

OUR GUIDING LIGHT

Our Guiding Light is the ever-shining, never-setting Sun of Divine Grace. Ever the same, constant as the northern star and bright as the mid-day Sun, our Guiding Light is the Divine Grace of Shri Guru Deva, Maha Yogiraj, His Divinity Swami Brahmanand Saraswati Maharaj, the most illustrious in the galaxy of the Jagadguru Shankarāchāryas of India.

‘He was Maha Yogiraj, “greatest of *Yoga* teachers”, in the family of the *Yogis* of India and was held by the *Gyānīs*, “realized”, as personified *Brahmānandam*, “universal bliss or Cosmic Consciousness”, the living expression of *Pūrṇam adaḥ pūrṇam idam*. The divine radiance blooming forth from his shining personality revealed the truth of *Pūrṇam idam*, and his *Sahaja samādhi*—“all-time natural state of Cosmic Consciousness”—brought home the truth of both *Pūrṇam adaḥ* and *Pūrṇam idam*. It was the perfection of this great spiritual Master which innovated a spiritual renaissance in northern India and wherever he travelled.

‘This great pride of India was Rajarām in his early days, when he was the love of his great family and was cherished as the “rising Sun” in the community of Mishra Brāhmaṇas of village Gana, near Ayodhya in Uttar Pradesh, North India. He was born on the 20th December 1868, but his hour of nativity claimed him for the recluse order and not for that of the householder.

‘At the tender age of nine, when the other children of the world were mostly busy in playgrounds, he had matured in the idea of renunciation and by continuous and deep thinking was convinced of the futility and evanescence of worldly pleasures. He realized so early that real and lasting happiness cannot be had without the realization of the Divine. The joys and pleasures that are obtained from the phenomenal world are mere shadows and smudged images of the ideal happiness and bliss that is not far from man but exists in his own heart, enveloped by the dark clouds of ignorance and illusion. When he was barely nine years old, he left home and went to the Himalayas in search of God, the Light that dispels the great darkness in the human mind, the darkness that stands between man and inner enlightenment.

‘On the path of the Divine, a proper guide is necessary. During the search for a perfect spiritual guide, he came across many Masters and good beginners, but none of them came up to the ideal that he had set for himself. He desired his spiritual Master to be not only well-versed in philosophic learning but also to be a person of realization; and over and above these dual achievements, he should be a life celibate, perhaps the natural and legitimate desire of an aspirant who himself had decided to maintain that high ideal for life.

‘In the world as it is constituted today, to find a personality combining these three conditions and attributes is difficult, if not altogether impossible, and so the young truth-seeker had to wander far and long before he arrived at the goal of his search. After about five years of wandering in the Himalayas, he reached the township of Uttar-Kashi. In that “Valley of the Saints”, at that small and distant Himalayan hermitage there resided in those days a great spiritual Master, Swami Krishnanand Saraswati, a sage deeply versed in philosophical lore, representing a rare and perfect blend of theory and practice, of learning and realization.

‘To that realized soul, the young ascetic surrendered himself for being initiated into the mysterious realms of the spirit, whose real key practices are attainable not from books and treatises, but only from perfect spiritual Masters, who silently pass these top-secret practices from heart to heart.

‘After some time, with the permission and order of his Master, he entered a cave at Uttar-Kashi with a resolve not to come out before he had realized the Light Supreme. His desire to attain the highest knowledge was not merely an ideal wish or intention; it was a mighty, overpowering determination that burned like fire in his heart. It permeated every particle of his being and bade him not to rest or stop before the complete realization of the bliss eternal.

‘Soon he arrived at the heatless, smokeless effulgence of the Self and realized the divine truth, Unity Consciousness, the ultimate supreme reality, *Sat-chid-ānanda*, *Nirvāṇa*.

‘The greatest attainment of a saint is his life itself, the high edifice of

realized Upanishadic living that develops from direct experience of reality. To understand that inner personality, one must approach such realized souls with an open and receptive mind and try to visualize the great internal life that is the basis of their actual and real form of living.

‘At the age of thirty-four he was initiated into the order of *Sanyās* by his Master at the greatest world fair, “Kumbha Mela”, which is held once in twelve years at the junction of the two holy rivers, Gangā and Jumnā at Allahabad City. Then he again proceeded to blessed solitude, the only blessedness. This time he did not go to the Himalayas, but went to the Amarkantakas, the source of the holy river Narmada in central India.

‘He was out of sight of man but was well-marked in the eyes of the destiny of the country. For more than one and a half centuries, the light of Jyotir Math, the principal monastery of Shankarāchārya, was extinct, and North India had no Shankarāchārya to guide the spiritual destiny of the people. Here was a bright light of spiritual glory well adorned by the perfect discipline of *Sanātana Dharma*, but it was hidden in the caves and valleys, in the thick forests and mountains of central India, as though the blessed solitude was giving a proper shape and polish to a personality which was to enlighten the darkness that had overtaken the spiritual destiny of the country, by the flash of his mere presence.

‘It took a long time, twenty years, to persuade him to come out of his solitude and accept the holy throne of Shankarāchārya of Jyotir Math in Badarikashram, Himalayas. At the age of 72, in the year 1941, a well-marked time in the political and religious history of India, he was installed as Shankarāchārya of Jyotir Math, and that was a turning point in the destiny of the nation. The political freedom of the country dawned under his Divine Grace, and he was revered by Dr Rajendra Prasad, the first President of the Indian Union. At the conference of the eminent philosophers of the world during the Silver Jubilee Celebrations of the Institute of Indian Philosophers held at Calcutta in December 1950, Dr S. Radhakrishnan, the famous philosopher and the successor of President Dr Rajendra Prasad, addressed Guru Deva as “Vedānt Incarnate” (Truth Embodiment).

‘His policy of spiritual enlightenment was all-embracing. He inspired all alike and gave upliftment to everyone in his religious, virtuous, moral, and spiritual life. He was never a leader of any one party. All parties found a common leadership in him. All the differences and dissensions of various castes, creeds, and *Sampradāyas* dissolved in his presence and every party felt itself to be a thread in the warp and woof of society, and that all the threads make the cloth and that no thread can be taken out, with advantage, from it. Such was his universal and all-embracing nature.

‘His entire personality exhaled always the serene perfume of spirituality. His face radiated that rare light which comprises love, authority, serenity, and self-assuredness—the state that comes only by righteous living and divine realization. His *Darshan* made the people feel as if some ancient Maharishi of Upanishadic fame had assumed human form again, and that it is worthwhile leading a good life and to strive for realization of the Divine.

‘His spiritual teachings are simple and clear and go straight home to the heart. He strictly adhered to the Vedic Principles of inner development laid down by the systems of Indian philosophy and ethics, and he raised his voice never in opposition to but always in firm support of the truths and principles contained in the concept of *Dharma*. He gave to the people the spirit of religion and made them happy in every walk of life.

‘As time would have it, after twelve years flashed by, the Manifest merged with its origin, the Unmanifest, and *Brahmalīna Brahmānandam* is now appearing in the hearts of his devotees as waves of *Brahmānandam*—bliss. He left behind a few others to keep the light of His grace shining and pass on the torch of His teachings from heart to heart for all the centuries to come.

‘His Divine Plan of Spiritual Regeneration of the world is being worked out quite naturally by the stronghold of time, which is found marking a change in human destiny. We only pray Him to keep on guiding us.’

—Maharishi, quoted in *His Holiness Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, Thirty Years Around the World—Dawn of the Age of Enlightenment* (Vol.1, 1986)

Jai Guru Dev