb no liberty; I reserve with me the right to think as I do and give the same right to others.

My personality? For me it is the Mother who has, all the meaning and this personality has none. It has meaning to those who can link themselves up through it. But even then, it is the Mother who counts and not the person.

-8-

It is all Her grace. It is the grace of my Guru. Nothing is mine herein.

I am a child in Her lap, in the Mother's lap. I dance as she makes me dance.

We are to learn to look upon life and all its events dispassionately. The more one is able to do it, the more readily he can change himself and the less miserable his life becomes for himself and his associates. After all the centre of consciousness (individual) lies beyond all that is perceivable within and without, and it should not be so difficult to establish oneself there temporarily, if not permanently. To acquire that attitude, one is to

attempt. Let the name be hummed within you when you mean to assume the attitude or let it run deeply within you. This will at once lift the consciousness to the super conscious regions from where you can survey dispassionately.

Look upon the misdeeds of others, as well as your own, from those Himalayan heights, i.e. stand apart and watch. Such an attitude will take the wind out of the sails of anger and sex-instinct. You will be in tune with Lord and His Grace will hold you firm as a rock in the tempest. Such is the power of His NAME, and such is the power of His Grace. Deem it not impossible. This you can easily realize within yourself.

-9-

We are to learn to lean upon Him in difficulty. Let Him be our constant companion. We can hear His voice in the calmest moments within ourselves. His advice is for our ultimate good (not immediate always). Have faith and act. The more we know it, the clear and stronger becomes that guidance.

I allow full liberty in the form of expression. I would rather encourage it.

What I want is, the inner being to flower forth, using the circumstances that life affords and radiating all-round the fragrance of the unfolding Divinity. Spontaneously should the environment be remoulded by this growing spirit, and in ways which are natural and self-determined. The outer should be the natural expression of the inner.

-10-

What matters to me is evolution of the individuals. If anything comes in the way, we shall have to take it into consideration, otherwise all else should go its own way. I live and let live.

No social philosophy goes as a necessary counter-part of the system of our Sadhana.

2. OTHER SAINTS

It is important to keep one's mind open. One begins to apprehend truth directly when the intellect is stilled. Convictions for which we have attachment, abandonment of which will mean pain to us, are a block in the way of our progress. At present with the facts that are at my disposal and the power of understanding that is mine, I think this to be true; what is true in reality I cannot say. Such an attitude is a desideratum.

Aurobindo's convictions are his convictions. No body is required to take as final anyone else's convictions, except in so far as they are immediately concerned with the path. Even that is not required when one begins to see the path for himself.

Mahatma Gandhi is great, let me take into my daily life whatever good I can take. Aurobindo is great, let me have what I can have of him. Aspire neither to be Aurobindo nor Mahatma Gandhi in entirety. You are to be 'yourself'. You will be able to resolve the differences (understand and really evaluate them), when you have fairly advanced. Mere reasoning and arguing will come to a standstill. Peace will reign in the intellect as well.

I am ready to pay my deepest respects to persons to whom I owe all that is in me, but to defy them or to take them to be infallible etc. is beyond me. I worship the God that is within me and within all. I view persons as instruments in His hand. I worship the truth and I believe that it is the best and ultimate when it comes from within. Mere authority is only a temporary thing, even if it be universal or eternal.

Descent of Cosmic Kundalini is an every moment experience with me and spasmodic with many others whom I know. My spiritual experiences

fall in line with Sri Aurobindo's. It is, therefore, that I recommend his works (also because his philosophy is akin to my line of thought).

-13-

3. ASHRAMA

Yes, you can form ashrama. But why should not your home become a first rate ashrama. Then you can help others to make homes like your own. I value such ashramas far more than 'nothing-to-do' ashramas.

Personally, I value such permanent ashrama life at a discount from the point of view of spiritual evolution. In the ashrama there may be an initial push. The start in sadhana may as well come on quickly, but the pace of evolution in the long run will be much slower than otherwise. Ashrama life should be to quicken the sadhana. It should be occasional corrective and should be taken to only for a limited duration. The ashrama should be a sort of training ground after which the Sadhaka is required to plunge himself in the world headlong with the newly acquired balance, strength and the new outlook.

So much fuss about spirituality is indeed strange for me. Spirituality must spring from life and permeate life. To me the ashrama is another escape and a withdrawal, though not total. It can be allowed only in very rare cases and never permanently, according to my opinion.

-14-

You may have Vidyamandiras, but making them of your own will again smell trouble. We have a spiritual ideal. Live it and radiate it. Your field of work may be Vidyamandira or a Sadhana-mandira.

If the number of sadhakas at a place demand that they may have education of a particular type for themselves or their children, they are at liberty to have a vidya-mandira. It is the same spiritual outlook, which we have to bring to bear upon education as well.

Similar is the case with sadhana-mandiras.

-14-

4. AVATARA

I regard Avatara (incarnation of God) as an actual phenomenon. I believe what the Gita says about it. But I do not worship any Avatara as my all in all. They are unto me the vehicles of the Divine, and thus they draw my respect and love.

Prophets (like Mohammed), to my mind are saints who have been used to transmit teachings to people by higher forces. They have served as religion-makers in history.

Siddhas are those who have attained siddhis, miraculous powers. It is a very wide term covering many levels of growth.

-15-

5. IDOL WORSHIP

Idol-worship is a misnomer. It is the worship of a power or a spirit or the divine itself in an idol or image. It is not the image which is worshipped. It is the consciousness that has been invoked, which is worshipped. As the devas are invoked in fire and worshipped by offering oblations in the Vedic ritual, so are gods invoked in images and worshipped. It is a way of worshipping and one is at liberty to choose it or reject it, according to his aptitude and necessity.

-16-

6. SCRIPTURES

I respect the revealed scriptures of the world, but cannot accept everything as advocated by their advocates. In reality, I draw a distinct line of demarcation between the religious and the spiritual. The religious as such has no attraction for me, but the spiritual elements of the

scriptures I cherish. There have been various paths of spiritual growth and we get teachings in accordance with the path advocated by the particular scripture. I value the scriptures more as statements of instructive truths rather than injunctions.

-17-

7. WHAT AM I

What am I? In reality what you are or what the ultimate Truth is you will realize when you are established in it. All attempts at description must of necessity be incomplete because of the inherent limitation of thought. From one point of view, I am 'Akshar'- the immutable and as such I am all. I am Brahman. I am God.

In another and still higher aspect (to my mind), I am a ray of the Indivisible Purushottam, manifesting as the Universe. I shall give an illustration. There is a cone. It may be supposed to be comprised of numerous cones. In the apex, all cones are one, but in the body, they are different parts of a whole. In the plane of the 'Akshar' we are one, in the lower planes we are parts. That is how I understand (Purushottam's is a Transcendental plane).

The spirit makes of mind, heart, and sense organs a vehicle of manifestation, and the latter again puts a body to manifest in the physical plane.

Ultimately, as I have already remarked, this question will be solved when you have evolved into the higher planes and are established in the highest. I regard much thought upon this at the start unnecessary.

To establish yourself in jnana you have to perfect yourself and that comes through sadhana.

-18-

8. MONEY

We have to recognize the real place of money in life and give it its due. That it is necessary for living and making good use of life is plain, and if it is earned to spend it rightly, I do not see any harm at all. If it is made an end in itself i.e. we begin to love gold for its own sake, it is a terrible attachment and will bring us again down here till we are sick of it.

Capitalism necessitates hoarding. We must have something for the rainy day, and this generally leads to a fear complex and may actually result in undue hoarding. The way out is: have faith in the Lord (some would say karma). The whole property of a man may slip out of his hands within the course of minutes. Be prepared, in other words, for all that the Lord may bring upon you, fear it not - be ready to welcome even the worst. This is mental renunciation. When this is acquired the path is clear. Earn rightly, and save what you can normally without the ambition to be a multimillionaire and without the fear of being reduced to penury. This saved money if employed in productive ways, actually means service of society if it is opening up new channels of production. Capital in a capitalist society is a necessity.

-19-

This raises yet another question: the right way of making money. Again clear your mind of attachment to money as such, know that by doing business you are doing service of the society (and it actually is so, only we do not leave the narrow egoistic point of view) and knowing this we would not employ means which would harm the society. If the businessman takes his share, it is no 'sin' but it must not become profiteering.

Fear not money, let it come in millions, if it comes, and employ it well, to the good of self and others. If you ask about the problem of poverty and

general suffering, I would say we are to do our duty. As for as money is concerned, put aside a percentage of your income to that end. The smiritikars ordain ten percent.

-20-

9. SANSKARAS

The ancient sanskaras (religious sacraments) had their meaning and if properly performed have their specific influence even today. Through sanskaras we can tone up certain centres in the subtle body and cause change in the aura. The sanskaras have, of course, to be modified in accordance with the changes in the social structure of society.

By not performing them we devoid ourselves of the help we could afford to ourselves or other in the family.

The ancient festivals afford us opportunities for festivities. They are a welcome change in our life and are carriers of the national tradition. Of course, we can improve upon the mode of their observance.

-21-

10. OBLATIONS

I consider properly offered oblations to pitras as helpful. They are necessary in the case of those who have believed in their necessity during their lifetime, because of their psychological complex.

The system is based on averages and may be meaningless in certain cases where rebirth has taken place soon after death.

There may be spiritual influences at places like Gaya on account of the presiding deities of the places. I am inclined to credit tradition.

I do not consider that the onward journey of the soul after death is invariably hindered if such offerings are not made though we can speed it up by so doing.

Religious and Social organizations to not matter. Change is something formal. What matters to me is the life of the individual, not his profession, class or creed.

-22-

11. SPIRITS

The subject has fascinated me since years, and I have studied literature on the subject and know certain facts otherwise even. What proof is there to say that physical existence is all that is there? And there is no wonder that the space around us be filled with existence of a different order than ours. But why fear them. Mostly they are harmless beings, and those that can harm dare not affect those who have the will even of the order that you possess. Ram name is another guarantee of immunity from such influences.

But it does not mean that there are no frauds and that blind superstition has done no harm to India. No doubt most cases are merely hysteria and not actual possession. But for those who know, actual possession can be more readily cured than hysteria. Ghost stories told to children are really very harmful. There is no reason to fear a ghost more than the living person. The ghost is at a disadvantage in not possessing a physical form. In fact fear is the greatest ghost. Private suggestions, a little of patient disinterested observation will drive the fear off.

Believe me, with name ringing within you, you can face the mightiest of devils that can be imagined. Such a potency has the name.

Bhutas are elements. They are actual facts of existence as also the Pretas - the discarnate spirits. I am inclined to the Theosophical standpoint on these matters.

-23-

12. RELIGION

As far as religion goes, it is to my mind a constantly changing organization. It changes with times and climes. It is more like basic than a military school. The study of religious injunctions in the light of basic psychic truths is interesting and instructive.

Religion holds together the society and keeps up the individual integrity. It leads to a social organization. Now, many types of social organizations are possible, each being better fitted for realization of certain values of life. What type of social organization we shall have, depends upon the values, which we want to realize through it. Values are the fundamental basis of a culture. Realization of spiritual values in the more comprehensive sense of the term (including Dharma, Artha, Kama, And Moksha) was the goal of our ancient social organization. There has been many an upheaval and so much of change. The outward meaning of that realization has altogether changed today, and so have the mans. The old organization lies shattered today and does not serve the ends for which is was designed.

-24-

We cannot impose an organization from without upon the society in toto but we can certainly help it evolve more smoothly. We can lay the necessary emphasis upon the essential factors and bring them into prominence.

I contemplate no organization. Through love we come closer spontaneously. The organization, which springs out of necessity of our being sadhakas cannot be avoided, of course. We group together for sittings and Akhand-Japas. Any external rules of behaviour or any demands on conduct, I abhor. Sincerity as the law of love, I cherish it, but to enforce it looks so unnatural and unloving. We should grow as one man in unselfish Divine love and become service to one and all alike - that should be our aim.

13. CASTE SYSTEM

I consider 'Caste-system' as something which has outlived its utility and as already dead. What we have is a rotting Carcass. It had its meaning at one time in the history of the nation, but it has none at present.

As long as one claims a caste, creed or culture as his own, he cannot feel one with those belonging to another. When you claim none but the Lord as your own, all bonds are broken, all attachments severed and then alone can truth shine forth upon you. All these attachments should melt away before the Lord can be realized in all. That way alone can one rise above hate. Once that stand is possible, you can serve your own 'so-called' religion and culture better than you could before, because of the wider outlook and the broader love that it generates. You can love. You are free from limitations. The intellect is always seeking for something separate to be proud of, but the spirit rejoices in oneness alone. Rise to the level of the spirit and dwell there.

It is the spirit of self-sacrifice, and the radiance of spiritual love, which I want to dominate life fully in the sadhaka.

Do not be aggressive, and try not to shatter it forcibly. That creates unnecessary difficulties.

14. MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE

The present system of marriage though it has its defects, is yet much better than the love-marriage system. We have a very high ideal of marriage. We should try to live it.

I have no objection to law permitting divorce. I want that it should not be permitted till after three years of marriage have passed.

The system of demanding dowry is bad. Marriages should not be expensive.

I fail to consider the feminine sex as lower than the masculine. Both have their place in the economy, spiritual evolution and social life. But equality as sameness is a harmful idea. Motherhood is the highest privilege of a woman and not secretaryship in a foreign embassy. Both man and woman must live their own life without trying to vie with each other.

I regard marriage as a spiritual union of two equals.

I believe in the inherent equality of human beings.

-27-

I do not understand the law of adoption and succession

Somehow, I cannot reconcile myself to the aggressive reformist attitude. A gradual change from an inner pressure and wider understanding is the right course. Revolutions do more harm on the whole than good. We have some high values in our social structure, some laudable ideals. We should take care to bring them to the foreground and thus cause a spontaneous challenge in the society. It is a slow process no doubt. And we have to count with so much more.

All these problems are pretty intricate and need being talked out from so many points of view.

The society has a right to interfere with people only when they violate the law 'live and let live'. Aggression has got to be remedied.

-28-

15. COMMUNISM

The philosophical foundations of Communism are shaky. The Dialectical Materialism of Marx does not go far enough. It is no longer scientific. With

me it cuts no ice in the face of firsthand spiritual experience, personal and of vast multitude of people whom I know intimately.

His interpretation of social and economic phenomena seems at least unsympathetic, if not positively vicious. It refuses to understand man as an evolving unit of consciousness. It makes too much of the evil in him, and hence builds him an iron cage wherein he can live peacefully and prosperously. It is based upon a denial of human dignity and an inherent divinity. How can one see eye to eye with it?

Its scale of values, an inevitable counterpart of that philosophy, smacks of animalism. Admittedly it plays upon the lower nature of man (i.e. greed, selfishness, resentment and hatred etc.) to bring about a 'crisis' in the economic life of the people.

As a creed it is bankrupt. It can lure only young uniformed minds, which have a dominant antisocial bias.

-29-

That Communistic way has produced great results in material and scientific fields in Russia and elsewhere, I gladly admit. In spite of my total disagreement with that approach to life and its problems, I welcome change even in the structure of our society, if it would solve our problems fruitfully; but fruitfully it should solve them, and not ruinously. I am prepared for a virtual communism.

We must have patience and consider the issues dispassionately, without fanaticism and without rancour against anybody. (For, fanaticism and malice will cloud our vision). Consider the changes we want. Consider their repercussions as widely as we can. Know what concomitants we shall have to face in other spheres. Regard thoroughly the price we shall have to pay. Then, chalk out the way how far to go and how to go. Effect a fruitful bargain. Fain would I see all happy.

The communistic fanaticism is a madness. It blinds one to the higher values of life. The alignment of the party with a foreign country is detestable. Their methods are beastly.

-30-

Free India must face her circumstances squarely. She must be prepared to solve her problems in her own way. To seek a ready-made solution from elsewhere, or to attempt a drastic shortcut to prosperity will not do. We have a long history behind us. We have a tradition of genius, perseverance, sincerity and self-sacrifice. The present is a stage of reaction. We must awaken to our heritage, and awaken we will. I have faith that our national consciousness will assert itself soon and the way ahead will clear up.

Passing as India is, through a transitory stage it cannot be said what values will gain 'in prominence. Are we going to forget the old lesson of millenniums of experience and begin a new in the wake of the west or will our hereditary experience reassert itself in the national mind and enable us to adjust ourselves accordingly? Destiny holds the reins in its hands. If we assimilate the knowledge and commodities of west in our spiritual outlook, we have a glorious future and so has humanity. If we do not and are carried away, we are doomed and so is probably the present humanity.

Socialism is no threat to our culture, nor can a modified communism even be. If the social mind makes the realization if higher and transcendental values of life the aim of any social and economic reorganization, we remain Indians, and Indian culture lives. Western dress, western amenities and western machinery cannot destroy India, if our consciousness realizes the Highest as the highest and subordinates all else to it. If this consciousness reasserts itself, we are bound to change in our actions.

As far as this fundamental fact goes Islam is no threat to Indian culture. We are one here. Islam is eastern and spiritual.

-31-

16.SPIRITUAL DEMOCRACY

This world seems to be shaken through and through today. The civilization based on possession and power is running into bankruptcy. Science has given great power, but it lacks the understanding of higher principles, and so science has become today a terrible engine of destruction. A crisis has overtaken the world; no external barriers will stem the tide that is rushing on, if man is not prepared to outgrow his inner limitations. Neither socialism, nor communism, nor even an international federation of countries can bring the self-stricken humanity the peace that it yearns for.

There is one way and one way alone: all men and particularly the leaders, must make their best effort to rise above greed for possession and power, personal as well as social, communal as well as national. This will not be so as long as we do not recognize the son of God in all men, high and low, coloured and uncoloured, Hindu and Muslim, Christian and non-Christian.

To outgrow the present inner limitations, we have to turn to our Higher self - the Highest self of all - the Lord, and to establish a live link with Him. Then alone the desired transformation shall come. The link is there already, we have only to recognize it - we are of Him, and in Him, and also for Him.

Humanity wants in every walk of life, leaders who live in this grand consciousness. With such leaders we shall have a Spiritual Democracy - a democracy which is not of the capitalist, a socialism which is not

restricted to the material, a communism which is free from coercion - a Democracy which transcends these all.

To grow into this consciousness is veritably to fit oneself for the noblest service of humanity. Young men of today are to hold the reins of humanity tomorrow. To them this is the call of the suffering humanity - the call of spirituality the call of the Presence Divine. 'Be ye supermen - god men - the true servant leaders of your fellow beings, Harken!'

----- The End-----

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