

You are unique in the eyes of God. No one can replace you in the role that you fulfill in God's creation. Therefore, rejoice, and be grateful to the Lord that He has given you a role to perform.

Always remember that the worship of the God within you does not require any time or space or preconditions. Because wherever you are, He is there. To live in that awareness is to be always in a temple.

Swami Chidananda
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A DIVINE LIFE SOCIETY PUBLICATION



SADHANA— THE KEYNOTE OF GURUDEV'S TEACHINGS



Sri Swami Chidananda

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PUBLISHERS' NOTE

24th September 2016 marks the auspicious occasion of Birth Centenary of Worshipful Sri Swami Chidanandaji Maharaj. To commemorate this sacred occasion, the Headquarters Ashram has decided to bring out one hundred booklets comprising illuminating talks of Worshipful Sri Swami Chidanandaji Maharaj for free distribution.

To propagate Sadgurudev Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj's gospel of Divine Life, Worshipful Sri Swamiji Maharaj travelled extensively in India and abroad and showed the path of divine life to countless seekers through his spontaneous and highly inspiring lectures. His lectures, in Sadgurudev's words, are the outpourings of his saintly heart, the revelations of intuitive wisdom.

We are immensely happy to bring out some of his hitherto unpublished lectures in booklet form as our worshipful offering at his holy feet on the blessed occasion of his Birth Centenary. The present booklet '*Sadhana—The Keynote of Gurudev's Teachings*' is a compilation of his five inspiring talks at the sacred Samadhi Shrine during the year 1991 and 1995.

We express our heartfelt gratitude towards Shri Mukund Jere, Mrs. Moo Briddell, Mrs. Mary Dean and the inmates of the Headquarters Ashram for their loving service in transcribing, editing and compiling these talks.

May the abundant blessings of the Almighty Lord, Sadgurudev Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj and Worshipful Sri Swami Chidanandaji Maharaj be upon all.

—*The Divine Life Society*

1. PRAYER AT THE FEET OF DIVINE MOTHER AND GURUDEV¹

Radiant Atman! Sadhaks and seekers, gathered together in the spiritual presence of revered and beloved Holy Master Gurudev Swami Sivanandaji. May the grace of the Divine Mother and the choicest benediction of Holy Master be upon you all in your quest after an ideal life, in your quest after divine perfection, liberation and eternal blessedness on this 7th day of the annual worship of the Divine Mother. This is my special prayer at the feet of the Divine Mother and holy Master that they may bless you with the gift of awareness of your divine mission, bless you with the gift of constant awareness of the central purpose for which you have been sent to this earth plane. In the physical sense it is a plane of birth, old age, disease, death and sorrow. Yet in the spiritual sense it is a plane of evolution unto perfection, a plane for practising Dharma and attaining enlightenment. Physically, it may be a plane of sorrow and suffering, but spiritually it is a plane for completing the ascent of the Spirit towards its divine destiny. And all of you being immortal souls, being parts of the Supreme Being, for you it is not the physical aspect that counts much, but rather your spiritual nature, that being your real element. Not so much the brief physical sojourn, but rather that life really and truly means to you this sublime and glorious spiritual process of ascending into a state of divine illumination and God-consciousness. May this awareness of

1 Talk given at Sri Samadhi Mandir on 1/10/95

the central purpose of your presence here be given to you by Divine Mother and Holy Master, so that you may live upon the basis of this awareness. For to forget this truth becomes the source of all sorrow and confusion. But to live in awareness becomes the fulfillment of your divine mission. Therefore I am praying to Holy Master and to the Divine Mother that this great spiritual awareness may be bestowed and your life may be lived in this awareness. Here is the prayer to them thus earnestly and sincerely on behalf of each and every one of you.

Hari Om Tat Sat!

2. SADHANA—THE KEYNOTE OF GURUDEV’S TEACHINGS²

Radiant Immortal Atman! Beloved and blessed children of the Divine, Jijnasus and Mumukshus! A Jijnasu is one who is in quest of knowledge, Jnana. A Mumukshu is one who is desirous of liberation or Moksha. It is with a quest, a desire for knowledge—to know the purpose of life, how to live it effectively, what is Dharma, what is Adhyatma (spirituality)—that you have come here. Through Sravana (listening), through Satsanga, you wish to imbibe knowledge that may help you to live in a more effective manner. Therefore, you are a Jijnasu.

You want this knowledge because you have been told and you believe that such knowledge may help you to attain liberation from pain, sorrow, suffering, fear, anxiety, all the unpleasant, negative experiences a person is subjected to on this earth plane. During this life span, one is subjected to sorrow as well as joy, pain as well as pleasure, misery as well as happiness. And whereas the latter is desirable, no one wants the former. So the human quest is for liberation from these undesirable, painful experiences, which make one suffer.

Simultaneously, the human quest is also for the attainment of all the positive, pleasurable experiences, Sukha, Ananda, Shanti, Tripti, Santosha comfort, convenience, joy, happiness, pleasure. And due to the belief that knowledge

² Talk given at Sri Samadhi Mandir on 18/9/91

gained here may help you in fulfilling this central quest, you have come for instruction, guidance, inspiration, study and reflection. Therefore, you are Mumukshus. You are Sadhakas actively engaged in spiritual Sadhana.

With the intention of meeting the needs of Sadhakas, Jijnasus, Mumukshus, Satsangis such as you, Gurudev long ago decided to provide a handy manual giving all the necessary information about spiritual life, Yoga and Sadhana. One who is keenly desirous of a life of Sadhana will find all the material to immediately launch into the life of Sadhana and commence a practical spiritual life of daily practices.

To this end, he did not want to leave anything untouched. He wanted to include everything. Therefore this compact volume gives the essence of all the Yoga paths—Hatha Yoga, Karma Yoga, Bhakti Yoga, Raja Yoga, Jnana Yoga, Japa Yoga, Laya Yoga. It gives invaluable practical instructions on how to successfully carry on such Sadhana, how to arrange your day from morning till night, what time to allot for what Sadhana and then how to keep watch upon it, so that at a glance you will be able to know how well you are proceeding. You will be in a position to key yourself up periodically, to take specific resolves, and to keep the intensity of the Sadhana at a desired pitch and not let it slacken. Thus beloved Gurudev provided for us in this compact manual everything that is necessary and useful to a Sadhaka.

This manual is given to every person upon enrolling as a member of the Divine Life Society as part of the package with

the significant name ‘Sadhana Set’, and the name of the manual is ‘Essence of Yoga’.

The very purpose of membership in the Divine Life Society is to commence an active and progressive spiritual life. It is to know everything about spiritual Sadhana and to know about the very essence of the different types of Yoga. Therefore, if you want to know about Sadhana, obtain a copy of this book and study it diligently. You will understand yourself, your mind, and you will understand the finer points of spiritual life and the secret of Yoga Sadhana. It is given in a very concise way, yet not leaving any essential point out. Thus equip yourself with the knowledge of right Sadhana, and proceed upon the path.

Sadhana is directing all your activities towards the ultimate experience of the great Reality, Sad-Darshana. For this we always pray ‘asato ma sadgamaya’. From our birth we have lived only amidst passing unrealities, amidst this changing phenomenal appearance. That is our only knowledge, our only experience. But we have been told that there is something higher than this, something that does not pass, which is Nitya, permanent. Because it is Nitya, it is Satya. Therefore, we want Darshan of the Sat, and the ancient prayer is: ‘Lead us from unrealities to the great Eternal Reality, the Cosmic Reality’.

It is very difficult to believe that what we perceive, what we live right in the middle of, what we experience day after day, is not the reality. Whereas, that which you have never perceived, about which you have no knowledge, that which you have never experienced—neither the nose has smelt it,

nor the eye has seen it, nor the hands have touched it, nor the ear has heard it, nor the tongue has tasted it—that is the reality.

Therefore, Sraddha (faith) is required in the Apta Vakya (words of a trustworthy person), in the Shruti Vakya (words of the Vedas), in the Guru Vakya (words of the Guru). The Shrutis, the saints, sages, mystics and world teachers and your own Guru have no axe to grind. They have no ulterior motives, nothing to gain by misleading you, telling you something which is not true. They have no self-interest. Therefore you must believe.

The Shrutis proclaim that which is conducive to your highest welfare. They proclaim it without any motivation, without any purpose except to benefit you. Therefore, believe in the Apta Vakya, believe in the Shruti Vakya, believe in the Guru Vakya! For, if in this universe there is anything totally unselfish, it is Shrutis, it is the great immortal teachers who have attained everything. Their hearts are full; they have no more desires. Such ones cannot misguide you. Therefore, believe, have faith, have Sraddha.

You should not think that a logical and rational approach in any way excludes faith, that they are incompatible; “Faith is blind, whereas we want to know. We want everything to be proved before we believe, because we are rational people”. Our ancients discovered a super-rational approach to the great Reality. They were people of keen intellect, they were incisive, sharp, probing, analytical. They were a hundred times more logical, rational and scientific than any of us. But these Jnanis, practicing the Vichara Marga,

Jnana Yoga, Vedanta, said, “sraddhavan labhate jnanam” (The man who is full of faith obtains knowledge). They also declared that if you wish to listen to the exposition of Vedantic truths, one of the virtues you must equip yourself with is Sraddha, faith, belief.

Go through the ‘Essence of Yoga’ devoutly. The great heart of Swami Sivanandaji had only one desire, and that is your highest welfare, your highest good. It was you he was thinking about when he produced all his great literature. He was not thinking of himself. He was thinking firstly of you, secondly of you and thirdly also only of you. He wanted to benefit you. He was thinking of your success in life. He was thinking of your highest good and welfare, of your happiness. Therefore, with faith and devotion, sincerely make an attempt to earnestly study the wisdom teachings of Gududev Swami Sivanandaji. That is the greatest investment. You could not do a wiser thing than this.

But, you must have earnestness and sincerity. You must not have only curiosity in Yoga and spiritual life. There should be deep earnestness to imbibe the knowledge and to start living the life, to plunge into practice. This is one thing needed.

Sadhana was the keynote of worshipful Gurudev’s teachings. Sadhana was the central theme of all his writings. Sadhana was the thing that he wanted you to actively live in your daily life; he wanted you to give it a central place.

How to do Sadhana? In what manner to set about doing it? What are all the helpful practices to further it? To impart this knowledge to you, he carefully wrote “Twenty Important

Spiritual Instructions” which has been translated into all the Indian languages and has spread everywhere throughout the world. He also compiled and produced “Sadhana Tattva”, the Science of Seven Cultures, which contains a carefully graded series of thirty-two instructions covering Health Culture, Energy Culture, Ethical Culture, Will Culture, Heart culture, Psychic Culture and Spiritual Culture. He compiled, “Twenty Hints on Meditation”, the Resolve Form, Daily Routine Timetable and the Spiritual Diary. He put the essence of all of them into the Universal Prayer. And almost everything that I have just now mentioned, you will find in the Essence of Yoga, which you cannot purchase because it is not for sale. It is given only to genuine Sadhakas who want to commence serious spiritual practice in their daily life.

Therefore, if you wish to know how to lead a life of spiritual Sadhana, you could do no better than to obtain this book by becoming a member of the Divine Life Society. Then commence living a spiritual life in a systematic way. That is how Gurudev lived. That is why he left behind him a Sivananda Ashram. That is why he left behind him a Divine Life Society—in order that you may do spiritual Sadhana, you may move towards God. You must seek the Immortal and become blessed.

Who is a member of the Divine Life Society? A member is a Sadhaka engaged in spiritual practices with an earnest desire, earnest aspiration, to improve one’s life, to spiritualise one’s activities, to live in a Yogic way, so that life becomes a process of gradually ascending towards the supreme Goal.

Ponder well this aspect of your personality, and see whether you are well established in this great aspiration, this great ideal of being a Sadhaka. Ponder well and see whether you have acquired all the qualifications of a Sadhaka, whether day by day you are improving these qualifications and becoming a true Mumukshu, a true Jijnasu, becoming established in Yama and Niyama, becoming established in Viveka, in Vairagya, in the Shat-Sampada, in Mumukshutva, becoming well established in all these important aspects or the preparatory Sadhanas.

Constantly keep analysing your life. Be so much absorbed in it that you have no time for miscellaneous thinking and activities, because you are earnest, you are sincere, you are focused upon your most important vocation, your spiritual Sadhana. Ultimately it will take you to supreme blessedness, crown your life with peace, bliss, fearlessness and freedom. That is the objective of Sadhana. Therefore, be a sincere, practical Sadhaka.

May Gurudev’s choicest blessings be with you in this great adventure! May the divine grace of God grant you steady, unhampered progress and grant you fulfillment in your Sadhana!

Hari Om Tat Sat!

3. SADHANA—A SACRED RESPONSIBILITY IN THE DIVINE DECADE³

Radiant Immortal Atman, beloved and blessed children of the Divine, devotees of the Lord, Sadhakas who are gathered here under the auspices of the Divine Life Society's 'Divine Decade' programs and projects, by which we seek to serve all fellow beings in this world. We seek to serve them ethically and spiritually in particular and in all ways in general, in and through this Society established by our worshipful and beloved Gurudev Sri Swami Sivanandaji more than a half century ago, on the banks of Divine Mother Ganga, in this hallowed Uttarakhand.

Under the auspices of the Divine Decade, we have been prompted to undertake certain specific projects and numerous programs all over India as well as overseas, so that during the closing years of this twentieth century the Divine Life Society may be instrumental in playing its part in helping humanity move towards the next century in a manner that might be wiser and better than in this century.

With wisdom, from sweet and bitter lessons learned during the past nine decades may we strive to make the remaining years of this century better years. May they be years of discipline, of purification, of giving a right direction to our thoughts, words and actions. May they be years during

3 Talk given at Sri Samadhi Mandir on 17/9/91

which we equip ourselves with more divine qualities, so that we may play an effective part in bringing about peace, harmony, brotherly love, mutual goodwill, and in cooperation with all people of goodwill the all-round welfare of human society in this world of ours.

To this end we are trying to imbibe right ideas, to give a right direction to our thought, for thought is the key to human life, both present and future. It is thought and the quality of thought that leaves its imprint upon human actions, what a human individual is and does, what he makes of his life. Does his life affect all beings around him positively, or does it have a negative influence? Does it constitute a helpful contribution towards the happiness and welfare of those with whom God has put him, or is it contrary?

That which decides the outcome and the ultimate effect of our life upon other lives is our thought, our motivations, the overt as well as the covert motives that are behind our mental, verbal and physical actions. And it is not only that we become what our thoughts, sentiments and motivations make us, but our thoughts govern our actions which are felt by all life around us. Our thought becomes a factor affecting others, causing within them happiness or misery, peace or restlessness. We have to be careful of our thought, not only for its effect upon us and our lives, but also because of its effect upon other people and their lives.

We can pollute the atmosphere around us by our thoughts. We can purify a polluted atmosphere and make it clean, make it holy, make it sacred, by our thoughts. Thoughts do not merely make our interior either sublime or

base, they pervade the whole world and enter into other people’s minds and hearts, affecting their lives.

We live in a human situation. We live in constant mutual exchange with other human beings. It is a vital, dynamic relationship, not a passive one. By our thoughts we affect and influence the very pattern and quality of life around us. We move about playing this role, shouldering a sacred responsibility until our last breath.

A mother has a sacred responsibility towards her children. What she is, the vibrations that emanate from her through her thoughts and emotions, whether they are Sattvic, Tamasic or Rajasic, spiritual or unspiritual, gross or elevating and subtle, is her responsibility. It has to be her lookout; it has to be her concern.

There is a book called ‘No Man Is an Island’ by Thomas Merton. A mother in a family cannot think of herself as being an isolated being: “I can live my own life, go my own way. I can harbour any thoughts I like, good, bad or indifferent, put myself in any mental mood, even throw temper tantrums, I can make my personality the playground for all types of thoughts or emotions.” A mother cannot think like that. She is not an island. She is part of a family. Her inner states and the manifestation of these states affect her children, her husband, her in-laws, her servants, her friends and her neighbours.

A father cannot think that he is an isolated being and can thus indulge in any thoughts. He would be doing the greatest service if he were to realise the sacred, ethical and psychological duty and responsibility he owes to the home

and family atmosphere, to his wife and children, and to his brothers and their families, if they are a joint family.

Children are not isolated beings. They cannot throw their responsibility to their parents to the winds and say: “We are young people, we are a privileged, distinct class by ourselves. We can have our way; we can make our day.” It would be the height of ingratitude and folly for children to feel that they owe nothing to their parents who have toiled for them, suffered for them and exerted themselves for their upbringing. It would be the height of ingratitude.

In this way, starting from the most basic unit of human society, a single family, we are constantly a centre of influence. Will that influence be elevating and uplifting or degrading and demeaning? What is to be your contribution to your home, to your place of work, to your immediate environment? This needs to be pondered. This needs to be considered each day.

In the twentieth century we have so far witnessed a steady overall downgrading of the human ethos. The standards of human behaviour both inside and outside the home have fallen. The result is confusion in society with chaotic conditions prevailing in all countries, causing great concern to those who feel for the human condition. Everywhere is a cry that moral standards have broken down, have been rejected, thrown to the winds, and humanity is reaping the bitter results of this breakdown in the form of various diseases, uncertainties due to the increase in crime. The results are conflicts, violence, loss of peace, fear, anxiety and unhappiness, leading to high blood pressure, heart

disease, neuroses, insomnia, nervous breakdown, psychotic conditions and downright insanity. People go berserk and do things which cause widespread harm and destruction to others.

It is in the context of this present situation that the Divine Decade acquires relevance, however humble it may be. They say that little drops of water make the mighty ocean, and that little stars make up the Milky Way. Nothing is wasted. If you generate within yourself one single good thought, one sublime, noble emotion, one pure Bhav, one great purposeful Sankalpa, or one thought filled with great goodwill, with universal love, towards all existence—if you generate one such thought and project it outwards, then that thought will go around the whole globe; it can influence the whole of humanity, people living in the remotest regions in far-away jungles and hills or people living in the din and bustle of crowded cities.

Such thoughts have the capacity to bring about a lasting impact, in keeping with the nature of that particular thought. Positive thoughts can elevate, while negative thoughts can depress. That is why your ancient forefathers in this holy land of India established a tradition of the human individual waking up in the morning and visualising the entire globe—all living beings on this plane, on the planes below and on the planes above—and directing thoughts of peace, thoughts of love, thoughts of goodwill, harmony and brotherhood.

This ancient tradition established by your ancestors was done with the full knowledge that each human individual

affects all human individuals. And if you are not careful, if you do not keep an ever alert, watchful doorkeeper on the door of your personality, allowing only kind thoughts and dismissing anything of the contrary, then you can also be on the receiving end of negative thought trends.

Therefore, they say you should always keep your mind occupied with noble, sublime thinking. Then there will be no scope for anything else to have its impact upon you. On the contrary, you should be an active, positive contributor to human thought, activity and life in the right direction, giving thinking and feeling an upward dimension.

In this context devotees of God, spiritual people, Sadhakas like you who have adopted the Divine Life ideal as your pattern of living, have a special duty, a special responsibility. Or we can also say that you have a special privilege, a great good fortune, of making use of your life to contribute to the overall welfare of human society today, especially during these last few years of the present century.

You are supremely blessed; you are most fortunate. God has showered grace upon you. Saints, sages and mystics of the present and recent past have bestowed upon you untold benedictions by coming to you in the form of their wisdom teachings and lifting your life to a more elevated plane.

Therefore you can do much for yourself and for present day human society by living a life of aspiration, by your universal love, your sense of renunciation, your sense of goodwill towards all beings, your spirit of service and selflessness. A Sadhaka is the salt of the earth, a blessing, a precious asset of mankind.

Therefore introspect, look at your life, the state of your interior, the feelings that you harbour, the thoughts that you allow to be actively present in your mind. Do they make you a positive, elevating, enabling factor in human society? Are you a boon and a blessing to mankind? What is your place, your role, what is the effect of your life upon your fellow human beings?

You are a Sadhaka, a devotee of God, one who is trying to lead a sublime, divine life of selflessness, service, devotion, worship, spiritual discipline, control of the senses, conquest of the mind, meditation and aspiration. This constitutes your personality. You are the embodiment of purity and truthfulness. You shine with noble character. You are following the path of Sadachara, good conduct. Your whole life is guided by Dharma.

Being such a Sadhaka, how much good can and should you do to humanity of today! Day by day improve. Let everything that constitutes your personality improve day after day. Thus let your individuality, your capacity as a Sadhaka and your life of Sadhana be your contribution to the 'Divine Decade'!

Hari Om Tat Sat!

4. THE DYNAMIC PROCESS OF INTROSPECTION IN SADHANA⁴

Glorious Immortal Atman! Great is your good fortune this morning to be in close proximity to the presence of the Adi Guru, the Trimurti Avatara, Lord Dattatreya. His miraculous advent was the outcome of Pativrata Dharma (the virtue of single minded devotion to the husband) of the great Sati Anasuya and the power of Tapasya of the great Maharshi Atri. On this hill Lord Dattatreya is Aranyavasi Dattatreya (living in a forest), not Nagaravasi (living in a city) or Gramavasi (living in a village). In this Tapo Bhumi the Lord is in Tapasya Ki Mudra (in a posture of penance). He is in seclusion. He is in the forest, gazing at the Ganga.

Lord Dattatreya was the outcome of two of the greatest life-transforming forces that the ideal of the Vedic way of life has held out before all sincere seekers, all genuine aspirants. Indeed, the culture of spiritual India was the outcome of these two great forces.

One is the force of penance, of prayer, of austerity, of Tapasya. Through Tapasya Vishvamitra was able to create a second Svarga for Trishanku. What cannot be done? Through Tapasya Brahma understood Himself. He became Veda, and out of Him this knowledge came forth. Through Tapasya He created this world. Through Tapasya is this world sustained.

Tapasya is controlling oneself and shining like fire. Tapasya imparts to the Tapsasvi this quality of fire. Due to

4 Talk given at Sri Samadhi Mandir on 19/9/91

Sattvic Tapas created by overcoming oneself, using the power of Samyama (self-control), one shines with this inner fire. The power of Tapasya of Maharshi Atri obliged the Trimurtis to incarnate in his home.

The second power is the power of chastity, purity of thought, word and action, purity of motives, inner motivation. What is behind your actions, behind your behaviour? Are you aware of it? If not, you better become aware through introspection, self-analysis, self-examination.

This Sadhana is the key to improvement. There is no other way. This is the only way to progress. Progress in the spiritual life, in the path of Sadhana is only possible if you are earnestly introspective, if you sincerely analyse yourself; if you don't allow self-love or a subtle partiality to creep in, if you are not inclined one way or the other. If you are sincere in your self-examination, earnest in your introspection, then no one can stop your progress, provided you do it in a spiritual way, not in any other way.

If your self-examination and analysis is not spiritual, you will only end up by finding everything wonderful inside yourself, everything admirable, praiseworthy; you want to justify it, and you are greatly satisfied with everything. It will be like blowing air into a balloon. This is a very subtle trick of the mind which only true Sadhakas are able to perceive. You will look within, you will seemingly analyse, but if it is not done in the correct manner, with ruthless impartiality, then the analysis will not reveal what you do not want to see. It will only reveal what you don't mind seeing. And so it takes you nowhere.

However, if there is a genuine earnestness and sincerity to improve, to move towards Divinity and to shine, then this process will be carried on always. Just like Vichara and Viveka, they are not meditation room Sadhanas. Vichara and Viveka are not Sadhanas that you engage in at certain times, sitting on a particular Asana. That is alright for Vedantic Vichara. But spiritual Vichara and Viveka, Dharmic Vichara and Viveka, Yogic Vichara and Viveka are to be done from the moment you wake up in the morning until you go to sleep at night. They are dynamic processes of Sadhana that have to be continuously kept going, that are to be with you always, entering into every one of your activities. You must keep on analysing, correcting your direction, removing veils and discovering truths. This has to be kept up.

In the same way, analysis and scrutiny of one’s inner motivations is an ongoing Sadhana. It has to go along with you in Vyvahara. In this way one can grow in purity. The power of purity of thought, word and deed is acquired by constant self-introspection, self-examination, the scrutiny and analysis of one’s inner motives. Gurudev was never tired of reiterating this important point. Scrutinise your inner motives. Introspect. Daily set aside some time with a view to discovering hidden things, so that you can strengthen that which is desirable and eradicate that which has no place within you.

So, both these processes should be kept going—on the one hand, eradication, and on the other hand, improvement, development and cultivation. And this can be done only if

you introspect, analyse and know yourself—know yourself mentally, intellectually, psychologically and ethically.

This is not the Vedantic enquiry of “Who am I?” This is not the enquiry of the Sat as distinct from the Asat, of the Nitya as distinct from the Anitya, or of the Svarupa as distinct from the Upadhis. This is a different enquiry, at a lesser level, but at a very important level. It is a very important part of Sadhana.

Know yourself first upon this lesser level of consciousness, which is where you have to constantly live your Vyavaharic life. If that life is not of the proper quality, the very setting for your higher, inner, subtler Sadhana will be unsuitable. How can Sadhana progress unless the soil is of the right kind? No seed will sprout; no fruit will be produced. The frame in which you do your inner, subtler Sadhana of Japa, meditation, prayer, worship etc. is provided by your daily life, by your interchange and association with people, by your normal activities. Therefore, analyse, introspect, scrutinise your inner motives. Let everything be first rate, pure, Sattvic, godly, divine, spiritual. This is Sadhana.

If you are deliberately acting with some concealed motive, that is bad enough. But not to know with what motive you are acting is still worse. The first is hypocrisy. The second is ignorance. Ignorance is ten times worse than hypocrisy. Hypocrisy is a very terrible thing but ignorance is still worse. It is ignorance that prevents you from realizing what great harm you are doing to yourself, by trying to deceive God and trying to deceive man. And in that process you are deceiving yourself also.

Sri Ramakrishna used to tell his disciples, “Human beings are going about deluded, not knowing what is their own good, their own welfare, yet they think themselves to be very clever and shrewd. They think they can fool everyone and get away with it. They are like a crow. You can catch other birds, but the crow is always alert and it immediately flies away if it is approached. So it thinks that it is the most clever among birds and more clever than man. But then, what does it do? It lives on filth, on the dirtiest of things. It thinks itself to be very clever, but at the same time it does not know what a dirty life it is living.”

So, one who is very clever and wants to subtly maneuver and conceal, does not know what a very despicable life he is leading. He thinks himself to be very intelligent, that he can deceive everyone, that he can put himself across as a wonderful person. But you cannot deceive the indwelling God. O fool! You do not know that He knows you inside out. Everything that you think you have concealed is already known to Him.

Therefore, do not fool yourself, do not deceive yourself. Be sincere. Be earnest. Be without guile. Be without this subtle crookedness inside. Be like a real child before God, innocent and pure at heart. This is a great desideratum. Anasuya was like that, and the Trimurtis had to accept their defeat, confess who they were and become her children.

And so Dattatreya is the very embodiment of chastity and purity, of two great cornerstones of Sadhana, which should come automatically and naturally to you, because you are the ever-pure Atman. You are Divinity. In you there is no

impurity. And Tapasya should come to you naturally also. If awareness is there, keen discrimination, if you identify yourself with the higher aspect of your being, you will always be established on the spiritual level and never allow the lesser aspects of your being to overcome you. Because it is only when you forget yourself and identify with the lesser aspects of your being that you yield to their impulses.

Sadhana is this inner process of growing in divinity, minus ego. If the ego accompanies this growth into Godliness, then it is not complete; it is not genuine. Ego has no place in it. That means it is still binding you, keeping you down, because ego belongs to the other nature, to the delusion, not to the Svarupa. Therefore, Sadhana is growing in Godliness minus ego. It is growing in Godliness with Brahmatva and Atma-Bhava, not Jívatva. Ponder deeply this point. This is the truth.

Hari Om Tat Sat!

5. THE ESSENCE OF SADHANA⁵

Radiant Immortal Atman! During the early morning prayer and meditation fellowship in the presence of Gurudev in the Samadhistan the standard practice is to come out of silent meditation with three long drawn Pranavas: OM, OM, OM. Thus one gradually comes from a state of inwardness into Bahirmukhatva (outwardness), from a state of inner silence, of deep inversion of the mind, to active sense-perception of your environment. And it is noteworthy that at the end of the three Pranava Ucharanas, when you open your eyes, it is the practice to chant:

*Namostvanantaya sahasramurtaye
Sahasrapadakshi shirorubahave
Sahasranamne purushaya shashvate
Sahasrakoti yugadharine namah*

(Salutations to the Infinite, the One with a thousand forms, with a thousand feet, thousand eyes, thousand heads, thousand thighs and thousand arms. Salutations to the One who has a thousand names, who is the Eternal Person, who supports the thousands of crores of ages).

Thus, when the meditator, who has been meditating upon the one great Reality, the supreme, imponderable eternal Truth, the ultimate Divine Being who alone exists, when he comes out of the contemplation of this *Ekameva advitiyam Brahma* (Brahman, the One without a second), the *Antaratma* (inner Self), what does he do? He makes the

5 Talk given at Sri Samadhi Mandir on 20/9/91

necessary provision so that this inner contemplation of the supreme Divine Reality is not lost. This deep meditation, the inner dwelling on the Divine, is meant to smoothly continue in the waking state also, even when one is aware of all the multifarious names and forms in the outer environment.

Whatever one sees, hears, tastes, touches, smells, whatever one becomes aware of and dwells upon, is to be brought within the stream of the meditative consciousness. These factors are not meant to bring about a break and draw you away from that inner dwelling upon the Divine, but on the contrary, emerging into the waking state should be a continuation of the contemplation of the Divine, Atma Chintana, Tattva Chintana, Bhagavat Dhyana. Hence, this glorification of the Cosmic Form, “*Namostvanantaya sahasramurtaye sahasrapadakshishirorubahave*. I salute that Being, the infinite, the endless Being, Who has innumerable heads and hands and feet”. This means that I behold all forms as His forms. Everywhere He is. He alone has taken this Cosmic Form. Sahasra is a symbol of the innumerable, of the uncountable.

Thus inner meditation is smoothly made to prevail in the waking state. It is to continue. Nothing is to change. God is beheld in and through the world. This vision of the world is then succeeded by:

Tvameva mata cha pita tvameva
Tvameva bandhuscha sakha tvameva
Tvameva vidya dravinam tvameva
Tvameva sarvam mama deva deva

(You are my mother, You are my father. You are my relative and friend. You are my knowledge and my wealth. You are my all in all.)

In sleep you are, as it were, in a temporary state of non-being, a temporary state of death. The body is inactive, the senses are inoperative, the mind is hushed into silence, and the intellect does not function. There is only a mysterious state of non-being where the very awareness of your own self is lost. That is the mysterious state of Nidra, ever recurring, but never fathomed, never comprehended. Its importance is very great for the Vedantin, but we bypass it; it misses our attention. This is Maya.

However, at least in the one effective state, the waking state, we must not allow Maya to prevail upon our consciousness. We must not be in a state of self-forgetfulness, having opened our eyes and recognised the indwelling presence of God in the environment, in all things, through the first hymn of *namostvanantaya sahasramurtaye*. The next logical step is—“Now that I have come into this waking state, into an awareness of Your created universe and the things in it, grant O Lord that there may be no doubt, not the least shadow of a doubt about what I am seeking, what is my true quest. Grant, O Lord, that I may not be deluded by these passing appearances of things created by You, that I may not be deluded by their power of attraction, by the Akarshana Sakti of Maya. May I not lose my direction and forget my goal. May I not turn away from You and place value upon these

passing petty things and thus lose contact with You. May it not be so, O Lord.

“Grant that in this new day my only value may be you. May I live in the fullest knowledge, awareness and Bhava, that You are my all in all. I have none in my life greater or more precious than You. You are the only value, the supreme value. You are my mother, You are my father, You are my relative and friend. You are my wisdom, You are my wealth, You are my all in all. Bless me that I may go through this day firmly based upon this conviction, this Bhava, that God is the highest value to me—God first!”

Next comes the ideal of Paropakara (doing good to others), selflessness. Because the self is the obstacle between man and God. The self is the obstacle between the Sadhaka and the Sadhyavastu (thing to be attained). The self is the obstacle between the devotee and the Divine. Therefore, this self has to be set aside. What is the first word in the Divine Life crest? Serve! It implies service without a selfish motive, with absolute selflessness. This selflessness is the very essence of Karma Yoga. Selflessness is the quintessence of Vedanta. “Then shall I be free, when I shall cease to be. For it is in dying to the little self that one attains to everlasting life.”

All mystics, all saints and sages, all masters of wisdom have tried to bring home to us the truth that we constitute the barrier to our attaining the Divine. “Thus help me, O Lord, to move through this new day, that you have gifted to me, in the

firm awareness that You are my all in all—*tvameva sarvama mama deva deva*. Let me not be attracted by anything lesser than You. May I keep You as the only, whole and sole goal of my existence. May I live to dwell upon You. May I live to attain You. May I live to ever become established in You.”

This is the significance of the sequence of three recitations of Pranava followed by beholding the whole universe as veritable manifestations of the Divine in innumerable ways. We behold the Divine in whatever we may see or hear.

*Yat cha kinchid jagat sarvama drishyate srutyate api va
Antarbahish cha tatsarvama vyapya Narayanah sthitah*

Whatever in the world is seen or heard, pervading all that internally and externally, Lord Narayana is present).

Purusha evedam sarvama yad bhutam yat cha bhavyam

All this is verily the Supreme Person, that which has manifested and that which will manifest.

Yo mam pashyati sarvatra sarvama cha mayi pashyati

Tasyaham na pranashyami sa cha me na pranashyati

He who sees me everywhere, and sees everything in Me, he never becomes separated from Me, nor do I become separated from him.

Again and again the indispensable necessity of adopting this view and vision and each day dwelling in this view and vision has been brought home to us by the scriptures.

Tasya ko mohah, ka shokah, ekatvam anupashyatah

Where is delusion, where is grief for the one who sees oneness?

Thus Sadhana becomes sustained. There is no break in the stream of divine contemplation. Inner meditation and outer perception blend into a process of God-awareness, of dwelling upon the Divine. This spirit must be kept up. “Within and without, I behold only Thee”.

The very revered and beloved Swami Omkar Maharaj of the Mission of Peace once gave expression to this vision by posing a question in one of his birthday messages. “I wish to behold Him, to dwell upon Him. Therefore, let me close my eyes in order to see Him, for He dwells within me ever. But as I close my eyes and go into meditation, the thought arises, ‘why should I close my eyes in order to perceive Him within when He is everywhere present in all things in this universe?’ This is the way I feel nowadays. There is neither special meditation, nor is there Vyavahara. All is dwelling upon the Divine.”

In this spirit the provision is made, that when you come out of morning meditation and emerge into the waking state, the dwelling upon the Divine will continue and prevail. It is to be kept up. “Start the day with the Lord. End the day with the Lord. Fill the day with the Lord. This is the way to the Lord.” This is the quintessence of Sadhana, dwelling in the Divine always.

In the eleventh Skanda of the Srimad Bhagavata Mahapurana, the parting advice of Bhagavan Sri Krishna to His most beloved friend and companion Uddhava is: “O

Uddhava, where am I not? Contemplate Me and bow down to Me and adore Me in all things and beings”. Thus He brings home to us the same truth.

This is the link and the unbroken connection between inner contemplation and outer Vyavahara. Ever we are in God and God alone. Thus may He bestow upon you this vision of His Omnipresence. Thus may He fill your entire life. May not Sadhana just be some part or portion of your life. May this spirit of Sadhana and the divine vision of Sadhana be your total life. May God thus grace you! May Gurudev thus bless you!

Hari Om Tat Sat!

