

THE PHILOSOPHY OF SWAMI NIGAMANANDA

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ABSTRACT

India is great. It is great not for any worldly possessions but for the priceless possession of spiritualism and the leading luminaries of Vedic Literature. "When people in other countries were still using barks for clothes and lived in tree-holes and caves, Aryans, in Aryan land, on the banks of river Saraswati were singing hymns of God and were far advanced in civilization" (Yogi Guru/English/p-1). Vedas are India's treasure. India is proud and honored for Vedic Religion, Sanatana Dharma. Sanatana Dharma is eternal. This eternal possession of our beloved mother land Aryabarta Bharatbarsha is our religion. Swami Nigamananda is a pioneer preacher of Sanatana Dharma the oldest order of religions of the world. His philosophy synthesizes knowledge and love (Bhakti). The union of Sankara and Gouranga is the synopsis of his life time contribution. His finding is one of the most important features of Sanatan Dharma. He dedicated his life for the cause of Sanatan Dharma. He is unique to get Nirbikalpa Sidhi of Vedanta and realizing the ultimate truth of this ephemeral universe in a shortest period of time frame. His whole life was an adoption and embracing of the ancient religion of India to the new problems of life. Nigamananda who was an engineer by profession got married to an elegant lady Sudhansubala, whose death was incidental in the change of his life. After the death of his wife he saw her astral figure time and again and became mad to know the existence of life after death. He was confident that life exists after death. So he wanted to see his dead wife and set out to achieve his goal that leads him to be a Sadguru the enlightened one. Really it is historic as well as unbelievably wonderful.

KEYWORDS: *Swami Nigamananda the seer of the ultimate truth of the universe and a pioneer preacher of Sanatan Dharma got Nirbikalpa Sidhi of Vedanta in course of searching his wife after her death. The philosophy of Swami Nigamananda is the synthesis of the philosophy of Bhagavan Adi Sankaracharya and Mohapravu Gourang Dev i. e. the union of knowledge and love means Jana and Bhakti. Key teachings of Nigamananda is Sanatan Dharm Prachar, (Preaching of Sanata Dharama) Satsiksha Bistar (expand true education) and Siva Jnane Jiba Seva (service to man service to God). In order to materialize these objects he established Saraswat Sangha and emphasized on ideal household life, establishment of Sangha Shakti (power of Sangha) and Bhaba Binimay (exchange of thoughts) for which he arranged an assemblage called Bhakta Samilani which is being organized every year by his followers since 1915.*

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"To recall that moment when thy feet first touched the earth will make our heart leap in joy. Thy fascinating eyes and thy lovely form have captivated the entire world. The love that shone out of thy face was heavenly, not of this earth, so brilliant was it. The entire world bends to worship thy lotus-feet. Oh God Nigamananda, immeasurable is thy mercy"! (Spiritual Heritage of India and Sadguru Swami Nigamananda/ii).

"My dear children! The real Sannyasi is a teacher of house-holders who see lofty ideals in their loves. In the case of the Sannyasi the end is the liberation of the *SELF* and doing well to humanity". (Sadguru Nigamananda English, p-111).

INTRODUCTION

Swami Nigamananda is a great Master of Vedic Literature. So far his name is concerned he has achieved pleasure of *Nigam* (Veda) so Nigamanda. Vedas are the source of all knowledge, all literature and all pleasure. "They were communicated by the supreme godhead or the divine essence (Brahman) to the ancient seers (*rishis*)". (The Holy Vedas/ Introduction/p-vi). Vedas is the core of not only Hindu religion but all religions of the world. Aryabarta is great for Sanatana Dharma. Swami Nigamananda is a great champion of Sanatana Dharma. He achieved the highest form of Sidhi i. e. "*Nirvikalpa Sidhi*" of Vedanta and dedicated his findings for the benefit of the universe. In his literary creations he clearly depicted the truths therein Vedic Literature. His literary works can lead the world towards peace, fraternity and friendship of oneness. This will give us to materialize the great line of Veda "Basudheiba Kutumbakam (the whole world is one family)". India is honoured for this universal fraternity. The great spiritual leaders of this country preached this.

BIOGRAPHY

The advent of a highly elevated soul like Swami Nigamananda on this earth is not without any reason. At the time of his birth differences of opinions of different sects of religion had reached the peak and the sufferers were the general mass, not the preachers. Mother India was shackled with the foreign rule and alien culture was thrust upon her. The society had forgotten the time tested system of education and new educational system had made the mass unruly and materialistic. The rich cultural heritage of Mother India was displaced with a culture not suitable to the people of the sub-continent. Confusion and hatred prevailed in almost all the levels of the society. India needed someone who could re-establish the values of Sanatana Dharma and to start a process of harmonization among the different religious sects to take the people from darkness of confusion towards the light and reality of serenity. It is obvious Swami Nigamananda arrived on earth with a particular mission. He became successful in all the four Margas of Vedanta such as Tantra, Jnana, Yoga and Prema within the shortest ever time frame of three years only. This achievement is unparalleled in the history of the world of religion.

Nalinikanta (Nigamananda) who was an engineer by profession got married to an elegant lady Sudhansubala, whose death was incidental in the change of his life. After the death of his wife he saw her astral figure several times and became mad to know the existence of life after death. The spirit of his dead wife came and requested him to offer her death rituals. As he saw the spirit of his dead wife time and again he could not believe the death of his wife. He was confident that, death is not the end of this life. Life exists after death. He wanted to see his dead wife. So he moved from place to place and searched her. Some false saints assured him to help meeting his dead wife but it was not possible by them. Still he did not give up hope. People called him mad. Searching of a dead person in flesh and blood is really madness. But Nalinikanta embraced that madness and became confident. He dared and ventured unbelievably; and that confidence was the source of his success.

Until he lost his wife, Nalinikanta had seen death as the ultimate end. Losing her wife led him to believe that there must be life after death. Nalinikanta became obsessed with this question. His inquiry took him to Madras (now Chennai) to study theosophy at the Theosophical Society, Adyar. Through a medium, he was able to talk to his dead wife, but remained unsatisfied. The spiritual masters of the society could not satisfy him. They failed to mesmerize Nalinikant. He asked them questions which remained unanswered by the masters of the society. His discussions at the society led him to leave Theosophical Society of Adyar and search for a yogi who could full fill his desire to meet his dead wife and educate him in the true philosophy of "life after death".

Dissatisfied Nalinikanta of Adyar embarked and searched for a preceptor who could guide him to see his dead wife but nobody came to his help. He only prayed god for a preceptor. In one night at his work place, all of a sudden the closed bedroom of Nalinikanta became illuminated. A tall and radiant saint appeared and gave him the *Mantra* on the palm of his right hand. Before getting any scope of asking about the mantra, the saint disappeared from the room. Nalinikanta searched him around but he was not there. He passed the night with considerable anguish, grief and repentance. He became restless and searched the saint the Guru everywhere but all in vain. At last he decided to commit suicide at Laxmanjhula, Rishikesh where he got the information about his Tantrik Guru Bamakhepa in a dream. He became elevated and arrived at Tarapitha, his home land of Bengal. Being guided by the famous Tantrik Guru Bamakhepa, Nigamananda became able to see her beloved wife in Tantra Sidhi. He came back to his work place. He invited his dead wife and talked with her as and when desired. Nigamananda observed his dead wife incarnating from within him and disappearing like illusion. He couldn't touch her. He couldn't grasp her. 'He was standing on the bank of river Madhumati but unable to swallow it to his heart's content' (Spiritual Heritage of India and Sadguru Swami Nigamananda/p-163). His Tantra Sidhi was all useless. He said 'I didn't want this kind of pleasure. I didn't leave home to seek God. I did so to win back my beloved Sudhansubala. So he was dissatisfied and went Tarapitha and asked Bamakhepa "If dead Sudhansubala is incarnating from within me then 'who am I'" (Sri Sri Thakur Nigamananda/p.53). Bamakhepa also asked the same question to Goddess Tara and got the answer 'Oh boy he needs knowledge so he has to accept Vedic Sannyas'. Mother desires to lead him in the path of knowledge. Brahma Jnana or Vedanta is the ultimate source of knowledge. All questions end here. All inquisitiveness quenched here. All routs end here. So it is Vedanta the end of Veda, the knowledge of cause and effect of this universe. 'Brahma is the cause and Maya is the effect' (*Sadguru Nigamananda*/p-18).

Achievement

Again Nalinikanta set out in search of a Jnani Guru. Finally he found his Jnani Guru Sachidananda the great preceptor of Puskar Tirtha, on Savitri Hills, Rajasthan. One after another he learnt Jnana from Sachidananda, Yoga from Sumerudas and ultimately Prema from Gouri Maa. He became numero uno in Vedanta Sidhi. Swami Nigamananda achieved Nirbikalp Sidhi of Vedanta in the year 1904. Swami Nigamananda became the seer of the Vedic truth. He felt and expressed "I am Guru" (*Sadguru Swami Nigamananda*/p-134). He is Guru. He had attained Nirbikalp Sidhi of Vedanta. So his teachings create the difference between 'life and death'.

Philosophy

The philosophy of Swami Nagamananda is a synthesis of Sankar and Gouranga i. e. knowledge and love (Bhakti). (*Sadguru Nigamananda*)/p-131. "What is a soul and who is Almighty and what is known as the world?- to know these is discussion of knowledge" (Jnani Guru (Odia, p-165)). The knowledge of self is the direct and only cause for achieving Mukti(salvation). Knowledge means to know the soul and Almighty. On the other hand Bhakti is 'the supreme love for Parameshvara(Supreme God)' (Premik Guru/English-p-01). Bhakti or true love attracts compassion of God and fulfills all desires. Truly speaking Bhakti means absolute love for God. Tapasya and knowledge of self are cause of Salvation or liberation from this mundane world. Tapasya destroys attachment and knowledge brings salvation. In order to get knowledge one should read *Darshan Sastra*. They are called *Sada Darshan* in Sanatan Dhrama. Nyaya of Goutam, Baisesika of Kanada, Samkhya of Kapila, Yoga of Patanjali, Vedanta of Vyasa and Mimamsa of Jaimini are Sada Darshan (Jnani Guru (Odia, p-168)).

The edifice of the philosophy of Swami Nigamananda rests on his four original works in Bengali viz, Tantrik Guru, Jnanin Guru, Yogi Guru and Premik Guru which he wrote from 1905 to 1912 (*Sadguru Nigamananda*/p-87). It was my great preceptor Swami Sachidananda Saraswati who ordered me to reveal the meaning of all the scriptures and the ways of religious practices after making a synthesis and harmony of them and then propagate by writing books” (*Sadguru Nigamananda*/p-152). He also published Brahmacharya Sadhan and Vedanta Viveka. The periodical Arya Darpan was really the mirror of Arya Sanatana Dharma. In this periodical he published so many articles on the teaching of Vedanta Philosophy. He inspired Indian society by writing on the original problems of the then society with the solution so the periodical was popular among the truth seekers of British India.

Swami Nigamanada achieved the ultimate truth and at last he got the answer of ‘who am I’? “According to Vedanta, the realization or understanding or experience of true nature of ‘self’ involves convergence of the knower and the known or of the experience and the experienced, into one. In that sense, experience of the true self that ‘I am’ is not different from knowledge of ‘myself’. This is called ‘*neti neti*’ in Vedanta. The renunciation as the path of salvation is emphasized throughout Vedanta; it is the renunciation of all the notions about myself in order to arrive at the truth of myself. Only through renunciation one can attain liberation says Vedanta (Vedanta/ p-44 & 45). Swami Nigamananda pointed out that the path shown by Gouranga Mohapravu, who practiced and preached unconditional devotion and love for God, was rather narrow, in as much as it was directed to Sri Krishna as the only God. In order to broaden that path, Nigamananda suggested taking the master (Guru) as an embodiment of Sri Krishna (or any other deity whom the aspirant loved), in which case the guide himself becomes the goal. In this way Nigamananda convincingly reconciled the two apparently contradictory creeds of Adi Shankaracharya and Gauranga Mohapravu who advocated the principle and practice of apparent duality between the devotee and God. After all, Nigamananda pointed out that in the path of devotion and love the aspirant has to subdue or tame his ego adequately and hence he attains to the same stage as that of the monastic aspirant whose ego loses its identity on attaining to his goal. In the former case, the individuality is reduced to a trifle, overpowered by personal god-consciousness, whereas in the latter the aspirant loses his self-consciousness in the ocean of impersonal universal consciousness. In a diagram of Jnanachakra Nigamananda has pointed out that the doctrine of Vedanta philosophy treats the supreme reality in terms of oneness of individual and universal consciousness ‘The Chart which I have drawn will help you to understand the mystery of the creation’ *Sadguru Nigamananda*/p-208.

“The Rishis are known as seers of truth and the seers of real knowledge. ‘*Rishaya Mantra Drasta*’. The real wise one sees the truth in deep meditation i. e. Samadhi. There is a great difference between a seer of truth and the knowledgeable and the highly cultured and vastly educated pundit” (The Life Gospels & Philosophy of Shree Nigamananda/ p-407). Key teachings of Nigamananda as envisaged in his own publications are Sanatan Dharm Prachar, (Preaching of Sanata Dharama) Satsiksha Bistar (expand true education) and Siva Jnane Jiba Seva (service to man service to God). He intended to preach Sanatan Dharma the religion of Aryabarta-Bharatbarsh. To full fill this aim he first published Yogi Guru. After that he published several books with a periodical named Arya Darpan (the mouthpiece of Sanatan Dharma). Next is Satsiksha Bistar. He desired to teach the whole mankind ‘education to the true sense of the term’ so he established Saraswat Sangha. The last but not the list is Siva Jnane Jiba Seba i. e. service to mankind service to God. He had a vision of new social order. He travelled extensively throughout the holy places of India. During his travelling he saw human suffering everywhere. The suffering he observed was in most cases man-made, the rich taking advantage of the poor, the strong of the weak, the Brahmin of the Sudra and so on. He was a religious Guru so his thought was quite different and unique. He thought ‘religion must intervene to stop exploitation’. To him what was most important was man

himself and not so much the system. “An ideal society according him is not merely a society where all are equal, with equal rights and privileges, but where there are conditions conducive to maximum moral and spiritual growth. Society should certainly attend to an individual’s material needs but it should also try to foster in him and urge for moral and spiritual excellence” Sadguru Nigamananda/p-130. In order to materialize his aims and objects he emphasized on ideal household life, establishment of Sangha Shakti (power of Sangha) and Bhaba Binimay (exchange of thoughts) therefore he arranged an assemblage called Bhakta Samilani every year since 1915. Ideal household life is the key note of His Life’s Philosophy. An ideal household life is the foundation stone to ideal society that can only materialize the great line of Vedanta ‘Service to man service to God’.

Nigamananda the founder of new Order in our time has given us a new devotion. In course of his Sadhana he attained the highest stage in all the four principal disciplines of Vedanta (Tantra, Jnana, Yoga & Prema) leading to God realization. His major works constitute the essence of his philosophy which is based mainly on the philosophical thinking of Sankar and Gourang i. e. knowledge and love. So the world owes to his special genius for a bold and new synthesis of these two Arya-Sanatan Creeds. He attained Nirbikalpa i. e. oneness with Brahman and felt that he should come down on the earth as a Guru to lead the distressed, miserable and grief stricken people. He became a Sadguru to provide light and wisdom and solace to the humanity at large. His books are the essence of the philosophy of based on the philosophical thinking of Adi Sankar and Gouranga Mohapravu.

Nigamananda was a Sannyasi of the Adi Sankar cult. He studied Vedanta philosophy due to Shankaracharya after he was initiated as a Sanyasi of that order. Nigamananda's core-teachings were that disciples should adopt ideals of Lord Adi Sankar (i. e. the path of Jnana) and ideals of Lord Gouranga (i. e. the path of *bhakti*). “*Nahi jnanena sadrusam pabitraniham bidyate*” (Srimad Vagabatgeeta/4/38). ‘In this world there is no purifier as great as knowledge’ (Srimad Vagabatgeeta-Tattvavivecani/4/38/p-250). There is nothing as pious and sacred in the world like jnana but this jnana is achieved easily if one tries to achieve it with respect and one has control over his senses” (Jnani Guru-English/p-123) According to Nigamananda, Shankar and Gourang provide a sweet combination of Jnana (knowledge) and Bhakti (love) to lead the world in the right way. The ultimate aim of love is to achieve Gopi Bhava. “Sri Radha is the only ideal of the devotees coveting divine love based on Gopi Bhava. Sri Bhagaban enacted *braja lila* and assumed the incarnation of Radha-Krishna deliver on man complete bliss on the path of *prema bhakti* through this ideal” (Premik Guru/Englivsh/p-126).

So far the philosophy and teachings of Nigamananda is concerned he is a Guru not Avatar. He never admitted that he was God-incarnate or an Avatar. “I am no Avatar, I am just a Sadhan Sidha Sadguru’ (*Sadguru Nigamananda/p-112*). He stated that an incarnation is an exclusive descent of God on earth to uphold spiritual order. The Avatar ordinarily does not enlighten or guide individuals. Through his agency righteousness is established and demonic forces are destroyed. Nigamananda wanted to be treated as a Sadguru (a perfect spiritual Master.) who, on account of his quest over a succession of birth and death, attained the knowledge of his true or potential nature, i. e., supreme universal consciousness. He drew a difference between Sadguru, Jagadguru and God. According to Nigamananda the disciple should take his Guru to be the Jagadguru or the Master of the world, and not an ordinary human being.

Mannāthaḥ śrījagannātho madgurustri jagadguruḥ

Mamātma sarvabhūtamā tasmai śrīgurave namaḥ (Guru Gīta)

There are two pathways to attain spiritual liberation: one is by initiation into and observing the austerities of Sannyas yoga and the other – by service rendered to a Sadguru who has realization of Brahman. The former is extremely arduous a path – the disciple must die in a sense even while he remains in his body. In other words, he has to lose his body consciousness. But if one unconditionally loves the Guru by way of rendering service to him sincerely, spiritual liberation may be obtained relatively easy. Nothing substantial can be achieved without Guru's grace. "I have been wandering far and wide like a bird as if with its voice box mutilated but have not had God coming and helping me. But the day I was able to have the grace or the benefit of the Guru (Who is God in human form), I started making real progress" he said.

The Guru is the embodiment of both the monistic (or non-dual) ideology due to the Great Adi Sankaracharya and love divine as preached by Sri Sri Gouranga Mohapravu. If the disciple submits himself to the Guru his latent characteristic attitude is bound to unfold. He can realize God. "To realize God is the supreme goal of human existence; all Indian religions agree to this philosophy. Arise, awake, approach the feet of the master and know that" (Sadguru Nigamananda/English/ p-150). Study of scriptures is fruitless as long as the Brahman is not been experienced. Spiritual life based on such a universal (non-sectarian) and sweet relationship between the Guru and the disciple can help harmonize the diverse faiths in the world. This will bring a new status all over the world.

According to Nigamananda, the theory of self-realization requires expanding the individual self to the status of the supreme universal self. The expansions can be directly practiced only by the most competent among the aspirant Sannyasi by means of precise intellectual inquiry, analysis and deep meditation, although service to the Master is the key to success in such pursuits as well. However, Nigamananda pointed out that true transcendental divine love and ecstasy could be properly experienced by the most fortunate ones only after they had attained monistic realization of the supreme as declared by Lord Krishna himself in the Bhagavadgeeta (18/54).

Unlike saints who recognized and preached a diversity of doctrines for self God realization and offered multiple paths to attain them, Nigamananda suggested the realization of the oneness of self and the supreme universal self as the true and the highest goal of human life. For most aspirants the path is one of true devotion to the perfect spiritual master (Sadguru) who initiates them. Rendering personal service to the Master and invoking his grace through prayers, chanting and simple meditation are the chief modes of spiritual practice for them. They will acquire non-dualistic realization that their Master is a realized soul (*Brahmajnani*) and experience bliss due to intense love for him over the course of time.

CONCLUSIONS

The whole universe is under the pressure of troubles and tribulations of universal unrest. We need peace and tranquility. At this critical juncture of time the life and philosophy of Swami Nigamananda can guide people towards an ideal household life. An ideal individual can only lead a peaceful life and at the same time can stand exemplary to help others living peacefully. Ultimately this will create an ideal society and ideal state. 'Be good and people would follow you' is the clarion call of the philosophy of Swami Nigamananda. Exactly this is the real 'synthesis of knowledge and love'. First know 'what is what', and then 'love what is truth'. This kind of love stands eternal. This kind of love leads life after death. This kind of love leaves life immortal on this mortal world. He discovered how to win over death and live life without suffering. End of suffering means end of desire. Living a life without any desire leads to happiness. Sorrows and sufferings of this life is the result of our own action. Self less devotion is the foundation of peaceful life. Life without any passion for worldly possession is eternal, that ultimately brings the truth and leads a human being to the status of salvation. The true sense of Sanatana Dharma is to die without desire and achieve divinity.

The evolution of ideas must go on forever. India is a land of preceptors and philosophers. This country has guided the whole world spiritually from time immemorial. From Kapila Muni to Maharshi Kanad from Suka Mmuni to Sridhar Swami from Swami Vivekananda to Swami Nigamanda everybody has drifted the spiritual heritage of Aryabrata. The observation of Swami Nigamananda is not for a single community or class. It is all above any class, community and sect. It is eternal. Hindu, Muslim and Christian can assemble on one altar to worship the Almighty. Guru Bramha is castles and classless. Swami Nigamananda's concept of Bramha is 'Para' (Absolute) and Abara (the creation). In order to explain 'Parabramha' he has classified it into Saguna and Nirguna. According to him Sachidananda too is another appellation of Bramha; beyond any distinction- without form, name and absolute. The union of Shankar and Gourang is the genuine truth-real religion. If we discover in any heart the union of Shankar and Gourang (knowledge and love), we shall at once recognize him a true devotee of Sanatan Dharma. More over Swami Naigamanda's commands and advice suggest the far reaching effect and possibilities of achieving heaven on earth. The noble object of his life's mission is in fact to create ideal householder. So 'he said again and again that man making was his mission and the monastery founded by him was based on this noble ideal. As a Vedantin, the Sadguru believed that each soul is potentially divine and that the goal of life is to manifest that divinity' (Sadguru Nigamananda/English/p-130). True knowledge can lead someone to know the real philosophy of life after death i. e the synthesis of Jnana and Bhakti.

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