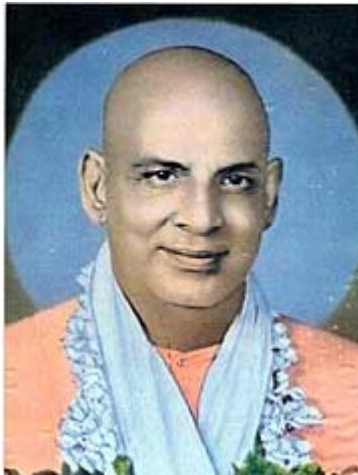


GUIDELINES TO ILLUMINATION

By

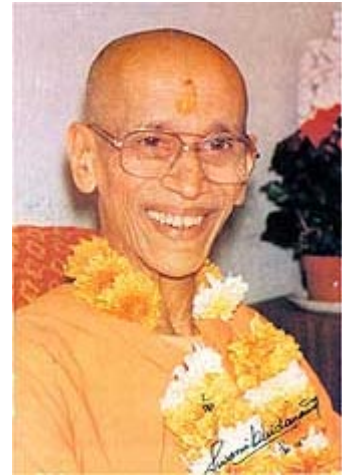
SRI SWAMI CHIDANANDA



Sri Swami Sivananda
Founder of
The Divine Life Society



**SERVE, LOVE, GIVE,
PURIFY, MEDITATE,
REALIZE**
So Says
Sri Swami Sivananda



Sri Swami Chidananda

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AUTHOR'S PREFACE

Human life is a rare gift. It is a gift from the Lord. Three things are very difficult to obtain in this mortal world,—birth as a human being, desire for liberation and association with the wise ones,—and they are obtained only through the blessings and grace of God. Of the three, human birth is a very precious gift that has been put first and foremost. It is that state of existence where alone the Jiva becomes endowed with intellect and the extremely rare faculty of discrimination. Therefore, human birth is considered as a very rare gift of God.

The purpose of life is to know your own essential nature or Atman by knowing which you have nothing more to know. Every one must know that the Divine is within him. God is within you and you are in Him. Attainment of God is the Supreme purpose of life. Without this aim in life, the life of an individual is a mere waste. It is essenceless.

In order to progress in this spiritual path one should know the fundamentals of spiritual life. This book “**Guidelines to Illumination**” serves the purpose of giving some practical and useful information in this direction. It contains the essentials of spiritual life. This entire book constitutes a sincere attempt to serve earnest seekers after spiritual Truth and to spread spiritual wisdom that is likely to be of benefit to mankind. Unlike other books containing one subject-matter, this book “**Guidelines to Illumination**” contains many practical hints useful to seekers in the spiritual path. It is culled from my speeches given abroad during 1969-70, in various places. I place this book in the hands of seekers who wish to know some of essentials of spiritual life and earnestly hope that it will serve that purpose well.

I am grateful to Sri Swami Vimalanandaji (formerly known as Sri S. Nagarajan) for collecting the material for this book and also to Sri Bill Eilers (Sri Swami Atmaswarupanandaji) of Vancouver, B.C., Canada, for going through the entire manuscript and suggesting the excellent title for this book.

I offer and dedicate this book at the feet of holy Master Sri Swami Sivanandaji, who is no more physically, but whose invisible spiritual presence is guiding me even now.

Swami Chidananda

BRIEF LIFE-SKETCH OF SRI SWAMI CHIDANANDA

Sridhar Rao, as Swami Chidananda was known before taking Sannyasa, was born to Srinivasa Rao and Sarojini, on the 24th of September, 1916, the second of five children and the eldest son. Sri Srinivasa Rao was a prosperous Zamindar owning several villages, extensive lands and palatial buildings in South India. Sarojini was an ideal Indian mother, noted for her saintliness.

At the age of eight Sridhar Rao's life was influenced by one Sri Anantayya, a friend of his grandfather, who used to relate to him stories from the epics, Ramayana and Mahabharata. Doing Tapas, becoming a Rishi, and having a vision of the Lord became ideals which he cherished.

His uncle, Krishna Rao, shielded him against the evil influences of the materialistic world around him, and sowed in him the seeds of the Nivritti life which he joyously nurtured until, as later events proved, it blossomed into sainthood.

His elementary education began at Mangalore. In 1932 he joined the Muthiah Chetty School in Madras where he distinguished himself as a brilliant student. His cheerful personality, exemplary conduct and extraordinary traits earned for him a distinct place in the hearts of all teachers and students with whom he came into contact.

In 1936 he was admitted to Loyola College, whose portals admit only the most brilliant of students. In 1938 he emerged with the degree of Bachelor of Arts. This period of studentship at a predominantly Christian College was significant. The glorious ideal of Lord Jesus, the Apostles and the other Christian saints had found in his heart a synthesis of all that is best and noble in the Hindu culture. To him, study of the Bible was no mere routine; it was the living word of God, just as living and real as the words of the Vedas, the Upanishads and the Bhagavad-Gita. His innate breadth of vision enabled him to see Jesus in Krishna, not Jesus instead of Krishna. He was as much an adorer of Jesus Christ as he was of Lord Vishnu.

The family was noted for its high code of conduct and this was infused into his life. Charity and service were the glorious ingrained virtues of the members of the family. These virtues found an embodiment in Sridhar Rao. He discovered ways and means of manifesting them. None who sought his help was sent away without it. He gave freely to the needy.

Service to lepers became his ideal. He would build them huts on the vast lawns of his home and look after them as though they were deities. Later, after he joined the Ashram, this early trait found in him complete and free expression where even the best among men would seldom venture into this great realm of divine love, based upon the supreme wisdom that all are one in God. Patients from the neighbourhood, suffering from the worst kinds of diseases came to him. To Sridhar Rao the patient was none other than Lord Narayana Himself. He served him with tender love and compassion. The very movement of his hands portrayed him as worshipping the living Lord Narayana. Nothing would keep him from bringing comfort to the suffering inmates of the Ashram, no matter what the urgency of other engagements at the time.

Service, especially of the sick, often brought out the fact that he had no idea of his own separate existence as an individual. It seemed as if his body clung loosely to his soul.

Nor was all this service confined to human beings. Birds and animals claimed his attention as much as, if not, more than, human beings. He understood their language of suffering. His service of a sick dog evoked the admiration of Gurudev. He would raise his finger in grim admonition when he saw anyone practising cruelty to dumb animals in his presence.

His deep and abiding interest in the welfare of lepers had earned for him the confidence and admiration of the Government authorities when he was elected to the Leper Welfare Association, constituted by the state—at first as Vice-Chairman and later as Chairman of the Muni-ki-reti Notified Area Committee.

Quite early in life, although born in a wealthy family, he shunned the pleasures of the world to devote himself to seclusion and contemplation. In the matter of study it was the spiritual books which had the most appeal to him, more than college books. Even while he was at the college, text books had to take second place to spiritual books. The works of Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda and Sri Gurudev took precedence over all others. He shared his knowledge with others, so much so that he virtually became the Guru of the household and the neighbourhood, to whom he would talk of honesty, love, purity, service and devotion to God. He would exhort them to perform Japa of Rama-Nama. While still in his twenties he began initiating youngsters into this great Rama Taraka Mantra. He was an ardent admirer of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda. He visited the Ramakrishna Math at Madras regularly and participated in the Satsangas there. The call of Swami Vivekananda to renounce resounded within his pure heart. He ever thirsted for the Darshan of saints and Sadhus visiting the metropolis.

In June 1936, he disappeared from home. After a vigorous search by his parents, he was found in the secluded Ashram of a holy sage some miles from the sacred mountain shrine of Tirupati. He returned home after some persuasion. This temporary separation was but a preparation for the final parting from the world of attachments to family and friends. While at home his heart dwelt in the silent forests of spiritual thoughts, beating in tune with the eternal Pranava-Nada of the Jnana Ganga within himself. The seven years at home following his return from Tirupati were marked by seclusion, service, intense study of spiritual literature, self-restraint, control of the senses, simplicity in food and dress, abandonment of all comforts and practice of austerities which augmented his inner spiritual power.

The final decision came in 1943. He was already in correspondence with Sri Swami Sivananda of Rishikesh. He obtained Swamiji's permission to join the Ashram.

On arrival at the Ashram, he naturally took charge of the dispensary. He became the man with the healing hand. The growing reputation of his divine healing hand attracted a rush of patients to the Sivananda Charitable Dispensary.

Very soon after joining the Ashram, he gave ample evidence of the brilliance of his intellect. He delivered lectures, wrote articles for magazines and gave spiritual instructions to the visitors. When the Yoga-Vedanta Forest University (now known as the Yoga-Vedanta Forest Academy) was established in 1948, Sri Gurudev paid him a fitting tribute by appointing him Vice-Chancellor and Professor of Raja Yoga. During the first year he inspired the students with his brilliant exposition of Maharshi Patanjali's Yoga-Sutras.

It was also in the first year of his stay at the Ashram that he wrote his *magnum opus* '**Light Fountain**', an immortal biography of Sri Gurudev. Sri Gurudev himself once remarked: "Sivananda will pass away, but 'Light Fountain' will live."

In spite of his multifarious activities and intense Sadhana, he founded, under the guidance of Gurudev, the Yoga Museum in 1947, in which the entire philosophy of Vedanta and all the processes of Yoga Sadhana are depicted in the form of pictures and illustrations.

Towards the end of 1948, Gurudev nominated him as the General Secretary of the Divine Life Society. The great responsibility of the organisation fell on his shoulders. From that moment he spiritualised all its activities by his presence, counsel and wise leadership. He exhorted all to raise their consciousness to the level of the Divine.

On Guru Purnima day, the 10th of July, 1949, he was initiated into the holy order of Sannyasa by Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj. He now became known as Swami Chidananda, a name which connotes "one who is in the highest consciousness and bliss."

In November, 1959, Swami Chidanandaji embarked on an extensive tour of America, being sent by Gurudev as his personal representative to broadcast the message of Divine Life. He returned in March, 1962.

In August, 1963, after the Mahasamadhi of the Master, he was elected as President of the Divine Life Society. After election, he strove to hold aloft the banner of renunciation, dedicated service, love and spiritual idealism, not only within the set-up of the widespread organisation of the Society, but in the hearts of countless seekers throughout the world, who were all too eager to seek his advice, help and guidance.

Swamiji has toured the length and breadth of India and also South Africa and Malaysia to serve devotees of the Society.

Again in 1968, Sri Swami Chidanandaji undertook the Global Tour at the kind request of numerous disciples and devotees of holy Master Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj and visited South Africa, Rhodesia, Mauritius, Malawi, Uganda, Kenya, Germany, Belgium, France, U.K., Greece, Italy, Switzerland, U. S. A., Canada, Bahamas, Uruguay, Argentina, Chile, Fiji, Australia, Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia and Sri Lanka. Wherever he went devotees received him cordially and listened to him with rapt attention.

Sri Swami Chidanandaji, right from the beginning is working and serving the Divine Cause of Sri Gurudev's Mission tirelessly and spreading his Divine Life Message far and wide not only in Bharatavarsha but also in countries outside.

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PRINCIPLES OF YOGA

Yoga is not only in Nirvikalpa Samadhi. It is in every moment. If a thought comes and if you are not able to watch and put it down, you have failed in Yoga, you have failed in the examination. In every thought, in every action you have to assert your mastery over your Vrittis. Then Yoga is fulfilled, divine life is lived; and what is the time taken for this process? It is a moment. Within a split second so many frames (cinema films) go away. Similar is the case with the mind. The entire process takes place in a split second, starting from Samskaras and ending with Cheshta or fulfilling of desires. From experience you get Samskara, from Samskara you get Vasana, from Vasana you get Vritti. Imagination makes the Vritti into a desire. Then ego attaches itself to the desire and it becomes an urge, a Trishna. Now you are forced to do Cheshta—action—to fulfil the desire. This process of the mind is going on.

The scientists are trying to find a perpetual motion machinery, a machinery that never stops but is always in motion. If you have to find such a machinery, now it is in you; it is the mind. We have to deal with the mind. All the Vasanas and Samskaras, which you have formed, are already there and you cannot help it. But you can at least do one thing. You can prevent the formation of new Samskaras. And also let the past Samskaras be not further strengthened by fresh ones. How is it possible? Daily you get new experiences and daily you perceive so many things with your five organs of senses. Then how can we prevent these experiences making impressions upon the mind? Is there any technique? How did these objects get into the mind and form Samskaras? Here is an object. You perceive it through any one of your senses. First there is contact between the sense and the object. That is the first thing, and then what happens? So far only the outer fringe of man's personality has been touched. Supposing you are very deeply absorbed in some task, and your brother or sister comes and lays his or her hands on you; you are not aware although the object has contacted the sense, because the sense has not conveyed it to the mind, and the mind is away from it. The objects have contacted the senses, and the senses have conveyed it to the mind, but if you are not there, if the sense of 'I' is not there, the impression taken by the mind as a matter of routine, makes no meaning to the person. So, if the ego is not there, the object does not go deep into the mind. If the ego is engaged in some other thought, a particular impression brought by the senses will not produce any effect. But if the 'I' is there, the object goes and impinges upon your awareness; and if this 'I' is in a state of heedlessness, is not vigilant, it is in a state of illusion, a state of worldliness or Rajas, and it will easily take these perceptions and create in you a desire for the objects.

If you are not alert due to lack of understanding of the thought process, the moment the thought of a lovely object arises in you, you will follow it and the result is you want that object. You see money and immediately you want it. Supposing it has come to this stage, there is only one thing to be done. What can you do? You can simply burn up that desire and reduce it to ashes. There is only one fire to burn all desires; Nachiketas had that fire. So many attractive and alluring things were offered by Yama. He offered money, beauty, strength, power, kingdoms and lordships over all worlds, all Vidyas. He gave flowing descriptions of the whole attractive and alluring worlds, but Nachiketas reduced all such desires to ashes, because he had that one fire, and that was Mumukshutva, aspiration. Aspiration is a positive fire in which all desires, cravings are thrown and reduced to ashes. This is the fire that should characterise all Sadhakas, Yogis and Vedantins who lead the divine life.

If you want to lead the divine life, your inner heart should be a place of aspiration and a fire of Yoga should burn in you inside always. This blaze should be there. You cannot completely change the outward mode of life, but inwardly there should be aspiration. This fire should burn day and night, when you are awake, when you are sleeping, when you are alone, when you are among men, when you are meditating and when you are engaged in work. This fire should not be put out. This aspiration should always form an integral part of your being. Then you are living the divine life. If this fire is there, you need not worry what work you are doing or in which place you are living. Because, you will be leading the divine life. You cannot be a victim of sense-pleasures. But you must at any time know if, in spite of your vigilance, an object goes to the inner consciousness, how to burn it through aspiration. If before it enters the outer threshold you have to burn it, what are the techniques? There are two techniques. One technique is always keep the mind indrawn. Never allow the mind to be completely extrovert, so that even apparently when you are moving amidst objects, the senses are not outgoing but turned inward. This is a very difficult technique, but this has to be practised. This Pratyahara is very essential. The ideal of the aspirant should always be to acquire this important qualification—Pratyahara.

The other thing is to be indifferent. What does it mean to you? It does not mean anything to you at all. If a non-vegetarian goes into the bazaar where they sell fish, poultry, etc., his mouth may water. But supposing he is a pure vegetarian, they will not mean anything at all, because he is not interested in them. Even so, we will have to create an attitude within ourselves by constant reflection and constant meditation on the Supreme Reality which will reveal the vanity of the world, the worthlessness of earthly objects, and the perishable nature of the entire creation. By constantly imbibing such consciousness in one's personality, an attitude of mind is created when all things cease to have any meaning to you, and then, even when these things come, there is no response from within, and this state is called Udasinata. You are simply not interested, and when there is a thing which you do not like, you are not aware of its existence. This attitude of not being interested in a thing should be universalised. An aspirant should hold an attitude of indifference when he is in the midst of objects. This way you have to move in the world.

Day-to-day movements of men constitute the very essence of Yoga and Vedanta. One should not commit the mistake of running away with the idea that by merely having a great idealism that one can indulge in every type of actions and words. Every action goes to form one's character even as every drop goes to form the ocean. Day-to-day movements of men constitute the very essence of divine living, the very essence of Yoga and Vedanta. If one is watchful of every thought and sees that the broad principles of divine living are observed in daily life, the principles which go to make up the foundation of spiritual life, the edifice will come by itself.

Truthfulness, compassion, purity,—these are the broad things which have to cover our entire life down to the minutest details. An aspirant cannot afford to forget this detailed living of divine life, and his whole life, at least in the beginning, should be characterised by self-restraint. If a Sadhaka thinks that he can do anything and also meditate, he is deceiving himself. Yoga is not a toy; which you can easily take and play with. Therefore, every action should be done with awareness.

The whole personality should be restrained. One should live a life of moderation. As said by our Gurudev Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj in his song: "Eat a little, drink a little..." we have to understand it in its proper sense. There are two parts of this song. "Eat a little, drink a little, talk a

little, sleep a little”; when he says these things he means moderation. These things should not be done too much. These are not said in the sense that they are essential. It means that you must not overdo them. The instinctive life of eating, drinking, talking, etc., should be kept to the minimum. The other portion wherein Gurudev says: “Do Japa a little, do Asana a little, do Kirtan a little,” means not that they should not be done too much, but here it is the other way round. Sri Gurudev has said that everyone of these items is essential, and all these items should find a place in your daily programme. All gross things that merely pertain to the body should be kept to the minimum and all the higher aspects of Sadhana should be given proper place in your daily programme. This is the broad general outline of divine life or spiritual living, for you. All these, Japa, meditation, Kirtan, etc., form the positive side. Living a life of restraint, and not fulfilling the undue desires of the mind and senses, understanding that to fulfil such demands is to become greater and greater slaves of the mind and its promptings is the other side. Always be based upon self-restraint and inwardness and make the best use of your quiet hours in self-study, so that your Yoga may be fulfilled. This sums up the essential principles of Yoga.

THE NEED FOR FAITH

The differences in views and opinions in matters like politics and economics are understandable. But it is surprising that such differences of opinion and approach exist in the spiritual field also, even though the seekers have one common end as their aim, viz., the realisation of the Supreme Being. What could these differences be due to? One reason advanced is that different facets of the Ultimate Truth are presented to different seekers. Suppose a pillar is made of gold and silver—gold on one side and silver on the other. Viewed from one side the pillar appears to be nothing but silver, and viewed from the other, it appears to be only gold. The second explanation given is that different people have got different capacities of grasping or understanding. Each one is able to grasp according to his capacity. So there are differences in the method of approach, like absolute monism, qualified monism, etc., to suit different men of different capacities. Therefore, there are no inconsistencies in the scriptures and they deserve our faith in them. Even with a grain or a mustard of faith you can do what is seemingly impossible.

Where is the need for faith? Cannot man use his intellect and know things? No, because of the limitations of the mental process (Antahkarana). Great people both in the East and the West, after having experienced the Highest, have stressed the need for faith, and they could not have made a misstatement, for they had no purpose to do so. In all our experiences of external objects, there is the person who experiences, the process of experience and object experienced. Without these triune factors one cannot live. Every moment of one’s life they are present. These triple factors have to be annihilated for attaining the Supreme Experience. Triputi Laya has to be achieved. And then Consciousness alone remains. The Supreme Experience alone is present.

The nature of the Supreme is existence. This can be illustrated by an example. You go to a jungle and see a tree there. The tree is. Suppose a wood-cutter cuts the tree; it is then called ‘log’. Though the tree has changed its form and name, its existence has not disappeared. It exists in the name and form of the log. If the log is then made into planks of wood, then the log is not there, but the planks of wood are, or each plank of wood is, there. The existence aspect continues. Suppose

these planks are converted into tables or chairs; then the planks are not there, but still the tables and chairs are there. If after some years the tables and chairs become useless and are reduced to pieces of wood, then the tables and chairs are not there. If these pieces of wood are burnt, then the ashes remain. The wood now exists as the ashes. And if the ashes are also annihilated, according to the scientists, they still remain as atoms. Thus existence continues. The ultimate Truth is Existence, Eternity.

But, we are not able to experience the Truth with our senses and the mind, for they are limited in their scope. One sees an object at night as long as there is light. But if the light is put off, in spite of his having his eyes opened he cannot see anything. So, the eyes depend on an external object for seeing, viz., the light. But suppose there is too much light. The eyes cannot see. The eyes will be dazzled or even perpetually blinded by excessive light, as for instance, of an arc-light. Again if a curtain hides an object, the eyes cannot perceive it. If a crystal-clear glass tumbler is filled with pure water, from a distance it cannot be said whether it contains water or not. If you are affected with cold, you cannot smell an object. You cannot hear a very low sound, and a powerful sound may deafen your ears. When you are absorbed in some thought, you cannot hear the external noises. However delicious it may be, a third or fourth cup of milk ceases to be delicious. If the milk was really delicious it must have been delicious always. Then, how is it that a fourth cup of milk is not delicious, and a fifth cup causes vomiting? So, our senses are limited in their scope. We cannot have uniformity of experience through the senses. You cannot remember what all dishes you took yesterday. You cannot remember the past nor can you foretell the future. However intellectual one may be, when something goes wrong with his brain, he has to consult a psychiatrist or go to an asylum. One dose of opium is sufficient to make him lose his consciousness. Such are the limitations of intellect and senses. Further, jealousy, anger, prejudice, depression—all these cloud man's vision. If a man is cheerful, everything is beautiful to him. Otherwise, everything is ugly to him. If a man is filled with hatred, everybody becomes an enemy to him. If his mind is filled with love, everybody becomes his friend. Thus knowledge derived through the mind can never be dependable.

Our great master-minds have tried to show that anything that we try to perceive is only appearance of a thing, and not the essence of a thing. Take for instance, a piece of cloth. You say it is a piece of cloth. Suppose you remove its warp and woof. You remove all the threads. It is no more the cloth that it was formerly. It is now called a heap of threads. Again it can be reduced to cotton, and cotton again to atoms. So in reality we are wearing only atoms!

Then, are the senses and intellect not useful at all? They are useful, of course, but to a certain extent. Up to a certain stage intellect is useful, but when that stage is reached, the intellect is no longer useful. It is an obstacle thereafter. It should be dispensed with. Even in Vedanta, which is mainly a process of constant enquiry and analysis, the intellect has to be avoided when one reaches the point of meditation, of drawing the mind inward. Master-minds knew that mind was not the essential part of man, and so they gave a kick to the mind and intellect and boldly took a leap into the Unknown. They had direct experience of the Truth and enjoyed the Supreme Bliss which they wanted to share with others. So they said, "Come ye, O seekers, we will show you the way to eternal beatitude, where there is perennial bliss and lasting peace." So to believe in their words is not blind faith.

Faith is Spirit responding to the Spirit. The ultimate essence in man responds to the Infinite. Faith does not spring from the mind and senses. Faith is the nature of the innermost Being of man. Faith is a power. It is a great primal power which elevates man and lifts him to the transcendental experience.

The giant intellect, Sri Sankara, himself has laid down ‘*Sraddha*’ (faith) as one of the sixfold virtues in Sadhana Chatushtaya which consists of Viveka (discrimination), Vairagya (dispassion), Shadsampat (Sama, Dama, Uparati, Titiksha, Sraddha and Samadhana) and Mumukshutva (intense longing for Liberation). If everything could be understood by analysis and enquiry, then why did he stipulate ‘*Sraddha*’? Without faith, an aspirant cannot practise even Sravana (hearing). If he has no faith in the teacher, if he doubts that what his teacher says may be incorrect, how can he learn anything at all? Even in our daily life, faith is indispensable. Somebody cooks food and we take that food. We do not doubt that the cook might have put some poison in the food. We go to a doctor for medicine and take the medicine that he gives, without doubting that what he gives might be poison. In the spiritual realms also, the same is the case. There have been sages who have plumbed the depth of Truth and given out their experiences. We repose faith in the words of persons who say that they have visited the moon. Similarly it is reasonable to repose faith in the words of those who have seen the Truth because they say: “We have experienced the Truth, so you can also experience the Truth, provided you do what we have done in order to experience the Truth. Experiment for yourself and then see whether you attain the same result or not.” The sages give us assurance that we can also experience the Highest Truth by following the proper self-analysis.

Saint Tulasidas says that faith is like the handmaid of a queen. If anyone wants to see the queen, he cannot be led by the servants of the palace to the innermost chamber in which the queen is. Only upto the gateway to the innermost chamber others can lead a visitor. Thereafter, one of the handmaids of the queen alone can take the visitor to the queen. All our reasoning, theoretical knowledge, etc., will take us only upto a certain stage. Beyond that they cannot help us, but only faith can help us in attaining the Supreme Experience. Faith is necessary for all aspirants, be they Raja Yogins, Bhakti Yogins or Jnana Yogins. May God bless you all with supreme faith to experience the Bliss.

HOW TO LEAD THE DIVINE LIFE

Life is precious. Life is valuable. Do not think that life is all misery, or all frustration, or all disappointment or all disillusionment. No. Amidst all these passing phases of life the great and glorious fact ever remains—that life ever beckons us to a high destiny, to a destiny that is no less than attaining our eternal abode. Attaining the experience of Supreme Bliss in God is our birthright.

God is the only Reality. God exists and He is the One Reality. He is the very centre of our life and He is the most important concern in our life. We have no other concern as vitally important and so very absolutely indispensable for our very existence, our happiness, our peace, our ultimate well-being as God is. He is our Goal.

It is not to get stuck in this earth-plane through which we are passing on our way towards Him, but to make use of this earth-life to rise into the blessedness of blissful divine communion with Him—the indescribable experience of being one with Him, partaking of the sweetness of His essential blissful nature. That is the great task. That is the great business of life. That is the one great thing to be achieved in the midst of innumerable little things. All these little things ever keep changing, ever keep shifting and ever pass away, but this great business of life starts with the cradle and it is not completed in the grave. No. It is completed only when we attain Him, no matter how many bodies we may have to take, that is the great business, the central business amidst the passing distractions of our life here.

The present state of consciousness is a product of ignorance. Birth, death, pain, sorrow and suffering are all due to ignorance, or the lack of knowledge of one's own essential Divine nature. This confined personal identity is ignorance or egoism. This ego-consciousness of 'I am a human being', 'I am a weak being', 'I am full of defects and imperfections' is the basic ignorance and the prolific root of all sorrow, of all misery. Out of this springs desire. Desire is born of ignorance. Likes and dislikes are born of ignorance. Clinging to mundane life is due to ignorance, and the non-perception of your eternal life in the Spirit, of your great destiny of perennial life in God—Bliss Infinite—forever, is also due to ignorance.

Identification with the body is the great error of man on earth. Mistaking this impure, inert and perishable body for the pure, immortal Atman or Soul, is truly the great malady of this Samsaric life. Egoism, likes and dislikes, desires, cravings and thoughts are all modifications of this prime error only. From this prime error are created all sorts of desires and their ramifications. To realise the objects of desire, the human being does Karma or actions. He likes some things, dislikes others, expect fruits of his actions which are not what he expected them to be, and is, therefore, thus bound to the wheel of birth and death.

Attain supreme divine wisdom, or the knowledge of the Great Reality, the wisdom of your own Supreme Self, and pain, sorrow and suffering will cease. You will attain Bliss immortal, everlasting Peace and Perennial Joy. You will be freed once and for all from birth and death. Discrimination, dispassion, non-attachment, serenity, self-restraint, endurance, renunciation, faith and devotion, cosmic love, courage, humility, truthfulness, compassion, concentration and meditation; and burning longing for liberation are all aids for Self-realisation, or the attainment of Brahma-Jnana (i.e. knowledge of the Supreme, knowledge of the Eternal One).

God is Self-existent. He does not depend upon others for His existence. He is what is called Svayam Prakasa, Svayam Jyoti. He is Self-luminous. He does not want any other light to reveal Him. He is the Light of Grace. God is self-proved. He does not want any proof. You do not want any proof to know that you exist. You do not require another person to come to you and establish the fact of your existence. Your existence to you is self-proven but it cannot be demonstrated outside yourself. You are, therefore you are. God does not want proof, because He is the basis for all existence. All existence is made possible because He exists. You are because He is. Because God is, it is possible for you to be. He is that principle of Pure Existence or Pure Being within you. He, Himself, is the basis for all the proof. He is Self-contained. He contains everything within Himself—the entire universe is in Him. He knows Himself by Himself.

GUIDELINES TO ILLUMINATION

There is a great deal of quibbling nowadays about God not being personal, or being personal, and so on. Who are we to say that He should be thus and not thus? A human being cannot dictate to God how He should be and how He must not be. We should not quibble about all those things. It is unnecessary. Personal or impersonal—what is all that to us? To us He is personal. He may be impersonal to philosophers, to metaphysical speculators. We are not in any way concerned with them. To us seekers, to each one of us, He is intensely personal. He is close to us.

We cannot even know what is going on inside of ourselves. We do not know how food is being digested. We do not know how blood courses through the minutest capillary. We do not know how a bud opens to become a blossom. And yet we would claim to know all about the nature of God and dictate to Him how He should be. Ours is to love Him. Ours is to seek to know Him. Ours is to approach Him. Ours is to live to get close to Him, experience Him and enter into His very essence. That is the great goal. That is the one thing that is worth doing.

Let us not talk about His nature. It is enough to know that He is inexpressible sweetness—He is inexpressible sweetness—He is Bliss which even the farthest reach of your imagination is powerless to comprehend or conceive of. He is Bliss—He is Peace. He is wondrous Peace. Be still and feel that Peace.

All Peace springs from Him. The highest Bliss that a human being can think of is but a faint reflection of the illimitable. He is Bliss. He is the marvellous Beauty of beauties, and the Radiant Light of lights. He is the Eternal, Infinite Light—the Unchanging One. Peace, Bliss, Radiance, Light, Eternal Being, Existence—all that He is. He is Supreme Perfection. And more than all these—more than anything else, He is our very own. He is your very own. Your relation to all things upon earth has to end.

Enough of argument. Let us have no discussion—no arguments. Let us just know God is our own and God is here and now. Time is fleeting. Life is very short. We have to cut the knot of ignorance and experience the Bliss of God. We are here for it and great Masters, like Swami Sivananda, and many other Masters of both West and East, live in order to bring you to that Fountain Source. They live in order to make the Sun of Knowledge, the Sun of Wisdom arise in the firmament of your consciousness. They live in order to lead you on to that great and glorious destiny. So develop a heart of love. Remember the Saints. Serve all. See God in all. That Inner Being alone is real. He is Blissful. We should directly find our way to Him somehow or other through this imperfect, unsatisfactory life on earth. Discipline the senses—discipline the eye—discipline the tongue. Take little food, control your sense of taste, reduce your sleep, and fill yourself with the thought of God. Fill yourself with Love.

Overcome all your little dislikes and prejudices and disunities and make yourself a reservoir of love, oneness, unity and good-will to all. See no difference of race or religion or caste or creed, or barrier of any sort. Embrace the whole universe in the arms of your cosmic love. Remove selfishness, control anger, develop virtues. Do something substantial while life is, while breath is in the body, and somehow pray, get His Grace, and quickly finish this journey here and reach the heavens of eternal delight in Him. Then alone life is fulfilled.

May God bless you!

DHARMA IS THE SPIRIT OF LIFE

Dharma is duty, righteousness, a life of virtue, in the fulfilment of ethical standard in life. Dharma supports life. He who supports Dharma is supported by Dharma. When you follow a life of virtue it brings you face to face with God. Dharma leads to immortal bliss. Where there is Dharma there is success, there is joy and peace. Dharma is a very unique concept. It is the ideal—the life of idealism—that which ought to be, things as they ought to be, not things merely as they are and it is based upon sound science—not physical science, not material science but upon spiritual science. No one wants to be unhappy. Everyone wants to be happy. No one wants restlessness, fear, peacelessness, anxiety or worry. All want the experience of happiness. Everyone seeks peace. But very seldom people realise the absolute inseparable nature of these two factors. Very few people know or recognise that there is an inexplicable connection between these two factors. What is that connection? Happiness entirely depends upon peace. Peace is the cause of happiness. Without peace you cannot have happiness. Peace comes first. Happiness is its spontaneous result. When incense is burnt fragrance is felt. When flower unfolds fragrance is after it too. Happiness is the result of peace. You cannot have happiness without peace—inner peace, peace of mind. You can have peace without happiness because when you are perfectly in a state of peace you wouldn't think of happiness. Happiness or unhappiness will have no meaning to you, because peace in the ultimate analysis means supreme bliss. When you have a potful of honey you won't care for sweetness. So happiness becomes superfluous if you have true peace because the very essence of happiness is already in peace, just as in honey the very essence of sweetness is there. So, those who know say: "Peace is the supreme goal"—Supreme peace, not merely the absence of noise or absence of clash but a positive state of experience, where even if there is noise and clash yet the peace is there that nothing can touch, nothing can distort or destroy. Therefore, they call it an extraordinary unique peace—a peace that cannot be understood by human beings, peace that passeth understanding. That peace can be there in the midst of trouble tribulation, disappointment or vexations. People may hate you, all friends may abandon you, they may call you names, even persecute you, but yet you will be full of peace. This is the peculiar extraordinary peace that comes when you experience the deepest Self within because it is a peace that nothing can touch. It is that peace that some of the martyrs had. They said, "Our Father forgive them for they know not what they do." And they were able to pray for those who were about to destroy them, because they were at peace with themselves and the Supreme. That peace passeth understanding. It is something which no power in the universe can affect, can change, can alter or can take away even one little bit, because it is the only Reality. It is a positive powerful state of experience—peace—and when that peace is there you are the Emperor of emperors. A billionaire is nothing for you. All the wealth of the whole universe is as dust before you if you have that peace. That peace is the goal—Liberation; Nirvana, Illumination, Moksha, Transcendental experience. They all mean nothing but this great peace.

There is cessation of all desires—all delusion—no more restlessness, no more hankering, no more craving. You are full. You are in a state of overflowing divinity—peace. Supreme reality is profound peace and that peace is the supreme joy. It is the Bliss-absolute of the Upanishads—That is Brahman, that is the thing-in-itself. That is the supreme Tao which cannot be described, attaining which there is nothing higher to be obtained. One is in a state which nothing can equal and which is unvalued. That is possible only in a mind devoid of restlessness. Where there is restlessness of the mind due to desire, thoughts endless, ambitions, peculiar delusions, in that restless mind peace is far off. If you think: "Let me satisfy this desire, then I think I will have a little peace," you are the

greatest deluded being. There is no greater delusion. Satisfaction of desire will have only one result. It will intensify that desire, because desire is an extraordinary peculiar mysterious force of Maya. Desire is not subdued by satisfying it. Desire is subdued by transcending it, by overcoming it and by sublimating it into a higher channel. If you think every desire that arises in the heart spontaneously: “Let me satisfy it,” you are making a sad mistake. You are not walking in light. You will soon find to your bitter cost that you have got yourself in an endless chain. Flowing along the stream is not the answer to the question. It is not the solution to this problem of desire. Flowing along the stream soon you will meet whirling begird. Only strength of self-control can help you to come out of this. You have to assert your higher nature. Giving way to the lower nature anyone can do. The jails of this world are filled with people who give way to their lower nature. It is nothing—it takes nothing. When desire arises immediately go into it. But man is not chaos. Man is made in the image of God.

Desire is a disease of the mind. Desire is a curse of the psyche. It is the pain of the deluded ego, false human personality, human individuality. Desire is Maya and Maya is desire. This desire has to be overcome. This is the whole of Yoga, whole of philosophy, whole of all the teachings of all the saints and seers. Overcome it. Be a hero and overcome this formidable enemy of desire. It is a formidable enemy. It requires exceptional strength. Avoid them even if you have to destroy it. To give in to desire is weakness. Therefore overcome it. Let us stop. That is Yoga. That is spirituality. That is inner strength. That is individuality, true reality. You are asserting yourself. When the mind asserts itself, or senses assert themselves, or desires assert themselves, or the delusion of the intellect asserts itself, you are not asserting yourself. You are falling into a trap. You are distinct from that, absolutely different from that. Our beloved Gurudev chants: “You are not this body, not this mind, immortal Atman you are.” Day and night base yourself upon this great truth. Base yourself upon this awareness. Never move even a hair’s breadth away from this awareness, the central spiritual awareness. Ever be on the alert. Don’t fall in the trap of the senses, the mind and the intellect. You cannot afford because desire is the outcome of a mixture of Rajas and Tamas, and as long as desire dominates your mind, senses take you like a puppet on the end of string. So, you can never have peace of mind because mind will be filled with Tamasic and Rajasic qualities.

Therefore, understand this law and true peace can only come into a mind that is at peace with itself, that has become refined and subtle, that has been wiped clean of the Tamasic and Rajasic qualities,—the desirous nature, the sense-nature. Where there is presence of Sattva there is purity of mind. When the mind becomes subtle and refined peace comes. In that peace happiness or the supreme reality begins to ascend. Dharma lays down the pattern of life—a life of self-control, a life of discipline, a life of discrimination and renunciation, a life of the practice of virtues, of moderation, simplicity, self-restraint, purity and dispassion. That is the essence of Dharma and that is why Dharma becomes the spirit of life and the means for attaining God-realisation.

MEDITATION AND ITS VALUE

Meditation is the ultimate process when one has laid the foundation of spiritual life, when one has overcome the constant pull of the senses and has become the master of one’s senses, when one through true discrimination and true inquiry, has realised the absolute hollowness of all that is pursued, and therefore has overcome the natural tendencies of the mind, towards appearances and

has succeeded in turning away completely from the desire for names and forms and attachment to objects and experiences, when one has learned the techniques of withdrawing the mind from the outer appearances, and when one has cultivated and created within a state of quiescence, balance and equipoise. In that condition of being firmly grounded in virtue, that condition of perfect sense-control and self-restraint, in that condition of conquest of desires and the mastery of one's passions, in that condition of enlightenment, in that condition of inner stability and equipoise, one begins to gather oneself and move towards the concept or idea of what you feel of the Reality as opposed to appearances. This—the ingathering of the totality of your being and the centralising of this ingathered power in one specific self-chosen direction—is the object of your meditation, and the keeping up of a continued and unbroken movement of the ingathered totality in that particular direction, of your entire being. Thus ingathered and directed, when continued unbroken movement succeeds, you are in a state of meditation.

So it is the successful movement, continuously, in a self-chosen direction of the totality of your being, ingathered in a unity—a unified whole—that is called meditation. All other things are individual private notions of meditation. All other things are only what you think to be meditation. They are not meditations. Meditation requires the being perfectly grounded in virtue. Virtue means certain spiritual qualities which are absolutely indispensable prerequisites for the interior life of meditation, without which meditation is impossible. There are certain spiritual qualities, which are the building blocks for the structure, which ultimately attain the pinnacle of meditation. Meditation is, as it were, the point of the pyramid, and that point of the pyramid cannot be created in air. It is created from the broad base on hard earth. The structure goes on and on and then you attain that point where there is that one stone—that is meditation. And, therefore, it is a process which is grounded in virtue. Virtue means spiritual qualities and why those spiritual qualities are insisted upon is very simple to understand. Because they are the qualities which keep out of your nature forces that are the direct antithesis of the Divine experience—factors which are direct contradictions of the spiritual experience. As long as they are there, it is not possible to rise in spiritual experience. You cannot be wet and dry at the same moment. And in order to put out those factors there is only one way. That is, you have to create a strong positive movement within yourself and then they are no more. They cannot remain, because they are merely the negations of certain positive forces. They have no separate or independent identity by themselves. So to overcome them, certain positive factors have to be created in you. These positive factors are called virtues for want of a better term. They are spiritual qualities which are essential in order to keep out of your nature those factors that are directly contradictory and the antithesis of the experience which you are trying to attain.

Based upon that, meditation is an interior process. The senses always have as their main task the keeping of your entire psyche in an exteriorised condition. That is the very nature of the senses, and unless you know how to control your senses, the psyche can never be ingathered. The ingathering of your psyche is absolutely indispensable and necessary for meditation. So, control of senses comes as the next preliminary condition. But if the psyche is in a constant state of efflorescence within, then even in spite of having success in making it ingathered, you cannot initiate this process, which requires a certain degree of stillness. Therefore, next comes the calming of the mind, its desires, the passions, the various ambitions, the constant attachments and the cravings that keep the mind always in a state of flux and ferment. They have to be overcome, and this does not come in a day. This is a process that takes time. This process of attaining a certain

extent of absolute quiescence of this mind takes many years. Even if it takes years, it is worthwhile. Spiritual life cannot be in the presence of impatience. It cannot be done in the presence of haste. The eagerness must be there, tremendous eagerness—tremendous enthusiasm—, and at the same time it should be accompanied by patience. So, this state of quiescence can come about only if you are able to cast out of your mind miscellaneous desires, attachments, overwhelming ambitions, plans and schemes and what not. All these things have to give place to a unified aspiration. The mind wants only one thing. In that it should not want anything else. Total elimination of wants is impossible. Hunger, the desire for food and drink, desire for clothing and other desires by their very immediacy in your life are so very demanding and you cannot get rid of them. A father will have plans for his child, but all miscellaneous desires have to be completely out along with all ambitions and planning, and there should be unified aspiration, meaning that, by and large, the maximum predominant emphasis in your mind will be upon that ultimate goal. The mind is relatively unified, even though there may be in its periphery some of these unavoidable desires of the immediate life you are living. Mainly, it will be unified, and when it is thus unified, all dispersal will go. There will be no other ambitions, no other desires, no other attachments, no other passions and cravings. The mind will be totally in a state of ingatheredness and unity. We call it in Sanskrit Ekagrata.

Ekagrata means attainment of a state of one-pointedness. This mind alone, which has now been rendered subtle by giving up gross sensual experience, by totally eliminating the gross sensual desires, and by renunciation, attains a state of purity. See, mind is also matter. It is very subtle matter compared to physical matter. Compared to the Spirit it is also matter. When it is filled with earthly tendencies, passions and greeds, it is full of Tamas and Rajas, i.e., it is very close to the presence of the quality of inertia and becomes still more gross due to the presence of the quality of restlessness, selfish desires and activities. When these have been transcended and to a certain extent mastered, then mind attains a state of purity and subtleness. Both these are interchangeable. And in that state of subtle purity, mind assumes an upward direction. Until this state of subtle purity comes into the mind, mind cannot assume an upward direction. It is always horizontal in its dynamics.

It assumes a state of upward direction only when it attains a state of subtlety and purity. Such a mind, rendered pure, rendered subtle by absolute purity and virtue, sense-control and elimination of desires and passions, only becomes the instrument which can think of the Atman—the Reality. Otherwise normal gross mind has not the state in which it can think of the Atman—the Truth or the Reality. It only gets the capability of thinking about the Atman when it is thus rendered subtle and pure. That mind should be engaged in meditation. Unless you acquire that mind, you cannot engage in meditation. Thinking that you are meditating is only a thought in your mind.

You may be sitting straight and you may be thinking that you are meditating. You are doing something with the mind but it is not meditation. Meditation requires a different mind. The outgoing mind, the objectifying mind, the mind with desires and ambitions, this mind cannot be really meditating. Yes, it may be trying to concentrate and do some exercises and going through valuable training, a valuable process of discipline. This is not completely useless. It will always prepare the mind in a certain way, but ultimately this total transformation in your interior, by bringing the mind into that state of subtleness and purity, is absolutely necessary to initiate the process of meditation inside, because that is the instrument. A subtle, pure mind, completely still

and calm and totally inward,—that is the instrument for meditation. With that mind alone one can really meditate.

INDIA TODAY AND TOMORROW

Adorations to the land of the sublime Himalayas and the Holy Ganga and the Yamuna. Salutations to our Guru Maharaj Sri Swami Sivanandaji, who taught us to adore India, her philosophy and her religion, her lofty culture, her ideals and her Dharma, and who showed us enduring greatness of her wisdom wealth, and that her very soil is sacred and that her very atmosphere is spiritual.

A land or a country or a nation is more than its mere geographical features or its economic resources. It is more than the people who live in the land. It is the way of life evolved by the people, who have lived in it over the bygone centuries, that really constitutes a nation—the idea that they have evolved and the goal for which they have as a whole lived and toiled. The present is a product of the past and the tomorrow is what we make of the today at hand. India today and tomorrow has to be a fulfilment of the India of numerous yesterdays that have gone down the corridor of many, many centuries, through countless generations.

There is a divine plan for humanity in this world. There is common evolution of mankind. Each nation has to offer some specific contribution towards this common evolution. The spirit of sharing and the self-offering of one's own wealth in the form of one's own culture for the common benefit of the universal weal and the universal collective progress of mankind as a whole, is the principle upon which God's plan unfolds. This spirit of sharing is to be recognised more and more. This spirit of sharing and common responsibility of all nations and of all races towards the collective overall progress of evolution of the human race upon earth, is referred to as the spirit of Yajna and Dana. Dana means what you give of yourself unto others. Yajna means what you sacrifice as part of your service unto mankind and to the world as a whole.

People of this great country—India, the land of great Gurus, the Sikh Gurus, the land of Kabir, the land of Rama, the land of Ramakrishna and of Swami Vivekananda—must ever be conscious of this great heritage which they have inherited at this present day, if they have to fulfil this principle of Yajna, the common responsibility of all nations towards the evolution of mankind towards an ideal state of being here upon earth.

The great land of India is not so much the land that has devoted its attention for countless centuries for the evolution of merely a materialistic way of life, but the land that has the sense of spiritual value—the ultimate value in terms of man as the child of God.

Blessed children of Bharatavarsha, you are here as pilgrims passing through this earth plane. Therefore, life here is not an end by itself but a means to a higher end. Life has been given as a great opportunity, a golden chance to attain that higher end—the recognition of your eternal relationship with God, the Divine Spirit. You are ever related in your deepest and in your inmost essential nature with the Supreme Divine Consciousness which religions call God or Bhagavan or

Paramatman or Allah. You are the children of that great Divine Principle. There is but one world. The world is one. God is one, no matter what name you call Him. Humanity is one and in this great family of humanity each one of us has to lovingly recognise our oneness with the rest of mankind through this common relationship with God who is our source, our root, our support and our ultimate goal.

We address God: "*Tvameva Mata, Tvameva Pita*"—"Thou art my Mother, Thou art my Father." Does it not mean that you are His child? Therefore, you are essentially divine. As the Father and the Mother, God is divine, imperishable, eternal, ever perfect, Satchidananda. Then you, His children, are also imperishable divine spirit. This is the essence of the culture of this great land of India. The essence of India's culture is a message to all her children and to all mankind: "O man! You are essentially Divine. You are not this perishable body. You are not this impure and restless mind. You are ever-pure and ever-peaceful spirit. Santi is your name. Santi is your nature. You are not this little finite intellect, sometimes reasoning clearly, sometimes full of error and confusion, for you are the infinite ever-perfect Atman." This is the central message of India and life here must be lived in this awareness. You should live to manifest your sublime higher nature, your Spiritual Consciousness. You must live to manifest this purity, this love, this goodness, this perfection that is already within you as your changeless, eternal nature.

O man! You are divine but you have forgotten your essential nature. You have been overcome by your senses and have totally mistaken your identity which is absolutely foreign to your real nature and which wrecks the very essence of your being. You are God yet bound in this physical existence. You have forgotten your real glorious nature. Essentially you are a divine ray of light, purity, bliss, wisdom, with the consciousness of God; but you have now become a slave of your senses. All thoughts spring from your identification with this petty personality which is not your real Self. Therefore, wake up. Understand your real nature and strive to rediscover yourself that you are Divine.

All Bliss and Joy lie within you. You are yourself all Bliss, all Happiness, immeasurable Peace and all Perfection. This is your very nature. Your innermost being—your true self—is essentially ineffable Bliss and Peace. The recovery of this living awareness of Bliss is the great task. It is the great purpose of life.

Manifest Divinity in your nature. You are not to manifest the body-nature or the mind-nature. You must manifest the God-nature, the spiritual nature. Learn the art of awakening this still, innermost, spiritual principle within you, unfold it and develop it by conscious effort.

Realise this Divinity. Manifest this Divinity gloriously. Let your life be a great radiation of truth, beauty, goodness, purity, the spirit of service, the spirit of the oneness of all mankind. Recognise that, in God, you are at one with all humanity. They are all your brethren. They are one with you and therefore their joys and sorrows, their successes and failures, their happiness and unhappiness, you must feel as your own.

May you all attain this Supreme Goal in this very life. Attainment of Perfection is the supreme ideal of man in Bharatavarsha. This is the real India.

THE MESSAGE OF LORD GANESA

Sri Ganesa is known in South India specially as Siddhi Vinayaka, the *Siddhi-Data* or one who gives perfection or success in all things. Under the auspices of this Holy Vinayaka-Puja day we offer our adorations to this great Lord who is worshipped at the beginning of all works and all functions.

People know all about the traditional story of Lord Ganesa. We shall here try to see if there is any special point about this deity, by a study of which we may be able to gain something special and receive some benefit which is above the ordinary.

Lord Ganesa has traditionally a very peculiar form and many people have tried to interpret this Rupa (form) in their own esoteric way. We shall not so much concern ourselves about the esoteric significance of the form of Ganesa, but we shall try to study some of the incidents in connection with the Deity, which are filled with very precious lessons to us, specially of an important spiritual nature.

First of all, we must know that we owe an eternal debt of gratitude to Lord Ganesa for a signal service He has rendered to us. This fact is mostly forgotten by us. It is this. The greatest Dharmagrantha of Bharatavarsha—the Mahabharata—was specially composed by Veda-Vyasa in order to bring all the knowledge of Dharma—morality, ethics and righteous living—to one and all. He gave this great scripture containing everything that may possibly be necessary for man to know about Dharma. Thus, it is a great treasure-house of all knowledge. The Santi Parva especially contains the very mine of wisdom. It is said that whatever worth knowing there is in all the great scriptures of the world is contained in the Mahabharata; and what is not contained in the Mahabharata is not contained anywhere else. It is due to the grace of Lord Ganesa that we have got that scripture today. No one was able to take down the outpourings of Vyasa during his inspired moments. It was the task of Ganesa to sit and take down the dictation of Vyasa. Though the author is Vyasa, the actual writer of Mahabharata is Sri Ganesa, who did it as a pure labour of love in order that He may bless us with the wealth of Dharmic wisdom.

Recognising Him thus, as the very fountain-head of the spirit of Dharma in Bharatavarsha, let us proceed to study two wonderful incidents in connection with Sri Ganesa, which reveal to us the very essence of the highest Truth, the Brahma-Vidya. It is said that, together with other adornments Lord Ganesa possesses a priceless necklace of gems. The story behind this necklace is that one day when Lord Siva, Parvati, Ganesa and Karttikeya were altogether, there arose a desire in the mind of the Divine Mother to test the individual calibre and knowledge of Her two great divine sons. Therefore, she held out the necklace she was then wearing and said: “Here is this necklace. He who will go round the entire universe once and reach me first—to him will I give this necklace of gems.” Immediately, Karttikeya thought that it was as good as His, because He knew that with His ponderous girth it would be very difficult for Lord Ganesa to go round the universe. Karttikeya Himself had a very fast vehicle, the Peacock, which would take Him quickly round the universe. Immediately, He was off on the Peacock. But, Vinayaka was not the least perturbed. He sat before His Parents for a long time. When He thought that it would be time for Karttikeya to return, He went round in Pradakshina (perambulation) of Siva and Parvati once and prostrated Himself before His Mother and held out His hand. Devi Parvati at once divined the depth of wisdom which had made

Him do this. She saw at once that His intuition was such that He beheld the entire universe as made up of nothing else but Siva-Sakti. He beheld that they (Siva and Sakti) were immanent in all things and within them they contained the entire universe. Thus He got the necklace, and when Karttikeya returned after His strenuous circumambulation, what He found was that the prize had already been given to Ganesa. This is a small story, but it contains within it the highest wisdom that the Upanishads give, viz., *Sarvam Khalvidam Brahma*, whatever is, is none other than the Almighty Being. It is this Almighty Being that has projected Itself as the entire universe. So, if we adore the Almighty we adore the entire universe.

Lord Ganesa is an Akhanda Brahmachari. He has no consort. There is also a story of deep significance behind this vow of celibacy. It is said that once, when He was a small child, Ganesa in a mood of playfulness beat a cat and injured it rather severely. He did not know what this ultimately implied. Later, after the play was over, He happened to draw near to His Divine Mother Parvati and He found marks of severe injury upon the person of the Divine Mother. The child was shocked and queried His Mother: “What is this? Who inflicted these injuries on you?” The Mother replied: “Just who else, by your own hand.” For a moment, Lord Ganesa did not understand how this was possible. He said: “What do you mean, Mother? I have never injured you.” Then the Mother said: “Try to recall, child, whether during the course of this day you have inflicted injury upon any creature?” Ganesa reflected for a while. Immediately He remembered His play with the cat. “Yes, Mother, after all I beat a little cat; that is all.” Then the Divine Mother smiled and said: “Can you not understand that whatever you see, whatever names and forms there are in this universe, it is only I who have become all these names and forms? There is nothing else in this universe except Myself, there is nothing in the universe but your Mother.” This is what Parvati revealed to Ganesa. This truth entered into the innermost consciousness of this Divine Child of Hers and He realised the truth of it and then and there He took a vow that as long as He lived He could never take anyone as His consort because when He knew that the entire universe of diverse names and forms is the manifestation of His own Mother, all women became as Mother unto Him. This is the deep significance behind the story of the celibacy of Ganesa. This reveals to us the highest secret declared by the Vedas and Upanishads, in all the Agamas and Sastras, viz., *Sarvam Saktimayam Jagat*—whatever is in the universe is but the manifestation of the dynamic aspect of the Supreme Almighty Self.

Thus, we have in these two incidents in the life of Lord Ganesa, the very essence of Brahma-Vidya, the highest declaration and revelation of the Upanishads. viz., *Sarvam Brahmamayam, Sarvam Saktimayam*. The absolute identity between the visible universe and the transcendental Supreme Being, and the fact of the immanence of the Supreme Spirit in and through all names and forms in this created universe—the two great truths—are powerfully revealed to us and to all seekers.

Our worship of Lord Ganesa is, as it were, a prayer unto Him to give us also the great spiritual experience which He had through His Mother. Therefore, let us pray to the great Lord Siddhi-Vinayaka that, like Him, we too may receive the grace of the Divine Mother, and like Him, to us also may be revealed the great truths that whatever is, is but the Supreme Being and that the Supreme Being Itself has become all this.

In His own form there are some indications valuable to the seeker. One is the serpent that He ties round His middle. They say that the serpent is the sign of the ego. Therefore, a complete control over the ego or Ahamkara is shown by this peculiar ornament of His.

Then we have also the incident in which He is angered at the moon and He subdues the pride of the moon by throwing His Danta (tusk) at the moon. This shows us the process of Yoga, viz., the absolute inhibition or annihilation of all functions of the mind. Moon is the presiding deity of the mind. It is that particular power that has come out of the mind of the Cosmic Being. And the absolute subjugation of the moon represent *Mano-Nasa* or *Mano-Laya*.

Thus, the annihilation of the separatist ego-consciousness and the complete annihilation of the mind are the two secrets of practical Yoga Sadhana that Sri Ganesa reveals to us through His personality.

BE DIVINE

The basis of eternal beatitude, life everlasting and the kingdom of Heaven, the basis of God-realisation, the basis of Samadhi and Superconscious Self-realisation, the basis of Cosmic Consciousness, the basis of Nirvana, the basis of all this is right conduct, noble character, virtue, purity, truth, kindness, compassion, simplicity in life, self-control, humility, conquest of desires, moderation in all things and refraining from wasting time, from gossiping, from miscellaneous thoughts, from useless pursuits and from unspiritual desires. In short, it is a God-oriented life, a life divinely lived with a character filled with divine qualities and divine virtues. This is the eternal foundation. This can never be ignored in spiritual life. One who wants peace and true happiness, must be good in life, must follow the path of good, for happiness comes out of good life, the life-pure, the life-virtuous. The life-virtuous may be hard and unpleasant, may bring upon one great difficulties, sufferings and much pain, but it will surely confer untold, indescribable and immeasurable happiness.

Happiness is the power to overcome all pain, suffering, difficulties and hardships. It is sometimes said that a man, who is seen to be good, seems to suffer hardships, and a man who is seen not good, seems to be very happy. This is a curious confusion of thought and failure to perceive that which is beneath the surface. One who is good may endure much hardship, but he will be very happy and there will be peace and joy in his heart. He will bear hardship but will be peaceful and joyous and sleep well. He will have no fears.

The evil-doer—the one who does not follow the good life—may apparently have ease and comforts, but he will be restless. He will be troubled at heart and will have no peace of mind. He will not have real happiness. Happiness is independent of outward conditions. Troubles and hardships can co-exist with happiness. This is certain. Comforts, conveniences and pleasures co-exist with misery, restlessness, a great deal of inner disturbance, much discontent and dissatisfaction.

The Supreme Law is that, happiness and peace follow in the wake of Dharma. The eternal law of life is that joy is to him who is virtuous and peace is to him who is good. Happiness and blessedness come to one who is virtuous.

Righteousness is the path to supreme blessedness, supreme joy and supreme peace. This is the truth, the basis of God-realisation—the highest happiness. Divine bliss and eternal peace, are from goodness in life and the path of virtue. The way of Divine Life, which leads to the progress of inner spiritual unfoldment, is the way of selflessness and service, devotion and worship, withdrawal of the mind from externals, concentration and meditation. It is the way of ceaseless inquiry—"Who am I?" and "What am I?". It is the way of affirming: "I am not this body, I am not this mind, I am not this intellect, I am that innermost Being, the Supreme Self, the Atman, nameless, formless, unborn, undecaying, deathless, Imperishable, eternal One. I am That. That I am,—Sat-Chid-Ananda am I."

So, based upon a life of truth, purity and goodness, simplicity and humility, good conduct and character, self-restraint and freedom from desires, the life spiritual, having God as the sole goal in the midst of all activities and duties dutifully done, ever keeping in mind the great goal, remembering God constantly with love and faith, seeing His presence in all things and doing all things in a spirit of worship, progress through selflessness and service, devotion and worship, concentration and meditation and ceaseless Atmic enquiry, attain the supreme blessed state of God-consciousness, of Divine experience and Self-realisation.

That state will bestow upon you the experience, the consciousness: "I am the Supreme, I am the Sat-Chit-Ananda Atman, I am Existence-Consciousness-Bliss-Absolute, I have no old age, I have no death, I have no restlessness or motion, I have no fears, I have no sorrows, I am the Immortal One, I am bliss, I am the peace. That I am in all conditions, whether I am young or old, male or female, man or woman, weak or strong, tall or short, rich or poor. It does not matter what condition the body is in, and what condition the mind is in—depressed or elated. I can neither be depressed nor elated, for I am the same, I am the One Sat-Chit-Ananda. In all conditions, therefore, I am Consciousness-Bliss-Absolute. Whether the body is well or ill, comfortable or uncomfortable, in whatever condition it is, and whether the mind is satisfied or dissatisfied, whether it is in an expanded or a contracted condition, I am the Reality in all conditions, in all places, in times, and under all circumstances. Even if I am clad in rags, even if I am in the role of unemployment, even if some disease has affected me, even if society has spurned me, even if my family has cast me out, and am friendless and have no one to look after me, yet I am Sat-Chit-Ananda—Existence-Consciousness-Bliss-Absolute. These outer circumstances cannot touch and tarnish the shining Reality of my true Self, my essential Being."

That experience, which triumphs over all things, is the supreme, ultimate, victorious experience, attaining which one is filled with joy "Anandoham, Anandoham. Brahma Anandoham—I am bliss, I am bliss, I am Supreme bliss"—one exclaims. Attaining this, one is victorious over all circumstances, all situations, all dualities and triumphs over everything.

What is that wonderful experience? Master Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj was very fond of a certain song which he called "The Divine Injection." Even a single utterance of this song of Divine Injection immediately raises you from the gross physical level to the radiant consciousness of your true nature. It brings back to you remembrance of your 'birthright' and inspires you to claim

that birthright here and now. That Divine Injection is the song of your real nature. People used to call it “The Song of Chidananda”, and urge Gurudev to sing it on all special occasions when he stood before an audience. He sang it all over India in 1950 during his all-India tour.

The Song of Chidananda, many of you know. Chidananda is not my name. It is your real name; my real name also. ‘Chit’ means Consciousness, and ‘Ananda’ means Bliss. In the Sanskrit language, when the word ‘Chit’ joins with the word ‘Ananda’ the ‘t’ in Chit becomes ‘d’, and the combined word becomes ‘Chidananda’, and it means Consciousness-Bliss. You must be able to experience this and exclaim “I am Knowledge-Bliss-Absolute, without death and old age, without fear and worry, without bondage, ever-perfect, I am Knowledge-Bliss-Absolute.” Do not think you have already risen to that experience, but always be aware that this is the goal and it is there in seed form. It is there in a latent or dormant form slumbering, as it were. Therefore, Awake! Come! Arise! and move towards this great experience. Do all that is necessary to unfold the flower that is within. Let the bud that is closed blossom to make the seed spin up into life and rise up into the tree of Divine experience. You must work for it.

This realisation is already within you. It is there. It is like a locked box in which there is a priceless diamond of unparalleled beauty and the key is not to be found. You have to open the box to possess the diamond. Even so, this eternal Perfection is dormant within you. You are That already. Even as I talk and you listen, you are Existence-Knowledge-Bliss-Absolute. You are the ever-perfect Atman. You are Sat-Chit-Ananda Consciousness. That is your true consciousness. The consciousness you feel such as: “My knee is paining, I have sat for so long, my back is aching, etc.,” is physical consciousness or body-consciousness.

We have to face facts. We cannot put the cart before the horse. We cannot avoid issues that have to be dealt with. So Sadhana is indispensable. Self-realisation comes through Sadhana. What is Sadhana? Sadhana means right living—living a God-oriented life, living a life where you start manifesting and expressing That which you are. You are ever-pure and spotless. Well, express that ever-pure, spotless nature in your thoughts, words, in the pattern of your desire and inner motives in your daily life. Practise that, live that, radiate that—that is Sadhana. You are the Truth, the supreme Reality. Express this Truth. Root out falsehood from your heart. Become an embodiment of Truth. Be what you are. Let not your life be a contradiction of what you are. This is the essential Sadhana. It is the direct path to live a divine life, to be divine in thought, word and deed.

“Truth is my God” declared Mahatma Gandhi. God is Truth. Truth is God. He was a great man—a great and heroic figure in the Pages of Indian history. He gained Darsana of Divinity through Truth. That is Sadhana. You can also gain it. Attain this great realisation through a God-oriented life—a life filled with the spiritual quality in every thing that you do and in every innermost thought. Step by step, brick by brick, a great structure, an edifice is raised. Spiritual exertion is joy. The mere living of a life towards the great attainment itself is glorious. What can you hold as more worthy than the expression of Divinity? Do not make your life a poor and despicable contradiction of your true nature. If you go on contradicting your true nature at every step, who can save you? Who can give you liberation? You are barring yourself by your own acts and by your own life. You are for ever robbing yourself of true happiness, true joy, true bliss and peace by contradicting your own divine nature in your life.

The supreme Sadhana is a life lived divinely where every act, thought and word is permeated with the divine quality. Through a divinely lived life, expressing your innermost divinity in all aspects of your life, attain this divine experience and rejoice. Declare thus with supreme joy: “Chidananda, Chidananda, Om, I am Existence, Consciousness, Bliss, in all conditions, I am Bliss-Absolute, Existence-Absolute.” Strive for this and claim your birthright. No effort is too much. With joy and hope, patiently work towards this goal. Even when you are working, do not leave this inner consciousness, and awareness. Assert it at every moment in all things. Be victorious over circumstances. Be the conqueror of your mind, the subduer of your desires, and a master of your destiny.

Again I say, you must work for it. You must climb up if you want to reach the peak, and when once you are on the pinnacle, all labour seems as mere child’s play. Until then, you must be able to laboriously climb up, step by step. Hold on to the Awareness and feel that you are already on the peak, but don’t stop climbing. Climb up and up, step by step. This is the secret of Sadhana.

May God bless you! May His Grace shower upon you in abundance. May the spiritual benedictions of the Holy Master Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj ever follow you all the days of your life and enable you to successfully live this Divine Life and shine with virtue. May you develop noble character and walk the path of the good and the pure, the path of Truth, purity and goodness, and move towards that glorious goal which awaits you. This is your birthright, which you can claim and experience in this very body. Do not postpone it. Be up and doing. The prayers of this servant, will always be with you, that you may arise victorious, and attain full success in this life. May you abound with the glow of God-consciousness.

THE GLORY OF DIVINE MOTHER

Puranas are sacred scriptures through which the wise seers of ancient times have tried to give us the precious treasures of wisdom, inspiration and guidance. They are holy books into which great sages have packed in deep facts about human life and the secret of success herein and hereafter. Thus these Puranas, the holy repositories of abundance of spiritual knowledge, the sacred treasure-house of vast wealth of vital wisdom of life, have ever exerted a profound influence upon the progress and development of the glorious culture and civilisation of India. The Puranas are the framework into which have been filled the knowledge of the ways and means of conquering man’s lower nature, achieving integral perfection and attaining the glorious goal of a sublime Divine Consciousness. All these they have done through the medium of didactic stories, narratives of deep esoteric significance and symbolism and rich allegory. Knowing well that basically a Hindu is religious in temperament and essentially a being of faith, these sages wove the fabric of such allegory and symbolic narrative around some popular, powerful and permanent aspect of Divinity or a great and renowned Rishi. This Divine personality usually forms the central figure of each particular Purana. You have therefore the Siva Purana, the Vishnu Purana, the Skanda Purana, the Varaha Purana, the Matsya Purana, the Markandeya Purana, the Narada Purana, etc. An important portion of the Markandeya Purana consists of the renowned Devi Mahatmya which glorifies Divinity in its aspect of Sakti or Devi. It is comprised of 700 verses and hence it is also known as

Devi Saptasati. And here you have a brief summary containing the very essence of this great scripture of Devi Mahatmya.

Suratha, a king of the solar race, has been defeated by his enemies and forced to flee his capital. He is wandering in exile in a forest. Here he meets a Vaisya (merchant) named Samadhi who is in a similar predicament, having lost everything reduced to penury and abandoned by his own wife and children. Both the king and the merchant are dejected and their thoughts are constantly going back to their family, possessions and property, due to attachment. They fall into conversation and are puzzled as to why their thoughts are again and again dragged towards and centred upon those very persons, things and places whence so much sorrow and pain have come upon them. To solve this vexing problem they approach a sage dwelling in that forest. In answer to their query, the sage tells them that their minds behave in this manner due to the mysterious power of Divine Sakti, Maha Maya. The king and the merchant,—Suratha and Samadhi—are eager to know more about this Divine Sakti, Maha Maya and Her Lilas and glory; and in answer, the sage narrates Devi Mahatmya; and the narrative unfolds thus:

Before the dawn of creation, at the commencement of the Kalpa when Lord Maha Vishnu is reposing upon the bosom of the vast undifferentiated ocean, two terrible Asuras,—Madhu and Kaitabha,—arise out of His Cosmic Being. They are terrible. They are dangerous and having perceived Brahma they set upon him to destroy him. Threatened by these powerful Asuras and menaced by their malevolent motive, in great fear Brahma invokes the supreme, indescribable Divine Power, the Primordial Power, Para Sakti or Adi Sakti and implores Her merciful intervention.

The Divine Mother appears and awakens Lord Narayana from His Cosmic slumber. The Lord engages Madhu and Kaitabha, the two Asuras, in battle and destroys them both. Thus ends the first phase of the narrative.

All the gods and the celestials hail the Mother with cries of victory. Mahishasura, a powerful demon, has overcome all the Devas and has subjugated them. He is terrorising the three worlds. He is enraged to hear the Devas crying victory unto the Mother. He thinks that he alone is supreme. He is arrogant in the extreme. He will tolerate no other being to question his power. Therefore, he decides to make war upon the Divine Sakti whom the Devas are hailing. He confronts the Mother with drawn weapons. There ensues a terrible fight. Bitter is the struggle. Asura fights from all the elements. He takes fearful forms. But darkness cannot stand before light. The Divine Power is the Supreme Power. Truth always triumphs. Victory is to the Supreme Reality. Devi slays the Asura. The Divine overcomes the undivine. Thus ends the second Phase.

The Divine Mother whose glory shines and dazzles in the three worlds is seated in the Himalayan region in the form of Saila Putri. At this time Sumbha and Nisumbha, two powerful Asuras, hold absolute sway over all the worlds. They have subjugated all the Devas, Yakshas, Gandharvas, Kinnaras and the like. They have rested and got into their possession all the best of things like the celestial Airavata, Uchchaisravas, Kamadhenu, Kalpavriksha and the Chintamani. They are intoxicated with the pride of their prowess and their conquests. Their desire is insatiable. They want to possess more and ever more. Two Dutas from the Durbar of the powerful Asura brothers behold the Divine Mother and decide that She should come into the possession of their

royal masters. They inform the Asura Sumbha of their find. Sumbha sends at once a royal messenger to bring Devi to his court. Devi says She can come only to one who conquers Her in combat. She refuses to go with the messenger. The messenger conveys the news to Sumbha. He blazes with anger and sends Dhumralochana. Dhumralochana tries to lay his hands upon Divine Sakti. Devi with a single *Humkar* of anger reduces him to ashes. He is consumed in the flames of Devi's wrath. Next the Asura, Raktabija, comes to fight. He is an Asura of extraordinary magical powers. Moreover he is in possession of a boon by which whenever a drop of his blood falls on the earth immediately a new Asura springs upon therefrom. So every time the Devi wounds him and spills the blood, countless powerful Asuras spring anew and fill the field of battle. Devi invokes Kali, the terrible dark-hued deity. All-powerful Kali slays the Asura Raktabija, sucking in with Her terrible outspread tongue the Asura's blood more quickly than it can flow out of his wounds. Kali sees that his blood never reaches the earth. Thus, the Asura Raktabija is destroyed by the Devi. Sumbha and Nisumbha now confront the Devi. A great battle ensues. Nisumbha is killed and ultimately Devi with Her trident deals the death blow to Sumbha also. The undivine forces are thus totally annihilated. The Divine rules supreme. Vidya has overcome Avidya. Light has conquered darkness. Knowledge shines with the destruction of ignorance. Joy, bliss and immortality reign supreme. The Divine Mother shines in glorious triumph. All hail to Maha Sakti. Glory be to the Mother.

HOW TO OVERCOME OBSTACLES IN SADHANA

You must cultivate the flowers of Divine virtues in the garden of your heart. It is from virtue that one rises to holiness, from holiness to godliness and from godliness to God-experience. From impurity one rises to purity, from purity to sanctity and from sanctity into sublime spiritual experience.

The great Sankaracharya, who established the pure monistic philosophy—Kevala Advaita—in India, in describing the ascent of the individual soul into the experience of the Absolute said that in this practical path of Sadhana, three barriers have to be overcome. We are in a state of grossness because our consciousness is bound up in this form in which we dwell, the body which we are occupying, residing in. This embodied state has brought about the state of grossness. Why? Because due to an inexplicable, mysterious factor, we who reside in this body-house have become totally identified with it in our consciousness and this identification has made us feel that we are, ourselves, this body and this body is ourselves.

No matter how much we may mouth the words: "I am not this body", yet the very next instant after so saying, our actual life and behaviour betray simply "I am this body." So, in effect, we demonstrate body-consciousness though in words we may affirm or assert the contrary. Experiment with this for yourself. Observe yourself and you will see that even though your tongue may assert, your mind may think and your intellect may reason and convince itself: "I am not this body, I am the Atman", actually the intellect may be engaged in a process of discrimination. You may feel you have almost risen into a state of Atmic consciousness, while it is so engaged. But at that moment if someone suddenly comes and says: "You fool! you are wasting your time in a sitting there; why don't you go and work?", then your temper will immediately flare up and you will be in a

state of anger. Vedanta will vanish and the intellect will suddenly abandon itself to the anger that has arisen instinctively in the mind due to long force of habit. When this man looks at you and fixes his gaze upon your body and calls you a fool, you will immediately conclude he is calling you a fool. He addresses a name and a form, pointing to the body and says: “So-and-so, you are a fool!” And So and so, the Immortal Atman, Satchidananda, beyond mind and body and beyond all the pairs of opposites, immediately gets up and prepares to fight. Your mind is in turmoil. It is agitated and is thinking: “How can I repay this fellow?” Anger flares up and the mind is thrown into agitation and you want to go and punch the man in the nose. You have completely forgotten: “I am the peaceful and ever blissful Satchidananda Atman, beyond body, mind, intellect, name and form; I am all-full, complete, one without a second; so who can call me anything; there is no second other than me; there is only Satchidananda—Bliss, Bliss, Bliss I am.”

Now, this sudden wave of anger which changes our beauty into ugliness, non-violence into violence, the truth of your higher nature into the falsity of your lower nature and contradicts all the three fundamental values of Divine Life,—truth, purity and compassion,—and transforms you from Satchidananda Atman into something totally different, is impurity (Mala). It is an essential impurity. Anger, greed, passion, selfishness, arrogance, delusion, deluded attachment to the body, name and form, its passions, envy and jealousy, all of these constitute the impurities of human nature and every now and then they spring up in and overpower the mind. They fill the mind and your Satchidananda consciousness is obscured. It is forgotten, and pettiness, dishonesty, intolerance, pride and the thought of “how dare one address me like this?”, come into the mind.

These are all called impurities and are the basic blemishes of the human personality. They have to be eliminated if you are to rise into a higher state of consciousness. These blemishes constantly plague the human individual and so long as these are fully active in our nature, how can the ever-pure Atman manifest Itself in our consciousness?

So Sankaracharya said that one barrier is the impurities of such vicious qualities which are the total negation of the Atman, the Divine Principle. These impurities constantly put the mind into a state of agitation and activity. They never allow the mind to be calm and serene. As long as these gross impurities draw the mind outward to unspiritual action every moment, how can the mind be inward-drawn, calm, serene, one-pointed and concentrated? How can you meditate? How can you sustain one unbroken current of thought of the Supreme Reality?

Due to impurities, mind is filled with lower qualities like Rajas and Tamas and it is always in a state of restlessness, outgoing movement and agitation. This is the second barrier, called ‘Vikshepa’. This has to be overcome.

Still deeper in your mind is the third factor. You totally and completely forgot about the essential Divine nature and you were only an angry person wanting to retaliate. The thing which makes you totally forget the Reality of your Higher Divine nature and comes as an impenetrable veil, which is drawn between the Atmic Consciousness and your body-bound, mind-bound consciousness, the consciousness that is identified with the wave of anger, causes you not only to be identified with the name and form but also with the mind and its modes. It is this mysterious veil which holds you in a state of ignorance of the higher nature. It is there all the time in the very depths of your being and is called Avarana. It is a veil over the inner depths of your consciousness.

These three,—Mala, Vikshepa and Avarana—have to be overcome. The lower impurities or blemishes of the human nature, the imperfections are Mala. The constant restless nature of the mind, its constant agitation and activity is known as Vikshepa which prevents the mind from being one-pointed and introverted. Avarana is essentially non-awareness or non-perception in the form of nescience, basic ignorance, spiritual ignorance, the veil which hides you. This veil is made up of the identification of the body-mind-consciousness. The veil of ignorance is present inside the mind in the form of this identification of the body and mind. All the three in their gross and subtle forms have to be overcome.

Now, grossness is the identification with the body. Inside this is Tamas and inside Tamas is Rajas and the innermost veil is Sattva. Why do you call it Sattva? Because it is awareness? There is knowledge. So there is not total non-awareness or lack of knowledge as in deep sleep where you do not know anything. Here you know. There is awareness, but only the awareness of “I am Mr. so-and-so. I have just been insulted.” You know something but the only thing is that you know it totally wrong, you have it all wrong. There is Jnana but it is called Ajnana as it is topsy-turvy knowledge, knowledge inverted. It is really feeling yourself to be something which you are not. So, there is awareness and knowledge but characterised by ignorance. Because it is a state of awareness and it is a state of knowledge, it is the outcome of Sattva. Sattva is the principle that supports this awareness. All awareness is Sattva. This awareness is characterised by ignorance, and therefore it is called Ajnana. This should be replaced by the knowledge of the Reality.

So, Tamas, Rajas and Sattva,—impurities, restless tendencies and the veil of non-perception or forgetfulness of your true nature,—these barriers have to be gradually overcome, stage by stage in a methodical manner. And then suddenly you see, there will dawn the light, the illumination of Atmic Knowledge, transcending these three barriers. You will come face to face with your true nature, and you will have transcendental experience.

The removal of the basic impurity or blemish can be done only by overcoming them by their opposites. What do you do when you want to remove darkness? You do not bring mops or brooms or sacks to collect it. You would not do anything of that kind. If the darkness has to go the positive opposite quality,—light—should be brought in. The moment the positive opposite quality comes in, the negative quality vanishes, because the negative quality has no basis. A negative quality is not an independent entity by itself. Mark this very, very carefully. Negative qualities do not exist as independent entities. They have really no force. They only imply the absence of some positive quality. He is a great liar means he is a man who has no truth in him. There are no such things as lies and falsehood but there is absence of truth in this person and so he is called a liar. He says: “All right, I will try to become truthful” and the moment truth comes, the fact that he is a liar is no longer valid.

Hatred is not a positive quality. There is no such thing as hatred, some dark thing wanting to jump upon you. It means that there is no love, no kindness. So it only indicates a condition of the absence of love. And for one who cultivates love and compassion, there is no more hatred. The moment love comes in, hatred vanishes because the positive is real and the negative is not real. When the positive quality is cultivated, the negative quality ceases to be.

HOW TO OVERCOME OBSTACLES IN SADHANA

In the same way, our Gurudev Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj said that the cultivation of divine virtues is the method of overcoming the absence of these virtues in the form of a very nasty impure nature. A nasty impure nature only indicates that certain qualities that are desirable and necessary have not yet been cultivated. They are absent. The moment they appear, the person will become transformed. He will not be what he now is, because he only lacks certain necessary qualities. He does not possess any other positive quality. The required positive qualities are just not there. There is empty space, as it were, in our moral fabric, which has to be filled and the moment the right quality comes in, everything becomes full.

Our Master, in his own inimitable way, has said that every day you should practise the ‘18 Ities’ and then you will attain Immortality. You will behold unity in diversity. He has said:

Serenity, regularity, absence of vanity,
Sincerity, simplicity, veracity,
Equanimity, fixity, non-irritability,
Adaptability, humility, tenacity,

Integrity, nobility, magnanimity,
Charity, generosity, purity,
Practise daily these 18 ities,
You will soon attain Immortality.

You will abide in infinity and eternity,
Brahman is the only real entity,
Mr. So-and-so is a false non-entity,
You cannot attain this in the university.

And do your duty and Do It Now, D.I.N., and not K.I.V.—don’t keep it in view. If you always keep it in view, when will you do it? Heaven only knows! You will never do it.

So remember, cultivating virtues is a fundamental part of Self-Culture leading to spiritual culture and Divine experience. This is the laying of the foundation, as it were. If you want to cultivate a garden from a wild piece of land which you have purchased, you do not go sowing seeds right from the very beginning. You know what Jesus has said in the Bible. If you simply sow seeds in the midst of thorns and brambles what will happen is that when the seeds begin to sprout and grow they will all be choked and killed because the ground has not been the proper one. So you must first prepare the ground. The first thing you will have to do is to root out all the weeds, the brambles, the undergrowth and unnecessary things. You will have to remove all stones and pebbles and purify the soil. So this removal of these which are not wanted, these which are contrary to the condition which you want, is an essential part of the preparation. You must work at getting rid of the trash, eliminating all that is undivine, unspiritual, the brute and bestial nature, such as greed, hatred, anger, jealousy, selfishness, arrogance, haughtiness and attachment. All these things must be removed and then you are to plant the flowers of these eighteen virtues in the garden of your heart. Then alone will you rise unto a state of godliness. ‘Cleanliness is next to godliness’—this is said with more than one meaning. One should have great deal of zeal in cultivating divine virtues.

In the sixteenth chapter of the Gita you will find these truths delineated in a wonderfully inspiring manner. If you want to realise, “I am not this body, I am not this mind, Immortal Self am I”, you must practise virtue. You must cleanse yourself of the basic impurity of the gross human nature. It is there. It is all a part and parcel of our nature, it is not really existing, but appears to exist only due to the absence of the good qualities. Cultivate the flowers of virtue in the garden of your heart. Through cultivation of virtues, the removal of the oscillating, tossing, restless nature of the mind is achieved. Through prayer and other interior process the veil of ignorance is torn aside. Through deep meditation and philosophical inquiry, discrimination, Self-analysis, ceaseless inner philosophical speculation, you attain to the state of Reality—Consciousness. Then what is your experience? How do you feel? What will you say? How can you describe that grand experience of Spiritual Consciousness or Divine Consciousness, I am Satchidananda!

SUPREME VALUE OF STUDENT LIFE

Supreme value of student period is incalculable and indescribable. Student life is the most precious life. Youth is the best time. The way in which you utilise this period will decide the nature of coming years that lie ahead of you. Your happiness, your success, your honour and your good name all depend upon the way in which you live now, in this present period. In this present period, my dear student, you are preparing your future. Remember this. This wonderful period of the first stage of your life is related to you as the soft wet clay in the hands of the potter. Skilfully the potter gives it the right and correct shapes and forms which he intends to give. Even so, you can wisely mould your life, your character, your physical health and strength, in short your entire nature in any way in which you make up your mind to do. And you must do this now.

O fortunate youth, recognise this great duty. Feel this wonderful privilege. Take up this adventure. God watches you graciously, ever ready to help and guide. I wish you to be great. The world has put its faith in you. Your elders keep their hope upon you. Now youth means to place your firm confidence in yourself and exercise your hopeful determination and resolution and willing good intentions in this beautiful task of self-culture. This will truly bring supreme satisfaction and fulfilment not only to you, but to all concerned. The shaping of your life is indeed in your own hands.

Practise virtue. Persevere in virtue. Become established in virtue. Shine as an embodiment of noblest virtue and heroic adherence to goodness. Youth is meant for this grand process. Student life is the active development and fulfilment of these processes. This period of your time provides the suitable and favourable fields for the working out of this extremely important and most indispensable process in life. This is the special significance, the great importance and supreme value of student life. It signifies the creation of noble personality. It is Atma-Vikasa. It is Atma-Nirmana. Please try to understand the correct implication of the term ‘successful life’. When you talk of success with reference to life, it does not merely mean succeeding in everything that you undertake or do; it does not merely mean succeeding in fulfilling all wants or getting whatever you desire; it does not just mean acquiring a name or attaining a position or imitating fashionable ways and appearing modern or up-to-date. The essence of true success is what you make of yourself. It is the conduct of life that you develop, it is the character that you cultivate and it is the type of person

you become. This is the central meaning of successful living. Therefore, you will see this important matter is not so much a question of success in life (*Jivan-me-Safalata*) but rather it is success of life. Such successful life is one that succeeds in producing an ideal individual, a noble man. Your success is not measured in terms of what all you obtained but in terms of what you become, how you live and what actions you do. Upon this point reflect well and attain great happiness.

In our grand culture they conceived of life in four stages—preliminary stage, development stage, flowering or blossoming stage and the culminating fruitful stage. These can be described as the preparatory period, the practising period, the progressing or sharing period and the completing or reaping period. The satisfactory growth of the latter three stages truly depends upon the management of the first stage. Yours is this stage of preliminary preparations for right and successful living. Herein is its supreme value and great importance. This is like the ploughing and sowing of seeds in the field by a farmer. Now, you can easily understand what is the significance and importance of this in connection with the harvest which anyone would wish to reap later on. And also, it is like the laying of the foundation for an important building you wish to construct. If this building is something very important to you, then you just think how much more important its proper foundation becomes in your view. The strong and continued existence of the building depends certainly upon the foundation. This is the stage you are now in. Let your preparations be wise, correct and of such kind that will lead to your true welfare, supreme good and lasting satisfaction and happiness. This must engage your active, enthusiastic attention throughout the period of your student life. Our culture refers to this stage as the Brahmacharya Ashram or Vidyarthi Jivan. Here, you acquire knowledge of not only subjects like History, Geography, Mathematics, etc., but also about human nature, correct Vyavahara, science of self-control, art of developing pure mind, Dharma, the duties of man and the proper relationship between you, the world and God. I shall mention briefly about the second, third and fourth stages and then take up the important question of how you can manage your present vital stage in a most beneficial way or method.

The Second stage which you know by the name of Grihasthasrama is really a stage when the individual man starts to put into vigorous practice all the knowledge of Dharma—right Vyavahara, proper duties, virtues, conduct and proper fulfilment of his relationship to God and man. It is in this stage that the nature of his preliminary preparation becomes tests and trials under different circumstances and various kinds of temptations, problems and changing situations. If the earlier preparation of student stage has been thorough, then the Grihasthashrami manages to stick to his ideals and overcome all temptations, obstacles and difficulties, tests and trials of this stage and prove his real inner worth and develop his spiritual strength and bring added maturity to his personality. Such a man of inner strength, Dharma and ideal behaviour becomes a blessing to society, an honour to his family and an inspiring example to others around him. His life creates enthusiasm for goodness, purity and virtue.

In the third stage called Vanaprasthashrama, he progresses further and begins to share his knowledge, his experiences, and his developed talents for the welfare of the rest of the society. He becomes a guide to the younger people, an encouraging adviser to Grihasthas and a selfless Sevak of all. This is the meaning and ideal of the third Ashrama. As a result of a careful preparation of the first stage, earnest practical living in the second stage and selfless sharing in the third stage, the individual finally reaches the fourth stage called Sannyasa, where his mind is calm, steady and pure

and his heart is desireless and free from all cravings and is established in perfect self-restraint and virtue. This ideal state is the fruit of the right living of the first three stages. Here, the man automatically becomes absorbed in the contemplation of God and moves towards God-experience. He reaps the harvest of rich inner spiritual life, supreme peace and Atmic bliss. He attains that ultimate objective for which he has taken human birth. All this becomes possible only when the individual diligently makes himself fit for it by right conduct and right effort in the all-important first stage of Vidyarthi Jivan (student life).

What must you do? How must you live? What you should strive to attain? What are the things necessary to arrange and manage student life satisfactorily? These are vital questions that face you. Have you asked these questions and answered them? Now please follow with keen attention.

You must form a correct conception of how you wish to develop and perfect yourself. You must cultivate a clear idea of what you want to become. Now this will give you a definite and clear-cut aim in life. Without such an aim, your life cannot move forward powerfully and progressively. You will be pulled from different directions and attention will be diverted, mind will be distracted and much energy will be wasted. You can avoid all these if you have a well-defined aim or a set of a few definite objectives of similar nature. When your life has now acquired a definite direction, it will not be pulled in other directions. There is no confusion in your way. There is no confusion in your mind. You know what you wish to attain. You know in which direction to proceed. Therefore, you also understand what is right and what is wrong, what is desirable and what is undesirable, what is to be accepted and what is to be rejected in moving towards your aim of life. Such definiteness gives you inner strength. It develops will-power. It makes you a positive personality. There will be no more negative trend in your life.

The second important thing is to draw for your self a wise programme of life to help you to develop along the desired lines and to gradually attain the aim of life. Such a programme will provide a plan of action in meeting with all problems that face the young student, the growing youth, to deal with all situations that arise in his life, to meet and overcome temptations with firm mind and to surmount obstacles with boldness and self-confidence. The power to do all this exists within you already. Only it is in latent unexpressed state. It has to be unfolded and activated. A wise programme and a plan of action provide the necessary scope and practical method for this unfoldment and active development of these inner faculties. A proper understanding of your own mind, its behaviour and habits and the law that governs the inner activity of the mind become very, very helpful in living this wonderful and interesting period of your life. Acquire this knowledge, read suitable books and get basic knowledge of your mind and its working.

Now we come to the factors upon which depends the proper working out of your programme of life. Health is the key factor. Without health you can do nothing. Without health you can succeed neither in studies, nor in character-building, nor in sports and social activities, nor in home life. Health is a matter of careful living. It is got not only from things you eat and drink but it is also obtained from your wise and careful avoiding of such things that are not good for your health. Eat for your health and strength and not for your taste. Eat to live and to serve. Do not live to eat. Eat simple food. Go to bed early and get up early. Acquire healthy habits. Do regular exercise daily. Be

moderate in eating and drinking. Chew your food thoroughly. Do not overeat. Do not eat without hunger. Avoid things that do not agree with you.

Then you must conserve your energy. Never waste your energy in useless pursuits. Too much talking and gossiping, aimless wandering, habit of worrying, losing your temper frequently—all these drain away your energy. They waste your nervous force. Give up all habits that are likely to have adverse effect on health. Smoking is a curse upon students. Use your will-power and overcome such evil habits. Have self-restraint and controlled senses. Be established in perfect Brahmacharya. Give up pan-chewing, smoking, snuff and similar habits. Lead a well-regulated life of moderation. Preserve health, conserve energy, develop physical and mental strength and thus lay the foundation of a successful life.

Value character more than anything else on the earth. Be perfectly truthful. Do not let your speech be vulgar or rude. Speech must be clean, polite and joy-giving. Speech is Sarasvati. If She is offended by rudeness and vulgarity, you cannot advance in knowledge. Cast away egoism, pride and selfishness. These three form the blemish upon human character. They arise out of ignorance and greed. Ignorance makes you proud and egoistic. Greed makes you selfish. They lead to dishonour and unhappiness and failure in life. By leading a simple life and having a cheerful disposition under all circumstances, you can overcome selfishness and egoism. Your life and conduct must be the cause of happiness in other people.

Adopt certain virtues and principles and stick to them in all your activities of life. Never leave these principles. Never move away from virtue. These principles will be your true friends and helpers. They will assure your progress and ultimately grant you supreme happiness and success. Periodically make certain simple resolutions to practise those virtues. Maintain a personal diary wherein you make a careful note of your day-to-day conduct, speech and behaviour. This will reveal to you how far you are advancing and show you your mistakes and where you must correct yourself. Such a diary will be your friend. It will reveal your weakness and teach you humility. Pray to God and ask Him for inner strength and guidance, God's Divine Name has immense power. Repeat His name always and remember Him under all situations.

Reflect upon the lives of ideal personalities. Draw strength and inspiration from their lives and teachings. Try to mould your life upon their pattern. Always have a great ideal before your mind. Think of it at all times—morning, noon, evening and night. Develop it into constant background of your thought. Then your mind will never be idle or vacant. This is important, because right thinking is the key to noble living.

As you think, so you will become, just as you reap what you sow. In the same way, you will ultimately experience and attain what you constantly think and feel. Your inner thoughts lead to outer action. Repeated actions grow into habits. Such habits become permanent qualities in your very nature. This nature goes to form your character. Your future and your destiny is the direct result of your character. Understand this very well. Carefully bear this in your mind. Think and act with this knowledge. Your inner thoughts are the seeds of your ultimate destiny. Safeguard your thoughts and feelings. Think nobly, and virtuously. You will become a noble man. You will attain greatness and make your life fruitful. More than all the books that you read and study, more than all your lessons and examinations, more important than everything in life is the cultivation of virtue.

Thinking of good thoughts, doing of noble deeds and growth of grand character—all this will lead to a glorious future. This is the source of ultimate happiness. This is the ideal way of preparing yourself to face life as a true son of this great Punya-Bhumi, our motherland. Live wisely and nobly. Become good and great.

PURIFICATION PAVES THE PATH TO YOGA

Salutations and my loving greetings to you one and all seekers the world over. I send you all my very best wishes for a happy New Year, bright and joyful and may all the twelve months be months filled with prosperity, progress, success and much auspiciousness, blessedness and peace. May the grace of Guru Maharaj Swami Sivanandaji bestow upon you peace, bliss and illumination.

Purity is the prerequisite to perfection. No spiritual progress is possible without purity. Purity is the bedrock upon which an aspirant builds his or her spiritual life. Purified mind alone can take one Godward. Only a man of purity can strive in the path of Yoga steadily. Purification brings a thorough transformation of the individual and he transcends lower nature into Divine Nature.

The Supreme Self who is immaculate, Niranjana, pure and devoid of blemish can be experienced only in a purified mind. He could be realised only through one's consciousness that is of crystalline purity, because the Atman cannot be known through the mind or intellect as He is. He is beyond sense-perception. He can neither be known through the mind, nor the intellect, because knowing through the intellect and the mind involves some processes and He is not the product of any process. He is not the result coming out of any process, and so the perception of the Atman cannot be had and the only instruments which we have are mind and intellect. Intellect is part of the mind. The medium of knowing God is in a different level and that level of our being is our own Svarupa, Spiritual Eye, and they also call it Divine Eye. As long as our true identity is covered with Mala (impurities), God cannot be realised. As long as the inner eye or the eye of wisdom is not opened up, the divine perception is not opened up, or is not activated, and therefore we ultimately think and arrive at the great conclusion that God is not a perceived being. God is not some one to be known; He cannot be understood, and the Scriptures declare that He can be only experienced by the purified mind. He is in essence to be experienced, not to be seen or known or perceived, and for this experience they say one should attain purity of mind by right worship. This is the only method.

Do worship to draw closer and closer to God, nearer and nearer to God. Worship is referred to as Upasana or the process of drawing nearer to God. So if you want to attain Perfection and draw nearer to God, do right worship and then experience Him. In the ultimate stage, the actual experiencing is only when you become in nature like Him. You can have the ultimate experience through the acme of worship. Jnana and Samadhi are the highest forms of worship. The highest worship you can offer to God is direct communion with Him, in a state of deep absorption, total state of absorption in meditation.

There are different types of worship, long gradations of different types starting from the external nature, the worship through symbols, etc. the lowest form of worship or Tamasic worship is also a part of worship of God. Starting from the external, ceremonial and symbolic forms of

worship, you go on ascending to various grades of spiritual worship until the highest worship within your consciousness in deep state of absorption in meditation is attained, which is Samadhi. Meditation is the highest form of worship and this supreme worship ultimately leads to Samadhi.

In the state of Jnana and Samadhi, the consciousness becomes divinised, totally spiritualised, totally diverted of all earthly elements. In that state of pristine purity you enter into communion with God and thus when you have experienced Him and become established in Him, in that state, they say you actually become like Him. Going into His nature and starting to worship Him, you ultimately attain a state absolutely like Himself. *Brahmavid Brahmaiva Bhavati*—the knower of Brahman becomes Brahman—is the ultimate declaration of the Upanishads.

All processes of Yoga in their different varieties culminate and unify in this ultimate state of worship which is direct communion through meditation. Actually you will find that meditation is a point where all Yogas are unified. Though they start differently, proceed differently, progress differently, and develop differently, ultimately they unify themselves in the state of meditation. Meditation leads to Samadhi.

If you make a study of the spiritual history of lives of various Saints and of the great mystics of the East and West, you will find that all prophets like Buddha, Christ and others, have meditated and attained Perfection. You will find that meditation is a common factor in the spiritual practice of all spiritual seekers all over the world.

All the great scriptures point to lust, anger and greed as veritable foes of a seeker. Anger is related to passion. Anger plays untold havoc upon the body, nervous system, the mind and the very spiritual fabric of the higher self. It is a Vikara of passion itself. Passion becomes transformed into anger. These are the great obstacles to meditation. These impurities have to be eliminated from the mind. The scriptures tell us how to do it. One need not turn to any other quarter to find out how to get over the enemies. These are the products of lower Gunas, viz., Rajas and Tamas. Therefore, by making the entire life Sattvic, by filling ourselves with Sattva, we can annihilate these enemies.

The only way to eradicate them from our nature is to adopt ourselves a Sattvic way of living, in all aspects. One can get rid of anger and passion by such a noble living. An aspirant should make every attempt to free himself from the clutches of these lower Vikaras. Nothing that is worthwhile is to be achieved without undergoing a corresponding amount of pain and suffering. No enduring ideal can be attained without toil and sweat. Any young seeker will have to go through similar and various other ordeals sooner or later. He should face these trials with the same uniform fortitude that our holy Master Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj displayed during his Sadhana period. The path of Perfection demands rigorous Tapas and heroic endurance at one time or other. This has been the common experience of all such earnest souls who, fired by the ideal of Self-realisation, turn their back upon the world of vanity and folly, because the truth remains that the link between man and God is forged in the furnace of trial and adversity.

A grim endurance of all vicissitudes and a dogged resolution to persevere to the end are essential if one has to attain Perfection. On this glorious commencement of the New Year, I pray to the Divine that He may bestow upon you all wonderful health, all-round success in life and highest

spiritual blessedness. This is my prayer too at the feet of the holy Master Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj.

THE SECRET OF TRUE HAPPINESS

Desire and want which arise from this prime delusion, destroy all peace of mind. In a mind devoid of peace how can there be happiness? Happiness depends upon peace of mind. It is in a calm tranquil state of mind alone that happiness arises, for essentially true happiness is your inward spiritual state. Fortunately or unfortunately the only media through which it can be expressed are the intellect and the mind. If these two media are thrown into such a state of agitation that they cannot serve as proper channels for the welling up of this inner happiness, then their condition becomes unfit and unfavourable. It is only when there is peace and serenity in the mind and intellect that the inner happiness makes itself felt. The robber of your peace and serenity is the sense of want and desire which arise out of your prime error that happiness depends upon objects. That is the error in which you start your life. In childhood one is taught that to have a good time means going to places, or doing things, or getting objects and so children grow up in this delusion. The adult that is produced is at the mercy of things which are outside of himself. The grain of proper understanding of this world, as it really is, instilled into young people would grant a rich harvest in terms of happiness and joy.

Try to evaluate objects as they really are. To lead a proper life here on earth, one has to assign a limited value to objects. Certain objects are indispensable for the maintenance of life. For that purpose and to that end they should be utilised, but let them not assume an undue prominence in your life. For, instead of serving as the proper sustenance, they may become the veritable tyrants sapping life of all true contentment and satisfaction. Your happiness may become mortgaged to these objects. No longer of limited utility, they seem to be of utmost importance. Therefore, they come to have a stranglehold upon you and tend to dominate and enslave you. A proper understanding and a right evaluation of objects as they are and for what they are worth, is of prime concern for the human individual. “Thus far and no further”—you must say, when they try to invade the interior kingdom of your life.

Simplicity of life is the true secret of happiness. Unhampered experience of joy which lies within comes out of simplicity. Therefore, your life should never be complicated with too many things. Due to too many things, due to too many desires, modern man unfortunately has missed this. The religious man always sings. He always dances. He is comparatively care-free and filled with the happiness of simplicity and contentment. We envy and even try to imitate him, at least for the time being by leaving all distractions. It is unwillingly that modern man allows his life to become so complicated. He knows that simplicity is the secret of happiness. “But I can’t help it”—saying thus he weeps. He takes tranquillisers. He goes into a saloon or a bar. He does something—anything—to make him forget the total inadequacy of his present condition. Man has the key to happiness in simplicity.

Have contentment. Have the capacity to derive joy out of whatever situation you may find yourself in. Assert: “The situation has not the power to alter my experience. My experience is

alterable only to the degree to which I allow it to be altered. If I say 'no', then I can have the same peace and happiness within, no matter how the situation changes. It can change every hour, yet I can be changeless." So many blessednesses will come if you have simplicity and contentment. You will find, of all things, that you are free from debts. This nightmare of instalments (of credit plans), that comes month after month, year after year, will be gone. Some people do not have any freedom. They just slave away for those various companies to which they owe instalments. Right to the end of their lives they go on paying instalments on the house, on the car, on the radio, on the TV, on the refrigerator, on the washing machine, and so on; heaven knows how many gadgets have been invented!

A simple and a contented life depends more upon God-made things than upon man-made objects. There are hundreds of things that can fill you with happiness if you only have the eyes to see. When you get up in the morning, you can step out of your room and look at the dawn and be happy. When the sun rises, still more happiness. When you hear the birds warbling, even more happiness. When you feel the cool breeze blowing, again happiness. Well, there is no end to happiness. Know the technique for deriving happiness from these simple things—from the dawn, the sunrise, the birds, the laughter of children, the beautiful blue sky; the white clouds slowly sailing like majestic ships, little dancing flowers. They can inspire you if you only know how to derive joy. If you discover this secret there will be no end to your happiness.

Also learn to experience joy from the happiness of others. Instead of envy, rather become filled with joy whenever you see others in happiness. Feel happy by beholding the happiness of others. Train yourself to derive happiness out of bringing happiness into the lives of others. Learn the technique of joy by making others joyful. Your happiness will become a thousandfold. At the present moment it is circumscribed by the experiences undergone by yourself alone. But if you begin to get joy from all others, then perpetually you will be happy. Everyone's happiness will become a part of your happiness and will go to multiply and add to it.

Try to derive joy out of the beauty of all things, not only from those things which you possess. In this way you will develop an impersonal capacity for happiness. Without touching a cent in your pocket you will realise an illimitable treasury of happiness which lies strewn all around you and everywhere about you. When we realise the things that God has given for which we have reason to be happy, the whole day will not be long enough for us to be thanking Him. Untold treasure He has given. Just consider your own body, your own self. You have two sound eyes. Supposing someone says: "All right, give me one of your eyes and I will give you twenty thousand dollars," which person in a sane condition of mind would comply with such a request? Supposing you were offered one hundred thousand dollars for your tongue; would you give it? So that means that you have things that are worth millions and millions of dollars! And yet there is moping and fretting for a few things which we don't have, not realising the untold worth of the precious things which we already have. There are some people unfortunately deprived of these things. If you simply reflect how much God has given, then your whole vision of life will become changed. Know these little secrets. They are little but they are very important. They can mean the whole difference between darkness and light.

Learn to accept the experiences that come through life. There is no use of fretting and fuming and making yourself miserable over them. You, perhaps, may just add more misery to the

misery which these experiences already bring. Have calm and wise resignation. There is one Supreme Intelligence that is guiding the lives of men here and these experiences that come from that Source, learn to accept like human beings. Endure the little troubles that come through life. If there is a little sorrow, endure it and learn to take away its sting. Thus you may enrich your life out of those very experiences which you find painful and unpleasant.

Be friendly to all. Towards your superiors, have an attitude of complaisance. Do not be full of fear and timidity and nervousness in their presence. That can also rob you of your joy. Be serene. With your own equals, be friendly. Feel oneness with all. With those who are inferior to you in status, in health, in strength, in beauty, have an attitude of kindness, love and compassion. To those who are troublesome, wicked, unpleasant and nasty, be indifferent. Do not work yourself up into a state of irritation or annoyance or unfriendliness or hatred. Just ignore them. These four attitudes will provide you with a means of not being put out of your happiness—complacency towards superiors, friendliness and brotherhood towards your equals, kindness and compassion towards those who are inferior to you and a perfect indifference to all those who are inimical to you, who are troublesome, nasty, evil or wicked. All these four categories are bound to be present.

Above all, do not give way to anger. Anger, more than any other single factor in this world, destroys happiness. It can totally wreck the entire happiness of a home. If one member of the household has a temper and gives vent to his anger, he can destroy the happiness of all members of the home; even the neighbours may be affected.

Maintain a rational restraint over the senses. The urge towards carnal enjoyment is the natural part of the human being, but it pertains to the mental and physical part of your nature only. We have to recognise this as such. However, it is the prerogative of every individual, being endowed with a high intelligence, to hold a reign over the senses. By that way they cannot destroy happiness. If they are allowed to hold a sway over you, then while you are thus unrestrained, you cannot have any happiness. This is the Law of the Universe.

Base your life upon virtue, upon truth and upon purity. If purity is always yours guiding rule, guilt complexes and neuroses will go and psychiatrists would be unnecessary for you. Happiness fills those who base their lives upon virtue. Virtue is a direct emanation from the Divine, just as happiness is the quality of the Divine. Although it may be difficult in the beginning, yet how many headaches would you save yourself if you would base your life upon virtue and truth! If you tell a lie, to support it you have to tell a chain of lies. Sticking to the truth takes away from you all anxiety and a thousand pin-pricks. A life of truth and purity is a life devoid of many of the factors that contribute to the misery and unhappiness of the modern world.

Even more important, keep close to the Great Inner Source of all happiness, all joy, all bliss! Call it by whatever name you choose—I do not want to give It a name. Make That the centre of your being. That is the Eternal Thing that supports your life, which is your alpha and omega, your all in all, your supporting substratum and your destination and goal. Keep close to It by developing love. Love the Supreme. Always remember the Supreme. Great Ones who have immersed their lives and become absorbed forever in the supreme blessed State of happiness and bliss have told us one great secret which provides us with an unflinching method of attaining happiness. That secret is the Divine Name. They said: “Practise Divine Name. The Name of the Supreme and the Supreme are not two

but they are one. If you have the Divine Name within you, you have the Supreme within you.” This is a great spiritual truth. This is a great fact. If you remember this fact and try to make the Divine Name your own, if you are always repeating the Divine Name, always invoking the Divine Name, always filling yourself constantly with the current of the Divine Name, then happiness and blessedness will be present with you always.

Happiness, in the truest sense of the term, is that changeless experience right within you. It is that awareness which being present enables you to derive sweetness out of all other things, and which being absent, deprives you of all the sweetness from anything. That is the most important fact.

It works like the figure ‘1’ in mathematics. If ‘1’ is there, you may add to it any number of zeros and each zero progressively increases the value of the number enormously and the zeros have tremendous significance. If this ‘1’ is not there, all the zeros are just ciphers without any value of their own whatsoever. Similarly, all things gain the capacity for giving happiness only in the presence of this One Being. Make Him the centre of your life. Make Him the most important and paramount Thing in your life. Then you will never be taken away from your happiness even for a single second. No one will be able to take you away from It, for you are yourself that happiness. When a fish is taken out of a little bowl and released into the ocean, it swims about anywhere and always remains in the vast ocean. So, out of the tiny bowl of deluded life where we have paid this undue attention to external objects let us lift ourselves and enter into that vast Truth. In God lies happiness and within me He is and He and I are One.

Within lies the perennial fount of eternal happiness. May you live your life in this Truth. Then I assure you that your life will become a stream of happiness. May your life thus flow forth not as a vale of tears but as a perennial stream of infinite happiness. This is my prayer. May God give you the strength and the inspiration to blossom out into that simplicity and contentment, that shining and radiant virtue, that serene state of detachment, that friendliness with all beings, out of which this great gift that is waiting to be bestowed upon us will become our own. May your life become radiant with joy and happiness. Supernal Happiness—may That be yours.

RIGHT ATTITUDE IN SPIRITUAL PRACTICES

We should have an intense sense of the pervasiveness of the ever-present Lord. That ever-present Spirit, the Supreme Being, should make all our actions spiritually fragrant. Our actions may be prosaic, secular, but we should feel that we are moving in the ocean of *Satchidananda* which pervades everywhere. Feel the presence of the Lord wherever you go for He is everywhere. See Him in every action that you do during your daily round of duties in the world. If we do our actions in this peaceful, blissful awareness of His presence, then our actions become spiritualised, and this is the supreme necessity.

One should have the right spirit or Bhava that whatever one does is an offering and a worship to this ever-present Deity which alone is visible to us through all names and forms. Animate and inanimate is all the One Self. With this Bhava one should do all actions.

This Bhava is illustrated in a wonderful manner in the life of Guru Maharaj Swami Sivanandaji. He saw the one Divine Essence in everyone who came to him. He served the poor and the sick with this Bhava. He saw the living Narayana in every one. For him, every one was the visible manifestation of the Lord. He practised this Bhava until the very end of his life.

Even when we have this Bhava, activity usually throws the mind outward and it externalises the mind. And the Bhava can be held only if the mind is introspective. When the mind is externalised, it at once goes out and contacts the sense-objects and every one of them has got its inevitable effect upon the mind. The Bhava or correct attitude is weakened and in its trail other emotions are evoked. What is the remedy? Only deep earnestness, genuine sincerity, patient and persevering practice or Abhyasa.

Every time the mind gets externalised, try to keep one small portion of the mind cling to the Centre, just as the mariner's compass-needle always points to the north in whatever direction the vessel is moving. By this the undercurrent of the mind always holds the central essential Bhava. That is to be developed by gradual practice. Then however much the *Upadhis* or superimpositions may come and dash against it and try to shake it, it will always be fixed in its central Bhava. A stage will be reached when this Bhava will never be entirely shaken or broken and thus the central thought of our divine attitude will not be lost. Then our entire life becomes transformed from mere living into real worship, Sadhana, Tapascharya and real Yoga. This is the aim of life.

For this, a few practical pointers are there to keep up and intensify day by day this Bhava of oneness of all life. We start our day by waking and we end it by entering into sleep. So, the first idea to be impressed upon the mind when we wake up fresh from a period of sleep, should be a prayer: "O Lord, I awaken to worship Thee in all names and forms". The feeling that you are a Pujari (worshipper) of the cosmic form of the Lord should be impressed upon the fresh mind when you get up from sleep. Devise your own prayer: "O Lord, whatever actions I may do, during the course of my waking hours of this day, by thought, by word or by action, may it all be a continuous worship of Thee." With this idea in your mind commence your daily activities. If you perform your daily activities. If you perform your daily tasks with this spirit, then the work will not bind you any more; instead it will become a binding factor with the Lord.

At intervals during the course of your activities, for brief moments try to collect yourself and say: "This is all worship, whatever I do is worship of the Lord."

Try to behold the Lord in every being. Every now and then try to remind yourself that this is your Bhava: *Sarvam Brahmamayam*. And, in the end, when you retire to sleep, offer up all actions of the day at the feet of the Lord. Say unto the Lord: "O Lord, I am Thine, all is Thine, Thy will be done." Feel that you are an instrument in the hands of the Lord and that the Lord works through your mind, body and senses. Offer all your actions and the fruits of the actions unto the Lord. This is the way to do self-surrender.

Be a *Nimitta*. Feel that the place where you dwell is the temple of the Lord, every action as service of the Lord, the light that you burn as waving lights to the Lord and every word that you utter as the Japa of the Lord's Name. Feet His Presence wherever you go. He is in you. He dwells in the

chambers of your heart. He is nearer to you than your friends and relatives. Behold Him in every face.

Make it a daily habit to pray to the Lord before you retire to sleep. Say, “What all I have done through hands, feet, eyes, ears, nose, tongue, or mind, I offer up unto the Lord as my worship.” Then go to sleep with this idea impressed upon the unconscious mind. This helps you in your achievement in spirituality and this is practical spiritualisation of your life. Further, when you do certain special actions during the day, try to see that at the beginning and at the end of each individual distinct activity, this process is gone through. For example, it may be done when you sit for food. You offer up every thing to the Lord and then start eating and again before you get up say: *Brahmarpanam*. When you sit to write a letter mentally pray: “O Lord, may it be a worship of Thee,” and when you complete it, say: *Brahmarpanam*. Every complete act that you perform should thus start with a prayer and end with the offering to the Lord.

This is the simple secret and is a most effective and powerful way of transforming all activities of the day into Puja, worship and sacrifice. This is also what our ancient seers and saints have discovered and given to us as our priceless heritage. We have also the beautiful Sloka in the Gita which should be constantly remembered by aspirants: *Brahmarpanam Brahmahaviv Brahmagnou Brahmana Hutam; Brahmaiva Tena Gantavyam Brahmakarma-samadhina*—He who thinks that the act of offering as Brahman, the sacrificer as Brahman, the fire into which the sacrifice is made as Brahman and is thus fully engrossed in Consciousness obtains Brahman Itself. This is the supreme fruit which he attains by virtue of his having correct and pure Bhava or right attitude of mind in all his thoughts, speech and actions.

DIVINITY IS YOUR BIRTHRIGHT, UNFOLD IT BY REGULAR SADHANA

The essence of spiritual unfoldment is the transformation of your consciousness. The spiritual unfoldment is a matter of transformation of one’s consciousness and this could be interpreted and expressed in the light of different Yogas. What is this consciousness in normal human beings? We feel, “I am Mr. So and so. I am the son of such and such parents. I belong to this family, this caste, this household. I belong to a certain place in America, Germany, France, India and these people belong to me and I belong to them. This is mine and I am connected with this person, connected with this house, connected with this field, with this motor-car, with this bungalow, with such and such an office, etc.”

So, the consciousness is filled with numerous factors which are connected with this universe outside and all these various relationships arise out of the basic connection he feels in his consciousness that he is so and so. And the immediate connections that arise are: “There are my parents, these are my brothers and sisters, relatives and so and so.” Then all other connections start. So, however much we may philosophise, however much we may read books, however much these higher spiritual things are discussed in the scriptures, yet our consciousness is a consciousness that has to do with our physical form and similar other external physical forms and names. So it is earth-consciousness, body-consciousness, the world-awareness. When such world-awareness

completely dominates your consciousness, how can God-awareness come into this field? There is no scope, and even if you close your eyes for sometimes and try to bring it, it may come but it will immediately disappear as it is a foreign element. A great saint used to say: “If you drop a stone in a pond whose water is covered by moss, it will give way for a moment and then quickly cover once again.” You can hardly see the water, before it is again covered by moss. Just as this moss covers the entire surface of the pond-water and makes it invisible and however much you may drive them aside they once again come together, even so the normal consciousness of the human being is totally covered over with world-consciousness, physical-consciousness.

It is the normal state of all human beings, even of a Sadhaka. But in a Sadhaka who continuously follows the process of removing this world-consciousness, just as clearing the water-surface covered with moss, there is always a little higher consciousness coming into his field. However, if he stops his efforts for a few minutes, the world-consciousness creeps in again. So, the whole of the spiritual process is a constant and unremitting effort, persistent and tenacious effort, continuous and unbroken effort to gradually cease this world-consciousness and to completely remove and replace it by that spiritual consciousness. Then you are not aware of this world, of this body and of yourself as an earthly being, but you are aware of only that which is the source of all these, the ultimate Reality, the very essence of existence—God. God-awareness will come in, God-consciousness will come in, and this transformation of consciousness is being brought about through a gradual process of absolute purification of the entire inner instrument, because Consciousness makes itself manifest through the mind. Of Consciousness as such we have no idea, for we have not touched the depth of our being which is Consciousness itself. To us It is only a concept or an idea. So we know of that Awareness as mental awareness, and that is our definition of awareness. But this feeling, this thinking awareness is something which is total emanation or expression through the mind. So, first and foremost we have to work only through the mind. Unless we work through the mind there is no method of approaching that Consciousness, which is supramental, which is beyond our mind, transcending the mind.

The spiritual process is a process of divesting the mind of all earthly associations, all gross associations, everything that is of the world, everything that is of Rajas and Tamas. How can you do it? These things are not tangible, are not visible. So you cannot catch hold of them one by one and put them out. You cannot do this process, because they are in the mind, they are internal, they are invisible and they are also abstract. This is the problem of the Sadhaka. They are all thoughts, emotions and various modes of the Antahkarana, impressions, memory, Vasanas and inclinations, gradually built up due to past experience. So, we find that there is no method of physically going to them and throwing them out. We cannot take a broom and clean the mind. Then how to do it? The only process is to create new counter-impulses and counter-thoughts within the mind which will gradually gain strength, become firm and ultimately grow and expand, and bring about a total reversal of the very nature of your mind, its normal condition, its ways of behaviour and activity.

To achieve this, numerous processes have been prescribed which constitute Sadhana or spiritual practice. So, the first consideration is the transformation of the consciousness. You must be conscious of your Self and not a part of this world or a part of your body. You are bound up in body-consciousness and your relation with the outside object is created through this body-consciousness. So this body-consciousness has to go and the higher divine-consciousness has to come. You must be aware of God and not of yourself and not of the body. You must be aware of

yourself as a ray of the radiant light that is God, as a drop in the great ocean, as part and parcel of that great ocean of Satchidananda, of Divinity. Feel that you are infinite, endless and limitless. Feel yourself as a part of It. Thinking about that Consciousness always is the concern of the mind. Therefore, Sadhana is the process of purification, concentration, identification and absorption. You must purify the mind and arouse the first elements of that divine Consciousness and then concentrate your mind upon that divine Consciousness alone and intensify that state and ultimately, be absorbed in that completely. Purify, concentrate and get absorbed. As you steadily advance in Sadhana, this experience comes to you by itself. Potentially you are the deathless Atman, you have no birth, no death, no sorrow, no bondage, you are ever pure and ever perfect. This seed is there already.

The scriptures have declared this. Your teacher had told it to you. He has told it to you in such a persuasive manner and forcible way that he has created a conviction also in you. So, you know that you are not this body and that you are the ever-pure, perfect and blissful Atman. That knowledge is there. It is in a potential form. It is not available for you as experience. You have not had the actual experience. You think that you are in a state of ignorance even when you know your real Svarupa, because you have not had the actual experience of the Atman or Brahman. So, if someone passes an adverse remark on you, you immediately run into temper and feel being insulted and you want to fight, you want to quarrel, you want to retaliate and you want to revenge. If someone fails to give you respect, you feel at once offended. If some little loss happens to you, you break down and cry. If you fail in the examination, if you do not get promotion, if you do not get increment, for days and weeks together you are unhappy. So, everything affects you continuously and as the result of your being affected by so many things like this, you do not know that you are the Atman, ever-free, ever-pure, ever-perfect and ever-full. But even though you have not experienced the Atman, yet merely knowing that you are Atman, the Light of lights, will help you a lot. Now and then a little bit of this knowledge will vaguely shake you. You will think: "I should not have lost my temper; why I have lost my temper? I should not have lost it because the Atman is not affected by anything."

Feel that you belong to God. In God there is no creation. No sorrow can touch you. No bondage is there. No fear is there. You do not lack anything when God is all in all. Feel that you are a child of God and that you belong to God. God is your father, mother and everything. You are here to share all His Divine Glory. Experience is one thing and potential knowledge is another thing. The potential knowledge has to be translated into actual experience, transformed into experience by a certain process. The process is moving towards that stage and not merely knowing that state to be the immaculate, spotless, ever-pure state of divinity which is all-pure, which has no desire. The whole of this process becomes a gradual moving towards the state of absolute fullness, absolute perfection of good qualities, perfection of virtues.

The spiritual ascent or the spiritual unfoldment is the process of moving towards that experience of the Divine nature, *Daivi Sampatti*. That means the whole of Sadhana constitutes, right from the very beginning, a gradual progress into that nature and therefore the coming to our life of those elements that characterise the highest divine nature. This forms the essential bedrock or the foundation of all spiritual quests. It is the foundation of Vedanta, Yoga, Bhakti and Karma Margas. It is the foundation of spiritual quest in Hinduism, in Islam, in Parsi religion, in Christianity, in Buddhism, in Jainism and in every religion. So the rock-bottom of all spiritual quest

is a gradual spending of all that is undivine, gradual elimination of all thoughts which are not proper and are not spiritual, and a gradual acquisition of all divine qualities enabling the unfoldment of the Divinity within.

Do not sit idle. Know that you are Divine in your essential nature. You have not come here to weep and wail. Assert your Divine nature. Awake! Arise! You are a pilgrim on the path of truth. You are Divine. Find the way back to your spiritual abode of eternal Bliss. To be human is to be unhappy. To be Divine is to be ever happy. Let your highest ambition be to find God in your own heart. Let every effort of your body, speech and mind be to encompass this end.

Stop identifying yourself that you are so and so and son of so and so. No more such things. Identify with the pure Self or Absolute Consciousness. You will become Immortal. You will attain Bliss eternal. May you attain Perfection in this very life. This is my prayer.

MIND, THE LIBERATOR AND THE BINDER

Even though modern psychology sponsors positive relationship, it leaves the soul untouched. In modern psychology the spirit being left untouched, there is no concept of it at all. They say that the body and the psychic being are closely related; but it does not at all affect the Vedantic viewpoint. Even though you know that they are indivisibly connected, what is it to the Soul? Because It is even different from the psychic being, and the astral being. The soul is distinct from all the things that make up this human personality. It is distinct from everything, except its *Svarupa* (essential nature), that is, spiritual nature. Its Svarupa is pure spirit, pure being, which has no beginning and no end, which has no change, which is pure Consciousness. So, ultimately, you must know this as pure Consciousness, Suddha Chaitanya, Chinmaya and Satchidananda.

Now, could there be the discrimination between the Self and the body without losing one's individuality! It is not so simple as that. It is not the discrimination between the Self and the body as we normally understand it. It is the discrimination between the Self and all that is non-Self, not only the body but all that is non-Self. If you have strength of austerity, you will understand what is Self and what is non-Self. And, everything that is other than Self is categorised by Patanjali as Prakriti. So, ultimately, what you realise in your experience of Nirvikalpa Samadhi is the distinction between Purusha and Prakriti. Purusha means the Self and Prakriti means everything that is non-Self. So, in Prakriti are included body, the five senses, the five sheaths, the Antahkarana, the five Pranas, all the Vasanas, all the Samskaras, all the world process, all phenomena, all perception, etc. So, every changing mode of the psychic, in fact, everything that is made up of senses, Prana, mind, even the ego and all their different modifications, the impressions, the inclinations and tendencies is included in Prakriti. And once you know the differentiation, you are no more afflicted by the world process. So, there is a distinction between Purusha and Prakriti. And as long as the mind is there, this distinction cannot be completely achieved. Loss of individuality, annihilation of individuality or destruction of the mind need not worry the aspirant because this individuality, the false individuality, has no proper existence within itself. This false individuality is due to the consciousness getting entangled on account of its proximity to the Prakriti. When this proximity is severed, what remains is the real entity. Loss of a false thing is no loss at all. When we understand

that this individual consciousness is part of Prakriti and is not part of your real entity, this loss or annihilation has no significance, no meaning. So, it is not mere control of the mind that Raja Yoga aims at. In the beginning stages it is control of the mind, so that a certain state may be reached through the exercise of the control of the concentrated mind, in which state mind totally ceases to be. Nirodha, in Raja Yoga Philosophy, is said to constitute Yoga. Nirodha is only up to a certain point, in order to achieve a state of meditation where you leave the entire plane of the mind and ego to go into superconsciousness. There the mind is not existent. Mind becomes extinct there. In that realm of superconsciousness where you realise the Purusha, the mind ceases to be. Unless you reach a plane where there is no mind, you cannot know the Self. The mindless state is absolutely indispensable for the experience of Self. Therefore, to reach that state, absolute control and absolute cessation of all activities of the mind become necessary steps, necessary discipline, and Raja Yoga gives that much of discipline. You transcend the mind, when this discipline is perfected. Transcending of the mind and losing of individuality should not worry the Sadhaka. This individuality is a most pernicious thing. It is a great disease upon Consciousness. It is a blemish to pure Consciousness. So, this loss of individuality is the greatest gain.

Now, a doubt may arise as to why we should destroy the principle of individuality, since the highest stage of evolution is considered to be reached only in the human level. Let us consider the answer. Why should you want to stick to this human level? No doubt it is a high stage comparatively, compared to all these subhuman species, from the amoeba onwards—the amoeba, and then the invertebrates, worms and insects, fishes and reptiles, birds and beasts and all others. All right, but it does not mean that you should get stuck in that state. Supposing there are ‘A’ class, ‘B’ class and ‘C’ class prisoners. ‘C’ class prisoners get whipping every day, have to break stones in the sun for twelve hours, have only dry bread and cold water, and have to sleep on the ground. ‘B’ class prisoners get one extra dish of vegetable and are given a cot so that bugs, worms and rats may not nibble at their bodies, and perhaps 10 hours work. And ‘A’ class prisoners may be given nice cottages and allowed to cook their own food and all that. They are given a bedding and no work to do. They can get newspaper, get magazines, perhaps can have an occasional smoke also. Once a week visitors are allowed inside the jail to meet them. Now, would you think: “Once I have become an ‘A’ class prisoner, why should I want to get out of the prison?” Similarly, the human state, compared to all the other states, is the highest state in evolution, but this is still bondage. So, freedom of the soul is something so unimaginably grand and glorious, that even this stage of evolution is bondage. It becomes hell. Compared to all other states, it is heaven and glory of God’s creation because man is made in the image of God. But human being also can be very rotten. He may do things which even animals would be ashamed of doing, and which sometimes animals will be incapable of doing. What animals will be incapable of doing, that also a human being does sometimes. And these are the defects and imperfections of human life. Or, even supposing human life is very nice, all good, all joy, all wonder, all perfection and all beauty, who will simply want to stick to this if there is a state hundred times better than that? That state is that of Divinity. When there is still higher and grandeur and more glorious state, it is not wise to want to perpetuate in the lower state.

How can we annihilate the mind, since thinking power is the very essence of the human being? “*Cogito ergo sum*”—“I think, therefore, I am”, or “I am, therefore, I think”, says Descartes. We can deny everything, doubt everything, but we cannot doubt the doubter. But, then, Descartes left it at that. Who is this ‘I’ that says “*Cogito ergo sum*”, and what is the real nature of ‘I’? That is

the subject of philosophy, the theme of philosophy. The real nature of this 'I' is beautifully given in the Upanishads. The Upanishads are the intuitional outpourings of the highest state reached in realisation and the declaration of the realisation which they had reached through great flights into spiritual realms through deep meditation and intuition. They realised that this being, this 'I' who says, "I think, therefore, I am" is a supramental being. This is beyond the mind. He transcends the mind. He realises the true 'I' who transcends the mind. Therefore, you see the need to get rid of this thinking power, which is a bar. How can we annihilate the mind as long as the thinking power is the very essence of the human being? Yes, thinking power is the very essence of the human being, but your essential nature is not human nature. You are not a human being. So do not continue the error of thinking that you are a human being. You are not human. You are Divine. Essentially, you are God. Therefore, you have to shed this human nature, and the essential power of the human nature which is the thinking faculty. As long as you go on thinking, you will be bound on the human plane only. So, a time comes where the mind becomes a bar. In the beginning mind is the instrument, mind is the path, mind is the help, and a stage comes when mind becomes a bar. And when that stage comes mind has to be discarded. This is very homely illustrated thus. Supposing your idea is to climb up and go to the open terrace. You are on the floor now and the ladder is your greatest friend and without it you cannot go up. Rung by rung you climb, up and up, and reach the last rung of the ladder. Suppose you fall in love with ladder, saying "O, it has got me up till here," and you do not want to leave the ladder. Then, what will happen? You will not reach the terrace. A time comes when you are standing on the highest rung of the ladder and you have to decide: "No doubt, this ladder has helped me to come up so high; now, if I continue staying on the ladder, I will be deprived of the pleasure of being on the terrace and so, if I want to go to the terrace, I will have to leave the ladder and jump up on the terrace." Up till that height where the ladder and the terrace meet, the ladder becomes indispensable, the most essential, most helpful, but when that height is reached, to stay on the ladder becomes a great obstacle, a great mistake. So the ladder has to be discarded if you want to go to the terrace. That is the position of the mind in terms of spiritual experience. The highest experience is that state where mind becomes a bar, and to approach that level mind becomes the greatest help, an indispensable instrument.

SWAMI SIVANANDA—A SPIRITUAL GUIDE OF BHARATAVARSHA

On the First of June, every year, we celebrate the Anniversary of the Sannyasa Diksha of our revered Gurudev Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj. Upon this great and auspicious day let us bring before our minds those glorious spiritual lights of Bharatavarsha—Sri Sankaracharya (the glorious Avatara of Lord Siva) and his brilliant line of monks who are the light and glory of this great land. Let us remember the Sant-Parampara, the long line of monks and Mahapurushas who have kept up this glorious tradition of Sannyasa upon this land. Let us today offer our thanks to the Lord for having given us the peerless privilege of calling ourselves his disciples and of trying through a close and humble observation of his personal life, to attain the highest goal of human existence.

To unhesitatingly cast to the winds all considerations of one's own welfare or gain and to sacrifice everything that life might hold sweet for the sake of commonweal, such have been the lives of most of the great-hearted helpers of humanity. Similar has been the story behind this

modern sage, a story of an intense feeling heart, a quick and sudden decision, prompt renunciation blossoming into a life of the most whole-hearted dedication to the service and uplift of humanity.

Sri Swami Sivanandaji has come to be a household name recognised everywhere as an awakener, inspirer and enlightener of thousands who would otherwise have continued to remain heedless and indifferent to all questions of higher life and loftier ideals. Born in 1887 (8th September), imbued early in life with a genuine thirst to serve the sick, relieve the distressed and help the needy, he studied medicine after a very brilliant college career. At the age of 25, early in the year 1913, he took up duties as doctor in the hospital in the Strait Settlements. For ten memorable years the youthful doctor strove tirelessly in pursuing with earnestness and zeal the sublime science of relieving pain, nursing, healing and curing. But the latent life's urge towards the monastic path was ever growing inside him and the call to a higher duty and a loftier and wider mission drew him out of the secular and raised him up to a holy life up on the spiritual plane. Thus 1923 saw him leave for the Himalayas, a lone seeker under the Indian skies, possessionless and desireless, intent upon the realisation of his life's mission. Blessed indeed is this auspicious day.

He was initiated into Sannyasa in 1924 at holy Rishikesh and at once plunged into a period of intense Nishkama Seva through the Satya Sevashram Dispensary that he started in 1925. About a year and a half later, he took to seclusion and meditation. Till 1935 his life was one of intense Tapas, meditation and inner Sadhana and enlightenment. But he was a man with a mission and the insistent call of humanity caught in the coils of soul-killing materialism drew him out of his meditation and cast him into the sublime field of Visva Seva.

It has given place since 1936 when he found the Divine Life Society, to the working out of his mission of disseminating spiritual knowledge. Ever brooding over the cause and cure for the modern malady of scepticism, irreligion and sensuality, and the innate sympathy and understanding of the Swami discerned the root cause as the ever-widening gulf that had begun to separate the sons of the soil from a knowledge of their own life-giving sacred lore. The system of education imposed by the ruling power and the classical language of the scriptures were both responsible. This baneful ignorance Sri Swamiji was combating with by a nation-wide dissemination of the lofty truths of spiritual life and he made available the contents of the scriptures to the anglicised hopes of tomorrow.

The expansion of this work has been nothing short of marvel, seeing that like the Sannyasins of yore he stuck to a holy spot on the banks of the Ganga where he made his abode. His awakening message has reached all quarters on the globe and nearer home his labour has resulted in the moral and spiritual regeneration of the youth and the aged alike. Seeing Siva in Jiva he carried on all activities as worshipful adoration of the Cosmic Spirit.

He was successful in awakening the modern generation to the greatness and glory of our civilisation and culture and implanting in them a healthy reverence to the appreciation of the traditions, institutions and genius of the Motherland. His words and works have resulted in making the average man today feel the underlying oneness of all humanity. Sri Swamiji has hammered home the truth that external differences and divergences which are but superficial, matter not and that the essential part of all beings is spiritual and identical throughout the universe. He has thus come to be a unifying force of a nation and the world.

Believing in the destiny of India, as spiritual guide to the world, his labours were directed at making the world mass conscious of this high duty. Thus is seen that he aimed at awakening this spiritual sense in everyone from children, students, youth, elders to the old fold and women as well. The numerous Branches of the Divine Life Society constitute centres of spiritual education and regeneration of groups of whole families. They are unique units to inspire and train up the toddler, the youngster, the mother of the family and the servants and neighbours as well. Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj was marvellously gifted with the peculiar quality of not only doing effective spiritual propaganda but he also made enthusiastic propagandist of every individual that came within the pale of his powerful personality.

He has been a silent but withal an active and potent factor in dissolving differences, breaking barriers and ushering in a year of amity and understanding amongst all sections of the people. By dint of ceaseless industry of his gifted pen, by his personal admonitions, instructions and guidance of his inspiring epistles and through the silent unostentatious work of the numerous Branches of the Divine Life Society he has brought about a moral and spiritual revolution in the hearts of thousands. It is not at all surprising that countless people of every shade belonging to every caste, creed, sect and community have come to regard him as their sole guide and philosopher.

In his methods of spiritual ministry he was refreshingly thorough. He did not stop with awakening and inspiring, but spared himself no pains in drawing up definite, practical programmes to suit every type of aspirant. Thus he followed up by guiding and instructing, encouraging and enlightening the practitioners at every step.

Unlike the ordinary missionary, fanatic in his loyalty to his Faith, Sri Swamiji took a rational attitude to the question of religion and was frank and direct in criticism where and when required. A tireless advocate of religious life and the spiritual path, yet he exposed the evils and pitfalls of the line, condemned its malpractices and point out defects, at every stage. The supreme value of this trait in him has been incalculable in that it thoroughly safeguards the seeker that sets forth upon this rugged path. His frank forewarning acts as a safe shield to the aspirant in his war with unseen factors in the spiritual field.

The peculiar attraction that his teaching exercises over the youth and the man of the world today emanates from the twofold fact of his absolute non-sectarianism and presentation of practical religion with a wise emphasis upon the true essentials that matter, by rejecting the unnecessary, confusing superfluities that are of no real value.

It has been stated that not by words but by his deeds shall a man be known. Fully has this Saint of Ananda Kutir justified the homage and recognition of the grateful thousands that have come to have their lives redeemed out of the dark depths of unbelief and transferred to the bright heights of faith, devotion and blessedness.

Under the inspiration of his simple, forceful and eminent practical teaching men and women have come to feel religion as a positive, constructive and redeeming force in their lives, elevating them from dejection and weakness to fresh hope and inner strength.

Amidst all this spiritual labour prompted by pure love, he was ever in tune with the Eternal Centre ever living, moving and having his being in the constant consciousness of the ever-present Reality; for, this man of God had seized hold of the Divine hint uttered by the Charioteer of Partha to “see Me in everything and see everything in Me.” May his Grace be ever upon you all, is my prayer.

YOGA OF DEVOTION AND ITS TRUE IMPORT ACCORDING TO THE BHAGAVATA

Srimad Bhagavata Purana, one of the eighteen Puranas and the most important of them, called “The Great Purana” depicts the glories of divinity as manifested in Vishnu or Narayana, with whom we are most concerned, for He is the upholder, the sustainer, the nourisher and the protector of this thing called life, this world, this universal process—everything that happens here.

The divine power so far as we are concerned with it, manifests in three fundamental aspects. It has numerous aspects but we are concerned with only three of its fundamental aspects for we are in the universe and the universe has come into being from the state of the pure unmanifested, transcendental Reality—when there was no name, no form, no creation and It alone abided, Supreme. In the beginning was God. God alone was and He willed—“Let there be manifestation, let there be light.” The Bible says about cosmology—“Let there be light.” The Upanishads say: “There was one, one without a second, supreme, alone and there arose in Him the mystical idea—‘May I become many’ and the many were brought forth, manifested, by the sheer act of the Divine Will.”

Therefore, coming into manifestation is presided over by one functional aspect of the Divine power, the aspect of bringing into being, the aspect of the creative energy. When this great creative aspect of the divine power is conceived of as a person, or embodied or personified, He is called Brahma, the Creator. When this same force, at the end of a cycle, ultimately absorbs back into the bosom of the Unmanifested once again all these manifest names and forms, the power of reabsorbing, the power of dissolving into nameless, formless condition, when personified, is given the name of Siva. He who once again disperses all the phenomena, dissolves them back into their original state, is the dissolver or the absorber, though they call Him the destroyer. In human language, anyone who does away with something that was existing is said to have destroyed it. In that sense, every day we are destroyers, also. If we want a glass of fruit-juice we cut the fruit and put it into the juicer and in this way we destroy the fruit. If you want to convert the juice into energy, it also has to be destroyed, and one becomes a demon who gulps it down to transform it into energy. In that way, every creation requires destruction.

Siva is a benign power that dissolves, absorbs back into formlessness that which has been brought into form. Brahma creates and is then finished with it. Then, when the cycle comes to an end, Siva steps in and absorbs. These two functions are terminal, and in between these two terminals for hundreds of thousands of years, these things have to be taken care of. They have to be maintained, preserved, and all that is necessary for their continuation has to be provided for; and another aspect of the same power takes care of this. In the past, present and future, on and on through the ages, looking after everything, sending rain, sending sunshine, providing all things that

are necessary and looking after the minutest detail of the entire process—the whole function of protecting, nourishing, and setting right things that go wrong is all but another aspect of the great Divine Power—Vishnu. This aspect functions continuously and at no time is it not related to our lives here and at no time does it remain unconcerned. Vishnu or Narayana has been lauded more than any other aspect of Divinity because we cannot get along without Him.

The aspect of Vishnu's consort, Lakshmi, is present in this world as corn that grows in the field without which we cannot sustain our lives. She is present as well in the money that makes things go all around in this world. She is also the power behind all secular knowledge, knowledge of the sciences, knowledge of business—everything. She is the royal power to maintain law and order, administer justice and in this way, in eight different aspects, She looks after everything. The elephant is Her insignia. It is the insignia of royalty.

In the Bhagavata Purana, the glories of Lord Vishnu the Preserver, have been extolled. Of the entire twelve books in it the Tenth book occupies the largest portion. In it all about the supreme incarnation of Lord Vishnu as Sri Krishna is given. He was born in Mathura on the banks of the Yamuna river. He was taken to Vrindavana soon after his birth and there he spent his boyhood period in wonderful divine sport.

He saved many virtuous people, destroyed many wicked people and created, first and foremost, the waves of real spiritual love in a vast number of people. It is He who started or sowed the seeds of ecstatic love for the Divine and created the way of Bhakti Yoga or the practice of devotion in the right spirit. He is the Supreme object of Bhakti in India. Bhakti Yoga started with Lord Krishna's incarnation and it has as its basis the Bhagavata. All Bhaktas get their inspiration from the Bhagavata, from the life of Krishna contained in the Tenth book.

The Lilas or sports of Sri Krishna provide a complete field for the exercise of the devotional aspect of our personalities in relation to God. The higher emotion,—not the lower human emotion,—ecstatic Divine love, pure spiritual love towards God, has been given maximum scope for its exercise in the Krishna Lilas.

The life of Krishna, especially His Vrindavana Lila, the love of the Gopis, the simple cowherds, as well as the cowherd type of love of the heart of the human towards the Divine, have ever been the inspiration of countless devotees of Lord Krishna.

Bhakti Yoga is the path where you try to attain Divine experience or God experience by relating yourself to the Divine through some particular emotional link. This emotional connection is developed through various exercises and brought to the highest pitch wherein this love fills your entire consciousness, pushing out even the awareness of 'I'. You forget even your own self and become the very personification of love. You turn into love-Divine and thus, through a total forgetfulness of the senses you rise into a state of God-experience through this all-absorbing love which saturates your consciousness. This love relationship with the Divine has been helped by their suggesting certain patterns of relationship. "How can I love a Being whom I do not know, who is strange to me, whom I have never seen? He is remote, and unfamiliar and in what way is one to love Him". This is countered by a question: "How can you know people here? How can you love people here? You love your husband or your wife as the case may be, your son, daughter, sister and so on;

so where is the problem?” The reply is: “Here I can love beings because I see them, I know them, and I am born with some sort of a relationship with them and so it is natural for me to love them. There is nothing unfamiliar, strange or remote about them.”

It is a problem. All right, we solve it by the very statement you have made of the problem. You say that He is strange to you and so you are not able to love Him; and you can love human beings because they are familiar to you. Why should you think that He is strange or unfamiliar to you? In whatever you relate yourself to your familiar and human relations, relate yourself to Him in the same way.

So no strange or new type of love has to be created. You do not have to go out of your way to find a new type of love which is unfamiliar and a means to develop it. No unnatural or new type of love is necessary. Whatever is the dominant aspect of love in your heart, direct the self-same thing towards God. Go a step further and conceive of Him in the self-same manner as the being to whom this love was and has been directed and exercised all along by you. So, if you are very fond of your child, the very love you have towards your child, direct that towards Him and do not think He is a great big God, all-powerful and full of glow, but think of Him as your child, as a simple little child, forget all His glow and greatness and grandeur and feel that He is your Divine child.

I am very sure that very few felt awe before the child Jesus; on the other hand, they were very much concerned for him and feared for his life when Herod started massacring the children. So they hid the child and escaped into Egypt. They felt he was helpless, required protection and had to be taken away from the threat to his life. So they had all the concern of a mother and a father for a little child and his grandeur and his glow were not here for them.

In the same way, transfer your normal natural human love, that which is dominant, that which is most familiar to your heart towards Him. You can follow any one of these: If you are one who loves your Master greatly, think of him as your God. If you are a boy or a girl who loves your parents most, think of Him as your mother or your father and love Him with all the love you have for your own mother or father. Similar patterns of love are given and you are asked to exercise the self-same love towards the Divine so that he comes nearer to you, becomes very familiar to you, and not someone strange or remote to you. In this way, one must progress in love.

Five different patterns are suggested and the highest pattern is the deep, intense, passionate love a lover has for his or her beloved, which is the most intense form of love. If that is the love most familiar to you, all right, conceive of the Lord as your beloved, the object of your deepest love.

In the Gopi and Krishna love, it is this form of love that is carried to, the acme of perfection. But, mind you, this love represents the love of the human soul to the Divine. The Gopis were well aware that Krishna was the very embodiment of the great, all-perfect Divine Reality, the imperishable One. With this knowledge they lavished their love upon Krishna. How do you know it? You go to the Srimad Bhagavata which tells you how their love was tested and came after much striving, prayer and worship. They did not get Krishna’s love easily but only through great penance. They arose at 4 O’clock in the morning in the winter and took bath in the icy cold waters of the Yamuna river. Shivering with cold they went and worshipped for an hour before the Goddess in the temple, because someone said if you want to win the love of Krishna you would have to perform

this special penance and for several weeks you would have to worship the Goddess. They did it and they prayed ceaselessly day and night to Krishna: “Give us the gift of true love for Thee and give us the return of Thy love.” And then they knew that He promised. “All right; on a certain full-moon night, I will meet you and return your love and I will show you the grandeur of Divine love.” He played upon the flute and when they came they were all completely overcome by the music of his flute, because it is divine and celestial and hundreds of Gopis gathered around. Suddenly Krishna started acting innocent and said: “What happened to all of you? Why did you come here? Is it proper for you to come? You are all married girls. You have husbands at home. Did you take permission from your husbands or your mothers or your fathers? It is very wrong of young girls like you to come here at this time of night leaving your husbands and children and your duties at home. This is very wrong. What will people say? What will the world say? Please, go—go back home!” So, he becomes a teacher.

Do you know what the Gopis replied to him? You must read in the tenth chapter of the Bhagavata. In reply to the questions they said: “Do you think we do not know who you are? How can we leave our husbands and come, because whom are we loving in our husbands? Is it not the indwelling Being? Our love goes to the indwelling Being, and are you not the Indweller of all beings? Are you not the Cosmic Being. Are you not the one great Reality who alone merits all love and devotion? Knowing this we have come to you. In your love is liberation. In your love is emancipation and salvation. You are the Supreme Object, the endless One.” Thus they tell Krishna they are well aware whom they are approaching. They are not conscious of their bodies when they approach Krishna. So it is a love where there is no body-idea, no body-consciousness. It is not the love of this world. It has nothing physical about it. As individual souls they are fully aware that He is the pure Cosmic Being and they are completely free of body-awareness when they approach Krishna and lavish their love upon Him. It is a transcendental drama. It is a divine drama of the response of the human to the call of the Divine and these Gopis are incarnated celestials.

Therefore, develop true selfless devotion to Lord Krishna like Gopis of Vrindavana. There lies your true blessedness and happiness. Uninterrupted devotion to the Lord will generate both renunciation and wisdom. Devotion opens the eye of wisdom. God is easily moved by pure devotion and humility.

May Lord Krishna of Vrindavana bless you all with health and happiness. *Om Namo Bhagavate Vasudevaya!*

PORTAL UNTO PERFECTION*

Homage unto worshipful Gurudev Swami Sivananda, the effulgent sun of spirituality. May his light shine for ever. May his light light up the lives of people all over the world.

Blessed Children of the Divine! You are here for the attainment of the sublime destiny. This is no less than the attainment of Divine Perfection. You have before you a glorious future. It is moving towards the attainment of Supreme and Radiant Spiritual Beauty in life. This perfection and this beauty is your birthright. For, your human life verily derives these from an Eternal, All Perfect, Infinite Divine Life of pure Spiritual Being. Thou art heir to spiritual splendour. Thou art heir to divine perfection. Thou art heir to Infinite Beauty, Eternal Bliss and Indescribable Peace.

This splendour, this perfection, this beauty, bliss and peace is your Real Nature. This is the true Self within. This divinity is inherent within your true being. Thou art Divine. This universe is but a manifest expression, a revealed form of the Supreme Divine Reality. Your life in this universe is actually a divine process. Therefore, live life divinely.

What is life? To evolve and to manifest the spiritual principle within you and to seek and obtain vision and the experience of the divinity concealed behind visible names and forms,—this is life. To behold the external world as God and to worship this revealed divinity through ceaseless act of selfless loving service,—this is life. All this here is sacred. The Divine Presence sanctifies all places and all objects. Where you are, you stand before the presence of the Most High. Whatever thou doest, thou doest unto the Lord of the Universe, the hidden God Who pervades His own Creation. Therefore *spiritualise* your life.

Spiritualise your life. This is the portal to perfection. This is the pathway to glory. This is the secret of supreme attainment. Every little thought and sentiment, every single word and deed fill everything with our attitude of intense reverence, devotion and worshipfulness. Let all your life be pervaded by a spiritual Bhava. Thus raise up your life and actions unto a new direction. Even while in the world tune yourself on to a spiritual plane. Have a new vision and a new approach. Live in the awareness of the Immanence of the Divine. Behold light of God shining everywhere. God looks at you through all eyes. To live here is to move with God. To live here is to have your being in God. For, God is here and now. All life is spiritual. Therefore, feel this Truth. Affirm It. Assert It. And strive to live in this Truth. Consciously endeavour to spiritualise your life. This is the key to blessedness.

Our worshipful Gurudev, our glorious Master Swami Sivananda himself lived and showed to us this way of life. To him everything was sacred and holy. To him all activities were spiritual activities. To his vision everything was God appearing in innumerable varieties of forms. In his life to act was to adore, work was worship and to live was to pray. Even the most common and normal activities of the body like eating, drinking, talking, listening, sitting, moving, coming and going, all constituted sacred processes and as such were offered up at the feet of the Lord. All movements

* Message delivered by the Swamiji on the occasion of his 57th Birthday.

were accompanied by interior prayer or ceaseless remembrance of God. Silent repetition of the Divine Name was to be carried on simultaneously with all the activities. "I am Thine! All is Thine," this sublime inner feeling accompanied his every action. Spirituality was the keynote of his life. His mandate to his followers was: **SPIRITUALISE YOUR LIFE**. This was the heart of his teachings. It was the essence of his message to mankind. One who follows this, indeed, becomes liberated. He attains perfection.

Beloved Seekers! God is love and know all life is sacred. To live is to worship the ever-present God. Lead this life spiritual, from this moment. Fill your life with this spiritual vision. This is the portal to perfection. You will come face to face with God.

Wake up at dawn each day to salute this Universal form of God. Bow down in adoration unto Him before you start the day. Fill your day with the spirit of worshipfulness. Act with devotion. See God in all names and forms. Be courteous and polite. Be kind and generous. Be merciful and compassionate. Forgive and forget. Do good unto all. Live to serve others. Root out ego and selfishness. Become a servant of humanity, a hope of all beings and a messenger of peace and unity. Live and act for the welfare of all and for the happiness of all. Control anger. Counter hatred by love. Be truthful and honest. Never deceive, harm or hurt others. Strive to be a Sadachari and a Paropakari. Engage in works conducive to the benefit of others, knowing that the living Presence of God indwells all beings. Through control of senses and conquest of mind, through the renunciation of selfishness and greed move onwards towards your lofty destiny of Perfection and Liberation. Attain it in this very life and become blessed forever. Life is transitory. Time is fleeting. This body is perishable. Every moment is precious. Therefore do not tarry or delay. Waste not time. Be up and doing. O Glorious Divinity! Claim thy birthright. Evolve an ideal life. Shine with virtue. Be radiant with Divinity. Move towards Perfection.

May God confer upon you peace, bliss and illumination. All success to thee upon the onward journey to Perfection! Hail to the great Sat-Guru Sivananda, dazzling Sun of spirituality and Light of our light!

TRIBUTE TO HOLY MASTER SWAMI SIVANANDA

The Divine Master is verily Brahma, the Creator, Vishnu, the Preserver, and verily Siva, the Dissolver. He is indeed the supreme, unmanifest, absolute Spirit in manifestation. To him, the Divine Master, the Preceptor, the Spiritual Guru, I bow down in reverence and devotion and pay my humble homage.

In the year 1887 was born the great Master, Swami Sivananda, who from his holy abode at Rishikesh had set a flow of perennial stream of life-transforming spiritual knowledge, the knowledge of the supreme spiritual ideal in life, the knowledge of the supreme purpose of this precious human birth. He has set aflow a veritable Jnana-Ganga—a Ganga of spiritual knowledge. For, out of this stream of spiritual knowledge that had flowed forth from his abode in Rishikesh through his ceaseless writings on all matters of spirituality, religion and culture, through this knowledge a great awakening has come about in all countries of the world among all peoples—an

awakening, a thrill of spiritual awareness, and aspiration. And this great soul whom the world reveres now as its foremost spiritual leader, had been for forty years unceasingly striving to bring this message of spiritual life in and through the ordinary activities and the routine day-to-day life of the world, a message of Divine Life, a life lived in a divine way as an expression of the divine principle within us, and lived upon the sublime pattern of great saints, sages and mystics of all climes and upon the high standards of moral rectitude, faith, devotion and worship.

It is this message which this servant offers to you with great joy and in a spirit of sharing.

If you find anything of worth, anything of use to you in your day-to-day life from this article of this servant then indeed our gratitude has to go to the Great Master whose message it has been and of which this servant has been but a conveyer. Let us all pray together and try to express our gratitude and devotion to him whose birthday falls on the 8th of September.

In a small South Indian village by the side of the pure glistening waters of the Tamraparni river, this great soul was born of high-caste Brahmin Hindu parents in the year 1887. An ideal childhood and a brilliant school career, followed by a medical career led this ideal young man, who was full of compassion, purity, truth and integrity to the far-off shores of Malaya in the Far East. There for twelve long years he ceaselessly strove day and night to bring relief from suffering, pain and disease to the countless people of those parts, and his heart expanded. He grew in love of all. He grew in sympathy. His heart was filled with compassion for the suffering of humanity. He made no distinction of people of different castes, races or classes. Indian, Malayan, Chinese, Japanese and to all alike he unstintingly gave of his love and sought to bring relief to them in their hours of distress and suffering.

This close contact with the wretchedness of human life, deep suffering, the magnitude of human sorrow and pain, brought about an inner spiritual awakening in this noble-minded young man and soon the Divine Will stepped into his life. From being a doctor of suffering bodies, he soon turned into a higher level of life and entered into the noble order of Sannyasa in India. Thus, there came to the world a spiritual doctor, one who made his task the relieving of the pain of the soul of man and who was intent upon showing to the afflicted the path beyond sorrow, the path beyond pain that led to immortal life, perennial peace and bliss, supreme, eternal well-being. Thus, what the medical world, the material world lost, the spiritual world gained and what the small community in Malaya lost, the whole of humanity gained.

That was a glorious day, the day Dr. Kuppuswamy entered the noble order of Sannyasa and became Swami Sivananda. From that day his life had been one totally dedicated to God. After years of intense and rigorous penance on the banks of the Ganga, subjecting himself to severe mortifications and austerities, this young doctor plunged into meditation day and night; and at the end of ten years he came out of his seclusion as an illumined Soul filled with the Light of God, the bliss of the Supreme and his heart throbbing with love and compassion for all humanity. Thus there arose in him, even as these arose 2500 years ago in the compassion-filled heart of Buddha, a desire to share his wondrous knowledge, his bliss and peace with one and all of his fellow-beings. So from out of the deep penance and meditation, from his silence and isolation, from his austerity and seclusion, Swami Sivananda stepped forth in the year 1930 and started his great spiritual mission of bringing about this essential knowledge of the spiritual ideal in life, the knowledge of how to attain

this spiritual ideal amidst the din and bustle of the normal secular day-to-day life. That is his supreme message. Not metaphysics, not philosophy, not controversies or dogmas, not creeds, rituals and ceremonies—no, but practical spiritual living, a life lived in the awareness of the all-pervading presence of the Divine—the awareness of your eternal oneness, your eternal link with the divine source of all beings. This life is not to be lived in the forests or caves, on mountain-tops or deserts, but it is to be lived here and now in the homes, in the offices, in the market places, in the midst of the teeming masses. This life is dynamic spiritual living, lived as a changed being and for a glorious higher purpose striving through the normal avocations of one's life, to attain the Supreme Goal, by changing the angle of vision, by regarding nothing to be secular, and all to be holy and by doing actions in the spirit of deep worshipfulness and dedication. That is the secret of divine life.

To one who was striving thus to bring the widest dissemination of this spiritual message, who created around himself a colony of inspired, enthusiastic, dedicated young workers and who specifically created the Divine Life Society for the purpose of spreading this spiritual message, and who has given unstintingly to the world his spiritual knowledge—to such a one our hearts go out.

Blessed indeed is the moment when we think of such great men. Blessed indeed is the hour when we honour such holy souls. The lives of great men often remind us that we too can make our lives sublime. Remember that during contemplation of these holy people, memory of their lives inspires us and fills us with a fiery desire to walk in their footsteps, to live in the patterns of their sublimely lived lives, to strive to attain the ideal which they have embodied in their own personal lives and inspiring teachings. I have the greatest happiness in wishing you all a glorious life of spiritual endeavour, moral and spiritual progress and sublime perfection.

I wish you the crowning glory of Supreme Self-realisation in this very life in the name of the Master, under which we all gather together so devotedly. The greatest honour we can pay to a sage like the Master is to try to imbibe his teachings. The greatest homage and the greatest reverence we can pay to a great soul is trying to live in the spirit of his noble teachings. The greatest form in which we can repay our debt of gratitude to such great ones is humbly and earnestly trying to walk in their footsteps. Let us determine today to pay this great homage to this great Sage through a life lived in the spirit of his teachings. God bless you all.

Glory be to Master Sivananda. Glory be to all great sages and Masters. May their blessings be upon you all. Live the Divine Life and attain Self-realisation. May the blessings of the Master be ever upon you all.

THE PATH OF DEVOTION

The coming into the company of seekers, who love the Lord, and who aspire for the attainment of Divine Consciousness, is in itself a tremendous experience. It is a process of vital renewal and a spiritually recharging and remaking process. In this process you once again revive your inner awareness of the Changeless behind these changing names and forms. You once again restore your relationship with That which is the very Life of your life, the origin and source of your being, your invisible support and the goal ultimate of your existence. In this Satsanga you once

again strive to re-establish in a vital way your inner spiritual link with the Divine. This is the purpose and the meaning of Satsanga. It is the drawing near to That which is the eternal, the immortal, the changeless, the ever-perfect, the whole behind this fragmentary and chaotic flux of momentary appearances of names and forms that are rising shadows, and re-establishing your spiritual link with the abiding Reality that is the innermost Self of your being.

Herein lies the unique value of Satsanga for it draws your consciousness away from passing unrealities into the basic Reality which is the substratum of that which is seen, that which is perceived and it is in this living contact, in this continued and unbroken connection, in this vital spiritual relationship that you have the assurance of true fulfilment in your life. Take away this inner relationship, this inner contact, and your life will soon run into a dryness. It will become arid and essenceless. There will come upon it darkness, great dejection and a sense of frustration, void and emptiness. Meaning will be taken out of the life of that individual who loses contact with the Reality, not the appearances that masquerade as Reality, but that Reality which is the very root of your being. It is the source of your very existence and, therefore, that contact is the vital factor that makes any meaning, significance, depth, a sense of fullness and a sense of real acumen in life.

Take the example of a tree. High above the ground there are fruits, flowers and leaves that are vital, alive, full of energy, dynamism and growth. What is the secret of this life there in the air? Hidden from sight, invisible and, therefore, for all practical purposes, non-existent as far as one's gross perception goes, there lies a certain source of living energy. Hidden under the depths of the earth is this source of life and sustenance which gives it power of growth. No matter how far above the ground these various parts of the tree, they have a hidden connection with that invisible source and that is the secret of their life. If you chop off a branch, lop off a little twig, separating them from the tree, immediately their leaves and flowers are dead and they dry up soon.

Similarly with your life, there is a hidden source, a hidden reservoir of all that is positive. When your life blossoms forth with the bliss that is beyond all sorrow, into peace that transcends all turmoil, and restlessness, into an illumined state of consciousness that is far above this little half knowledge, ignorance and error, you attain the source that gives you the dynamism to move towards this fulfilment of your life and it is variously called Self, Atman, etc. Call it what you will, it is something you cannot ignore. And you ignore it at the cost of your own happiness, peace, sense of fulfilment, success and, in short, of your own life.

A great saint summing up this great secret of the fact of life, said: "Remembrance of God is life and forgetfulness of God is death." The moment one separates oneself by losing contact with the Divine, stagnation begins to come into one's life. And life begins to weigh heavily and becomes a burden and is no longer a song of joy, a thing of beauty, an unfolding and outer progress. It becomes a burden filled with all the pains, sorrows and sufferings which are caused by this little 'I' consciousness, the confined 'I' consciousness cut off from its Source—the universal 'I' Consciousness.

Develop a relationship, or become aware of your relationship (it is something that does not need to be developed in you but it needs to be heeded, not to be forgotten or neglected) with the Divine. Become aware that in your true nature you are ever linked with the Divine Source of your being and progressively make it grow until God becomes the dominating stuff of your

consciousness. That is the great need. That is worship and that is the way to make this life truly whole, truly successful in attainment and to transcend the imperfections and defects of this fitful transitory earth-life.

All religion, all worship has as its objective this renewal, this restoration of the great fact of your being: “I am related a thousandfold more to the Divine than to the mundane. My relationship with the mundane is but for a fleeting moment. A little while ago I was not of this universe nor did I exist for this universe. I am here now but soon I have to pass on. A moment in time will come when my relationship with this external phenomenal set-up will cease, and once again I shall be back in that dimension from which I entered into this state of temporary contact with this external phenomenon.”

How blind man is! He never sees the Reality. Maya is making the appearance of the apparent to assume the status of Reality and thus making man forget the Reality.

This process of developing and growing into a progressive state of intense, inner, spiritual relationship, the recognition of the fact that your relationship with the Divine is a fact and is a thousandfold more real and valid than your relationship with passing material phenomenal process, is the great thing that is needed if you really wish joy, fullness, peace, plenty, beauty, harmony and all health to come into your life. All the religions faiths and creeds, and all the saints have but come into this universe with this one great objective—to recall to man once again the great need to make this relationship into a dynamic and living fact in his life. This is the central purpose of religion and it is the central message of all saints and sages—whether of the east or the west, ancient or modern. The central theme of philosophy and the scriptures is to make the individual turn away from this kaleidoscope, this circus of the many, and move towards the abiding and the changeless one. One should not lose oneself in this dense jungle of earth-life (Samsara) but should move towards the inner shrine wherein dwells blessedness. This is the meaning of religion. All the processes of religion, all the practices of Yoga, and every technique ever devised by any Master or Guru or any adept have for their ultimate objective and purpose this re-establishment and the development into all its fullness your relationship with that One Being, the one Principle, the one Reality of which alone you can really and truly say: “It is mine, I belong to That.”

About no other thing in this universe can you assert this truth: “It is mine and I belong to it”—not even with regard to this body which you think is so dear to you, so near to you and is your own self and with which you are in an absolute state of identification. Even the body will one day leave you in the lurch and depart and will say: “Oh, no, you have no authority over me. I am here under some other law, the law of Karma, and when that is over and done with, you cannot claim me as your own.” Even when you consider the body as your own, how much control have you over it? If only you take some wrong thing in your diet the bowels start purging. Can you then say: “No, you belong to me, stop, you should not purge?” It will not listen to you and you will have to run to the toilet ten times. You may have three Ph.D. Degrees, or be president of any country, but you have very little control over the body. If you obey its natural functions and treat it properly, then it will go along with you, but if you contradict some law, then you will be taught how much control you have over it. So we have to realise that it is only with one Being, Truth, that we can assert: “Yes, Thou art mine and I am Thine,” and that one Being Is.

God is your own. The Divine is your own. You belong eternally to the Divine and in the Divine you have your all-in-all. The great need, therefore, if life is to ever keep yourself closely related to that which does not perish, which does not pass away, which does not change, which can never disappoint you and which can never bring about disillusionment into your life. All association with the non-eternal is ultimately fraught with sorrow. This is the simple truth. Commonsense tells you, if you will reflect, that association with the non-eternal is ultimately fraught with sorrow and the Eternal alone can fulfil the longing of the innermost depths of your being. The Eternal alone can satisfy the spirit and you are spirit. You are not this physical body. You are not this ever-changing mind, neither the intellect nor the spurious little 'I' personality. You are Spirit, and the Eternal alone can ultimately give satisfaction to your expression. In the Eternal alone can you find true joy, true fulfilment, true rest and a true sense of becoming completely whole. That is the great Thing to which one should remain close, which one should never forget and with which one should ever keep an intense relationship that is ever growing and ever dynamic.

How can you do it? You can do it with the faculties you possess. They are your working tools. If that Divine Principle were a tangible thing in the nature of an object to you, first you would make use of the physical body to grasp it, hold it and keep it. But it is supra-physical and invisible, at least in your present state of consciousness. Now your consciousness is outgoing oriented thought, objective perception only. So it is the world that is visible to you.

What is it that has brought you to this state of such confused involvement with this universal process, the world outside with the objects here? How is it that you are enmeshed in a variety of things and experiences from which you do not seem able to free yourself? It is your sentiments and your emotional involvements which have managed to bind you, and you are attached. They have hooked you with your affections and your likes.

The individual's nature, which is made up of the emotional potential and of the man's personality, is very much in evidence here. It is very much the reason, the causative factor or the propelling force in this present involvement out of which there is much bondage, slavery and losing of oneself in the experience of things. So laying oneself open to the experience of all the impacts that evolve out of this involvement, man exposes himself to all the variety of experiences that result from this involvement, always the same in joy and sorrow, in suffering and anxiety, in fulfilment and disappointment. So you ever react, due to being exposed to the inevitable outcome of this involvement with the outer through your emotional potential, to that dimension of your being made up of the emotional content of your personality.

ESSENCE OF THEOLOGY

Homage unto the Supreme Lord, the Father of all mankind, the Almighty Ruler of countless universes and the Supreme God of Love. Prostrations and salutations unto Thee, beloved Father, by whose Will we are all gathered together this morning. May Thy presence be felt by all at this moment. For it is before Thy Supreme Majesty that we are here in humble servitude to seek to know one another more closely in the spirit and in our common love for Thee. We thank Thee for this hour of spiritual solicit amongst ourselves and we recognise that Thou hast grant in this grace of spiritual

treasure not as something deserved by us out of any merit on our part but due to Thy boundless love for us all, due to Thy spontaneous grace upon us all and due to Thy infinite imponderable compassion for us all and we humbly acknowledge Thy compassion, Thy grace and Thy love towards us all, who are far from worthy for this great grace, for this grand mercy. Thy name be glorified for all times. I thank also the Madurai Branch of the Divine Life Society for having enabled me to come before all of you who are devoted to that path of life which brings you closer to God day by day. By coming here to this holy seat of spiritual learning I feel myself satisfied. I thank also my beloved and revered brother Selvamani for having very kindly and graciously invited me to this place during this visit to Madurai and thus for giving me an opportunity to speak to you about God, to speak to you about yourself, to speak to you about your relationship with Him, who is the source, the support, the Goal Ultimate of all beings. And lastly I also thank you all who are here this morning, prompted by the Lord. I am here as a humble servant of God as well as humble disciple of the Master Sri Swami Sivananda.

Swami Sivananda was one of those rare beings, who was born in a particular religion, who was bred up according to the beliefs of that religion, but who later on rose to a spiritual stature, which spontaneously made him outgrow that religion and took him into a plane of experience and consciousness, where he no more belonged to any religion and he felt that he belonged to a universal religion, which is concealed in the heart of all religions and he felt at home equally with Christianity or Islam as he felt at home with Hinduism. He felt at home equally with every faith and every religion. He used to say that there is but one religion and it is the religion that seeks to bring man back to God. It is a religion of the journey of the finite to the Infinite, journey of the individual to the Universal, journey of the human towards the Divine, man towards God. At the heart of all religions is this quest and this movement of the Spirit within the human being seeking to reach and grasp to ascend and to enter into an experience of the Reality, which is beginningless and endless, the Reality which is eternal, the Reality which ever was, is and never shall cease to be, the hidden Truth behind changeful and temporary appearances, the names and forms that go to make up this external physical gross universe of ours. There is something behind these vanishing names and forms. Whereas these are changeful with changeless, whereas these are non-eternal, That is eternal and that permanent abiding Reality which we call God, he said, that is the ultimate quest, that is the ultimate goal, which all religions seek to enable man to attain, seek to help man to reach, and it is sure that he found the essence of religion. All the other factors which go to make up the formal structure of organised religions, he said, do not comprise the life of that religious system. These comprise the body. But the life of religion is this unerring movement of the spirit in the human individual towards that eternal imponderable Being and that eternal, imponderable, subtle, supra-cosmic essence. It has no name.

It is nameless. We can call it by any name. Its names are legions and equally it is nameless. It is that which is and declaring itself 'I am that I am'. Knowing as such I am That which for ever exists in the eternal presence, where past, present and future are fused into a timeless eternity. That I am. That is the nearest definition one could give to the Supreme Reality as It declared Itself to Moses 'I am that I am'—'Yahve'. And the great ones who have cut through the formalism of the religion and tried to go to the heart of the experience, this mystic experience, they all ultimately found themselves upon a common ground where they partook of an experience of this eternal affirmation 'I am, I am' and long ago, thousands of years, in a time beyond recorded history, the mystics and seers of this land when they attained into that experience, they declared, though called

by various names, that Reality is only one. That hidden Truth, that hidden eternal Reality, is only one. It is not many. It is non-dual. Because it is infinite and it is whatever is. *Ekameva Advitiyam Brahma*. That Supreme Reality is Brahman,—the word is not to be mistaken with the first of the Hindu Cosmic Trinity, the creating functional aspect of Divinity, the creating principle. In the Vedantic sense Brahman or Brahma is that which was when nothing existed. That which was even before manifestation of names and forms, even before creation, the uncreated causeless primal cause of all things is *Ekameva Advitiyam Brahma*. It is one and non-dual and therefore whatever name you may call it by, it does not make it more than one. You may call it Almighty Father in Heaven, you may call it Jehova, you may call it Allah, you may call it Ahura Mazda, you may call it Isvara, you may call it Nirvana, you may call it the Supreme Tao, it does not make any difference. It cannot make it more than one. The one ultimate non-dual God of all religions is beyond all religions. It is He alone who is the Eternal, the Infinite, the All-full, All Perfect and until and unless the human spirit enters into an experience of that Being it will ever feel itself dissatisfied, discontented. A sense of insufficiency will always break the human head, the human spirit, until the All-full is attained; because this here what we know, this universe, is fragmentary. It is finite. It is conditioned in space and time and all things here are changeful and will soon pass away. They have a beginning in time and an end in time and therefore they are evanescent and transitory and they are ever unstable. For even in this little temporary time continuum when they exist, they are ever changing, always changing. They are unreliable and with these ever-changeful, evanescent, imperfect, finite objects the human spirit cannot be satisfied. It thirsts for something which is full and complete, all-perfect, everlasting, enduring and eternal. That thirst cannot be fulfilled by anything in the created phenomenal universe. That hunger cannot be satisfied by anything except the All-full, the All-perfect, the Eternal and that we call God.

God is the quest of man. God is the goal of all religions and the holy Master Swami Sivananda sees that instead of trying to grasp this essential fundamental universal principle that is hidden in the heart of all religions, he found that human society had entered into a state, where they had involved themselves in the outer structure of organised religions and have begun to emphasise their differences rather than entering into a consciousness of the essential unity, which would at once make a man into a harmonious, homogeneous whole and make every being feel kinship with everyone else in this universe, a fellowship in the Spirit, a oneness in God, a kinship in this quest. Instead of that, religion had become a factor to create antagonism, hostility, friction, discord and he was very sore that man is fighting over things which should be a unifying factor. So he made his mission in life trying to bring to all beings in this much disturbed, restless twentieth century the essential unity, the real religion of mankind. Religion is one, God is one and the true language of religion is the religion of love. It is the religion of the heart. The more you begin to split, hair-split, and start trying to find out in how many ways we differ from others, the more the religion takes you farther and farther away from one another. But the more you begin to feel this beautiful unity that exists at the heart and goal of religion, the more you will begin to come closer to one another. Therefore, he said, there is one God, the Father of man. There is one religion to love man and serve man and dedicate one's life to the worship and the quest after divine. He said, to worship God and to seek to find Him, to seek to attain Him, to love all beings and to seek to serve them. These two sum up the very heart of religions, the eternal message of all religions.

O man! Worship the Supreme and make your life a conscious movement, a conscious attempt to attain God-experience and O man! love all beings and make your life a ceaseless field of

service, loving service and brotherhood. His definition for service was love in expression. Love in expression is service and his definition of religion was the worship of the Supreme, a conscious attempt to attain this experience.

We are all in Theological Seminary here. Theology is knowledge of God. 'Theos' is God and knowledge of God is theology. We can get knowledge of God by reading the scriptures. We can get knowledge of God by sitting in discipleship before holy people, putting questions to them and seeking answers, light from them and thus getting to know God through the mouths of those who are competent to expound this nature to speak about Him. This knowledge of God is called the lesser knowledge. For it is knowledge through mind and intellect through understanding. This can give us the ability to explain to others. But this cannot give us a living experience of the God-principle. Therefore, it is called the lesser knowledge or *Paroksha-Jnana*, as they call it. But there is another knowledge of God. That is a deep personal experience of the God-principle within the depths of our own spiritual nature. Here you require no argument, you don't have to be told, you don't have to be convinced, but here at once you are caught up and gripped and lifted into a state of consciousness where God becomes to you a palpable reality, where the knowledge of the universe vanishes. You have no more consciousness of anything here, but there is a living luminous vibrant, palpable experience of God within the depths of your own consciousness. Such experience, once for all, takes away doubts about the non-existence of God, whether this way or that way or another way the knowledge of God becomes to you as absolutely certain and indisputable as a fruit placed in the palm of your hand and this knowledge is not gained through the media of any sense either of the physical senses or the mind or the intellect. It is at once direct, immediate and spiritual. This is called *Aparoksha-Anubhuti*. Once you attain it, you are no longer the same being. You are totally transformed. Your consciousness becomes illumined with a luminous quality, where everything becomes clear as day light. God becomes to you a living fact and part of your life, part of your normal consciousness. It is then only you can say that you live, move and have your being in God. It is this knowledge that is the essential thing to attain. It is called *Aparoksha-Anubhuti*. It is not so much a knowledge. It is a living experience. It is like a man who up-till a certain day was told by someone about what sugar is and who was taught physically or chemically the structure of sugar and the appearance of sugar and how it is produced. It comes from wheat, it comes from cane-juice and it is manufactured in this way; it is a white amorphous powder; it is also sold in cubes; it is also sold as sugar-candy and hundred other things he knows completely. He has a knowledge about sugar. He can give lectures, he can write a thesis. But it makes a world of difference until he actually has been made to taste sugar by taking into his mouth, putting it on his tongue and then entering into experience of the sweetness, this is sugar. This is the difference between *Aparoksha-Jnana* and *Paroksha-Jnana*.

Enter into God-experience, so that it becomes a living experience to you. That is essential and I would humbly submit that all the students of Theology in this very holy and sacred seat of learning while they equip themselves with the book knowledge about God, this world, man, relation of man to God, relation of the world to God, relation of man to world, while they acquire all the knowledge through books, through lectures, through study, through reflection, at the same time, I urge you all with all the earnestness of my heart, simultaneously within your heart, within your interior, let there be the ceaseless quest for living experience of God. I would put before you, my spiritual brethren, that the theology that you here learn should be known to be not an end in itself, not even a means for some secular end here as equipped in yourself for the clergy or becoming a

writer of theology or propagating the tenets of the church or even preaching theology to the masses, not even a means to this end only but you must know your theology, you must make your theology a means for the entry into the living experience of God, who is the central theme and subject of theology. I would eagerly look forward to that day when each of you would be endowed with that grand God-experience, would shine with that inner radiance of spiritual communion with the Supreme Being, by which alone life becomes fulfilled, by which alone man justifies his existence on earth, by which alone you can raise to a state of spiritual consciousness, when you can claim 'I am the Father's child'. 'He only is my Father'. 'I do not belong here. I belong to Him'. In that way as the great mystics like St. John of the Cross, St. Theresa of the Avila and St. Francis of Assisi, as all these great illuminers of the mystical Christian Church as they entered into this experience, beloved brethren, make your theology a stepping-stone, a take-off ground for that supreme experience. Be not satisfied with anything. Have always That as your goal and while you are fulfilling your humble role as a member of the church and propagating the message of the Master side by side live a rich, dynamic, progressive, interior life and immense spiritual life. Day by day, may we go nearer and nearer to the Supreme Experience of God-consciousness, Supreme experience after living what they call Nirvikalpa Samadhi. This was our holy Master Sivananda's central mission in life. He wanted once again not only to bring this God-experience and take our attention away from the apparent external diversity. In addition to this invaluable service he did to the twentieth century mankind that was, he worked to restore to the religious life of twentieth century man, the spiritual quality, the spiritual quest. Otherwise all religion, the practice of all religion, was only formal. The Hindu was only a formal Hindu. He fulfilled the external form of Hindu life. But inwardly he was totally bankrupt of any spiritual aspiration or spiritual urge to know God. No one wanted anything to do with God. They wanted to fulfil, have the satisfaction I am not an atheist, have the satisfaction I am not irreligious, so that they may not be feeling guilty and so just in order to satisfy themselves they fulfilled only the external form of religion. The Muslim of today is only an external namesake Muslim. The Christian of today is only an external namesake Christian. In the same way the Parsee.

Almost 98% or 99% of man goes only to lip allegiance to his particular faith and religion. They only fulfil the external forms. But the real things for which religion exists to give man, that is, the spiritual quest after God, after God-experience, that has been somewhere lost and so religion has become devoid of the spiritual content. It is dry and Gurudev came and worked all his life with all his might to restore to all religions this spiritual void. So religion may mean to man a conscious effort to know God; to enter into an experience of God here and now. So religion must become a dynamic movement towards God, intensely vibrant along spiritual process, not merely an external process. So he wanted religion to enter deep into you and become active within the innermost heart of your being. Therefore he gave this great message—goal of life is God-realisation. O Man! Wake up. Life is a wonderful chance and opportunity given to you to be made use of and to attain God. Before this body falls off, before this physical body drops away, some how or other, attain God-experience and become blessed. Make life successful. That is the only thing which crowns your life with true success, the living experience of God. Therefore do this through selfless service of mankind, seeing God in all beings. Ceaselessly remember God in the midst of all your daily activities and whatever you do link it up with God. Every activity, no matter how petty or how ordinary insignificant it may seem, no, it is not insignificant. Link it up with God. Do not think it something which links you up only within this passing universal show, this drama, world drama, that links every bit of activity with God. Tell Him, "O Lord, whatever I do, verbal, mental, physical,

I offer it up all at Thy feet. Thus I seek to worship Thee. With every ordinary act of mine in the home, in the professional field, in the market place, in society, every little act I offer it unto Thee. For the love of Thee I do this act and I offer it up unto Thee.” In this way, he said, transform your secular activity into activities that directly connect you with God. See God in all beings. He is not only a transcendental supra-cosmic Reality, He is an immanent Reality. He is present everywhere here and now. Therefore see Him everywhere and all your activities offer up unto Him with deep devotion and dedicate your entire life unto God and thus let your life itself become a perpetual process of moving towards God. To act is to adore. To live is to pray. To work is verily to worship the ever-present Divinity. Thus he sought to bring to us this message of spiritualising your entire life in every minute detail of it. So from morning till night you do nothing but you are a worshipper of God. The worship may not be inside a Church or a Mosque or Sinagogue or a Temple or Gurudvara, but wherever you are, you are verily in a church; you are verily before God’s presence. Therefore all places are sacred. They are sanctified by His presence and therefore make your life a beauty-offering unto the Divine.

Just as this beautiful garland with so many flowers was brought and put upon my neck, make your entire life a garland of the cosmic Reality, the Supreme Being, the God, who is here and now and always and let every action of yours be cause unto these various flowers that go to make up this beautiful garland, that every little action of yours be a blossom that goes to make up this garland of life which is offered to God. Therefore spiritualise your activities. Transform them into acts of Yoga. Feel His invisible presence at all times. See Him immanent in all this creation, indwelling all these names and forms and thus make your life itself a grand process, an integrated process, a concerted movement, towards God-experience. Love mankind. Worship God. Think of Him ceaselessly. Remember Him in the midst of all activity and morning and evening set apart some time and enter into your Self. Forget the external. Forget the body. Forget time and enter into your Self and be stayed in the Divine, calm, peaceful with true devotion and love. Contemplate. Meditate upon God and thus refresh yourself, recharge yourself spiritually and come and carry on your activities and again in the night once again enter into God. Thus attain Self-realisation. Serve all. Love the Supreme and worship Him daily and do this in an intensified interior form by meditating upon Him regularly every day and ever seek through all the moments of your life to enter into a spiritual realisation of the Supreme Being. Serve. Love. Meditate. Realise. To bring this great message of restoring to your religious life the indispensable and most essential spiritual quality Master lived all his life and worked. He gave a universal spiritual message. He did not preach so much any particular ‘ism’, particular religious system, but he rather spread broadcast his message of the spiritual life, the spiritual quest, without which religion becomes devoid of true life, it becomes dry, it becomes essenceless.

The essence of religion, therefore, beloved brethren, is the quest after God and the experience of God. May your theology indeed become a living and vibrant process of attaining living personal experience of God, the true inner spiritual experience of God. Knowledge of God in the lesser sense is the basis for it. Build upon this basis of the Knowledge of God, the superstructure of God-experience and thus become blessed. May your life be crowned with this glorious experience. In this very body, before you quit this frame, may you be established in God-consciousness. In that same consciousness in which our Lord Jesus the Christ was, where He knew Himself as the Son of the Father, which was not merely a statement, but He knew in the deepest depths of His being that He was the Son of the Father. May you all have this consciousness

‘I am the Son of the Supreme Father’ and thus make yourself supremely blessed. Become a light unto yourself and become a light unto all beings. That is my humble prayer at the feet of the God and that is my earnest urge to one and all of you. Live to seek and to attain God. Live to love and serve man and fuse both of these loves of man as well as God into a great all-consuming love which makes you forget your self and become a centre to bring joy, bring happiness, bring succour, bring consolation, bring help and service unto one and all. May your life be ideal. May your life enter into a state of perfection in God-experience. God’s Grace ever be upon you all. May the blessings of all saints of the East as well as the West, ancient as well as modern, past as well as the present be upon you and the earnest prayers of this humble servant will always be with you. May your life be radiant with spiritual virtues, may your life be vibrant with spiritual love for God, in the quest for God and may your life become luminous and radiant with God-experience.

GOAL OF HUMAN LIFE

Three things are very difficult to obtain in this mortal world,—birth as a human being, desire for liberation and association with the wise ones,—and they are obtained only through the blessings and grace of God. Of the three, human birth is a very precious gift that has been put first and foremost. Because, it is that state of existence where alone the Jiva becomes endowed with intellect and the extremely rare faculty of discrimination,—Nitya-Anitya-Vastu-Viveka. Therefore, human birth is put down as a very rare gift of God and, having got a human birth, if you do not have a yearning to attain that state which will bestow upon you eternal bliss and immortality, it means that you do not utilise this human birth to any purpose at all. Then your existence becomes patterned as of the animals. Eating, drinking, sleeping and sensual pleasure are common things to man and animals, but that which distinguishes man is his idealism, his earnest desire for attaining something higher than mere material existence. We know that there is a higher thing to be attained and we have also a keen desire to become free from the imperfections of this physical life. And then comes association with the wise. Even after getting these two,—human birth and desire for liberation,—our life becomes clouded in an illusion, clouded in unfruitful endeavour, because we do not know what is right endeavour. And that right endeavour is given to that blessed man who has this third gift, which obviates the obstacles on the path. If we surrender ourselves unto God, He shows us the path, He is able to give us inspiration, enthusiasm, courage, when temptations beset us on the path. We have been endowed with all these three blessings. And the fourth also, i.e., the mind should say, “All right.” There is no devil except the mind of man. It is the representative of Maya, Mara or Ahrimn—something that stands as an obstacle on the path of God-realisation. So, the mind should be propitious. You may have Devakripa (grace of God), Gurukripa (grace of Guru) and Sastrakripa (grace of scriptures), but the mind also should cooperate.

We are here to progress day by day towards the highest ideal and, therefore, it is very blessed a day and very auspicious an occasion, when we start regular classes upon the theory and practice of meditation and all aspects of Sadhana and on how to spiritualise all our activities. We do meditation in the morning and in the evening, but during our activities and dealings with others during the day we show petty-mindedness and selfishness. That obstructs our Sadhana and nullifies the benefit of our meditation. Penelope, the wife of Ulyses, had during her husband’s absence many suitors, but she did not want to become the wife of any other man. She was a faithful and loyal lady.

She, therefore, told her suitors that she was preparing a fabric and until the fabric was finished, she would not accept anyone. They agreed. Everyday she went on knitting and, at night she used to undo the work till Ulyses appeared. This sort of ‘undoing’ should not happen in our life. Whatever we might have practised in the morning and evening,—we should not add to it any undivine element. If, during our actions, we forget our essence, if we are harsh, if we criticise, if we are dishonest,—all these things will undo whatever Sadhana we have done in the hours of meditation, and, therefore, our external physical life and activity, our speech and actions, have closely to keep up and further the spirit of our meditation, worship and Sadhana. Therefore, in order to keep up Sadhana, it is very essential that we not only confine our Sadhana to the quiet hours, but divinise all our actions. All our deeds should express our real, inner nature. They should all become spiritualised. Therefore, this divinisation of all activities is given in Karma Yoga. Everyone must know this, whether he is a Dhyana Yogi, Bhakta or a Vedantin. Karma Yoga is very difficult. You can have a very ideal Bhava (pure feeling) when you are alone, but when you come into clash with hard realities, then, in the world of diversities, to keep up harmony, to express only divinity, selflessness, is a hard job. But it is worth the while. Because it will make other Yogas fruitful. In the case of the man who lives an ideal life, full of self-sacrifice, sweetness,—one Mala of Japa that he does is equal to ten thousand Malas done by other people, because his nature is ready and purified by divine activity. But if the nature is full of Kama (desire), of Krodha (anger), etc., even if you do meditation, the field is not prepared, it is not fruitful. One wonders, “Why am I not progressing?” Because you are contradicting your Sadhana in your active life. An aspirant must be wise. He should know where the pot is leaking. Otherwise, when the pot is leaking you go on filling it. It is useless. So you must know where the pot is leaking. For this, you have to know the art of Karma Yoga.

You will have a practical knowledge of these things in the classes of the Ashram. Once there was a king who had three skulls, and he asked his Court-Pandit as to which of them was the best. The Pandit passed a rod through one ear of the first skull, and the rod came out of the other ear. In the second skull, the rod, when inserted through one ear, came out of the mouth. In the third skull the rod which was inserted through one ear went right into the chest. The Court-Pandit said that the third skull was the best. The first skull represents that type of people who hear wisdom through one ear and, without assimilating it, leave it through the other ear and forget about it. The second skull represents those people who, after receiving wisdom, are anxious to teach it to others, but do not practise the wisdom themselves. This is the second class of people. The third skull represents the best type of aspirants, who after hearing wisdom, keep it in their hearts and try to practise it in their everyday-life. So, I would request you all to be like the third skull, cherishing and practising whatever you may learn from your association With the wise, the saints and the sages, May God bless you all!

THE LAW OF PROSPERITY

The theory of Ayurveda is that the root of disease is not in the body, but in the mind, and this disease which is the cause for the outward physical disease they named by a very significant term. The disease of the body they called Vyadhi and the mental cause, the root of these physical diseases, they called Adhi. At first disease comes, and from that springs a second disease and then the actual

effect is abuse of one's own vital energy, the vital life-force. Abuse of the vital life-force brings about certain conditions in the body which cause disease.

The ancient seers of India interpreted in a very unique way, and not in the Western way, these body-conditions. They had the theory of Tridoshas (ailment caused by disbalance of forces) in the Ayurvedic science of diagnosis of the diseased conditions which manifest as a result of Mala (dirt) which is in your mind. Your vitality is based upon the three 'humours' of the body. They said that such upsetting of the purity of the mind and the fineness of the vital energy brought about a state of disbalance of the three humours which constitute the normal condition of each human being. The theory of these three humours was not entirely unknown to the medieval type of medicine which they had in Europe and England. In Europe, I do believe, they had something similar to Ayurveda and perhaps it had come through Arabia and Greece.

The three humours are the phlegmatic humour, the bilious humour and the windy humour. These humours are found in a certain proportion in a normal healthy body and when there is an upset in the vital force due to abuse and misuse, due to overindulgence, and there is an upset in the mind due to wrong thoughts and emotions, there comes about a disbalance in the three humours and then disease conditions begin to manifest themselves. If due to this imbalance there is a predominance of the phlegm condition, for instance, then all sorts of phlegmatic diseases,—bronchitis, lung trouble, coughs, colds, toxins, etc.—come about. If this disbalance brings about an excess of wind, then rheumatic diseases such as aches, joint-pains, rheumatism, lumbago, flatulence, etc., manifest themselves in the body.

It is the imbalance of these three humours which is sought to be set right by the actual medicine which the Ayurvedic physician gives; but he says, "I can, with this medicine, but try to bring about once again a rebalancing of your three humours; but you have to work from the inside." So, the first necessity is, of course, complete self-restraint, and secondly come the emotions. Get rid of all bad emotions. How? Here the Ayurvedic seers were of real help. They did not know 'psychology' as the modern psychologists know it, yet they knew what ought to be known. They said, "If you want to calm your mind and free it of all emotions, arouse in it a spiritual wave." And, to this end, a physician always prescribed the uttering of such-and-such a Mantra, or a particular mode of worship to some particular aspect of the Deity, to be offered in a certain way, in a certain shrine.

Worship, you know, is such a powerful instrument in your life, and when you once lift up your mind to God, when once you attune your spirit to the higher Being, that Source from which you have cut yourself off,—which is the root cause of this great disease called worldly existence, this human birth,—the mind is completely overhauled. When once again, in worshipfulness, you attune yourself to the Divine and start repeating the Mantras, chanting the Divine Name, then the whole of the mental stuff is put into a state of purity and fineness and that gross condition which had given rise to these disease symptoms in the physical body is corrected. So the physician on the outside, from out to within, and the patient from within, cooperate, and once again the body is restored to its healthy condition. This, in short, is the theory and system of health according to the Ayurveda, the fifth Veda, the science of life.

Based upon the first premises that man is Divine, that health is his natural condition, and that purity and fineness are the prerequisites of health, Ayurveda has a very interesting declaration. In the Hindu view of life the individual is supposed to live and work for the four great attainments,—Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha. Dharma is fulfilment of the ethical norm. Artha is the earning of wealth in an honest way in order to live decently. Kama is the fulfilment of all legitimate desires that are necessary for a dignified and honest living, one's well-being, and also for the well-being of all others with whom one lives; the fulfilment of all legitimate desires that are not opposed to the welfare of others. Moksha is, ultimately, liberation in the Divine, Eternal Freedom in God.

Ayurveda says that for these four aims of life, health is the supreme and excellent root or basis. Without health, none of these four can be achieved and, therefore, a proper care of the body is one of the most important duties to be attended to, and this can be done only by conservation of the vital energy through moderation, restraint and the proper refined modification of mind through right thinking, right feeling and worshipfulness; the proper care of the physical condition through pure food taken moderately at the proper time and in the proper way,—thoroughly chewed, taken when you are calm, and with a little rest taken after it. Try to be moderate, and always take food in a spirit of worshipfulness, for food is the giver of life as well as the taker of life. It is all-important.

If, thus, through the proper care of your health, the proper conservation of vital energy, and the right attitude of mind, you are in a state of good health, how shall you try to attain, also, a prosperous condition of living? How can you have a fair level of prosperity—which does not mean the fulfilling of cupidity, of avarice, of greed, or of inordinate desire, but, within legitimate bounds, to have a comfortable life permitting calmness of mind, freedom from worry, freedom from agitation and restlessness, so that you can give your mind and thought to the service of your fellow-men and to the worship of God, in order to be of use on the outside and to be of the utmost use to yourself. What are the laws of prosperity? I am not telling you the secrets of becoming prosperous, but I am telling you the law of prosperity.

The secret of prosperity, of course, would be to live within your income, to spend less than what you earn and *not to go into debts*. That would be the greatest wisdom in a nutshell! How, then, to be prosperous? If you earn 150 dollars, spend 149 dollars, then you always have 1 dollar left. If you would have me make a comment on it, I would say, “Never get into the instalment system.” If you have cash, then, all right, purchase things. If you have not the cash, then don't purchase them,—go without them.

Yet, there are certain laws of prosperity which also stem from eternal spiritual truths. If you begin to feel and think lack (want), you experience lack. If you assert your abundance, then, as the shadow follows the person, abundance follows you. If you begin to desire, immediately you admit poverty. Desire is poverty. Desire is a feeling of inadequacy, and when you begin to desire, you are a beggar already. The secret of becoming prosperous is to live in conformity with this law of prosperity and also to live with commonsense.

Once one unconsciously begins to affirm poverty by desiring, then poverty only becomes the law. To get free of desire is the secret of setting free the law of prosperity into motion. Why? All plenitude is within you. There is nothing that you lack, for you are of God, who is All. He is

All-in-All. He is the source of all. In Him there is everything, and if you know that you are in Him, you have everything, you are in everything. And it is just to affirm this knowledge, to affirm this fact of your ever being in Him, who is All-in-All, that is the Master-Key for making prosperity follow you, as a dog follows its' master.

After all, you are the master of the whole creation, for you are heir to the one who is the Master of everything. You lack nothing. All plenitude, all abundance is your Self. Your True Nature is plenitude. The more you begin to assert that, to affirm that with perfect confidence, not as a thing *to be*, but as a fact that *is*, prosperity is yours.

Want and a feeling of poverty is an attitude of the mind. If you have so much and you feel "I have everything", then you don't want anything else, but if you have so much and yet you feel "I don't have it," then you haven't anything else. A millionaire who is always wanting to make ten million or twenty million, is really a beggar. A cab-driver or a porter who is getting, say, 3 or 4 dollars a day, and says, "That is quite enough for me. My pocket is always full," is greater than the millionaire. He is richer, more wealthy than the millionaire, for he has not the nagging feeling of lack and want and the beggarly attitude of desire.

So, the inner secret of the true law of prosperity is to affirm your plenitude, to affirm your abundance and live in that ever-present condition of lacking nothing, of having God, and, therefore, of having everything. This is the only way. This is the only secret, and the moment you start affirming it, you will find conditions changing, for, your conditions are the product of your own thoughts. The ultimate factor, the vital factor that goes to make up all your life is your thoughts. They are as much tangible and substantial as bricks that pile up and become a big mansion. They can build your whole life. They can create any condition in your life. They can even create the condition of your own health if the proper thought is thought. Just as a human being catches hold of something and mounts it, even so proper thought has the power to build up cell by cell; broken cells can be built up. Anything that has been destroyed in you can be built up by the proper thought and, in the same way, the wrong type of thought can destroy whatever is whole and make it diseased.

The power of thought is something that stems right from you, from the very soul, because it is nearest to You, and the soul-force is beneath and behind all thought-force, and the affirmation of your true condition overcomes all conditions that are foreign to you, that are not natural to you.

To this end, contentment is the true secret of affirming your abundance. Whatever comes, feel full. If it is 1 dollar, feel as though it were a million, and if it is 10 dollars, feel as though it were ten millions. Once you have contentment, there is nothing that can make you unhappy, and if you don't have contentment, nothing can make you happy.

The secret of prosperity is to affirm your true, abundant nature, the true fact of your plenitude. Be content and put a notice on your mind: "No admission for any desire." "Desire—Get Out!" The moment desire arises, just reject it, and then you will begin to experience that the desired object comes, by itself, to you. The moment you turn away from it, it follows you by itself. This is an eternal law. This is a law which has been proved in the life of all those who have discovered it and applied it to themselves; the more you desire, the more does your want increase. Let this theorem be in your mind; let it be in your heart.

There is something a little higher even than this. The Hindu believes that whatever there is in this universe is all the Divine Essence. It is all God. You may feel that I am repeating the same thing again and again in all my tales, but Truth cannot be changed, I cannot say that everything is God today and, for a change, say that all that is *not* God tomorrow. Truth is always eternal. It bears even a million repetitions, for it is never properly taken to heart, never properly lived. Everything is God. Every force is God. Every phenomenon is God. Every being is God. Every name and form is God. Everything you experience is only the Divine Essence in various manifestations, and prosperity is one of the direct manifestations of the Divine Power as the sustaining force in this universe. The Divine Power in this Cosmic Process expresses itself first as a projecting power, a power that brings into being, and then it acts here upon the threefold time continuum of past, present and future, as the sustaining power. That which has been brought forth, it sustains, it nourishes, it protects, it takes care of. You see it is God, and the cycle closes at the other end. The same power once again dissolves all that has been brought forth, where it once again reabsorbs projected phenomena into the original state of non-manifestation.

It is the central portion which is the most important to us,—that aspect of the Divine Force which protects, sustains, nourishes, takes care of,—and this it does in various ways. It is present as food seasons, clouds and rain. It is present as the abundance that comes out of the earth, the fertility of the earth, and it is also present within us as the gastric fire that digests food and nourishes us. It is also present as all prosperous conditions.

Ultimately, we have to know that the whole of human life is being directed by God. Here is the inner guardian of the whole universe. He is the inner director of the entire cosmos, and He is the one who is guiding your life. In every moment of your life He is bringing about conditions, so if you fulfil these conditions of honouring the law of prosperity, of honouring the manifestation of God in these various forms.

THE IMPORTANCE OF YOGA

For a Sadhaka mind is the arch-enemy in the unfoldment of spiritual consciousness. It is the mind that acts as the greatest barrier in its various aspects, as craving, Vikshepa or unsteadiness, etc. If the mind is absolutely steady, the light of the Atman gets itself fully reflected. Ahamkara (ego), the self-arrogating little personality never allows us to realise our essential nature. The process of remembrance (Smriti) is also a great obstacle. Avichara-Buddhi alone with the above various aspects of the mind taken together, is a great slayer of the Atman. The Atmic consciousness is not allowed to manifest itself. There is an irresistible tendency for thought to become translated into action and every action becomes a habit in the nature of man, and when habits are constantly indulged in they become part and parcel of his nature.

All behaviour of man is based upon character. Every action becomes fruitful seed for reaction later on. As he lives, he builds up the whole superstructure of action which becomes his destiny. So, we find how the thought of man governs his destiny and also the importance of selected thought, right thinking and the avoidance of wrong thinking. In the science of Yoga, the ultimate technique is aimed at the stoppage of all functions that are the root activities of the mind. But

already we are in the grip of its wide ramifications in the form of likes, dislikes, imaginations, fancies and thoughts. Therefore, before we proceed to the root, we have to destroy these ramifications. Suppose you want to give battle to a lion. First of all you have to travel in the jungle and ultimately come to its den. Chitta-vritti is the den of the lion of the mind and you have first to cut all its manifestations in the form of jealousy, hatred, etc., and the whole host of wrong actions, which are caused by wrong thoughts, have to be corrected. It is a process of narrowing down the range of our attack until we come to the target.

So in order to cut the mental functions in its extrovert far-flung manifestations, sage Patanjali took up the exposition of Yoga and did it in a very scientific and methodical way. Apart from man's nature as a rational being with a gross lower self pulling him downwards, there is his essential spiritual nature, and in between we have the Buddhiyukta Manushya, one who is capable of thinking being endowed with a mind. So in the centre is the being endowed with thinking capacity as distinguished from the world of subhuman species which cannot think.

Apart from the result of the study of man in his essential nature, sage Patanjali made a study of man as he is actually composed and he arrived at the above conclusion. He made the study of the universal man, not a Hindu or a Mohammedan, but the man constituted as he is all over when he is created upon earth and will continue to be till the last day of his existence. He found out that first and foremost, he is of the nature of pure Existence essentially. Man is the Spirit essentially. He is a spiritual entity, and this is evident to everyone who thinks. The ultimate principle in man is his Being. No one can imagine his own non-being for if you have to imagine your own non-being, there must be an imaginer to imagine that, and therefore, the imaginer is the ultimate Being. The ultimate undying principle of man is Being. He *IS*. I exist. I am pure Existence, pure Being, Kevala Sat, and this essential portion of man is the fundamental part of his personality. Sage Patanjali then found that this fundamental fact is somewhere inside, whereas the first thing that appears to man when he sees another man is his physical being.

Our experience of human being is only a certain shape, appearance and features. So sage Patanjali said, there is the physical, gross sheath of man. That is one aspect of man and within this there is the thinking man. There is the mental aspect of being, the mental sheath. Ideation occurs, thoughts come, and the being begins to think and out of the thought the body is made to act in order to give expression to the thought. The entire life of man is an expression of his thoughts, and these expressions are in the form of various actions, and so there is the thinking man. He said that in between these there is a link. Between the thinking man and the acting man there is the power to act. There is a peculiar invisible, internal electricity, as it were, which makes a man act. This power which animates the human being, without which all the senses will be absolutely incapable of any activity, is Prana Sakti. The eye sees through the power of Prana. The ear hears through the power of Prana. The tongue speaks through the power of Prana.

At the time of death when the Prana is withdrawn, the process of departure commences. Death means the flying away of the Prana from the body. So actually we are all moving and talking corpses only. When the Prana goes away, we will become absolutely immobile, because the Prana is moving the body, is acting, eating, enjoying, etc. All this is due to Prana Sakti. This is the third aspect of man and behind it as the mover of all is the pure Self, 'I am.' But a peculiar confusion has occurred. You have got yourself identified with the mind, and you have thought yourself to be part

and parcel of the mind, though in rare moments unconsciously you assert your unattached, witness-nature. When you say, 'My mind is restless,' you unconsciously admit that you are one and the mind is something which you possess. So you are different from the mind when you make such statements as 'My mind is restless,' 'I cannot control my mind,' etc. These are the spontaneous expressions of your real nature. So physical body sheath, vital Pranic sheath and mental sheath,—these three aspects of the being are temporary, passing, superficial and the non-essential aspects of the being, and the essential aspect is Being itself. You are yourself the pure Existence unborn, eternal and ancient—*Ajo Nityah Sasvatoyam Puranah*. Long before the mind manifested itself you were. The study of man as he is in reality, as a centre of pure Being covered up by mind-sheath, Pranic sheath and the grossest physical body sheath is the process called the practice of Yoga. Hence Yoga is the only way to realise one's real nature.

PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECT OF SVADHYAYA

The scriptures contain the revelations of sages who have communed with God, from whom they have derived a knowledge higher than the knowledge of physical things. This knowledge they have given in the form of scriptures. All the experiences and revelations and deep inner knowledge derived through meditation and superconscious state have been put down in the various scriptures—the Upanishads, etc. They contain the recorded experiences of the ancient sages who have established themselves in a higher spiritual realm through their determined effort, having tapped the Source Eternal of all knowledge. They are the books which reveal the knowledge of eternal verities. They are the texts whose declarations hold good for all times. They cannot be changed. They give us the wonderful knowledge of the ways of living in a divine way, so that we can transcend life in matter. They give us the secret of Sadachara (spiritual living). All these can never be found in any other books. How to awaken the divinity within us and how to progress higher towards spiritual development cannot be learnt from books of law, medicine, or books on business, etc. To work out the eternal destiny of your soul, you have to go to books other than the college texts and other than the books that fill the ordinary library. You have to go to the spiritual books and the lives of saints, which have within themselves the gems of the truths of life. And therefore, Svadhyaya (sacred study) is a golden key that opens for us the doors of the treasury of eternal wisdom, the treasury of spiritual knowledge which guides the aspirant in the path of perfection and immortal life.

Let us see what is the psychological value of Svadhyaya—scriptural study,—and also its practical value, what man can gain from Svadhyaya in his usual life. It has a very deep and intelligent reason. We know that every experience our mind comes to have at once takes in the impression of it and leaves a mark on itself. These marks become the seeds, and you know how the nature of the mind changes according to Vasanas (impressions) that it goes on acquiring. All these things were taken into account, and the sages said that if man is to progress at all and overcome unfavourable Vasanas, some methods should be devised to counter these Vasanas that are coming into his mind in his daily life. For countering these Vrittis (psychic impressions) they have given us Svadhyaya.

Svadhya works in somewhat this way. Supposing you drive a nail in a log of wood and you subsequently find that it is not wanted there. Instead of tugging it, you hold another nail and go on driving the second nail. The previous nail will come out and in the same process the second will have gone into the plank. Something like that,—instead of trying everyday to pull out and throw out every single Vasana which involves a lot of nervous energy, you do Svadhya. Everyday in the morning and in the evening you try to contact the bygone personalities of different ages, sublime spiritual personalities, whose words have got a power, for they spring out of actual experience. They are transforming words. So you place yourself in direct contact with these masterminds whose living experiences fill the pages of these scriptures. When you read a scripture you forget the material world and you are in a world of ideas springing from experience, and the power of spiritual illumination is behind the words of the sages who have given out the scriptures.

Svadhya means, therefore, sitting before the authors of the scriptures—Valmiki, Vyasa, etc. It is a kind of Satsanga (company of the divine). You place yourself enraptured with the great ones who are illumined with the radiance of Self-realisation, when you sit in Svadhya. These personalities are not dead and gone. They are not extinct. They have become one with the eternal Spirit and therefore their personality is eternal. It does not perish. Their personality is not like the personality of ordinary men, which changes at death. Thus you establish contact with the sages who are present invisibly. You get the company of the illumined by reading their books.

Svadyayanma pramadah—says the Upanishad. “Never disregard Svadhya”. The sages have given us this precious process of Svadhya, so that we may have contact with the greatest master-minds. As you go on doing Svadhya, if you deeply get merged in that particular book, your thoughts become completely fixed upon divinity. That itself is a sort of Savikalpa-Samadhi (superconscious state) with the feeling of awareness, for at that time all worldly ideas are shut off from the mind and there is absorption of the mind in the spiritual ideas. As you constantly do this Svadhya, what happens? These ideas you take into the mind; sentiment is created by these inspired ideas and your mind is filled with a whole wealth of spiritual ideas. Everyday, in Svadhya, you take in enlightening, higher, inspiring spiritual ideas which give you courage during your moments of depression. Supposing you are depressed, Svadhya elevates you, invigorates and gives you everyday the spiritual *manna* of the soul. It is the food which you take for the soul.

From morning till night, you are in a worldly atmosphere (Vyavahara). So many ideas and so many impressions are formed. So, in the evening you should do Svadhya which will drive out all secular impressions. They are never given a chance to stay. So the one practical utilitarian effect of Svadhya is the taking in of spiritual ideas, so that the worldly ideas may be overpowered by the latter. And, secondly it is a great help in concentration and meditation. How? I will give you an analogy. Now, our aim is to make our mind firmly established in a single spiritual idea. That is the idea in prayer and in all worship, so that the mind can ultimately get itself fixed in a single thought. But the mind always thinks about various undesirable things.

In ordinary unregenerate man, the mind is full of all kinds of sensual and carnal thoughts. All thinking is about objects of this world. He does not know whether anything exists beyond what he can smell, touch, etc. Suppose you begin to realise that these are not for your real progress and elevation, then, you try to think good thoughts and hold on to pure ideas. Sometimes good thoughts

come in, and other times bad thoughts. The mind is like a fly which sometimes sits upon good objects and sometimes even upon spit. Thus your mind alternates between various things. But the honey-bee always sits upon flowers. It never sits upon dirt. So the mind has to be weaned away from the first stage of a fly and then it should be weaned away from the stage of a bee and finally established in a higher position. It is this that Svadhyaya does. It binds down the mind only to elevating thoughts. It does not give chance for the mind to entertain bad thoughts. The mind takes in only what is repeatedly presented to it. In the beginning, the mind will revolt. But later on, when you begin to get a taste, without Svadhyaya you would not like to take food. It becomes an essential part of man. It is food for the real being. When this habit is formed spiritual ideas only begin to dominate the field of our mental consciousness. That is the deep inner psychological working of Svadhyaya.

OCCULT PHENOMENA: THEIR PLACE IN YOGA

‘Occult Phenomenon’, we are told, is anything that is hidden, not easy to observe, something secret of mystic. Here we are concerned with a reference to these Phenomena as occurring in Yoga. Great ones pondered over life in the world with its bondage, imperfection, its restlessness and peacefulness, its pain, suffering and sorrow, its various miseries characterising this earthly life and came to the conclusion that there must be some permanent state beyond this changing phenomenon. The technique evolved for this process of achieving fulfilment and perfection is named ‘Yoga’.

Yoga is an intensified effort for communion and in this intensified effort to pack into a short span of a few years or one’s lifetime all the experiences that the evolving individual would otherwise have had to go through over a much longer period of time, very unusual appearances and unusual phenomena are frequently brought about. By the one who does not realise what is taking place within the consciousness of the individual, these things are looked upon as extraordinary; but the one who understands, knows exactly why they have come about. It is not in the lives of all seekers, of all practitioners of Yoga that one comes across these phenomena, but only in the lives of these who go all out for Yoga with every cell and nerve-fibre, with all their heart, all their mind, all their might, and with a sole dedication to the life of Yoga.

During the process of this evolution this unfoldment, various transformations and changes come into the individual upon five different levels of his being. On the physical level various changes and experiences are seen. Upon the psycho-mental level (the mind and the Prana) certain changes take place, certain abilities come as a natural course, and certain phenomena are witnessed, both subjectively, by some, and objectively, by others. Thirdly, on the astral level, which is still inward from the mind (the astral body is the repository of all countless mental seed-impressions, Samskaras, with which it leaves the body at physical death and travels on and takes another physical body), certain other phenomena take place. Fourthly, you have your spiritual level and with spiritual unfoldment you begin to experience many of these inner experiences. Here it is more subjective and it is the seeker alone who is aware of what is going on inward and others are not able to know, for, it is in a finer realm, much deeper in the depths of his being. The fifth is the highest level of Super-Consciousness. It is Universal Consciousness, God-consciousness, and upon this level the phenomena that are witnessed are the true miracles as we know them. Jnanins (Saints and

Sages) operate upon this level and whatever is witnessed in their life is the manifestation of the glow and the power of this supreme level of Cosmic Consciousness or Divine Consciousness. They do them not as an individual, but as a Divine Being. Upon all these five levels occult phenomena are witnessed.

When the practice of Yoga is started in earnest, even the physical processes like the Yogic postures and breathing exercises or a little attempt at concentrated attention on the breath in Pranayama, it may bring various mystical experiences. If one honestly tries to practise Asanas (postures) and keeps on with this practice until one acquires what is known as ‘victory over posture’, (Asana Jaya or ‘victory over posture’ is a Yogic term which means one is able to sit absolutely motionless and steady for a period of three hours without a break), extraordinary sensations may be experienced from time to time. Yoga means the ascending into purity. We are given the Yogic division of all things in the universe into Sattva (that which is of purity, light and harmony), Rajas (that which is of passion, restlessness and movement), and Tamas (that which is of lethargy, darkness and ignorance). Through activity and passion, gaining control by will and discrimination, we rise to a state of absolute harmony, light and purity, and when this process is going on there come about changes in the body cells, and also changes in the psychic energy through the various inner currents or channels (‘Nadis’ as they are called). When this happens, a new nerve-current, which hitherto has been inactive, is set into motion by the prevalence of an excess of Sattva in the body, and the body, reacts and sometimes ‘jerks’ are experienced.

On the psycho-mental level it is a very common experience of those who have done a little sincere seeking (whether they have known it by the name of ‘Yoga’ or just been seeking and have been practising certain physical exercises without even having heard about Yoga) to find that they have developed certain abilities. The most common of these abilities (inner occult experiences) is thought-reading. You may be talking to someone and before he speaks out you know what he is going to say. You may pick up a telephone and say something and it happens to be exactly what the other person is thinking about, and when talking, you anticipate the other person’s mind. It is telepathy, but it is spontaneous rather than developed telepathy. You begin having contact with the workings of other people’s minds, unconsciously, and even when you are exercising it, you are not aware of so doing. This spontaneous telepathy just happens and it is the first and the most common of occult phenomena and is on the mental level.

The second is clairvoyance, which is also common. Many people are able to see things that are far away. In clairaudience, you may suddenly be put into a state where you are able to hear someone who is talking two hundred miles away.

These are in lower levels. When one’s Prana becomes refined and one’s mind purified, these phenomena come naturally and often one is not aware of them, and some, even though aware of them, do not know that they are extraordinary and take these powers for granted. When a thing grows very slowly and gradually in a person, that person is not conscious that it is unusual and thus takes it for granted. These are all the primary powers in Yoga and they come much more rapidly.

Personal magnetism comes when your evolution goes still further, and when from the psycho-mental level, a little unfoldment of the astral level takes place the development of other powers begins. The power of healing and that of instantly subduing a person are upon the astral

level. They are powers which are not exactly on the spiritual level and they begin to develop even when you are progressing very little. These powers on the three levels, viz., mental level, psycho-mental level and astral level, do not necessarily have any direct connection with the Yogic way of life. One can have all these powers sheerly by pure effort. If the necessary effort with determination is made, one can develop them. In Yoga they come through purification and in the other case they come through will-power. Without observing any of the principles of Yoga, certain persons possess these powers. They are plain and pure occultists who have made these, such as hypnotism and mesmerism, their main vocation. The powers they have developed in this way do not indicate the evolution of their nature or any progress upon the spiritual line.

Everyone of us has contact with the Cosmic Mind, for we all belong to the Cosmic Mind. Our consciousness is a part of the Cosmic Consciousness and our mind is a part of the Cosmic Mind. Because we are bound up with our own ego-personality we do not feel this, and when we try to rise above our ego-personality the channel which connects our mind with the Cosmic Mind and our consciousness with the Cosmic Consciousness become more clear and we are able to feel our oneness. When this happens, knowledge hidden from ordinary minds comes into the possession of such a mind, and knowledge of the distance, and sometimes even into the future, is known. This is due to the expansion of consciousness when a certain level of development is reached, when the spiritual being within is activated and the spiritual nature awakened.

This whole projected universe has come out of the subtle elements which are the first evolutes. The subtle elements are Earth, Water, Fire, Air and Ether, Ether being the most subtle. From this subtlest essence these grosser manifestations have later developed, which make the visible Universe. The source of these gross and material elements is invisible—purely subtle—Cosmic. During the course of Yoga, if the Yogi concentrates, meditates and goes into trance meditation upon one or more of these subtle elements, ultimately when he is able to do this threefold process called Samyama, then he gains mastery over these elements. He is able to travel in space at lightning speed. He is able to withstand either fire or water because he has complete mastery over these elements at their very source, and this you will find to be the extraordinary phenomenon that explains the immutability of certain Yogins. Even when passing through fire and water they seem to come through unscathed and this is on account of the Samyama which they did upon these elements.

When your practice takes the form of Kundalini Yoga and you begin the inner occult process of Hatha Yoga, then with the rise of the power of the Kundalini from the lower centres (Chakras) into the higher mystical Centres, which are in the occult body of each being, there arise various extraordinary powers and various experiences to the seeker.

By the practice of all paths of Yoga, viz., Karma Yoga (Selfless Service), Bhakti Yoga (Path of Devotion), Jnana Yoga (Path of Knowledge) and Raja Yoga (Control of senses and mind through Yogic discipline), and through purity the dormant powers in the various Centres (Chakras) become manifest. Through perfection, when you get to the end of Yoga you are endowed with the eight major Siddhis (Powers) and many minor Siddhis, such as Anima (the ability to reduce yourself to microscopic proportions), Mahima (the power of increasing the size at will), Laghima (weightlessness), Garima (extraordinary increase in weight), etc. For instance when one attains

Laghima—if one is taken to the top of a building and dropped, one would not fall but would just float to the ground like a wisp of feather.

All these powers are by-products. They are not the quest of the Yogi. These powers come also as temptations to test your moral worth and they are the greatest barrier to Self-knowledge. The possession of these powers works subtly, so insidiously that, unless you are extraordinarily introspective and watchful, you may succumb to them and become vain even without your knowledge. This type of subtle vanity and egoism is the greatest danger to the seeker; for it goes to the very root by invading the ego which is the deadliest enemy of the seeker, and anything which increased this ego is the very antithesis of God. If one is not vigilant these powers divert one from God, take him away from the straight path and puff up his ego.

All Yogic Masters—our Master, Swami Sivananda, one of the greatest saints that India has produced in recent times, and Sri Ramakrishna, the Master of Sri Swami Vivekananda who went and gave Yoga and Vedanta to the West in 1893, and many other saints,—have been absolutely at one in their opinion regarding this matter. Right from the beginning of the spiritual path they say: “Beware of psychic powers. Beware of occult powers.” If you get caught in their fascination you are lost. Your spiritual life is destroyed and all your Yoga will simply go away, and when you lose Yoga once, it becomes very, very difficult to regain it. They say, “Shun occult powers as you shun poison,” and they are indeed poison to spiritual unfoldment.

These powers might have their place in the case of those Masters who have the special task of guiding seekers bringing people to God, to the path. Sometimes the Masters make use of these powers to induce faith in a seeker who is ready for the path but the lack of faith is holding him back, and sometimes they help even common people.

But in the Case of aspirants, who are our concern, these occult powers can become the greatest of corrupters, the greatest of obstacles for all true seekers. They are not true and they have no ultimate value, no inherent worth. Therefore, my ultimate conclusion is do not run after shadows, but hold on only to the substance. Do not go after the chaff; go only after the grain that nourishes and gives life. Live only for the Lord. Love only God, and seek and be in quest with absolutely one-pointedness and whole-heartedness for the great Reality—God and God alone.

May the Love of the Divine fill your hearts! May the blessings of all great Masters ever keep the light of discrimination and true awareness bright in your heart. May they guide you on the path. May they give you the true understanding. May they give you the inner spiritual strength to overcome the lure of all petty powers that seek to divert you from the path.

THE IDEAL OF UNITY

We are children of Bharatarvarsha; and we are heirs to the lofty sublime Upanishadic lore. The clarion call which we have been hearing, running down the centuries from the lofty pinnacles of the Upanishadic wisdom and experience has been *Ekam Sat vipra bahudha vadanti* and again *Ekameva advitiam Brahma*, thus authoritatively, from the force of their living experience,

establishing the fact of the unity of Godhead. God is one: sages declare boldly, because they know Him to be so. They know Him; they feel Him; and they delve into a cosmic experience of oneness. Living this experience, they declare from the pinnacles of their Upanishadic realisation and wisdom: *Ekam Sat*—the Truth, the eternal Reality, the great Existence, the Being, is one and there is no second to it.

This great heritage is ours. To declare once again this great assertion of unity, to create waves of this feeling of unity, and to take this message of the unity of the ultimate Being to every nook and corner of the universe, into the hearts of all, would be the best way of being worthy of this birthright, this heritage of ours.

Existence being one, mankind is also one; for uniformity is the law of the universe in its inner aspect. Externally, variety or diversity is the law of nature. But in its inner aspect, uniformity or unity is the fact of life. Let us illustrate this in a very simple but clear manner. Take all the forms of life. Take all the elements in the external, visible, physical universe. Take all the various species of created things. You will find that they are *one* everywhere upon earth. The sky is the same everywhere, whether it is the Christian land, the Muslim land, the Buddhist land or the Chinese land or the Japanese land. Water is the same; earth is the same, sunshine, the wind, the trees and the forests, light and darkness, sun, stars and moon—in all the forces of nature, there is absolute unity, absolute oneness, sameness, uniformity, similarity, all over this universe.

We have infinite variety in the submarine species; but fish is the same in all the oceans, be it the Pacific or the Atlantic or the Indian ocean. Flies, mosquitoes, ants, birds and insects—conceive of what you will, you will find that they are essentially one and the same everywhere. Banana in India may slightly differ from banana in South Africa or America; but the species banana is the same. Of course, because externally variety is the law of nature, banana may differ in different parts of India; in some places during different seasons. But, all over the world, ever since creation began, through all the centuries past, and into the future also, these species of the creation have been and will be the same. They are one everywhere. Thus, you will find, as you study nature, that oneness or unity is quite an inescapable fact, the inevitable law.

The same law holds good in connection with man also. Mankind is one. The species of homo-sapiens is one. The unity of mankind is a fact from which there is no escape. We have to accept it. Observation irresistibly drives us to the conclusion.

On the one side we have this unity of mankind all over the universe; at the other side, we have utterances of sages, *Ekameva advitiyam Brahma*: God is one. Thus the two terminals being established in unity, the field which is between them, the field of their interaction, and interrelation, this life and the processes of their experiencing and relationship, which we name religion, also has naturally to be one. This, too, has to be governed by that law. Absolute unity has to partake of the nature of oneness. Thus when we go into the fact of religion from this observation and from this attitude, or point of view, we are drawn to the conclusion that whatever the apparent external differences of religions may be, yet the process of religion has necessarily to be one and the same.

Now taking this inference, let us proceed to examine it and see if, in fact, this inference is correct. Let us try to see if actually the process of religion is of the nature of unity. It is so. Any

process may be regarded to have three aspects. Everything is done with a *purpose*. There is a motive force behind the actual *process of technique*. There is an *ultimate objective* which this process strives to achieve. These three aspects in the matter of religion ultimately seem to be this. What is the motive behind the existence of religion? It is a desire to escape from the vexing trammels of this earthy existence.

Examine all religions. They may have risen from a single human personality, a prophet with divine inspiration, or the religion may be some eternal law coming down to us from a time which is beyond the reach of historical survey. We will find that, whatever be the nature of the religions now existing amongst mankind upon this earth, at the basis, the *motive force* is to free man from the torments that beset this severely limited physical existence, this mortal life upon earth which is full of miseries, pains, sorrows, disappointments, diseases, death, separation, grief, loss, which the Hindu religion named *Tapatraya*; the chief aim is to escape from the menace of death and to get beyond sorrow, to attain a state beyond sorrow, beyond pain, beyond all imperfections, defects, limitations and bondage—that is the motive of all religions.

The ultimate destination it promises for the believer, one who practises and lives a life of religion, is a state where the being is free from all pains, from all wants. Everything is fulfilled there. There is no feeling of want. There is complete cessation of sorrow. There is no more pain or death. The fear of death goes away. Each religion promises this end in its own way. We have the Pleasure Gardens of the Islamic conception of heaven. We have an eternal state of glory by the throne of God on High where man is once for all free from all trouble, pain, sorrow and death, according to the conception of the Christian. There is the Supreme Nirvana, infinite, ineffable Peace, that is reached by the Buddhist. There is the Bliss of Satchidananda where man becomes immortal, free from all fear, full of light, full of eternal bliss as conceived of by the Upanishadic religion. Every religion ultimately points to infinite peace, eternal bliss, all-light, as the final beatitude.

The process of religion is the freeing of man from the factors which bind him down to this earthy existence of pain and death. *The process is to free him from these factors*. If unrighteousness is the factor for suffering, then be righteous. Give up Adharma. If through untruth man is to be bound to this vexing mortal life, and has to pay a heavy penalty in suffering and pain, then abandon falsehood; be truthful. If by being cruel, you will reap a harvest of pain, torment and suffering, cast away cruelty or Himsa and embrace Ahimsa.

Be good, be kind, be compassionate. Thus the process of religion develops in a scientific way by studying the causative factors of this earthly life and its pains and sorrows and torments: they insist that by living a life of practical religion you can remove all these causative factors. Lead the life carefully in such a way that you do not commit these things which result in this painful existence. Thus they wean man away from the indulgence to the play of his Asuric, sinful nature, the Pasu in him, the animal in him.

The process of religion slowly works out a scheme of life for man, and he is made to bring into manifestation, into active expression, all these lofty, life-transforming elements of the divine aspect of his being to overcome the animalistic aspect and progressively unfold the divine element that is already part and parcel of his innermost consciousness. Man is made in the image of God; therefore, godliness is the essential factor of his real being. Therefore, the external operations of the

undivine nature have to be completely removed and cast away, thereby giving full scope for the perfect manifestation of the Divine Svarupa in him.

With the unfoldment and the blossoming of the divine Consciousness in man, he becomes at once a powerful link with the infinite divine existence, Satchidananda. Thus the unity which has been for the time being veiled, as it were, by ignorance—by Mala, Avarana and Vikshepa,—is re-established. This comes from the fullness of experience and culmination of religious practice which is the discovery of the eternal unity with Godhead. These three factors of the basic purpose, the process and the goal or end in view also would be found to be absolutely the same in all religions.

No religion wants you to be tied down to this earthly life. All religions have as their goal the reaching of perfection, freedom and immortality. All religions also have the same process in their essence, whatever may be the differences in the details, and they all want the complete annihilation of the lower self, the animalistic part of man, and the progressive unfoldment of his divine nature, until the unmanifest becomes manifest, the latent becomes potent, and man who is made in the image of God partakes once again the infinitude of his real nature. All religions are at one in this ultimate goal.

Religions have come either from eternal wisdom enshrined in scriptural texts like our Upanishads and Vedas, or from some great persons inspired by God. If we go to the source—after all what flows out from these can best be judged from the source from which they have flowed out—and seek out Jesus, Mohammed, Zoroaster, Krishna and Buddha and examine the lives of all these great fountain-heads of the various faiths in the world, we will find that by their practical example, through their exemplary life, they have shown us what is really the very soul of the religion.

Here, again, the glorious sublime unity is found; for all seers depicted in themselves, in a most splendid manner, the good life, the life of absolute purity, of infinite compassion, and of sweet love. This is what lay enshrined in the divine personalities of Mohammed, Christ, Buddha, Zoroaster and all the great sages. They were the very incarnations of love, goodness, compassion, purity, wisdom, non-attachment and brotherhood. They were not merely passive embodiments of these qualities, but their lives were active expressions of these great divine qualities. In every action and every word they uttered, when they moved among mortals in the universe, they reflected these qualities. They demonstrated the practical living of the religion which they later on gave to their followers. In this demonstration they were all at one. They all lived a godly life. They all lived love. They radiated purity and they all acted, spoke and thought with compassion, service and sacrifice.

Let us examine the religions and the prophetic utterances of these great messengers of God. Is there any religion which tells us ‘Utter lies; be dishonest?’ No, is the answer. Is there any religion which says ‘Hate people; develop hatred and anger?’ No, again, is the answer. Is there any religion which tells you, ‘Be impure. Be immoral?’ No, is the answer. Every religion, on the other hand, lays stress upon a life of truth, of absolute purity, of belief in God, of compassion and tenderness, a life of sacrifice, of goodness in thought, word and deed, a life devoid of hatred. Every religion has given a *way of life* to its followers as the ideal to be followed; in order to attain the goal; and *that way is*

one and the same. It is a life of divine qualities. It is a life as practically demonstrated by each one of these prophets.

Therefore, from whichever angle we approach and study the subject of religion, from whichever angle we see it, we find that religion is one, all faiths are one and that all prophets have lived the same life of ethical perfection, divine compassion, goodness and oneness. They have been inspired by the same vision of fatherhood of God and brotherhood of mankind. Thus, we find that, however much we may try to close our eyes to this fact, the oneness in all faiths is proclaiming itself in a living, irresistible manner through the ideal life lived by these prophets, through the very motive-force underlying each faith and religion, through the oneness in the very process that these religious achievements are to be worked out, and through the ultimate conception of the destination which each one of these faiths wants its followers to realise.

We have, therefore, always to put before mankind these shining and unifying links which make all faiths one. These different faiths are, as it were, so many beautiful flowers that go to make a beautiful bouquet which we offer at the feet of the Almighty Being. Let us ever remember these unifying notes that are at the basis of all faiths. Let us ever try to declare this unity to all mankind so that the external strife, rivalry and exclusiveness that have been brought about by losing sight of these fundamental unifying factors, may be once for all removed from the face of this fair earth and peace and goodwill amongst mankind may come to prevail for all time.

Sri Krishna has declared in the Gita, 'As different beings variously approach Me, even so, according to their approach I reveal Myself.' Taking this as the great truth, a small analogy will be found to be a very interesting way of effectively realising the unity of different religions and faiths.

Different people are travelling; they are all travelling in *different directions*. A devotee from Gujarat has got leave from his work; he wants to pay a visit to Banaras and worship Sri Visvanatha. Another devotee from Assam has retired and wishes to make a round of pilgrimage and wants to take a dip at the Dasasvamedha Ghat and worship Varanasipurapati. A devotee from Calcutta also wishes to worship the great Visvanatha at Kashi. Someone from Madras is similarly urged to go and worship Sri Visvanatha at Varanasi. Thus, various people from different parts of India are travelling towards 'different' directions, to different 'places'. One wishes to go to Varanasi, the other to Banaras, the other to Kashi, and so on; while the fact is: their destination is one, though called by different names.

Each one goes his own way. The Chettiar from the South takes a plane because he is wealthy. The great devotee from Assam does the whole journey on foot. The man from Calcutta travels by train. The man from Gujarat may use different means of conveyance. A Sadhu from Rishikesh also goes to Banaras on foot.

The very important fact which I wish everyone to grasp is this: No doubt, they are all thinking that they are going to different places (Varanasi, Banaras and Kashi). Their mode of travel is also different. Whatever difference there may be in the external way of proceeding, the process worked out is a progressive approach to that central purpose—to have Darsana of Visvanatha. Two important things which I want you to understand are these. One is the misconception of 'going to different places' due to the different names by which they call Banaras. The second is: they

apparently working out a *contrary process*. One is moving to South. One is moving towards North. The man from Gujarat is proceeding Eastward, and the man from Assam is going Westward. They are all going in *opposite* directions. And yet they are proceeding to the same goal!

This will explain how the various faiths which seem to be going in apparently opposite ways, yet take the followers to the same goal. There is another important factor. The Chettiar from Madras, during his journey to Kashi approaches nearer and nearer the Himalayas, his progress towards the desired place is taking him nearer the Himalayas. Whereas, the Sadhu from Rishikesh, who is also going to Banaras, goes farther and farther from Himalayas. Two absolutely contrary processes! But, curiously enough both achieve the same result.

This analogy illustrates the paradoxical phenomenon of how two processes, which are seemingly contradictory to each other and seemingly different in their results, have as their ultimate result a single goal. Each one has his desire fulfilled, though each man may maintain that he has done something different from what the other man has done. One may say, 'I have come to Kashi, travelling northwards.' Another may say, 'I have come to Banaras, travelling southwards.'

Even so, the ultimate goal, sustenance and source of the entire universe, is God. In reaching Him, souls from different states of consciousness come towards a single goal, however different and however conflicting the apparent outward processes in this quest may seem to be. These eternal differences and seeming contradictions in the eternal structure of the religious pattern and the practices need not and cannot deny the essential factor of the unity. Therefore, the best thing to do is not to cling to our own conceptions conceived of in a limited mind which has not reached the state of impartial wisdom.

Let us remember the great declaration of the Mahabharata:

'The Srutis differ; the Smritis also differ. The real essence of the ancient truth is hidden, as it were, in a cave. You cannot have direct access to it. Therefore, follow the way through which the great souls have trodden and gone before us, leaving footprint on the sands of times.'

The best way for us is to humbly and devoutly study the lives of these great ones and reckon the ideal examples which they have given us in their own sublime personalities, and try to mould ourselves upon the pattern of their ideal lives. This would be the greatest way of achieving the true consciousness of the absolute oneness of all mankind, the unity of all religions, and the oneness of all life. Universality, or cosmic consciousness, can best be achieved only by this way.

YOGA, ITS SIGNIFICANCE AND IMPORTANCE TO HEALTH**

God-realisation is a heritage and birthright of all mankind for all times. The saints and sages of yore discovered that the ultimate aim of human life is to attain Perfection or in other words God-realisation. And this discovery which they did, by their own quests and struggles, they later on systematised into a scientific system of attainment. What they attained through spontaneous struggle, trial and error, as it were, and progressing from a lesser truth unto a greater truth (this, ultimately for our benefit), they systematised into a scientific method of self-unfoldment and attainment—a system, a method, a series of practices, that lead us from ignorance to the light of knowledge, from death and mortality to immortality and everlasting life, from sorrow and suffering into a state of absolute bliss, eternal satisfaction, fearlessness and freedom—(*Paramananda Prapti—Sarvaduḥkha Nivritti*). This scientific system which they evolved and handed down to posterity is what we know as Yoga.

These great people, these intrepid researchers in the inner realm of man's spiritual being, these great souls could climb over death, pain and suffering. When they attained that state of realisation and illumination, they sent forth a clarion-call to man. They said: "O ye mortals, toiling and weeping in this valley of tears, in this world of fleeting names and forms, in this world of transitory, changeful, perishable objects, weep not, fear not! We have found a solution for this problem of man's pains and fear of death. We have gone beyond sorrow and we have experienced a realm of everlasting sunshine, attaining which man becomes free and liberated, man becomes fearless, and is filled with bliss and peace. We will show you the way, we declare to you the way. What we have attained, you also can attain." So, they addressed the mankind—not to any particular nation or race, not to any particular section or any particular religion. They said: "O man, O mortal, come, come, listen! We declare to you your highest welfare, in short and brief. We have come face to face with the radiant Being, beyond death, beyond ignorance, attaining whom one becomes immortal. Brahman, the Supreme Reality, the Supreme God of all religions, He who is worshipped as Allah, as Jehovah, as Almighty Father in the Heaven, as Ahuramazda, as Omkara, He, that Being, the Nameless One,—we have come face to face with Him. You also can attain Him. Come, come!" Thus these great people, the towering sages of illumination call upon man.

Yoga is the practical method of attaining this state of supreme blessedness. Who does not want to overcome sorrow and suffering? Who does not want to reach a deathless state? One ignores here death itself. Death becomes a thing to laugh at. Who does not want to attain a state of profound serenity and peace, away from all the restlessness, agitation, hurries and tensions and anxieties of life—a profound peace that nothing can shake and a bliss that is perennial, inexhaustible, that nothing can change, nothing can take away from one? Is it not the universal quest of man? Go throughout the world and question any individual. No matter how much practical difference there may be between man and man,—they may differ in every respect,—but in this respect all are one. All want to avoid pain and suffering and sorrow. Everyone wants to attain, if it is possible, a perfect state of continuous joy, which does not end, which is not temporary merely, but which is everlasting. This is a universal quest of all men. No one wants to suffer, no one wants pain and

** Lecture delivered by the Swamiji at the Hindu Temple, Trinidad, during the year 1970.

sorrow—be he an Easterner or a Westerner, a man of Christian religion or an Islamic, a Hindu or a Buddhist, a Jew or a Parsee, a Taoist or a Shintoist, a catholic or a communist. Every race, every caste, every creed, every religion is linked by this universal common desire to avoid pain and suffering. They want to avoid them and they want happiness. In answer to this universal hunger of the human being, human nature, has come to this great solution. Yes, there is an experience, there is for you an attainment of a plane of consciousness, attaining which that which you are seeking since birth and that which you fail to find in this world of temporary names and forms you can find. It is not an Utopia. It is not phantasy or imagination which is ever beyond the reach of man. It is a fact. It is a real experience, true and lasting peace, true and lasting joy, a perfect joy that never goes. It is complete freedom from sorrow, pain and suffering, and total satisfaction, a feeling of fullness, a feeling of absolute plenitude. And, as a matter of fact, this is your real nature. This is your birthright. Man has not been sent into this world in order to suffer, weep, wail and die. It is left to your choice: do you want to ever remain in bondage, as a slave of senses, a slave of desires, a slave of the inner cravings of the mind; or do you want to break out from this cage of bondage of your lower self and enter into the realm of absolute freedom, even here? This state of perfect experience is not something to be visualised in some remote hereafter, something which you can attain only after you die and pass away. But this experience is within the reach of anyone who struggles for it and who is really sincere and honestly strives for it. Here and now, in this body, in this physical, material realm, it is possible. That is the goal of Yoga—beatitude, liberation, even in life, Jivanmukti, the transcendence of sorrow and pain and attaining to a state of serenity which is not affected by anything outside.

“*Samatvam Yoga Uchyate*”—come success or failure, come honour or dishonour, come heat or cold, come sorrow or joy, it does not matter. Whatever it is, it is not affected. We are always the same when we attain to a state of divinity, firmness. Then, one’s inner peace is not affected by anything. The dualities (Dvandvas) that go to make up what is called life, the ups and downs, they leave the Yogi who is well-established in Yoga, absolutely unaffected. And if you want to attain to this state of absolute serenity within, you must know how to conduct yourself in life. You must move about amidst these sense-objects, amidst these various vicissitudes of day-to-day life, with wisdom, with discrimination and inner detachment. Being in the world, yet be not of the world. Involving yourself in phenomenon, do not allow phenomenon to entrap you, to ensnare you. Go moving in this world of sense-objects as a master, not as a slave succumbing to the temptations of every little fascination and external pull of sense-objects, colours, sounds and tastes. Always be a master, knowing how to deal with them, with self-control intact. You must know how to move amidst these objects, with wisdom, discrimination and skill, in activity, yet with inner detachment. “*Yogah Karmasu Kausalam*”—Yoga is skill in action, not to get into a mess in this life by deluded attachment, blind infatuation, getting crazy with desires and cravings for sensual experiences and sense-pleasures. But move to your higher nature, ever trying to base yourself upon that higher nature, still fully fulfilling the obligations of life. They should be fulfilled. Do all the duties that are incumbent upon you according to your particular position in which Providence has placed you. And yet, maintain your freedom and integrity in the presence of the outer environment of persons and things. That is skill in action. This is Yoga; to be in the world, yet not to be of the world.

If you want to do this, if you want to be detached in the midst of these alluring objects and if you want to become established in that ‘inner stability,’ you must know the act of disciplining the mind. Attachment as well as non-attachment, are states of the mind. To become easily agitated and

upset at every little thing, every little changing occurrence, or to become firm, unagitated, unruffled, serene,—this is all a question of the state of the mind. Therefore, the disciplining of the mind and the gradual training of it to attain to that state of unperturbed serenity through a certain graduated series of techniques, gradually alters its nature. The nature of the mind is restlessness. The nature of the mind is agitation. It is always in a state of activity. Tranquillity is unknown to the mind. Because, that is its very nature. Just as it is the nature of fire to burn, of water to flow, of the wind to blow, so it is the nature of the mind to be ever restless, to be ever agitated. Why? Because it is endowed with a certain percentage of Rajo-Guna, that quality of agitation, restless activity. The Creator has made it that way. And so, you have to change the nature of your mind.

The unstable mind is comparable to quicksilver or mercury. One of the greatest scriptures of Yoga which describes all the different methods of disciplining the mind, in one place, makes the statement that it may ever be possible for a man to control the wind and stop it, but it is difficult to control the mind. Mind is even more difficult to control than the wind itself. When this is being told, the great Teacher tells the disciple: “Thus you must control the mind, make it restful, bring it into a state of equanimity, direct it towards the Eternal Reality and meditate upon It. Then, you will overcome all sorrow and suffering.” The disciple then says: “You are explaining a very nice method. But I think it is futile for you to explain the method, because this mind which you ask me to discipline in such a way, to control it, unify it and direct it in meditation, is impossible to control.” When the disciple thus counters the Teacher’s position the Teacher does not totally disagree. He says: “You are right. No doubt, it is very difficult to control the mind. It is not easy, I do agree. I admit, because I know. But then, it is not impossible. It is possible to conquer this almost unconquerable mind. It is very difficult, but it is possible. And the only way of controlling and disciplining this mind and make it completely obey you and come to a state of stillness and rest is, never to give up the effort. This is the only prescription. Keep on with it. Go on trying, trying, trying. Never give in. There is no word ‘impossible’; in the dictionary of Yoga and a true seeker. It is sheer persisting and persevering in your attempt, day after day, without missing a single day. Regularly persisting and persevering in this discipline of stilling the mind and controlling it and making it calm brings you to success. But, a word of caution: while you are in this process of persistent and persevering attempt to control mind, do not do things in your life which tend to make the mind more restless. Then, you are defeating your own effort. Here you are in one area of your lifetime to control the mind, and here you are in another area of your lifetime, trying to do all things which make the mind even more restless. Then, you are feeding the fire, putting gasoline in one place, and pouring water and quenching the fire in another place. This is not the way. A proverb in South Indian language says: ‘He pinches the child in the cradle and tries to make it not to cry.’ This is something which you should not do with yourself. As you are trying to discipline the mind by daily setting apart some time to sit quietly, dropping thoughts of the world, internalising your consciousness and trying to be in silence with the help of visualising your concept of God and the repetition of the Divine Name, with the help of prayer or a continuous train of similar thoughts—all of them connected with the centred object,—let your external, normal, day-to-day life be such that it is helpful and favourable to this inner discipline that you are trying to progress in. Let there not be counteracting thoughts in the mind.”

Supposing you are trying to control the mind and at the same time you are a heavy drinker or a gossip, at the same time you cannot remain without reading the newspaper from the first column to the last, every day you want to fill your mind with countless distracting ideas, things that do not

concern you, listen to every programme in the radio, habitually,—what happens is: you set the mind into motion like a wheel every day. By doing all these they increase the Samskaras, take on countless impressions on this fast-moving kaleidoscope, of the phenomenon of the outer world. Try to turn the mind inwards. Try to lessen unnecessary activities, things which you are better without. Keep the senses from going too much into the phenomenon of the outer world. Control your desires and appetites. Try to see that you do not add fuel to the fire by indulging in too many sense-enjoyments. That makes the mind restless, because the more you get into sense-enjoyment, the more the desires are created in you and the mind becomes ever more restless. Therefore, from one side you fence the mind by sense-control and from the other side simplify your life, reduce your wants, limit your desires and engage in this discipline. Do this persevering discipline, day after day, with unflinching regularity and at the same time lead the outer life characterised by restraint, moderation, simplicity and a certain extent of self-denial. These are all the characteristics of a civilised, cultured human being.

What is the hall-mark of culture? It is the ability to control oneself. It is the essence of education, it teaches a person to keep himself under his own self-management, self-government. To be able to become a self-managed person,—that is the essence of education. It is the basis of real civilisation. What is the difference between an uncivilised person and a civilised person? A civilised person is self-managed. He can control himself. If your outer life is characterised by moderation, simplicity, self-control, then day by day, your practice, your exercise and your discipline of the mind begin to bear evidence. They begin to succeed and progress. And a day will come when you will be established in the mastery over your mind. When that day of perfect mastery over your mind comes, it becomes still and unified. This unified mind is concentrated upon the Eternal Reality. When all the restless thought-activities of the mind are totally under your control, then, you enter into a state of Yoga,—“*Yogaschittavrittinirodhah*” which means that Yoga is the control of the restless modifications of the mind. Desire, restless thoughts, anger, envy, jealousy, passion, temper, Raga-Dvesha (likes and dislikes), hate,—all these modifications of the mind. Once you are able to discipline and control the mind, then you attain mastery over your lower nature and its manifestations in the form of these negative traits. That is to say with the discipline of your mind you develop character. No more, the mind controls you. You control the mind. Mind cannot push you and make you become its director.

You have the power to discriminate what is wisdom and what is un-wisdom, what is worldly and what is un-worldly, what is good and what is not good, what is noble and what is ignoble. You are able to reject what is ignoble, unworthy and impure and select and tune that line of action which takes you up. For, at all moments, day by day, in your own home, in your own relationships with your own family, in your own professional field, two ways always present themselves before you. One way is merely pleasant and very attractive. The other way, elevates you, ennoble you, leads you towards a higher level of living which, ultimately, takes you towards your highest welfare. A normal human being, indiscriminating, without the power to control himself, at every moment, is pulled towards that which is merely pleasant and attractive. And he becomes a victim of his own sensual cravings, passions and desires. That is the way of degeneration. That is the way of greater bondage, greater darkness. But one who has been disciplining the mind and controlling its vagaries, is able to discriminate and turn away purposefully and resolutely from the merely pleasant and the attractive and move towards that which is good.

That which is attractive and pleasant, does not necessarily mean that it is good for you. That which is really good for you takes you towards your welfare. It may not necessarily be pleasant. It may be hard. But discrimination tells you that, that which is hard may ultimately lead you towards your own highest welfare and good. It will raise you higher and ultimately take you to the goal. This is Yoga: mastery of the mind, developing a character, thinking clearly, rejecting that which is merely pleasant and attractive but which brings you into deeper bondage, and resolutely selecting and accepting that mode of conduct, that way, which takes your life higher and higher. For, in the ultimate context, Yoga is the process of moving towards divine perfection. Within you is a divine essence which is your true nature, real nature. You are not merely this body-mind complex which the world regards as a personality. This name and form, this body and mind, these thoughts and dealings, do not make up your real nature. The body is only a dwelling-house and the mind is only your instrument through which you think and express yourself. The intellect is also an instrument for your use to attain knowledge of the external universe, to ponder over the purpose and meaning of life, to live intelligently and wisely to attain the goal of life. All these three, viz., the body, mind and intellect, therefore, are instruments or factors with which you are endowed, which God has given you to make use of, to be utilised in a wise way. But beyond these three, you remain an eternal spark, eternal spirit, with divinity inherent in you.

Yoga is the unfoldment of that within you which is divine, which is real Self. You are coming into your own, you are awakening to attain a state of Self-awareness. You become conscious: “I am Immortal Atman. I am Bliss. I am not this cage of flesh and bones. I am not this restless, impure mind, filled with selfishness, filled with ego, puffed up with vanity, filled with anger and passion, fears and worries. I am not this limited intellect, prone to so much of error, so much of confusion, finite and limited. I am imperishable and immortal essence. I am distinct from this restless and impure mind. I am ever pure, ever peaceful Atman. Distinct from this finite and imperfect instrument of the intellect, this reasoning faculty, I am infinite, all-perfect, ever-full and complete Atman, Soul, a centre of spiritual consciousness, characterised by wisdom, peace and purity, Anadi-Ananta about which, in stirring tone, the Bhagavad-Gita declares: *‘Ajo Nityah sasvatoyam purano, Na Hanyate Hanyamane Sarire*—unborn, eternal, permanent, ancient and timeless is this Being within the body, who is not destroyed when the body perishes.’”

Nothing can touch you. You are an immortal soul. You have somehow lost this awareness. Are you living in that awareness? Are you aware that you are an immortal Soul? There is no beginning or end, nothing can touch you, death and birth have no meaning for you. They are only something concerned with the body. “I am without birth, without death, immortal, imperishable and indestructible”—what a grand state! Even if a little bit of this awareness comes into you, how fearless you will be, how perfectly free from anxiety and fear you will be! You will become the witness of all the changes that take place within you. You will be the untouched Witness of the different conditions of the world, pain or pleasure, heat or cold. You will become that unattached Witness of the changing conditions of the mind. Whether the mind is restful or restless, you will be away from it. If the mind is suddenly overcome by passions, you will sit back from it and say: “No, I am the ever-pure, spotless Atman. Disgust or passion is something that is taking place in the mind. I am not associated with it. I am the ever-pure Atman.” So you develop a new awareness and a new consciousness, where you are able to be the unattached Witness, unaffected by the changing conditions of your mind. That is real life.

YOGA AND CHRISTIAN RELIGION***

I shall speak to you at some length upon the subject of ‘Yoga and the Christian Religion’ because most of you are from a Christian background, very pious and very religious. Some are only Christian because they are born Christian, but some are halfway going to the Church once in two months, but all are from a Christian background, may be some Roman Catholic, may be not, may be Protestant, may be Methodist, may be some other. Some of you are Jews. Whatever religion you belong to, when I speak about Yoga and the Christian religion, it could equally apply to Yoga and any other religion. So, what is the connection between Yoga and one’s religion? One takes it for granted that Yoga is of the Hindu religion, and asks: ‘What is the connection between this Hindu thing and my religion?’ Anyone belonging to another religion must wonder. So, it is worth—knowing how to relate Yoga to religion. Is it like other religions or are there sharp divergences between Yoga and other religions? If these things are not clear, may be some would feel a sense of guilt. ‘O, I am a Christian, am I doing the right by coming and taking to Yoga? Perhaps, I am being a little irreligious in the particular area of my interest in Yoga.’ Thus, a vague sort of uneasiness may be felt.

First and foremost, it has to be known that Yoga has arisen from a background or basis of the Hindu religion. It has its origin in India and it is part of the Hindu religion. But it is not Hindu. It is a universal science that has arisen out of the Hindu religious ground—a science that has risen above religion. It is a universal technique. Because in Yoga, as it is given in the Yoga-Darsana of Patanjali, one of the six systems of philosophy, no particular dogma is laid down and no particular God is pointed out for your worship. Yoga doesn’t say that you must worship Rama or Siva or meditate upon Krishna, or you must worship Kaali or Durga, or Hanuman; Yoga has nothing to say upon all these things. Yoga doesn’t say that you must repeat any particular Name of God. Yoga only says that repetition of one of the Divine Names is one of the ways of concentrating the mind. It says repetition of the Divine Name. You may repeat the Divine Name, you may say the prayer of Jesus, you may say Allah, you may say Rama, you may say the name of Siva, or you may say some other Name if you are in some other religion, but it does not specify that Name and also whom to worship. The All-perfect Divine Being, who is ever-free, ever-perfect, free from all the imperfections, ever-free beyond Maya, the Supreme Purusha, means the Supreme Being, Almighty Father in Heaven, Allah, Jehovah, you can call it by any name, it does not matter, the ever-free Being is not bound by Maya, and who is free from affliction, who is of the nature of Bliss-Absolute, Consciousness-Absolute; that is the object of meditation to be attained, that is the goal of Yoga. So, it does not give for you a goal other than the goal of Yoga; it does not give for you a goal other than the goal of your religion. It does not point out a God different from the one pointed by your own religion—Christianity, Islam, etc.—and it does not give a special name of that God so that you will have to change Gods. It does not give any special name to the one God. Emerging from the ground of Hinduism, it goes beyond religion.

Yoga is a Religious Science, which means that it goes beyond religion, and assumes a universal characteristic. Secondly, Yoga is a science for *Man*. It is not a science either for an

*** Gist of a discourse addressed to a Western audience.

Easterner or a Westerner, an Oriental or an Occidental. Yoga is for man on earth. It was given to mortal man on this earth of birth, pain and death. It was given to man on earth, no matter what he is or who he is; and it is given to man for all times. It was not given to an ancient man or medieval man or a modern man, or anyone who might come, wanting to go beyond all sorrow, pain and suffering, go beyond bondage and delusion. If he takes to this path, it brings him to the place of supreme experience. So it is the answer to the need of mortal man, on this earth plane. So it is something that is the property, the heritage of humanity—Yoga is the heritage of humanity. It does not interfere with religion. What does Yoga do? Yoga supplies to the life of man and makes up for certain lack brought about by religion failing man or man failing religion. There is a condition created by the failure of religion administering to man's highest needs, or the failure of man to take advantage of religion or properly utilise his religion which it is, we cannot say.

Some say religions have failed. I say, no. Man has failed to follow religion. It is not due to religion that man suffers. It is due to the neglect of religion, the ignoring of religion and its teachings and its wisdom. Mostly, this is the situation. But in some places where religion has become totally institutionalised, it has become a great impersonal structure, and lost living contact with the individuals. Under it, then, it becomes barren of real spirit. It becomes only a pattern for dogma and ritual, and ceremony and belief. You are a Christian; if you say 'I believe in salvation through the blood of Christ'. Yes, I believe, then you are a Christian. You are a very good Christian; so go your way. Do what you like, drink, smoke, break all the ten commandments, but you are a Christian. Religion has come to mean just accepting certain things which an institution has set to be the very heart of religion—a set of dogmas, and if you say you accept all this, then, you are a religious man. But, then, this is not religion. In each religion there is a certain spiritual content which has direct relevance to that part of you which is your innermost essential being, which is your innermost reality, a true, essential reality, and where religion fails to touch that part of your being, and loses its concern with that, and only concerns itself with the way in which you live, your social life and pattern of your social life, and your domestic life, whether you pay your tithe and whether you attend the Church regularly once in a week, or whether you go through all the various sacraments. You Baptise, and you are Christian. It is interested only in that but not in that highest part of you. It never asks you to question yourself or query 'What is the purpose of my life? Why have I come here? What have I to attain? What is the true meaning of my life? What is my goal?' In organised religions, the structure does not encourage you to ask these questions, does not insist that you raise these questions and seek an answer and make life a quest of that great goal which you ascertain through the answer. In such case, religion is not ministering to you in depth, while it is ministering to you on the surface. It fails to deal with you in that dimension of your being where you are the real being. Other dimensions are touched and affected, but that dimension is left untouched.

So, when the spiritual content in religion is no longer active, no longer progressive, then that religion has petrified. It is not alive in such cases. Yoga is a wonderful answer because the prime concern of Yoga is the spiritual reality within you, the attainment of the spiritual goal for which you have taken this human birth; that is the prime concern of Yoga. Yoga is the path to God-realisation. Yoga is the path of Divine Experience, and the Divine Experience is the heart of religion. Trying to attain God-realisation is the very heart, the very essence of religion. That is the inner spiritual core of religion, and where that spiritual core has been neglected and cast aside, and is forgotten, then religion is only there as a great forum; a great structure is there, but inside there is no one living. There are a hundred houses, only a built palace is there, no one is living. It is a deserted palace. Like

that, religion becomes a huge imposing structure with no life; and if such has become the religious life of any person, be he a Christian, a Catholic, a Protestant, a Jew, a Parsi, or a Mohammedan; if such it has become, then Yoga comes as life-giving waters, the living waters to revive that withering, languishing inner spiritual core, that innermost spiritual path that has been neglected and dried away. Yoga comes as the life-giving force. Once again it makes spring into life the spiritual centre of your religion. It makes your religion alive for you. It can make religion alive for anyone, be he a Christian or a Muslim, and it gives back to you the life within your religion. It is the common experience of many people that after Yoga came to them they started being really religious. After Yoga came to them a Christian became a real devoted Christian, started going to Church, started reading the Bible and trying to find out more interest in the words of Jesus, began to understand the meaning of many things he is now doing in the name of Christianity, which he otherwise stopped doing because he found it to be meaningless,—‘I find no meaning, it is mechanical’. It has no meaning, and once now he has found meaning, he begins to get interested in it. He begins to practise the teachings. Many things which were just meaningless once, become now meaningful. So one becomes a better Christian. In many cases Yoga has helped a person to find the inner meaning of his religion. He begins to see the reason behind the practice and then he begins to take more interest in his own religion, understand it better than he understood it before. Yoga restores to people whatever religion they may belong to. It restores to people the inner spiritual content of their religion. It restores to people the spiritual life which is the centre of any real religion, lacking which religion becomes merely an external facade. Yoga restores, makes it alive, makes it green, brings it forth into life. Yoga can be applied to Christianity and to any other religion.

In what way does it differ? That also we shall see. It differs in its refusing to accept the doctrine of ‘original sin’. It does not call man a sinner. It may call man a fool but it doesn’t call him a sinner. Man is God playing the fool, or, man is God who has lost his way home, wandered away, stumbling and running about in circles. It clears up the path, puts light and puts man on the path again and says, ‘go ahead now, go straight to your home’. So it doesn’t want you to consider yourself a sinner. And the other thing is this: Much of Christianity, unfortunately, in certain of its areas, becomes wholly a preoccupation with avoiding hell, trying to avoid hell, and somehow or other slip past the doors of heaven; somehow or other, even if you are not fully qualified for it. Yoga says: ‘This is a little childish, you have got something more glorious. Why do you play this game of heaven and hell?’ Yoga rejects hell, and Yoga rejects heaven also. Go to the Creator of heaven, the Master of heaven. Why heaven? Heaven is also a petty desire. You don’t want it. ‘I want God. I want to experience God, the Supreme Being, the Master of heaven’. Yoga concerns itself with God, not heaven or hell. You can say these are some of the differences, the way that Yoga differs from Christianity. It is where orthodox Christian doctrine differs from Yoga.

Yoga restores the most precious part of religion, which, unfortunately, by and large, is not present. In most of the major religions of the world, except in a microscopic section of people who enter into monastery for all life, the nuns and the monks, who somehow or other concentrate all their life upon this spiritual content, except for them, by and large, normally, the spiritual content is found to be lacking in religion. But since the impact of Yoga over the past fifty years, gradually, we see a very wonderful phenomenon, a revival is taking place in the Christian world, emphasising this inner spiritual aspect, your connection with this Godhead. There are many such examples. Some of them are working like the apostles. In the early days, some of them were really fired, like Pentecostal inspirations. They are all good signs. Yoga is presently doing that, restoring to religion

the religious life of any being. It restores to him the spiritual quality, the spiritual factor and that is the greatest thing that it does. It doesn't disturb your religion. It doesn't contradict your religion. In no way does it contradict anything. It says: 'wherever you are, whatever you are, try to find God, try to live a noble life. Purify yourself of the lower nature. Shine with virtue. Create in yourself divine qualities and awaken the divine within you, and move towards God.' That is the central message of Yoga. It can be harmoniously incorporated into any religion and the religious life of any being, any faith to enrich that religion and make it alive and take you towards the true goal which is the goal of any religion.

SRI SWAMI SIVANANDA AND HIS MESSAGE

Sri Swami Sivananda was a noble-souled man, filled with wonderful love in his heart, who lived all his life to make other people happy, the chief aim and objective of his life, and therefore he became a person beloved by countless people all over the world. He was himself very happy person and enjoyed to laugh and make other people laugh also. He was very humorous and radiated cheerfulness, made people forget all their sorrows and troubles, and brought joy and sunshine into their life. This he did to all people. He had no sense of difference between East or West, this country or that country, this race or that race, this religion or that religion. He was also a person of great compassion, understanding and sympathy. His personality was such that he immediately made everyone feel that they belonged to him and he belonged to them. He had no strangers in this world. For him, everyone was his. He simply showered his love upon all. It was a very strange thing to observe how even people who did not know his language and whose language he did not know, immediately felt a sense of oneness, the moment they came before him. He was a person of very simple nature. Many ministers, scholars, statesmen and other public figures came and offered their homage and respect to him. But he never felt himself big or great or in any way extraordinary. He was just natural and simple, almost childlike in his behaviour. But together with this absolute naturalness and simplicity deep wisdom was there in his head, for he had attained this nature through years of great penance and prayer in a very lonely place. Of course, he had some elements of this nature even previously from his young age. He was a kind and helpful person even during his school-days. He was very serviceable to elders and even strangers.

Later on, he qualified himself as a medical man and became a doctor. He travelled out of India to the Far-East where he served as a doctor. For about ten years he was in Singapore and Malaya doing such medical service with great love. This medical service-period of his was something that brought about a great change in his nature. He served the poor and the suffering people without any expectation of gain or reward. In those days, Malaya was the land of British rubber-planters. People of the East slaved and laboured for them in their great rubber-plantations. There were also tin-mines in which people worked. Indian labourers, Chinese labourers, Malayan labourers—all of them were thus working in these plantations and mines. He lived and worked near one a such very big plantation. And he grew in compassion, kindness and sympathy. He was moved by the pains and sufferings of these poor people. His large-hearted nature went out to them in great sympathy and friendliness. He became a brother to all and was something like a good Samaritan. He made no difference between day and night in his work. His door was open to all people at all times. Whenever a suffering man called on him, immediately he went to his side. And sometimes, because

they were very poor, he went and treated them freely. And at times he even offered them some money from his own pocket. This was the type of person that he developed into during those days.

At the same time, this contact with disease, human sorrow, human pain, suffering and death brought an inner awakening in him. He found the real nature of life on earth. He found it was not beautiful or sweet experience. He found that it was full of pain and suffering, disease and death. This brought in him the awakening of a religious consciousness. He felt that life here was painful and human body was an abode of much suffering and sorrow, and the soul within was in a state of bondage and imprisonment in human body. So his mind turned to philosophy. He read the lives and teachings of saints and philosophers, and he began to search for a way out of sorrow and pain. "Is there not a way by which man can transcend this present state? Is this the only state of experience available to man? Or is there another state of experience also within the reach of man,—another state where the imperfections, sorrows and pains of this present state will not be present, a state which will be marked by peace, joy, by true happiness which is absent here now?" This questioning and this quest drew him into the study of philosophy and the study of thought. He reflected and contemplated upon these questions. Ultimately it dawned upon him that there was a state full of blessedness, full of beatitude, full of peace and joy, and that state was within the reach of all human beings. So what previously people had attained, now also one can attain. Thus, he decided to dedicate himself to this attainment.

Suddenly a day came when he gave up his very successful practice, his popularity, his wealth, everything, and came away to India. He came as a lone wandering seeker and he turned his footsteps to North, towards the Himalayas. After weeks and months of travel he reached a quiet little village on the bank of the sacred river Ganga. It was a little place on the slope of hills, close to the Ganga bank. It was surrounded by mountains on all sides. Practically, civilised modern India ended at this spot, for, beyond this place were only the Himalayan mountains and the forests. It was the Northernmost part of India, where, in the Himalayan mountains, India ended and the land of Tibet began. And here he made it the place of his silent seclusion, penance, prayer and inner meditation. He reached this place sometime in 1923-24. For ten years he plunged himself in quiet meditation. He spoke very little, practised self-control, lived a simple life, served the neighbouring people with compassion and kindness. It was a place where only monks and such recluses lived. He served them. There were some villages with simple village-folk. He sometimes gave medical aid to them also. Otherwise, most of the time, he was sunk in prayer, meditation and study. This intensely lived life brought about spiritual illumination to this wonderful man. From that day onwards began his mission of calling to mankind towards this great attainment. He wanted to share his joy and peace with everyone. So he called to all people and said: "O friends! O beloved children! There is a way by which you can transcend all the sorrows and all the sufferings of this life and attain true peace and happiness in this life here. You have come only for this attainment. That is the main purpose of your life. And this is true life, a life that leads you to this great attainment, where sorrow vanishes and joy comes into your heart, where all the restlessness of the mind subsides and there comes peace, where there is no more inner darkness, where comes light within, and life becomes no more a thing of sorrow, true life becomes a thing of great joy."

This message which he brought into the life of countless beings, he gave the simple name of "Divine Life." He gave a simple universal name which did not have the label of any particular religion. A life that took you towards divine experience, a life that was lived in the knowledge that

within this physical body and this restless mind there is an all-perfect, divine principle. That eternal divine principle is of the very nature of absolute peace and radiant bliss. Within you is this hidden divinity. Within you is this immortal spirit. That is eternal existence. That is radiant, pure consciousness. That is bliss. That is peace. There is this foundation of joy within you. And leaving this, neglecting this, we are searching here and there, wandering in this world of external objects. We are trying in vain to seek for happiness in objects which are temporary, which are changeful, which are finite, full of defects. How can perishable, changeful, finite objects bring real happiness and satisfaction? This is impossible. And therefore man ever seeks for happiness where it is not to be found. And then he weeps and wails. He weeps and wails and does not know what is the reason of his sorrow. The reason of his sorrow is in him only. It is this primary state, this great error of thinking, that this imperfect world can give real happiness that is at the root of all sorrow in this world. There is no mistake in this outside world. The world does not stand up before you and say: "Come, O man, I will give you happiness!" The various things and objects in this world do not declare and say: "Yes, we are the source of happiness. We can give you happiness." So they do not promise anything; they do not cause disappointment. It is you who is expecting something and then cause this disappointment. So mistake lies not in the world but in man. And thus, from birth to death man wanders in this forest of earth-life, in this desert wilderness of perishable, changeful objects, ignorantly imagining that through these objects he can attain true happiness here. These objects can only give some temporary sense-satisfaction. A nice, beautiful form or colour can give a little satisfaction to the eyes. Some pleasant sound or an endearing word can give a little satisfaction to the ears. Some sweet taste can give a little satisfaction to the tongue. Some nice, soft touch can give a little pleasure to the sense of feeling. So these pleasant little experiences of a little pleasant taste, smell, touch, hearing and sight only give a little sense-satisfaction. This sense-satisfaction is not happiness. It is not joy. It is only upon the physical bodily level. It is a biological process, depending entirely upon your nervous system. This nervous system is part of this animal structure. This physical body is only the animal structure of your personality. If any part of your nervous system cannot function, then you cannot have this sensation. So all these fivefold sense-experiences are a matter of physical nervous process. This is not happiness. Happiness is an inward state of being. It is an inward state of mind and heart. And sometimes it just wells up from within, even when there is no object present at all. When you are sitting alone at times, when no desire troubles your mind, when there is no particular wish or want felt inside, and you are sitting at peace with yourself, you can experience a rare joy from within. This joy comes in the absence of any object or thing whatsoever.

This great truth, that joy is within, happiness is the very centre of your true being, and it has to be sought for inside and not outside, and that the more one runs outside it increases desire, the further one gets away from happiness and peace. This truth was given to every one by the teachings of our Master. But he was a realist and a practical man. Even though he gave this great ideal of Self-experience, he knew man has to live his normal life also. And he gave some practical suggestions and rules for daily living through which, even while living and fulfilling the duties of normal life and carrying on one's normal domestic, social and professional duties, man gradually grew into this state of self-management and inner control. This graduated discipline that he gave to man was the very essence of his Divine Life teachings. And he gave these rules and regulations of an utterly non-sectarian character, so that they did not interfere with the religion in which one was born or the religion and faith which one practised. These rules of Divine Life were such that anyone could incorporate it within one's own life without affecting one's belief and religious practices. He

embodied these teachings in twenty instructions. And in these Twenty Spiritual Instructions he put the essence of the teachings of all saints and sages. He said that this is religion in daily life. He said that this is the practice of religion, this is the science of religion. And the adoption of these rules made one move towards happiness and peace and move away from suffering and sorrow.

Be kind and friendly. Hate none. Dislike none. See only the good points in others and do not look into the defects of others. No one is perfect and no one is responsible as God made him what he is. Therefore, take things with a charitable view. See the good and ignore the false. If you want to see the false, see the false that is in you. And try to remove it and become a perfect person. Thus, practise kindness in daily life. Let your speech be free from anger and harshness. Speak sweetly and speak softly. Forgive people. Ever try to serve. Stick to truth. And thus, through selfless service of all, through the practice of kindness and compassion, through the practice of sweet speech, purify your heart. Develop a great love for the supreme universal principle which is the source of this entire universe. That is what is the very basis and source of both your being as well as the existence of this universe. Seeing that, attaining that, one attains fullness. In this present state of separation from that source of your being you are incomplete. Completeness and wholeness comes into your life when you regain once again your inner spiritual contact and relationship with That. And therefore, generate a great aspiration and a great longing for attaining the experience of That. Develop this inner hunger, this inner devotion, through practice of inner life. Be alive in your interior and grow in your inner life. Progress through prayer. Progress through daily contemplation. Progress through inner adoration. And try to practise ceaseless remembrance of that supreme divine principle. Do it in the midst of your daily life. Let your interior rest in that eternal Substance. Such a life is called Divine Life, for it is a life that takes you towards divine experience, it is a life that unfolds the divine nature that is inherent within you. It is a life that is lived in the awareness of the spiritual purpose of your life. It is a life where, through your thoughts, words and daily activities, you express the divine within you. It is a life where you manifest beauty, love and joy from within. Life is no longer a process of giving expression to your petty little selfish nature. It is not a process of petty selfish action, of anger, irritation, sharp words, fights and quarrels, petty enmities and jealousies, temper and restlessness, but it is a life which radiates compassion and kindness, friendliness and love, the spirit of selfless service, the desire to make others happy, the wish to be more and more useful to others. Such a life is called Divine Life. You become a blessedness to yourself. You bring joy into your home. You cause happiness to your parents and your own kith and kin. You bring friendliness, love and happiness in your own neighbourhood, amidst your friends, in the society in which you move, in short, in all fields of your active life. You move as a centre of blessedness. You fill yourself with joy and peace. You bring joy and peace to others also. But to do this you require self-control. If you are a slave of your own senses, you cannot live such a life. So, you require sense-control,—control over your mind and its desires, control over this ego and its selfishness. But you should not think that this discipline of control is something puritan. You should not think that this is austerity of monks and nuns. On the contrary, such discipline and such control is the symptom of real civilisation. These are the signs of true education. Such control and self-government over oneself and such denial of one's own desires in the higher desires to make others happy is the very essence of true culture. Civilisation, education, culture,—all are based upon such rational self-control. It is such self-control only which makes life worth living. A society or a community is truly rich and wealthy if it has men and women of such self-government. This is not a world-denying philosophy. For, don't forget, remember, that out of this temporary denial you are moving towards an abiding state of true joy and happiness. It is not a control and denial for its

own sake. You know, because this is the way to the attainment of true happiness. Thus, the goal is joy, the goal is happiness, the goal is peace and perfection. This is the way, and this is Divine Life.