

SPECIAL INSIGHTS INTO SADHANA

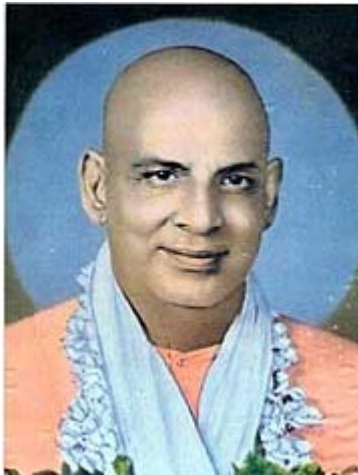
No. 6

By

SRI SWAMI CHIDANANDA

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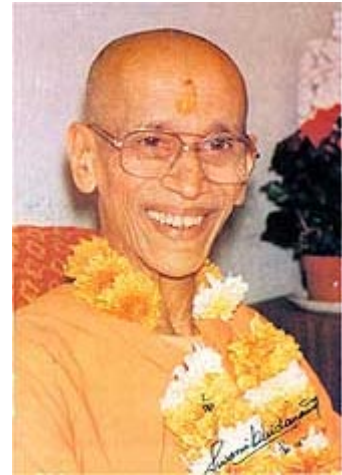
Early Morning Meditation Talks



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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Special Insights into Sadhana
on
Gurudev's Sannyasa
Guru Purnima
Gurudev's Samadhi
Gurudev's Call

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PUBLISHERS' NOTE

This special series of eight booklets is being published between September 1996 and September 1997 in honour of the 80th Birthday Anniversary of H.H. Sri Swami Chidanandaji Maharaj, the President of the Divine Life Society.

Each booklet contains several of his early morning meditation talks given on special spiritual occasions in the sacred Samadhi Hall of the holy founder of the Divine Life Society and Sivananda Ashram, H.H. Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj. The series of eight booklets covers the entire year of special occasions and festivals celebrated in the Ashram.

The talks contain penetrating insights into the meaning and purpose of *sadhana* as Swamiji takes advantage of these occasions to point out the fundamentals required for success in the spiritual quest such as devotion to the goal, discrimination, obedience to the Guru, faith in God and oneself, and a divinely lived life.

The spiritual advice and encouragement contained in these booklets will be an inspiration and help to earnest spiritual seekers throughout the world.

THE DIVINE LIFE SOCIETY

PREFACE

The whole year for the Hindu is a continuous observance of some sacred day of worship or other. The year is completely built around a great many days of sacred worship of various expressions of the one non-dual Divine Reality.

Each month is significant for the presence of some important day of divine worship. So, from beginning to end, life becomes God-oriented; it becomes devotion filled. Life becomes based upon worship.

The holiness and sanctity of life and actions of the followers of the Vedic religion is insured by this great wisdom-based approach to life. All the twelve months become a composite period of adoring the Divine Reality around which the entire life of the individual revolves.

Swami Chidananda

“All life is sacred. Therefore, deal reverentially with all beings. Honour the sanctity, purity, holiness of each and every living being. The living presence of God in all beings should be the basis of our attitude and behaviour towards others, our approach to the world.”

—Swami Chidananda

CONTENTS

PUBLISHERS' NOTE	iii
PREFACE.	iii
TRUE SANNYASA	1
SEE GOD IN ALL.	4
WHAT GURUDEV IS FOR US.	6
UNDERSTAND YOUR LIFE.	8
CLAIM YOUR BIRTHRIGHT	9

TRUE SANNYASA

Beloved and worshipful Gurudev! Homage unto thy glorious and gracious spiritual presence, thou who art the light, the life and the soul of this Ashram that you have created upon this holy spot on the right bank of Divine Mother Ganga in sacred Uttarkhand! Fortunate are we to gather together in this sacred Samadhi Hall during this early morning hour of quietness and to enter into silent spiritual fellowship with souls whom you have drawn by the power of your inspiration and divine wisdom teachings.

Most fortunate are those who visit this place. Most fortunate indeed are those who are able to spend some time doing *anushthana japa*, and most fortunate indeed are those thrice blessed souls who dwell with you and live the life divine. I bow to your presence and invoke thy glance of grace, *kripa-kataksha*, upon all those assembled here. I pray that thy *guru-kripa* and choicest blessings may enable them to lead the life sublime, to lead a life of *tyaga* and *tapasya*, *nivritti* and *sannyasa*, *bhakti* and *bhajan*, self-control and discipline, concentration and meditation, a life of active enquiry, discrimination and analysis, a life of introspection, reflection and contemplation, a divine life of truth, purity, compassion and kindness, a divine life of service, devotion, meditation and aspiration for Self-realisation.

May this be your special gift on this day, June 1, the anniversary of your *sannyasa*, your renunciation. In 1924 you came here as a lone wanderer, not knowing the language of this part of the land, not knowing the customs prevailing here and unfamiliar with the experiences of extreme heat and extreme cold. You had but one thought, to be in seclusion, in silence, and to chant the Name of God, pray to Him and attain realisation.

Blessed is that day, for out of that renunciation of yours, out of your embracing the monastic order, has sprung up a monastic family of effulgent *tyagis*, effulgent monks filled with a light of a higher awareness, a higher consciousness, benefiting others by this inner light that they have acquired by their contact with you. Blessed is that day, for it has given rise to this great, noble edifice of Divine Life, of Yoga-Vedanta, of practical spiritual *sadhana*, in this age of materialism, scepticism, atheism and hedonism.

Blessed Immortal Atman! Beloved fellow seekers after the Eternal Reality! We were considering the need to awaken, unfold and activate the latent, dormant spiritual *samskaras*, the spiritual impressions and the latent tendencies, spiritual inclinations, *vasanas*, carried over from past births. Otherwise they will remain dormant without fructifying.

A number of years back, in Egypt, when one of the tombs of a young pharaoh was opened, they discovered beside his mummy many seeds of grain left there by the ruler's loyal subjects. The archaeologists were fired with an intense curiosity: "Will these seeds sprout? Are they still holding the life principle after lying here for thousands of years?" So, with great anticipation they planted them. And lo and behold when the seeds were watered and given the right conditions for germination, they soon sprouted forth and grew into shoots of grain. Civilisations had come and gone, kingdoms had risen and fallen, but in these seeds entombed with the young pharaoh, life remained dormant ready to sprout forth given the right conditions.

Even so, we have considered how *samskaras* and *vasanas*, impressions and latent tendencies, will ever lie latent and dormant, without effectively making their appearance felt as part of our life, without becoming dynamically active, vigorously expressed and manifested in our own nature, until and unless they are made to sprout forth, awaken, put forth their fruits, by bringing to bear upon them a keen aspiration, a great desire, an intense longing, a fervent yearning for spiritual unfoldment, spiritual growth, spiritual realisation—*subheccha*, *mumukshutva* and *jijnasa*.

Such was the intensity of aspiration that burned in the heart of young Dr. Kuppuswami when he turned his face north towards the Himalayas and the Ganga and walked the length of India, arriving here towards the end of 1923. He had an intense longing, an all-consuming desire in the heart, a desire implanted by God, which is part of God's nature, *vidya maya*. *Dharmaviruddho bhuteshu kamo'smi bhatarashabha* (In all beings I am desire unopposed to *dharma*, O Arjuna).

It is such desire that liberates. It is such desire that awakens. It is such desire that brings into dynamism latent tendencies and dormant spiritual *samskaras*. It is like a flame being applied to a combustible material which will otherwise ever remain dull and cold like any other thing around it. It is only when a flame is applied to it that it immediately bursts forth into a blaze full of radiance, full of heat, full of the power to consume, to reduce to ash anything that comes into contact with it. That power comes when it is awakened, made to manifest in an active way.

That was what happened. Dr. Kuppuswami's heart was afire for Self-realisation, for *brahma-jnana*, to become a *jivanmukta*, to have the peace that passeth understanding, to have the *sukham-atyantikam yattad-buddhigrahyam-atindriyam* (endless bliss beyond the senses that may only be grasped by the pure intellect), *paramananda* (supreme bliss) which gives *nityatripti* (eternal satisfaction). And he kept this longing ever clean, ever ablaze, ever fiery; he never allowed it to die down or become dull or become mediocre. It was kept to a high intensity of heat through his fervour through his zeal, through his enthusiasm, through his keen longing and eagerness.

It was this that was the key to the Self-realisation, sainthood and sagehood of beloved and worshipful Guru Maharaj Swami Sivanandaji. This is the factor that causes a latent force, a spiritual force and power, to make itself actively manifest, to be dynamically expressed in our life as a transforming power, an uplifting force. If it is kept us to the very last, it takes us to the supreme state of blessedness and crowns our life with the glory of God-realisation.

And Guru Maharaj was that awakening and sparking factor who ignited within you the dormant and latent spiritual tendencies through his wisdom teachings. It is when you opened a book of his and your eyes alighted upon some page. That is what caused the miracle. That became the tuning point. Immediately the latent and dormant spiritual *samskaras* and *vasanas* sprang forth into dynamism. For innumerable souls all over the world in this twentieth century, the wisdom teachings of Gurudev have acted as a sparking factor, as that sudden, awakening touch, transforming force. Thousands and thousands of lives all over the world have been transformed by his power of grace, by the power of his wisdom teachings.

But then, sparks are to be fanned. Flames are to be fed with fuel. If the fuel that is there is burned up, then the fire dies out and it becomes ash. It has to be stoked; it has to be fed with fresh

fuel, and it is an ongoing, continuous process. It is not as though if you put some burning material into the fireplace that it will go on burning forever. No, it does not happen that way. It is not so.

This being Gurudev's *sannyasa* day, let us consider what *sannyasa* is, what constitutes *sannyasa*. Guru Maharaj was very specific about it. He said that merely shaving the head and putting on coloured cloth does not make you a *sannyasin*. A change of location does not make you a *sannyasin*. Coming away into seclusion or sitting on a mountain top or inside a cave in the forest does not constitute *sannyasa*, if together with this outer giving-up or renunciation, you have not simultaneously also kept up a process of a constant and a continuous inner giving up, an inner renunciation of the false ideas that "I am this body, I am a human individual, I am a physical being, I am a psychological being, I am mind, I am emotion, I am sentiment, I am thought, I am desire, I am memory, I am longing, I am imagination."

All these ideas constitute ignorance. All these falsehood should be renounced. They should be rejected. Truth has to be affirmed again and again and yet again. The essence of renunciation, therefore, is renunciation of this identification with the human, individual personality and all that it constitutes, its entire make-up, right from the physical up to the subtle—memory and imagination, projecting into the future and identifying with the past.

Gurudev was very specific. To lead the spiritual life it is not necessary to withdraw into the forest, hide oneself in a cave or go to a mountain top. What is needed is the renunciation of false ideas, of identification with the false human personality. It requires renunciation of ego, *abhimana*, *ahamkara*, renunciation of desire, renunciation of attachment, renunciation of *mamata* and *asakti* (mine-ness and attachment).

Again and again, in all the eighteen chapters of the Bhagavad Gita wisdom teachings, *nirmama*, *nirmoha* and *anasakti* (absence of mine-ness, absence of attachment and dispassion) have been stressed. Thus true renunciation, true *sannyasa*, constitutes giving up this false idea: "I am a human individual. I am a physical being, I am a mental being, I am an emotional, sentimental being, I am an intellectual being. I am a being separate from God, apart from all others." All that is ignorance. That is bondage. That is *samsara*. That is *maya*. That is *prapancha*. That is individuality. Renunciation of this is real *sannyasa*.

Renunciation of the ego that comes out of this ignorance, this identification—that is *sannyasa*. Renunciation of selfishness that springs out of the ego—that is *sannyasa*. Renunciation of attachment that springs out of another aspect of ego, I-ness and mine-ness—that is *sannyasa*. Renunciation of desires, the innumerable desires—their number is legion—that follow in the train of ego identification, attachment and selfishness—that is real *tyaga*, that is real *sannyasa*.

Once desire is given up, one no longer has any *sankalpa*, no other *spraha* (desire) other than devotion to the lotus Feet of the Supreme, devotion to attain *aparoksha'nubhuti* (direct, actual experience). "I am a mere instrument; whatever is being done, Thou it is that doest all." This idea becomes firmly implanted in the consciousness, and then only *sankalpa* is no longer there. That is the state of *sannyasa*. That is the state of real renunciation.

God bless you to ponder these truths that have been shared with you this morning by the prompting of Guru Maharaj. May the grace of the Almighty make you a true *sadhaka*, a real devotee of the Lord, a real renunciate and a real walker upon the path of spirituality and spiritual life! God bless you all!

SEE GOD IN ALL

Radiant Atman! As we approach the great day of Guru Purnima, I offer loving adorations to that One without a second, about whom the great ones, your ancestors, from ancient times right down to the present have proclaimed: “We have seen that Being, beholding whom the mortal becomes immortal. To know Him is the one way of becoming liberated; there is no other way!” Worshipful homage unto that Indweller who is seated within the hearts of each one of you, to whom your bodies are moving temples! May you ever be in the awareness that God is within and without, and, therefore, may all your dealings be worthy of the God who pervades you and surrounds you. May they be worthy of the Divinity that is immanent in all of creation.

All life is sacred. Therefore, deal reverentially with all beings. All beings are repositories of the Divine, because He is the Presence within. Recognise this Presence. Conduct yourself in a lofty and sublime manner. Be kind to all. Be respectful and just to all. Honour the sanctity, purity and holiness of each and every living being. Be pure in thought, word and deed. Harbour good thoughts, noble, sublime thoughts, goodwill and good wishes towards all your fellow beings. Be polite and courteous in your day-to-day dealing with others. Do not bear ill-will towards anyone. Do not bear a grudge towards anyone. Do not taunt anyone. Do not backbite or carry tales. All these go against the basic concept that God dwells in all people.

All people are deserving of our reverence, respect and goodwill. Honour the individuality of others. Not without reason that Lord Krishna washed the feet of the guests who came to attend the *rajasuya yajna* of Yudhishtira. Not without reason did Lakshmana never lift up his face and look at Mother Sita. Not without reason did Sri Ramakrishna go and sweep the hut of a harijan. The living presence of God in all beings should be the basis of our attitude and behaviour towards others; our approach to the world.

In one little verse, Sant Tulasidas has given the whole of what I have been saying: “*Siyaramamaya sab jag jani karaun pranam jori juga pani*—I bow with my folded hands, knowing that this whole world is pervaded by my *ishta devata*, Sita and Ramachandra.” And, Arjuna experienced this when the glorious vision of the Cosmic Form was bestowed upon him in the eleventh chapter of the Srimad Bhagavad Gita. Beholding the Cosmic Form, Arjuna could do nothing but go on bowing, bowing, bowing, filled with awe and reverence. He did not know where to bow; everywhere he looked, he saw only God. So he bowed in all the ten directions. He said: “I bow to Thee in the front, in the back, to the right, to the left, above, below, on all sides. I bow to Thee everywhere—*sarvatah pani padam* (with hands and feet everywhere.)”

This should be the basis of the vision, it should be the approach, the attitude, the behaviour of the true, sincere, spiritual seeker and aspirant who really wants to attain the cosmic vision in and

through one's life, who does not set the vision aside only for the period of his special study and meditation and reflecting "Oh yes. God is everywhere."

A great realised saint of Andhra Pradesh wrote a book called *Vyavahara Vedantin*. He says that Vedanta is not meant for your study place or your meditation room; it is meant for the field of your daily activity. This should be the vision. This should be the truth upon which you base your life. This should be your inner feeling, attitude. For the sake of the sentiments of others, you may keep it within yourself; you may not demonstrate it, or it may also become an ego-trip. It is not necessary that others know, but all throughout your waking state, in the midst of *vyavahara*, this awareness should be there: "I am in God, God is within me; God is within all. I am dealing with God; the whole thing is heightened by this Presence." This *bhava advaita* should always be there. This is our great *adesa: bhavadvaitam sada kuryat* (One should always have the attitude of unity).

This, therefore, is the great central truth our Upanishads have given us—*sarvam khalvidam brahma* (All this is Brahman). It should never be lost sight of. It should always shine in our hearts as a great light—this truth, this fact, this central mystical fact of God's presence now, here. More and more, the world is becoming aware of this great fact, only they are not able to put it into practice—"I am in the Light. The Light is within me. I am the Light." *Yo mam pasyati sarvatra sarvam cha mayi pasyati*. (He who sees Me everywhere and sees everything in Me...), is a sure way of never being separated from the awareness of God, of always being in God. He has revealed it to us by this wonderful verse.

So this, therefore, should be the basis of all *vyavahara* as we approach Guru Purnima. I pay loving adorations to Gurudev, who more than anyone brought home this truth to us: "Within is Ram. Without is Ram. In front is Ram. Above is Ram. Below is Ram. Behind is Ram. To the right is Ram. To the left is Ram. Everywhere is Ram." Gurudev brought home the supreme *advaitic* experience into the common language of everyone so that all people could understand.

See God in every face, and then do your service as the worship offered to the God who is within all beings. This is not merely the basis of *karma yoga*. This is the declaration of the Upanishads, of the loftiest Vedanta: *isavasyamidam sarvam yatkimcha jagatyam jagat* (All this whatsoever in this universe that moves or moves not is indwelt by the Lord). How can you ever be away from Him? Wherever you go He is there—*taddure tadvantike* (It, the Atman, is distant and It is near). Everywhere He is here!

May God and Guru shower grace and blessings upon you and make you realise this truth and live in the awareness of this truth each and every day of your life. This is my humble supplication at the Feet of God and Guru.

No matter whether you may forget it a hundred times, a thousand times, make up your mind to never lose sight of this inner awareness, this practice of the presence of the universal awareness. Make it one of the important *abhyasas* (practices) in daily life. Hold on to it. One day you will succeed; it will become *sahaja* (natural) for you. Until that, never leave it. God bless you!

WHAT GURUDEV IS FOR US

Adorable Presence Divine, worshipful homage unto Thee! We who are inseparable parts of Thy eternal, infinite existence, one with You in essential nature, have forgotten our eternal relationship with Thee Who art our *adi*, *madhya* and *anta* (beginning, middle and end), Who art our all in all. Through this forgetfulness we have alienated ourselves from Thee and thus find ourselves to be in a state deprived of the bliss, peace and light that is our birthright, that is what we are. We have deprived ourselves of this Self-experience, and we are living a spurious, false, counterfeit experience filled with love and hate, laughing and weeping, anxiety and tension, fear and bondage, fighting and quarrelling, self-centredness, selfishness, anger and jealousy. It is a *kritrimavastha*, a *vishamavastha*—an unnatural state, an abnormal state. It is not *sahaja* (natural) to us, but *kritrima* (unnatural).

At this moment, in the calm hours of this silent morning, in the spiritual presence of our beloved and worshipful Holy Master Guru Bhagavan Swami Sivanandaji, we offer adorations and homage to Your Feet. From the bottom of our hearts, human hearts, we pray that this separation, this alienation, this wandering away from Thee, may end. May this forgetfulness, this slumber of non-awareness of our own *svarupa*, our eternal relationship with You, which is the root cause of all pain, suffering, sorrow, misery, delusion and infatuation, come to an end by Thy grace.

May we be restored to our eternal, inner, divine oneness with Thee Who art the only reality in the midst of countless billions of half-realities and appearances. Then alone will sorrow give place to joy, restlessness and agitation give place to peace, delusion give place to knowledge and wisdom, and an insufficient, partial, existence give place to *purattva* that is Brahmanhood.

In this morning hour we pray: “*asato ma satgamaya, tamaso ma jyotirgamaya, mrityorma amritamgamaya.*” Put an end to this separation for Thou hast clearly stated: “*tam vidyad-duhkha-samyoga-viyogam yoga-samjnitam*—It is the cessation of union with pain that is Yoga.” With Yoga, all pain ceases, all suffering ceases, all *tapatraya* ceases. No longer is there weeping and wailing; there is bliss, there is joy. Grant us the gift of that Yoga.

That is the call in the immortal wisdom teachings of the Srimad Bhagavad Gita, where among many messages, many teachings, many commandments, Thou Who art Narayana hast also uttered the call to Nara, to Arjuna, the representative man: “*tasmat yogi bhava’rjuna.*” And as Swami Sivananda Thou hast repeated this call again: “Come, come, become a Yogi. Why do you weep and wail? Why do you unnecessarily prolong this bondage? Come, come, become a Yogi.” Thus in his call to modern mankind of this twentieth century, Gurudev Sri Swami Sivanandaji has resounded that ancient call.

Worshipful spiritual presence, Gurudev, thou who art our light and guide in life, keep sounding that call again and again in our hearts. This is the supplication at thy feet of all the seeking souls who are gathered in your presence, drawn by your *guru kripa*, grace, morning after morning to this sacred Samadhi Hall of your Ashram.

Radiant Immortal Atman! As we approach the sacred *punyatithi aradhana* anniversary, we have been considering the heritage that Gurudev has left behind for us. We have mentioned this

unique, most precious, invaluable facility of an Ashram on the banks of the Ganga. It is a fact, a felt, solid, tangible, material fact. No one can deny it. It is a facility of *bhakti*, *jnana*, *dhyana*, *karma yoga* and *paropakara seva*. Then there is *jnana ganga*, a vast body of inspiring, soul-arousing, illuminating, instructing spiritual literature. And he also gave us a certain pattern of life, an ideal, which he called divine life, not merely the gross physical life or subtle psychological life, but the divine life, a life qualified by our *svarupa*, qualified by our innermost essential nature, a life that is not merely an expression or of the nature of our non-essential *upadhis*, but a life that is the expression of the divinity which is the innermost reality of each and every one of us. He gave us the *adesa* and *sandesa*: “Live your life divinely, for that is what you are. If you manifest your *upadhis*, you are not manifesting yourself.”

Also, the quintessence of all the scriptures, the direction towards Divinity, was given a systematic shape. Gurudev said: “Its foundation is truth, purity and compassion, universal love. And the structure is ceaseless selfless service, devotional worship, discipline, concentration and meditation, ceaseless enquiry, aspiration, *jijnasa*, *mumukshutva*, *vichara*, *viveka*, investigation into the nature of the Reality behind and beyond appearances, sublating the *nama* and *rupa* which are ever-changing, never real, only appearance, and going beyond them to the *asti-bhati-priya*, into the *satchidananda tattva*, that which exists eternally, that which shines with luminous Self-consciousness, knowledge, light, and that which is very dear indeed for it is full of bliss.”

So the superstructure he has given us is *seva*, *bhakti*, *dhyana* and *atma-jnana*, upon the foundation of *ahimsa*, *satyam* and *brahmacharya*. But his unique bestowal to us is that he has given us a new identity. He said: “You are not here merely to wander about like a wayfarer, to get ditched somewhere, waylaid and stripped of everything by the dacoits of the five senses. Rather, you are here to attain union with the Supreme Being. You are engaged in that. This is the innermost meaning of life. It is a journey to put an end to the separation and once again attain union with the Divine. Then alone sorrow gives place to joy, putting an end to *samyoga* (contact) with *duhkha* (pain). Therefore become a Yogi.”

Thus, he gave us an identity: “You are all Yogis; you must live as Yogis. Life is Yoga. Life is a process of regaining that oneness, that connection, that inner relationship, that lost link with the divine source of your being. Therefore live as Yogis. Be aware of yourselves as Yogis.”

And this new identity was to be based upon a matter-of-fact pragmatic life. Merely imagining ourselves to be Yogis is not enough. Be practical Yogis. Practise Yoga *sadhana*. Be a *sadhaka*. More than anything else, be a *sadhaka*. Whether you are a lawyer, engineer, doctor, professor, teacher, taxi-driver, businessman or a shopkeeper, no matter what you are, be a *sadhaka*. “Do real *sadhana* my dear children. Do real *sadhana*.” Do *sadhana*. Be a real *sadhaka*. Engage yourself in spiritual *sadhana*. Let it become an inseparable part of your day-to-day life. Let the day start with *sadhana*. Let the day end with *sadhana*. Let the day and all its activities be infilled with the spirit of *sadhana*—*yat yat karma karomi tat tadakhilam sambho tavaradhanam* (Whatsoever work I do, O Lord, I offer unto Thee as worship).

This is the unique bestowal of Gurudev Swami Sivanandaji to the fortunate global humanity of the twentieth century. And, most fortunate of all are each of you who have come into direct contact with this bestowal, and who have decided to adopt that type of life, as a *sadhaka*. You are a

sadhaka and you are a Yogi. That is a new birth he gave to you. That is a new identity he imparted to you, taking away the wrong identity: “I am so and so, I am such and such; I am a male, I am a female; I am a *brahmin*, *sudra*, *kshatriya*, *vaisya*; I am a *brahmacharin*, *grihastha*, *sannyasin*, *vanaprastha*.” Above all of these, he gave the identity: “I am a Yogi wanting to attain union with the Divine. I am a *sadhaka*; my life means for me *sadhana*. My life should be infilled with *sadhana*. If *sadhana* is taken away, I am a cipher; my life has ceased to be. There is no more life in me; I am a dead being, *sava*.” Like that he gave us this new identity of a *sadhaka* and of a Yogi, of a *bhakta* and *paropakari*, of a *dhyani* and a Vedantin. “Be a Vedantin! Roar Om, Om, Om! Come out this cage of flesh and bones!” That is what he wanted.

So, he gave us a new consciousness, a new awareness of ourselves, a new identity purely in relation to God, connected with God directly, connected with Brahman directly. But above all he gave us the identity: “Live as a Yogi. Live as a *sadhaka*.” This is what you have inherited. This is what he left behind, a priceless treasure, a priceless heritage, which cannot be evaluated or estimated in terms of gold and silver and precious gems, which is *atulya* (incomparable), *amulya* (invaluable).

With this sharing, let us offer our worshipful adorations at the feet of Guru Bhagavan and offer our loving homage to that Being Whom he represented, Whose ancient call, which was sounded in the Gita *jnana upadesa*, he once again revived and gave voice to in this twentieth century: “Come, come, become a Yogi, attain Self-realisation, God-realisation, in this very life.”

That is Gurudev for us. That is what he shall ever be for those who have sincerely tried to ponder and tried to find out what we are to him, in what way we are related to him and what he has been to us—his life, his teachings. It is the *maha samadhi* anniversary of such a being that we are preparing to observe upon the twenty-fourth of this month. Let us fully appreciate who that being is whose *maha samadhi* we observe the *navami* (ninth day) after Guru Purnima. God bless you all!

UNDERSTAND YOUR LIFE

Blessed Atman! May God give you the gift of understanding your life and thus living it with understanding!

We never stop to ponder life. We never pause in our ceaseless outward-oriented activities which we think is life. We do not pause for awhile to take time to step out of life’s stream, to stand on the banks and observe life from that point.

The banks do not move; the banks do not change. Constantly the river moves; constantly the waters change. Even for a single second, you are not standing before the same river. The river that was before you one second ago is not there now. What is before you is some other river; the other river has gone.

Even so with life. You are also ever-changing. If you step out, stand on the bank and observe life, you may get a better understanding about it and its flow. You must stop for awhile and ponder life. You must pause a little from ceaselessly being rushed. It takes time.

On the last day of July 1963, we offered a grand worship to Gurudev upon his *shodasi* (16th day), *punyatithi*, as an *aradhana* offered. From the 1st of August 1963 our life was different than it was before the 14th of July, 1963. How did we face that new life? What was our state of mind at that time? What thoughts, what ideas filled our minds? How did we view the future?

Year after year we re-enact that same drama by offering a grand worship in the Samadhi. We recreate that same day. We also relive that experience and move towards the future in a changed way, just as we did in the 1st of August, 1963. For there was a great difference. We realised that we would have to stand on our own legs. We realised that we had to be self-reliant, that we were the architects of our own fate; we were the moulders of our own future. We had to get busy doing that work and carving out a glorious future in the light of Gurudev's teachings and example to us—building our future in a spiritual way because it was not a future in time, it was a future in terms of our spiritual evolution.

Every year that day is observed, that drama is re-enacted. We try to relive that momentous moment. But then, after the event passes, does it leave us cold, as we were before, or does it leave us with something else within us? That is the thing to be considered. If, upon considering it, we find that there is no fresh awakening, that no new aspiration comes into us, then it has become only a mechanical routine which we observe year after year—having all the outer frills but empty of content inside. It has just become automatic, repetitive; it takes us no further, no higher. The very purpose of the day has been lost. The very intention with which our ancients conceived of such recurring annual traditions would not be fulfilled; it would be lost.

Yesterday was such a day. May you understand it. May you understand the intention behind such a tradition. May you understand the purpose of such an annual observance. May you understand the significance to you and your life. May you understand life. That is the one thing needful to live effectively, to live life fruitfully—the understanding of it and the living of it with the understanding way. May Sat Guru Bhagavan bless you with such a deep understanding of your life and yourself in it. God bless you!

CLAIM YOUR BIRTHRIGHT

Homage unto Thee, Thou Infinite One, who has manifested Thyself into the countless names and forms that constitute Your temporary outer appearance! Thou art also the hidden, inner divine essence of all things; the world is pervaded by Thy divinity. Within these innumerable names and forms that Thou hast manifested as Thy outer *darsan*, Thou abidest as the hidden, inner reality, the one common consciousness uniting all existence into a homogeneous, inner spiritual unity.

The innumerable and diverse forms in which Thou hast manifested Thyself constitute Thy grandeur, Thy beauty, Thy endlessness. We pay homage, we offer worshipful adorations both to

Thy manifestation as well as to Thy inner reality, the hidden one universal inner essence. We worship Thee as *sahasra-murtaye sahasra-padakshi sirorubahave* (innumerable forms, innumerable feet, eyes, heads and hands). We worship Thee also as *eko devah sarvabhuteshu gudhah* (God, who is one only, hidden in all beings).

Grant us the supreme privilege and blessedness of recognising Thee in both Thy manifestation as well as the unmanifest essential presence within, and in and through, all Thy diverse and multifarious manifestations. Thus granting us this boon and blessing us, enable us to abide in Thee at all times, either when we contemplate Thee with closed eyes, intuned gaze and inward spiritual vision seeing Thy inner oneness, or when we open our eyes and gaze at Thee in Thy multifarious manifestation.

Either way, help and enable us to ever abide in the consciousness and awareness of Thy being and in the awareness of You being our all-in-all, in whom we live, move and have our being. There is no greater blessedness, for with this recognition, this vision, this awareness, this approach, this view of life, we shall ever abide in Thee. We shall never be away from Thee at any time, at any moment.

This we ask of Thee at this moment: the living of Thy truth that Thou art the one as well as the many, that Thou art the all-pervading, indwelling hidden reality as well as the multifarious, infinite appearance. May we be found worthy of receiving from Thee the gift of this awareness of Thy non-dual absolute form as well as Thy cosmic manifest form. Help us to be worthy of this vision, even as Thou didst help Arjuna to be worthy of Thy vision of the cosmic form by granting him the boon of a divine sight.

Radiant Atman! Prompted by the indwelling Being and induced by Gurudev, we had occasion to mention Gurudev's oft-repeated concept: "Supreme blessedness is your birthright; divine perfection is your birthright; peace profound, eternal bliss is your birthright; fearlessness and freedom—*moksha*—is your birthright. Why unnecessarily prolong your bondage? Come, come, be a Yogi! Strive upon the path of spiritual perfection. Claim your birthright, not in the distant future but today, right now, at this moment!"

It is in this context that we are led to dwell further upon this assertion of Gurudev that Divinity, freedom, liberation and fearlessness, peace and joy are your birthright, not bondage and sorrow, nor restlessness and weeping and wailing. They are superficial, avoidable and unnecessary. It is not what you are meant for; this is not why you have come here.

But then, even though he declared this supreme blessedness to be your birthright, he also asked you to claim it. Even as the divine Master Jesus gave the admonition: "Ask and it shall be given. Seek and thou shalt find. Knock and it shall be opened unto you," so Gurudev Swami Sivanandaji said: "Claim your birthright." We have to claim.

All that is necessary to have this supreme blessedness is already within you. We have to invoke it from within; we have to invoke it, activate it and apply it. Then that which is our birthright will be obtained by us. We shall find it. We shall be given it. And the portals to that blessed state will be thrown wide open to us.

But we should claim. This constitutes spiritual life. This asking, this seeking, this knocking, this claiming, this striving and deserving it, constitutes *sadhana*, constitutes *yoga abhyasa*, constitutes practical spiritual life. This constitutes the quintessence of what you are as seekers and *sadhakas*.

Lord Rama was Divinity incarnate. The Divine, as all scriptures declare and as all saints reaffirm, is omnipotent, capable of doing anything and everything. Not merely doing, He is also capable of knowing what to do because He is omniscient. And whatever He wants to do anywhere, He can do it because He is everywhere present, omnipresent. As Divinity incarnate, Lord Rama was present in Lanka by the side of Sita. He knew exactly what to do if He wanted to bring Her back. He also had the power of transporting Her back in the twinkle of an eye to where He wanted Her. Yet, having come into manifestation, He voluntarily observed the laws of this manifest plane of human existence and strove.

He did *sadhana*. He searched for Divine Mother Sita and kept asking: “Did you see Her? Did She come this way? Will you tell me where I can find Her, where She is?” With the help of his brother, He searched throughout the jungle regions where He was then living. Then He actively sought the help of the jungle dwellers. He was humble enough to seek their help and then, with great labour he built a bridge, enlisting the help of monkeys, bears and other types of forest dwelling beings. They all exerted together as one, intent upon this one attainment: “We must find Sita. We must help Rama to regain Her.” There was a concentrated focusing of all energy towards the one objective and fulfilment of finding Sita and bringing Her back.

This whole process has to be recreated within the personality and the life of the *sadhaka* and the seeker. All of our forces—physical, biological, vital, mental, intellectual, moral—should be geared up and brought together and focused upon this one attainment. Our entire, total personality should become completely focused upon this supreme attainment. We should not disdain anything. All our powers, our will, our soul, our heart, our entire spiritual being must be geared to the great quest and attainment. Harness and bring to bear your total personality potential in this supreme endeavour of *sadhana*, Yoga, spiritual life, *abhyasa*. Then you will be able once again to be enthroned in the palace in Ayodhya. Your quest will be crowned with total success because you brought into active use all the forces at your disposal.

Our individual consciousness has been totally dominated by the five *karma indriyas* and the five *jnana indriyas* represented by the ten heads of Ravana, who has forcibly abducted and taken possession of the individual personality consciousness. You are under the domination of this complex constituted by the ten organs—the senses of action and the senses of perception of knowledge. That is the Ravana, and it has to be overcome. We have to harness the energies of our total personality in this overcoming, in this confrontation, in this victory. Contemplate this!

And the harnessing of the total personality is the essence of divine life, for it is an integrated approach of orienting all our physical activities, our mental faculties, our emotional potential and our intellect towards this divine goal, towards Vedantic-realisation, *atma-jnana*, *brahma-sakshatkara*.

And by happy coincidence, the imminent visit of the President of India to this Ashram has brought into focus this nature of your life here. For each of you has been given a badge to wear which has at its centre OM, the supreme Goal. The whole of the Mandukya Upanishad is centred upon the exposition of the supreme, central Reality as symbolised and indicated by OM. And this central, supreme goal and objective, which is your birthright, which you are in your essential nature, and whose divine perfection and wholeness is already within you, inherent in you, has to be attained.

This badge also makes you aware of the manner in which you should utilise your life and everything that constitutes life, in order to attain this goal. For the badge also has on it Gurudev's admonitions SERVE, LOVE, MEDITATE, REALISE. Give up selfishness and focus all the body's activities in *nishkama-karma-yoga*, selfless service of the *virat*, God in manifestation. Bring to bear all the power, all the potential of your feelings, emotions, sentiments in devotion directed towards the Supreme Reality as *sakara saguna brahman*, God who is your father, mother, friend, relative, your wealth and wisdom, your all-in-all, who is your very own. *Tvam eva sarvam mama deva deva*—O my Lord of lords, God of gods, Thou art everything to me. And daily focus your thoughts, your entire vision, your awareness, upon that great Reality through concentration and meditation. Thus harnessing all your powers—physical, emotional, mental and intellectual—seek to realise. This integrated approach is Gurudev's gift to you—divine life.

Live the divine life. This is what you are expected to do. Let it be etched in your heart. What am I? I am a centre of selflessness and service, of devotion and worship, of concentration and meditation, of aspiration and realisation. This is what my life should be. This is what I constitute. I should apply all the energies of my entire human potential, my human personality complex, in that great direction, to realise and be free.

So, your new badges remind you of your birthright. They draw your mind towards this great truth. God-realisation and divine perfection are your birthright. Fearlessness and freedom are your birthright. Supreme, profound, eternal peace and infinite joy are your birthright. Thus, by diverse ways, the Supreme Being seeks to forcibly attract your attention towards the central purpose of your life, the supreme, spiritual, divine goal of your life. How kind, how gracious, how compassionate, how full of infinite love is the Lord, that *yena kena prakarena* (by diverse means) He seeks to bring us back into Self-awareness, to wake us up from forgetfulness, to focus our attention upon the purpose of our human existence, to urge us to lead the divine life and attain liberation in this very body, here and now. How compassionate!

How can we say that God has forgotten us, or He has not done His duty towards us? More than duty he has done. He has filled our lives to fullness and overflowing. Our vessel is overflowing with so much grace, compassionate love, and supreme, divine mercy. He has blessed us. He thus forcibly reminds us: that we are all manifestations; to lead the divine life; to serve, love, meditate and realise; to awake, arise and attain the goal—to become illumined.

So, even if we forget God, God does not forget us. Even if we turn in another direction and pursue lesser goals, He will not allow us. He forcibly draws our attention towards our supreme goal, our own greatest blessedness. That is God for you. May we recognise His grace and clearly see His love. May we clearly understand how much He is calling: Come, come, *uttishthata, jagrata*,

CLAIM YOUR BIRTHRIGHT

srinvantu vishve amritasya putrah—O ye children of Immortality, listen, listen, hear, hearken to My call. Arise and come unto Me. Attain the goal and become blessed.

God calls us today as always. If we have eyes to see and ears to hear, we can see that God is calling us every day to the attainment of our highest goal, which is our birthright. Claiming it is the life spiritual. We should apply our time, energy and life towards this great attainment. Then we are wise. Then no one can prevent us from attainment supreme blessedness. For we have lived wisely, acted wisely. We have claimed.