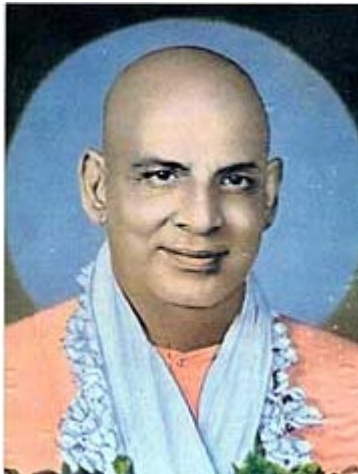


A NEW BEGINNING

By

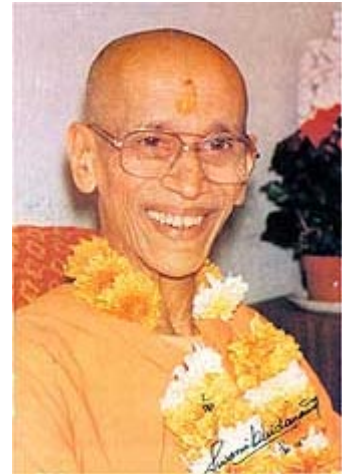
SRI SWAMI CHIDANANDA



**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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PUBLISHERS' NOTE

The pages that follow contain the exhortations made by Pujya Sri Swami Chidanandaji Maharaj to the inmates of the Headquarters Sivananda Ashram during December 1990-January 1991. Though these exhortations were spread over several days, there was a continuity in them, a fact which prompted us to edit Swamiji's talks in the shape of a unified discourse.

The words spoken by Swamiji for a few brief minutes every day during the early morning Meditation Class in the holy precincts of Gurudev's Samadhi Shrine deeply touched the hearts of those assembled and impressed upon them the total necessity and the imperative urgency to review their own lives in the light of Gurudev's teachings, so that they could plan ahead for the New Year to come.

It is a call to shape one's life anew in the light of a careful review of one's past. Many will find this inspiring booklet a most appropriate gift for presentation to friends not only on New Year's Eve, but also on Birthdays, Anniversaries and such other occasions.

Shivanandanagar,
25th December, 1991.

—THE DIVINE LIFE SOCIETY

CONTENTS

A NEW BEGINNING.....	1
VIDYAS THAT THROW LIGHT UPON THE PATH OF IDEAL LIFE.....	2
SADHANA IS WORKING UPON THE MIND WITH PATIENCE.....	5
LOOK BACKWARD, LEARN, GO FORWARD.....	6
INVOKE THE POWER OF VIDYA MAYA.....	6
TOUCHSTONES FOR JUDGING THE QUALITY OF OUR SPIRITUAL LIFE.....	8
VITAL IMPORTANCE OF EARNESTNESS AND CLEAR-CUT THINKING.....	12
THE MAIN OBJECTIVE BEHIND MY EXHORTATIONS	13
BE UP AND DOING: TIME IS RUNNING OUT	14
OUR PROBLEMS ARE WITHIN: OUR SOLUTIONS ARE WITHIN.....	17
NEGATIVE SOLUTIONS WILL NOT WORK.....	20
YOU ARE YOUR BEST FRIEND: RAISE YOURSELF BY YOURSELF.....	21
365 VIRGIN DAYS—24 GOLDEN HOURS—60 DIAMOND MINUTES	24
LET DIVYATVA OR DIVINITY BE THE KEYNOTE OF OUR LIFE IN THE NEW YEAR.	25
CULTIVATE DAIVI SAMPAT: ELIMINATE ASURI SAMPAT	27
WE ARE DIVINE BECAUSE GOD DWELLS IN OUR HEART	29
TIME IS LIFE: LIFE IS TIME.....	31
LIVING IN THE STATE OF TRUTH AWARENESS IS THE ONLY REAL LIFE	32
SPIRITUAL INDIA IS THE REAL INDIA.....	34

APPENDIX

20 IMPORTANT SPIRITUAL INSTRUCTIONS.....	37
UNIVERSAL PRAYER.....	40
RESOLVES FOR QUICK SPIRITUAL PROGRESS	41

A NEW BEGINNING

WORSHIPFUL Spiritual Presence! Beloved Gurudev! We bow to thee at this moment of early dawn! And by your infinite love and compassion and grace towards all, you have drawn us together in this hour of early morning spiritual fellowship in thy presence, to cleanse ourselves, to purify ourselves, to sanctify and to transform ourselves, to uplift our spirits and inspire and elevate our entire being to enter into this gift of the new day that thou hast given to us, to make it a further step towards that ideal of perfection which the ancient sages and seers of Vedic India have placed before all humankind, before the global human family, as the supreme ultimate goal of life. That goal is to become perfect, eternally free, fearless. That goal is to attain the Bhuma or the completeness or the Plenum of Platonius. That goal is to reach the Paripurna Avastha, the fullness, the Paripurnata that Brahman has been known to be. May this day become one more step, a step further, a step higher towards that great and glorious destiny of divine perfection that is eternal, inalienable, pristine, shorn of all imperfection, devoid of all weaknesses, defects and drawbacks. We thank thee, Gurudev, with the fullness of a grateful heart for this daily opportunity, this daily occasion to thus start the day on the right note, to thus commence this lap of twenty-four hours of our journey towards immortality with the right foot, so that everything in this day becomes suffused and infilled by the divine quality that is our essential nature, so that our life becomes truly an expression of our inward Reality, so that our life becomes truly dynamic, an active manifestation through thought, word and action of our inner truth, of the eternal fact of our godliness. For this we give thanks.

Radiant Atman! Beloved and blessed children of the Divine, gathered here in the spiritual presence of beloved and worshipful Holy Master Swami Sivanandaji, in the sacred Samadhi Hall of his holy Ashram, on the divine banks of Mother Ganga, the sands of which are sanctified by the feet of seers and sages of yore! We are now proceeding towards the middle of the very last month of this year that has gone by. Soon, upon the holy anniversary of the consecration of the Temple of Lord Visvanath, on the 31st of December, this year will conclude, and you will be entering into the New Year to come. At this point, when we are moving towards the middle of this last month, there is only half a month left for you to consider whatever you think is worthwhile considering, about yourself, about your life, about your ideals and principles, about your plus and minus points, your assets and liabilities, your strong points and shortcomings, and how far you have been able to keep up with your good intentions, spiritual intentions, how far you have been able to cope up with your inner situations that sometimes crop up, sometimes periodically, sometimes occasionally, sometimes frequently, to hamper your smooth advance towards whatever goals you are striving after, whatever goals you have been taught to value, by the ancient masters in their wisdom teachings—ideals and goals that you have been told should occupy a central place in your life, ideals and goals which you have been told are the only things worth living for and striving after. It is only these ideals and goals which make life worth living, which make life interesting, which make life deeply meaningful and which make life take on a real weighty significance. So, in your progress towards these goals, what are those little situations that crop up, maybe frequently, maybe too frequently, that you have to cope with and manage to overcome, manage to gradually scale down and ultimately eliminate from your life so that they are no more a part of your life?

Dirt or unnecessary matter exists only when gold and silver are mined from the bowels of the earth. Unnecessary encrustations exist even in diamonds. But they are not meant to be there. When the raw diamonds are mined and taken out they are meant to be subjected to a certain process. After which, completely freed and totally liberated from all the unnecessary factors that have grown around them, the diamonds shine in their great purity as they are meant to shine. And the diamond becomes a thing of beauty. It becomes one of the most valuable things that man cherishes, treasures.

Therefore, these other things that exist together with your eternal, essential nature, that exist together with the inherent perfection that you are, that exist together with the very truth of your being, are meant to be subjected to a certain process by which they are gradually overcome and eliminated so that you may shine in the pristine purity of your true original Self. That is why you have entered the spiritual path. That is why you have adopted this way of life. That is why you have launched upon a great course of study, study of much wisdom teachings from the Gita, from the Upanishads, from the Bible, from the Buddhistic texts, from the Yoga Vasishtha, from the teachings of saints, of great Masters like Gurudev Swami Sivananda, Aurobindo, Ramakrishna and St. Francis of Assisi. All this knowledge is not imbibed merely to embellish your intellect or to give you the satisfaction of “I know.” But, it is meant as so much invaluable light upon this path of spiritual evolution, upon this path of emerging into your pristine state of perfection. The wisdom teachings are meant to be aids, practical aids. They are meant to give you the tools to set working upon yourself until you shine like a brilliant diamond.

VIDYAS THAT THROW LIGHT UPON THE PATH OF IDEAL LIFE

Knowledge is knowledge. Knowledge is valuable only when it is applied and you benefit out of it. I am not speaking about the Knowledge which is your real nature. I am not talking about Jnana, Atma-jnana. You are Jnana-svarupa Atma. Brahman is Jnana-svarup. *Prajnanam Brahma. Satyam Jnanam Anantam Brahma.* It is not that Knowledge I am referring to. I am referring to the various Vidyas—the lesser knowledge, but not the secular knowledge. Our Upanishads speak of the greater knowledge and the lesser knowledge, Para Vidya and Aparā Vidya. In Aparā Vidya also, there are two classifications. In Aparā Vidya also, there is that vast field of knowledge which helps you to make a comfortable living in this world, which gives you the things of this world, which the Upanishads call ‘Alpa’, but which is inevitably essential as long as we have to live in a physical body and strive with that body for perfection. And we have to strive for perfection in a physical way also, for gaining good health and strength, for developing a strong body, a strong instrument to serve our fellow beings, to practice Yoga, to fulfil our duties, our Kartavya Karma.

A military man wants a very strong body if he has to be a good fighting soldier in the army. And in any walk of life, physical strength and health are the most precious possessions, because they fulfil a certain function which is indispensable in this world where you have to get on. This physical body, subject to hunger and thirst, heat and cold, has to be maintained in a comfortable way. Even though, simultaneously, the Sadhaka should strive to acquire the ability and strength of endurance to put up with discomforts and inconveniences, it is natural and

spontaneous in human nature to strive to live in a not too uncomfortable manner. Also, bodily care is necessary, because it helps you to fulfil other duties—professional duties, social duties, domestic obligations, etc.—and to fulfil your functions as a member of the human society in which you live.

Once the body is taken care of, you have to have a knowledge of your own contemporary times, and knowledge in the field of making a success of your life as a member of a family, as a member in society, as a member of a profession. So, these aspects of the secondary portion of the lesser knowledge are also necessary.

Whereas, when we speak of Vidya, even in this Aparā Vidya, there is a certain portion, viz., study or Svādhyāya of spiritual books, of scriptures, of psychological books, to understand yourself better, to understand why your mind behaves in a particular way, why particular types of thoughts come. Where is the root, the source, the origin of these thoughts? Can we change these thoughts? How can we change them? If we want to change them, what are the laws that operate upon this level of our being that make thoughts manifest, that make thoughts set into motion other impulses, desires and actions? What are those laws which we have to understand, get a grasp of, if we wish to change our mind, if we wish to alter our thoughts? So, this also is a part of the study. This is psychology. And then, a study of the spiritual study of how to gradually bring our consciousness into higher and higher levels of our being, how to develop and refine our emotions and sentiments and direct them towards the great Reality, God or the Cosmic Being or the Supreme Universal Soul or Spirit of which we are a part. This also is a higher part of a lesser knowledge. And, therefore, it is this Jnana, this Vidya that I mean. We have to equip ourselves in these Vidyas and upon the basis of these Vidyas, which throw light upon the path of ideal life, upon the path of the spiritual ascent of the individual towards the universal, the human towards the Divine, the spiritual ascent of man towards God, in the light of these various aspects of knowledge that we have developed, we have to see in what way we are able to deal with ourselves and how successful we have been in this process of studying ourselves, knowing ourselves and applying this knowledge to transform ourselves over the years.

Let us live in the light of the wisdom teachings of all illumined, enlightened sages and seers. Let us live in the light of our own wisdom garnered and gathered in our experience of life, gathered in observing others and observing ourselves all these years that we have dwelt in this body-house of ours in this present earth incarnation. Let us live in the light of that knowledge. Let not knowledge be unproductive for us. Let it be productive. Let it be fertile and fruitful. Knowledge is meant to give results, produce fruit. Let us live in the light of the knowledge that we have gained so far in life. And let us always be aware that within us there is a great Light of lights beyond all darkness, shining in the chambers of our heart as our own Self. So the Light that we are, let us manifest that Light gloriously in our life outside. Let us make our life an expression of that Light that we are.

We tried to enter the path of the good life, the path of higher unfoldment, not yesterday, not last year, but maybe several years back, maybe ten, fifteen or twenty years ago, maybe more than a quarter of a century ago. If that were so, where do we stand now at the conclusion of this current year of which we have already passed eleven months and thirteen days? Now is the time

to make a study of your life over the past eleven months, especially if you are not in the habit of keeping a diary. At one stroke you cannot recall, through memory, everything from the 1st of January, 1990 to the 15th of December, 1990; you cannot. It may take time. Supposing you want to devote two days to each month of the year that has gone by, it will be too much, too late now. December does not have twenty-two days more. So you may have to finish your study in another fifteen days, or maybe, in another eleven days only, so that you can make up your mind by the time you reach Christmas and the Spirit of the great Master Jesus is once again born into you and the light of His teachings is once again revealed in your heart. At that time, say, within the one week that will still be there after Christmas, in the light of your study of these past eleven months, you may start working or start planning what you are going to do in the year that is to dawn on the first of January. At that time you may ask yourself: “How am I going to proceed? In what way am I going to enhance my resources in the spiritual life? In what way am I going to augment my inner powers of application towards ideal living? I wish to cover a certain stage by the 31st of December, 1991 and attain a certain pinnacle-point. How am I going to manage myself in making each one of the 365 days in the New Year an upward step towards this pinnacle point?”.

Those who have visited Katra Vaishno Devi will understand what I say. Those who have visited Tirupati Balaji—they will understand what I say. Step by step you have to cover several thousand steps before you get to stand before the Deity in Tirupati Balaji. Similarly, in Himachal Pradesh, before you can have the Darshan of Vaishno Devi, you have to climb up several thousands of steps. But here, you have got set for yourself 365 steps, ascending steps, upward steps. For that, now is the time when you should seriously consider a calm attentive self-study of your current year up to this point.

It is in this context that I wish to put one little thought-seed into your mind. When one attains Brahma-jnana, realizes his Supreme Reality, one comes to the vision and experience of *Sarvam Vishnu Mayam Jagat, Sarvam Khalvidam Brahma*. Whatever exists is that one great Reality. But, until we reach that state of experience, what we know is that this universe outside ourselves is a constant state of movement, constant activity, constant dynamism. Nothing remains still. Water is flowing, wind is blowing, fire is burning. Everyone is engaged—action, action, action. One that does not understand the secret of this action and does not enter into the stream would be cast aside on the way. He would be left behind. Because, time and tide wait for no man. We have to be up and doing. This world is a manifestation of Sakti. In the Vyavaharic Satta, in the world of activity, you do not see everything as Vishnu and Brahma. You see everything as Para Sakti, as the great Cosmic Power in an infinite variety of movements and actions. In nature, nothing stands still.

In the heart of this constant activity, however, there is the supreme Stillness, the great absolute Silence where there is no motion. In a whirling wheel, all the spokes, all the circumference is whirling rapidly. If you put anything upon the spokes, or upon the wheel, you will find it thrown off, but if you put something in the centre, it will be just where it is put. It will never move. It stays put. It does not go about. Put something right in the centre at the hub of a whirling wheel; it will remain there. There, in spite of all the whirl, there is a serenity. There, in spite of a certain imperceptible motion, there is total stability. What you put in the

centre never moves. It is there and it is established there. They say that in the eye of the hurricane, there is calm. In the midst of this great whirling wheel of Prakriti or cosmic dynamism, there is the great Stillness. That is by the way. But what do we see when we open our eyes? Everywhere we behold movement. And this movement is brought about by a certain movement of a certain intention, a Will.

Therefore they say that Ichcha Sakti leads to Kriya Sakti, and if this Kriya Sakti is channeled in the proper direction, it ultimately comes to Jnana Sakti, the Jnana that transcends mere Vidya. That becomes Para Vidya.

SADHANA IS WORKING UPON THE MIND WITH PATIENCE

Now, we are also possessed of that same dynamism that belongs to Prakriti. Our mental problems are also merely manifestations of this dynamism. And if we properly take hold of these problems and give them the proper direction, our problems become our solutions, our liabilities become our assets. The very thing that bothers us can make us transcend all botheration and become fixed in the Reality. For, it is through the trained, disciplined, concentrated and well-directed mind that deep meditation is attained; and in deep meditation, intuition, illumination supervenes. The same mind that is now the great problem, that same mind becomes the ultimate solution to all problems, provided you relate yourself to it in the right manner. Work upon it with patience, not only paying attention to it when it bothers you, but also working upon it with patience, day after day, to discipline it, to train it, to mould it and to direct it. That is Sadhana, that is Yoga Abhyasa, that is practical spirituality. Not waking up and getting upset only when the mind agitates or bothers you, but on the contrary, launching upon a positive and a creative process, upon inner mental culture, in a scientific manner and upon a systematic basis, day after day. That is an important business of life. That is called practical spirituality. And in it lies the key to progress, attainment and ultimate illumination and liberation.

Mind is the instrument *par excellence* given to man, given to the individual soul by God. It is Para Sakti Herself. So, if you realize the value of your mind, the immense precious treasure that you have in your mind, and do not see it as a problem, but see it as the instrument of your liberation, then you will behold all your eleven months in a different light altogether. You will be able to draw much knowledge about yourself from this study, and you will be able to make up your mind how to apply this knowledge of your previous eleven months in the coming twelve months. You will be able to make up your mind, devising certain disciplines in the last week of December, from the 26th to the 31st.

This I recommend to you as a point to ponder, a thought-seed upon which to pay some attention. Make it grow into something within your mind: "In what way am I utilizing my mind, this precious asset which makes me a human individual, and which is not available to any other form of living being upon this planet earth, except the human individual? It is my uniqueness. It is my distinctiveness. It is my great specialty by which I become what I am, the crown and glory of God's creation, endowed with something which only God has. All the other animals have everything but this one faculty that makes the human being a rational, intelligent, thinking, feeling animal. In what way am I utilizing this faculty?"

LOOK BACKWARD, LEARN, GO FORWARD

So, now I recommend to you, upon this 11th day of December, 1990, a special study for the remaining eleven days before Christmas. If you have got a diary, go over the diary leaves. Otherwise, try to sit, try to take the mind inward and try to go back and introspect: “How did January 1st, 1990 start? How did it commence? What was my feeling? What was my position, situation at that time? How far have I come since then? Where do I find myself now?”. In this way, by Christmas, let this study be complete and devote the last week, 26th to 31st to meet the New Year in a prepared way and rejoice in the gift that God is giving you freely, without charging you anything, the gift of a New Year, in this life of yours, inviting you now. Make use of this New Year to come closer to God. Rise higher. Come, move towards the light away from darkness. Liberate yourself. Come from bondage to liberation. Accept this gift of a New Year from God; respond to His invitation. And lay a new trail of light and wisdom. May that be your 1991, sirs!

God bless you in this task of diving inside! God bless you in this task of looking within and studying yourself! Because, it is of vital importance that you commence this process of a determined polishing and removal of dross and beginning to shine in your pristine splendour.

INVOKE THE POWER OF VIDYA MAYA

Everything that exists, everything that is, everything that is perceived by the five senses, everything that has ever been conceived of, we consider as the play of the supreme inscrutable power of Para Brahman, Maya. This great Divine Mother contains within Herself both light and darkness, auspiciousness and inauspiciousness, the positive and the negative, progression and regression, evolution and involution, upward ascent and downward descent, emancipation and liberation, and bondage and perdition. And it is this play of Hers composed of these dualities, these Dvandvas, that we see in this paradoxical universe of ours. It is a play now full of joy, now full of sorrow. It is a play full of birth and death, day and night, darkness and light, love and hate, like and dislike, attraction and repulsion. There is therefore the great need of invoking this supreme Cosmic Power of Para Brahman in Her benign, auspicious aspect, in Her creative, constructive, positive aspect, in Her progressive aspect, that She may Herself manifest in each seeking soul, in each sincere aspiring soul, in the form of all that is positive, all that is good, all that is auspicious and blessed, all that is progressive. Thus manifesting, She Herself will enact Her divine play of overcoming all that is of darkness, of overcoming the opposing side of the downward pull. She is the downward pull and She is the force overcoming the downward pull. She Herself is both. Invoked as Vidya Maya, she liberates. Therefore, we have this great need, this indispensable necessity to invoke the positive, the auspicious, the blessed, the liberating, the illuminating aspect of the Mother’s power in us—not the enchanting, the binding, deluding or chaining aspect.

And this mid-point of this concluding month of the year would be indeed a very appropriate point in time to look back and try to study in retrospect what one’s life has been over these past eleven months, what one’s situation has led up to over these past eleven months, how

far the living of one's life over these months has helped to move towards the lofty, noble, sublime ideals one has set up before oneself for attainment.

Soon will come Christmas, the holy advent of the great Divine Master Jesus, who taught us the way to the Kingdom of Heaven through his beatitudes, through his Sermon on the Mount, through his own ideal pattern of life and conduct, character and relationship. He went about doing good. He had attained victory over his own self. He was a master who had conquered his flesh, subjugated his senses, uplifted his consciousness to the level of the Supreme Being. So much so he was able to say, "I and my Father are one". Thus he had shown to us by his own radiant and ideal life our potential, the possibility of our reach. The glorious day of his advent upon earth nearly two thousand years ago might indeed be a wonderful occasion, a golden opportunity, to ponder this sum-total of knowledge gained by looking in retrospect over the past eleven months and decide upon a certain pattern for the next twelve months, commencing from the 1st of January.

Radiant souls! Devotees of the Lord! Lovers of righteousness! Beloved seekers engaged in a determined effort at self-unfoldment, in a resolute effort to uplift yourselves by your own selves! For, that is the injunction, that is the great Adesh of the world-teacher Bhagavan Sri Krishna: "Uplift thyself by thy own self. *Uddharet Atmanatmanam*". Draw inspiration, draw guidance, draw light from all the directions if you wish, but the effort should be yours. Nothing can substitute for that. Guidance can come, light can come, encouragement can come, inspiration can come. But the effort has to be supplied by one's own self. That effort is Purushartha. It is self-effort. All things in this universe from the most ancient times were achieved by earnestness and earnest effort, sincerity and dedication, persistence and perseverance. This self-effort constitutes a small price for the glorious attainment that is the outcome. This glorious attainment, this great attainment means life. And without this attainment, life is no life; it is living death. It is as good as not existing.

If we exist only to pass through time, we do not exist, we do not live. Mountains and rocks, and minerals in the bowels of the earth, pass through millions of years, pass through aeons; but what they were a million years ago, what they were ten million years ago, they are that even now. That is a state of never rising beyond or above one's condition. The sole exception is when one comes into the level of animate life. And it is the privilege of man to be even more than animate life, to be conscious, intelligent and purposeful in the living of life. That is the supreme prerogative, the privilege of humankind of whom you are one, to which species you belong. The very hallmark of the human status is a clear perception, an intelligent comprehension of the goal of life, of the purpose for which you are being here; and also a purposeful effort, a sustained effort towards the attainment of that great, grand and glorious goal. That is life. And the human individual is capable of this wonderful effort, this wonderful Purushartha, this purposeful and intelligent effort, precisely because he is divine.

It is the divinity of your being that will not rest content by your continuing to be active only upon the human level. It will not rest content. It will manifest itself. It is that which urges you to recapture once again and realize once again your true pristine splendour. It is that divinity within you, it is the fact of your divinity that urges you towards the restoration of the lost glorious

kingdom, towards the awareness of your total perfection. This inner urge of the God in man towards God-consciousness is the only thing that is worthy of being called life. It is the only thing that deserves to be called life. This is the inner upward urge towards once again fully experiencing, fully realizing, that state of divinity that is our eternal, natural state, over which we have a birthright, a claim.

Time should not be allowed to pass by without doing something substantial in this upward ascent of the spirit towards cosmic consciousness, towards divine perfection, peace and joy. And, therefore, let us take stock of where we stand after having been given a whole year, 1990, of which eleven months have passed by and the last month is moving towards its close. Let us take stock and decide firmly, in the light of what we learn about ourselves, how we can utilize the next twelve months that are about to be proffered to us, about to be given to us, gifted to us, by God. Let us decide firmly in what manner the next year could be lived.

TOUCHSTONES FOR JUDGING THE QUALITY OF OUR SPIRITUAL LIFE

To make this retrospective study of the past eleven months more concrete, I would suggest a very practical method, a practical process. For, if you want to evaluate or estimate the quality of any condition, any situation, any state, any activity, any moment, it is usually done with reference to some standard which becomes sort of a touchstone, sort of a criterion, with reference to which we decide whether a thing is plus or minus, satisfactory or unsatisfactory. Really and truly, is it in the right direction or is it lacking in strength, energy, vitality, force, power? It is always with reference to some pre-set standard that anything is judged. If anything goes below that standard, it means, “No, it is no good, no good; something is seriously wrong”. Then something has to be done to set things right. And, anything above the standard means, “Yes, it is good. Keep it up. Or make it still better”. So, we have to have a certain standard, so that with reference to that standard, we can make a study of the past twelve months, January to December, 1990.

Now, what should be that standard? Upon what criteria, upon what standard of reference, may we try to evaluate our life, make an appraisal of our life during this just concluding year, 1990? What would be the touchstone for trying to know the quality of our spiritual life especially, and our ethical life particularly, and our common sense life upon the outer plane of day-to-day physical living?

Again and again I reiterate this great truth that beloved and worshipful Gurudev Swami Sivanandaji has left nothing unsaid. He has given us everything. And therefore we have a standard. If you want to study your life over the past eleven months and more, you may study it with the Master’s “*Twenty Important Spiritual Instructions*”¹ as the terms of reference or tool of reference. Ask yourself. “These past months, at what time have I been getting up? In the morning, what has been my pattern of waking up and starting each day? Next, having woken up,

¹ See Appendix 1

what was the first thought that I harboured in my mind? Did I take the Name of God? Did I think about Him?”.

I was just now coming up from “*Guru Nivas*”, walking, because I said to myself, “I’d like to walk up, I don’t want the vehicle”. So, when I was passing by the gateway that leads into the inner hospital, when I was walking by the side of “*Ganesh Kutir*”, I saw a sweeper cleaning up the whole place. I said to myself, “This is something. It is not yet 6 a.m. and this man has woken up, got ready, dressed himself and now he is busily sweeping, cleaning. And he lives somewhere else. He must have come all the way from his home”. And I said, “How true it is that one’s day should start early and one’s day should start first with purifying, or with cleaning, sweeping, making clean! This is an indication of what spiritual life should be, what a Sadhak’s life should be”. It is an exact representation of a Sadhak life. Wake up early, get going, cleanse, cleanse by uttering God’s Name, by thinking of God.

And, like that, check your life over the past months with reference to each succeeding point in the *Twenty Important Spiritual Instructions*. How did you fare with reference to Instruction Number 2? And Number 3? Did you do a quick round of at least brief meditation? What did you do from January 1st to January 31st? If you had not kept a diary of this, can you remember what you did?

“Certainly, I did not wake up early on January 1st. Why? Because on the night of December 31st they made it very late in the Satsang. They had the New Year festivities and all that and so I had every justification for completely discarding Gurudev’s teaching and getting up, maybe, at 6.00, 6.30 ... who knows? Because they delayed my retiring time. I ought to have gone to bed at 10.30; I was able to go to bed only at 1.00 a.m. after the New Year’s celebration.” Did you say like that?

And then, over the past eleven months and odd, have you been fair to your body? Have you been careful to observe the laws of health? Have you been eating moderately? Have you been avoiding the wrong type of food that does not agree with your system? Have you been putting forth positive and constructive efforts to build up your bodily health? Have you been regular in your daily exercise? Have you been trying to do your Asan and Pranayam without fail every day? Have you been practicing Surya Namaskar at least for five to ten minutes each day? That is, have you been putting forth active efforts, conscious efforts to build up your body, to cultivate and maintain a high state of health and efficiency, physical and mental? Have you been keeping up those efforts in a sustained and admirable manner, worthy of seekers and Sadhaks? Because, a Sadhak’s hallmark is perseverance in one’s efforts. Perseverance is one of the hallmarks of a Sadhak. Perseverance, persistence, never accepting defeat, never taking a “No” for a reply. Yes, it is possible. If not now, with more effort. Therefore, this Abhyasa or effort, persisted in, persevered in, and not slackened, but increased in its tempo, is the hallmark of an Abhyasi, a Yogi, a Sadhak.

So, are you applying this perseverance upon the health level also? Because, sound health is not to be dismissed as a mean or paltry goal. Upon the foundation of good health depends our achievement and success in the various walks of life where we have to make effort based on the

body. And knowing that the body and the mind are interconnected, knowing that the condition of the body influences the condition of the mind and affects it, either positively or negatively, have you been active? Have you been earnest and regular in your efforts in considering all these various things?

In this way, if you take item by item from the *Twenty Important Spiritual Instructions*, they will provide you a very, very practical term of reference, a very, very appropriate standard or touchstone to evaluate the quality of your life and actions over these past many months.

I reiterate also another standard of reference, another criterion, another touchstone, which is infallible, which is most wonderful. That touchstone is Gurudev's *Universal Prayer*² wherein he has shared his great ideals with us.

Gurudev has given to us the blueprint of an ideal life in his *Universal Prayer*. It contains within itself the quintessence of the teachings of all the great religions of the world, of all the scriptures, of all saints and sages. It is another touchstone with reference to which we can look at our life in depth, with reference to which we can look at our life in a higher, idealistic perspective. That is the *Universal Prayer* in which Gurudev has given his heart and kept for us a bright, shining, lofty, noble, sublime ideal for our living.

So, the *Twenty Important Spiritual Instructions* can be one term of reference. The *Universal Prayer* can be another term of reference. And they both are practical down-to-earth pragmatic terms of reference for your daily living. A third term of reference would be Gurudev's own' personality. In other words, whatever ideals Gurudev has placed before us by the manner of his own living would provide a third term of reference. And you can get some light upon this subject by studying the *Sivananda Day-to-day*³ volumes. They are books which give a close account of what Gurudev did day after day—when he came to the office in the morning, through the day. The chroniclers observed Gurudev's conversations, his meeting with people, his reactions and his comments upon various affairs and jotted them down faithfully. These jottings have all been brought together in *Sivananda Day-to-day*. That is another term of reference. You can get plenty of material regarding Gurudev's views upon spiritual life, Sadhana, Sadhaks and their behaviour. What did Gurudev expect of the ideal Sadhak? What were the things he did not like in the present-day Sadhaks? Plenty of times Gurudev expressed his views on these and related matters in a very frank manner. They have all been brought together in the *Sivananda Day-to-day* volumes.

Another valuable term of reference can be found in Chapter 18 titled "*Ecce Homo*" in the book *Light Fountain*; where certain handwritten excerpts from the diary which Gurudev had kept during his Swargashram days have been reproduced. They afford us yet another term of reference, though they set too high a standard, maybe.

And the last, but not the least, term of reference is your opinion of yourself. I have been distributing during the past couple of years a little card brought out by the East Malad Branch of

² See Appendix 2

³ Now available in a combined volume under the title "The Gospel of Swami Sivananda"

the Divine Life Society at Bombay. This particular card is captioned “Man in the Mirror” or “Man in the Looking Glass” or something like that. I do not remember the exact title. The point is this. It is not what the world says about you that matters. It is not what is said about you in public meetings, in welcome addresses that matters. They may say, “You are such a wonderful person. You are the foremost disciple of the greatest master the Twentieth Century has produced”. That, this and all that. They may say so many things. From far off, a mountain looks very, very charming, very beautiful. *Dooratham Parvato Rangah*. And so, deceived by that charming appearance, that attractive aspect of the mountain, if you go and try to ascend it, try to climb it, then you will understand that it is not all that beautiful as it looked from far off. It is a back-breaking and stiff climb, and maybe, you will find sharp flints upon the way, maybe a lot of mosquitoes and other poisonous insects, and God knows, maybe stench also of rotting carcasses of some kill.

So, you begin to encounter and experience many things that are not seen from far off when you go too near a seemingly attractive and charming spot. The same is the case with persons also. The same is the case with their nature. If from far off a person is seen, he may very well look wonderful, he may look like the ideal person specially created by God upon His earth. But when you go near to the person, and start living with the person, and begin to scrutinize the person’s daily life, you begin to see many other things which were not seen from far off. Even then a person can be clever and hide many things. And even if he does not deliberately hide, certain things may still remain hidden, things which a person never expresses on the outer. These inner aspects are known only to the God within and the concerned person himself.

So, the card captioned “Man in the Mirror”, says, “When you go out, it is not what people tell you, what encomiums people pay, that counts. Your friend may slap you on the back in the club or in the playground and say, ‘Oh, you are a wonderful guy!’”. If you help them in the local cricket match, they may say wonderful things about you. It is not what you perform upon the playground or in the office or in some social gathering that counts. It is when you are alone, when you stand before a looking glass or a mirror, when some person is looking at you, that you can truly judge yourself. Can you see that person in the mirror eye-to-eye? And can you acquit yourself creditably? Can that person give you a clean chit and say, ‘You’re okay, you’re alright’?”. If you can see eye-to-eye with that person, look that person in the eye and you manage to get a pass mark in his or her view and opinion, well, that is where you stand. That is what you are. That is your truth. But we rarely do it. Because we rarely try to do it, somebody thought it worthwhile to make a poem and circulate it among the general public—this thing which is very essential, very effective, which very few people do and most people avoid doing, maybe, but which is very, very important for one’s own progress and upliftment.

What is your opinion of yourself? What was your opinion of yourself on 1st January, 1990? What is your opinion of yourself on 14th December, 1990? It is, maybe, the last touchstone; if you can be very, very impartial, frank, very, very sincere with yourself, it may be the last touchstone upon which to appraise and evaluate your life and actions, the quality of your life as a spiritual person and a Sadhak, the quality of your life as an intelligent, rational individual, the quality of your life as a human individual in human society having to deal with

other human beings, having to interact with them. So, ethics comes in there; ethics, justice, fair-play comes in there.

VITAL IMPORTANCE OF EARNESTNESS AND CLEAR-CUT THINKING

This spiritual life for which we have turned away from the fleeting, from the transitory, from the evanescent, this spiritual life to which we have dedicated ourselves, has to be lived in all earnestness, in all seriousness, with deep sincerity and concern; otherwise, we would have given up that which is petty and of temporary worth and not attained that which is glorious and of permanent worth. So we shall be neither here nor there. Therefore, it is of vital importance that we consider, periodically and earnestly, our spiritual life to which we have dedicated our time and our energy, our mind, our heart, our everything, our whole being. Therefore, such an important factor to which we have dedicated everything, for which we have renounced and turned away from everything, such an important factor that has in it the potential to grant us the highest blessedness, cannot be taken for granted. And, rightly, therefore, at year-end, we seek to study and assess the quality of this life to which we are dedicated. We have voluntarily adopted the life spiritual knowing that sense-objects are deceptive, knowing that all human relationships are fickle and fanciful, knowing that there is no real happiness and satisfaction to be had in this imperfect, temporary world of finite limited appearances. So, to us, our spiritual life is an all-important vital matter. It is our very life, without which our life is as nothing. It is the only life that there is—the life in the Spirit, which thanks to God, thanks to the blessings of saints, we have been able to embrace and adopt.

Radiant Atman! Sadhaks! Devotees of the Lord who are gathered in this holy Ashram, in the holiest of holy areas in India, Uttarakhand, the territory of the Ganga and the Himalaya, both of which the Lord identifies with Himself in His Bhagavad Gita wisdom teachings! Try to make a calm, impartial and honest appraisal so that you may be able to evaluate the quality of your spiritual life and the measure of its success. What is there to be set right in it? What is there to be enhanced and augmented, made stronger? What is there that is absent and requires to be cultivated? What is there that is present, but not in sufficient measure, that requires to be developed and strengthened? And what is there that should not be, there and therefore has to be carefully weeded out, eradicated and thrown away, uprooted and thrown away? To do all these things, you should have a clear-cut view of yourself, your life, your behaviour and conduct, your spiritual progress and your practical spiritual programme, daily and ongoing, through the twelve months that have gone by. You have to have a clear-cut view.

If you never bestow a special thought, a very special thought, in a systematic manner, you are not going to have a clear-cut view. Your mind is always elusive; thoughts are evasive and slippery, vague; they never take definite shape and form. They do not stand before you clearly. They are always nebulous; they are always vague; they are always elusive; they slip away, because no one cultivates diligently the habit of constructive thinking, clear-cut constructive thinking, which is an art and a science by itself. And unless this clear-cut thinking is cultivated, the mind remains a grasshopper mind. Unless we gain a grasp upon the mind and its processes, the mind remains slippery. It is just a tossing about of the thought activity from morning till

evening, because one has never given thought given attention to the all-important science of mind cultivation, not devoted time and attention to cultivating the mind, cultivating clear-cut purposeful thinking, constructive thinking so that there may be nothing vague inside, nothing nebulous inside, so that everything may be clear-cut. Because this mind cultivation has not been done, it becomes very difficult to make a deep study of oneself.

Therefore, we have to make special efforts, take paper and pen, go and look behind, think over and jot down as and when a thought suddenly flashes, as and when an insight is suddenly gained, before it slips away and goes out of memory and is forgotten, lost for ever. We have to catch it and put it down. So, that which is of time, is made eternal, permanent, by putting it down in black and white. Concretizing things in this manner is very important, very necessary.

After centuries of study and progress, of science and advancement they are now coming to the realization that education should be visual also. To coordinate both sight and hearing and make it one single process, to make the input one single process, they have now started what is known as simultaneous audio-visual education. Likewise, we too have to concretize our thoughts, put down our ideas in black and white so that we can see them in front of us.

Nothing like seeing it in front of you. That is why when the dentist pulls out the tooth of someone who has had a tooth pain and gone to him for an extraction, he is not satisfied with pulling out the tooth when the patient is under gas and telling him, "It's finished!". No. The patient will not be satisfied that way; he will feel vaguely dissatisfied unless the dentist produces the extracted tooth before him. "Look, this is your tooth!" Then, o yes, the patient is immediately relieved, a hundred and one per cent, of that source of pain, because he is now convinced that the troublesome tooth is no more there. That is a habit of the human mind; it wants to see.

THE MAIN OBJECTIVE BEHIND MY EXHORTATIONS

My telling you all this has but one purpose. Sharing my thoughts with you in this manner has but one purpose, viz., your highest welfare, your supreme good. This sharing has but one intention, that your life should be crowned with glorious success, that you should reach your spiritual destination and you should fulfil your grand destiny. With but this one single intention and view, this sharing has been done with love and goodwill for you and with a prayerful supplication at the feet of Gurudev that his grace and blessings may make your life a complete success, an all-round complete success, so that you may shine as a light unto yourself and a lamp unto the feet of other pilgrims upon this great path that leads from darkness to light, from unreality to reality, this great path that leads up from death and mortality to liberation and everlasting life.

The objective in my saying all this is, first and foremost, not negative. It is not negative. It is not to make you feel small. It is not to give a hint that I have a very poor opinion of aspirants and Sadhaks. Far, far from it. You are people of great worth. Many times you have heard me refer to you as the "salt of the earth". You are people of great worth. So there is no question that I have a poor opinion of you or that I want to make you feel small. Not at all. Nor is it my intention to make you feel guilty of having wasted away a God-given golden opportunity

and allowed time to slip by. These are not my intentions, though such meanings may be automatically involved in my exhortations.

Far from these things, the objective of my exhortations is that you may be up and doing, that you may become alert. It is to alert you that I say these things. It is to make you intensely aware of an important thing that has got to be done. It is to make you intensely aware. And it is to bring about a keenness and a zest in your attitude towards your daily life, in your attitude towards your daily programme, in your feeling, in your relationship with your spiritual progress, so that you may start being vigorous and progressive when this month ends and 1991 dawns. It is to prepare you for the New Year.

Just as before a race, on the starting line, all the participants are poised, with every muscle taut, breath held, so that immediately the signal goes, like a bullet shot out of the gun, they may leap into the race. So, all this talk is a preparation for what is being given to you as a great gift, a wonderful year made out of twelve virgin months, each month consisting of no less than thirty days—except February—and each day made up of twenty-four hours. To everyone, be he a billionaire or a beggar on the street, the same twenty-four hours is given—impartially. No difference is made between high and low, big and small, great and little. No. The same twenty-four hours is given to everyone, whether it is a man or a beast, a dog or a donkey. The same twenty-four hours Bhagavan gives every day. What impartiality! What generosity! And each hour is a *golden* hour set with sixty *diamond* minutes. You might recollect this; each hour is a golden hour set with sixty diamond minutes, too precious to be frittered away, too precious to be whiled away and lost for ever. No one can give it back. A spoken word, a sped arrow and the spent hour—no power on earth can recall these three—a spent hour, a sped arrow and the spoken word.

BE UP AND DOING: TIME IS RUNNING OUT

Time and tide wait for no man. Moments, hours, days, weeks, months, years pass. They have passed. You consider, look back. A little while ago, you were a little child playing in your parents' garden. Then you were a little grown-up boy or girl taking going to school seriously, day after day, and becoming upset if Mummy delayed the departure by late breakfast. Because school was important, very important, you were worried what the master would say if you reached late. How serious that world was! Later on, adolescence took over and teenage.

It seems like yesterday, right behind your shoulder. It does not look remote or distant. It seems like yesterday, when you put on your first new full suit or full dress, dressed yourself like an adult, and made your advent into the society of seniors, into adult society, attended the first marriage party, maybe. And then the convocation ... and then ... all seems but like yesterday.

But then, consider the age of your body. How many sheets have been torn off the annual calendar, year after year? How many Christmases have come and gone? How many firsts of January have flowed by? And how black hairs have turned gray and gray hairs have turned white!

Dinamapi Rajani Sayam Pratah
Sisira Vasantau Punarayatah
Kala Kridati Gachchathyayuh

In this way, days and nights pass. The seasons fly away—spring, summer, autumn, winter—and life hurries past before we realize that we are in the evening of our life or the mid-point of our life. Therefore it is that these admonitions come with a certain sense of urgency. And it is worthwhile paying attention to these admonitions that we may not later on regret and cry, “Alas, alas!”. That is why we have the familiar expression: “Take time by the forelock!”.
Kal Kare Jo Aaj Kar; Aaj Kare Jo Ab.

Time is so precious, precious, precious. Not to be wasted away in idle talk. And so this is a gift that God is preparing to hand over to you at 12.00 midnight on Monday, the 31st of December. And it is a dynamic day, the start of the working week. It is not given to you on a Sunday, on the Sabbath Day when nothing should be undertaken. No. He is giving it to you on a dynamic day, Monday, dawning at midnight of the 31st of December. I am only trying to prepare you to accept that gift and make the highest use of it. That is the intention—positive, constructive, creative and progressive. The intention of my urging is that you may study yourself and then purposely determine to overcome all the things that have to be overcome, bring in all the things that have to be brought into your life, and throw away forcibly, and once and for all, all the things that need to be thrown away out of your life.

So, the intention of these morning urgings is to enthrall you to take up this task with keen eagerness, determination and purposefulness. Because, we have no time to lose. Gurudev used to say, “Remember death; any time it can come”. Therefore, do not be idle, do not be indifferent to important things. Do not postpone. Remember that there is no iota of pleasure or real happiness in this world. Do not be duped by your own inner desires and cravings of the mind, your own senses in this body and your own sense-objects, and your own surroundings. Do not be duped. They are all deceptive, they are all treacherous. They will entrap you. Therefore, be keen, vigorous and alert. There is no happiness in sense-objects. There is nothing to be gained through sense-satisfaction or indulgence—everything to lose, nothing to gain. And, mind and its desires and cravings are your real enemies. That is where you have to fight the battle. Remember the great Reality beyond all appearances, God. Call it God, Jehovah, Almighty Father, Allah, Ahura Mazda, Supreme Tao, Ek Omkar, Satnam, Brahman, Bhagavan—call It anything. There is one great stupendous, never-changing, everlasting, ever-present Reality. That is your source. That is your eternal abode. That is your origin. That is your indwelling support. That is your goal, without which life is a cipher, a zero. And that can liberate you from all pain, sorrow and suffering, all fear, bondage and limitation. That can bestow upon you true liberation, immortality. Remember the saints and sages who have taught us by their own life how to attain that Supreme Being and become free for ever from the vexations of earth life, how to attain the supreme joy, the supreme state of blessedness and liberation.

There is this urgency. While death is certain, we do not know when it will come. Its coming is uncertain. Therefore, we cannot afford to play with this truth, with this fact that one day our life must come to an end. We cannot play with this fact. It should be ever before us, and

in its light, we must live our life. Be up and doing, not sleeping and slumbering. You must be awake. When Gurudev outlined to us one day the easy path to God-realization, he said: “Eradicate negative qualities; cultivate positive, virtuous qualities. That is number one. Number two, remember God constantly, even in the midst of your activity. Number three, dedicate all your actions to God”. Gurudev said that this was the easy, sure and unfailing path to God-realization.

It is not a work. It is a pleasant task. It is a constructive creative task. It should give you the greatest joy, the greatest pleasure to engage in this process of reconstructing, recreating yourself, being reborn into a new dimension, a new consciousness. What greater thrill can there be than this adventure of transforming your life, transforming your entire self into a new being, a shining, radiant, liberated, joyful new being? Therefore this is recommended. It is the greatest joy; it is the greatest, most wonderful task for which life could be utilized—the task of tasks, the greatest of all tasks.

Day by day, even as we progress towards the fulfillment of our divine destiny, even as each day adds on to our spiritual ascent, it at the same time takes away from us the available time period. It takes away from us something of what we have to utilize, our life, our time, our energies. As we progress, we are faced with an ever lessening quantum of time to finish what is still left for us to do. You must always be keenly aware of this fact. Much as you may be satisfied with the little steps taken by you upon each day, much as you may have a sense of fulfillment that you have not wasted each day but taken a step forward, risen upward, simultaneously there should be a keener edge coming into your striving that as you take each step forward, the time still available to you becomes correspondingly lessened. Each sunset leaves us with lesser time available still, while each sunrise proffers to us the beautiful gift of a new day for spiritual striving, for ascending higher up on the scale of spiritual evolution. Each sunset finds us deprived of a day.

As each year goes by and a New Year comes, in as much as we rejoice in the gift of a New Year, we must also be simultaneously conscious that whatever is left for us is now one year the lesser. Whatever is left is one year the lesser. *Bahut Gayi, Thodi Rahi. Ab Tu Ho Ja Soch.* Much time has passed, little is now left. Therefore, now, come, come. Become alert. Wake up, wake up. Be vigilant. This is what the great ones have said.

Therefore, it is with greater earnestness, with a greater seriousness of purpose and with a greater sense of urgency that we should do what is still left for us to do before our time runs out. I cannot afford to look this way and that way, misdirect my energies, misdirect my minutes and hours, misdirect my forenoons and afternoons in channels other than that one most important channel or path to the attainment of God-realization, which is the one true and most important goal of human existence, as all the great saints and sages—ancient, mediaeval and modern—have reiterated again and again.

They said: “O man, wake up! You have not come here merely to exist for a little while and be snuffed out in death. O man, wake up! You have not come here merely for physical functioning or mental activity or intellectual processes. No. You have come here for attaining

God-realization, for attaining Self-realization. That is the main purpose for which you have been given this human life. Come, arise, awake and attain illumination! Life is short, time is fleeting. Many are the obstacles. Therefore, apply yourself diligently, wholeheartedly, perseveringly to the attainment of this one great goal". Likewise the Upanishads exhort, the Bible exhorts, the New Testament exhorts: "Seek ye first the Kingdom of Heaven, all these shall be added unto you". The Koran exhorts, the Buddhistic scriptures exhort: "O man! Life is short, time flies away. Come, apply yourself wholeheartedly to spiritual striving. Move in the direction of this great, grand consummation of your life, the fulfillment of your divine destiny, the attainment of immortality, the attainment of divine perfection, illumination, liberation". Again and again, all the great scriptures, all the great prophets and the messengers of God that have ever been there since ancient times, have been calling upon mankind not to slumber in spiritual forgetfulness, but to awake, not to remain stagnating, but to arise and move forward. They have been calling upon mankind to move forward day after day, to move forward, upward and Godward. "Claim your birthright, fulfil your destiny and be free"—this has been the exhortation.

And the latest one to resound that call and exhort us with all the power of his pen, with all the power of his oratory, with all the power of his earnest love for mankind, with all the power of the sincerity at his command, with all the power of his own deep penance and God-realization, was beloved and worshipful Gurudev Swami Sivanandaji, the prophet of this Twentieth Century, a messenger of God-realization, a messenger of spiritual life. In the modern space age and atomic age, Swami Sivanandaji came as the representative of that ancient unbroken line of seers and sages who have been doing the same thing generation after generation, through the millennia and down the centuries, from the ancient Upanishadic era beyond recorded history. Gurudev was a modern representative of this ancient unbroken line of spiritual awakeners, spiritual messengers, divine messengers. And therefore, fortunate as we are to have come into the orbit of his wisdom teachings, into the light of his divine awakening, into the powerful spiritual stream he set into movement, let us keep up our direction, let us not fall into slumber, let us not rest on our oars, let us not get into wrong channels, side channels. Let us keep to the main stream that flows towards the ocean, majestically, ceaselessly. Let the spiritual current of our aspiration towards God-realization flow in a steady unbroken stream. Let us direct all our energies, all our efforts, all the spiritual force at our command, all the power of our reasoning and intellect, all the vigour of our body, all the power of our will, the power of our purified sentiments and emotions, gathering together all our personality potential as action, feeling, thinking and reasoning, let us become one unified onward movement towards the great Goal. Yes, life needs to be consciously directed in the right direction of the Goal. Life needs to be purposefully applied towards this steady onward movement, upward and Godward movement. Our direction should be right. That is the key—the right direction and the right application of all that life comprises for us, all that our personality constitutes, outer and inner. That is the great task. That is the challenge. That is the great adventure. That is the one thing needful.

OUR PROBLEMS ARE WITHIN: OUR SOLUTIONS ARE WITHIN

In this onward movement, in this Godward movement, of the obstacles, difficulties and problems we have to encounter and contend with, only 5% are outside us. As we go along the

spiritual path, we realize this more and more. They are 5% outside us and 95% within us. There will be no problem outside if we are not a problem to ourselves within. When God makes us open our eyes to this truth, He confers upon us the greatest blessing; He bestows upon us His greatest benediction.

Let us ponder this great question. We have to contend with ourselves twenty-four hours—day and night. Whereas the external world is but a passing factor compared to ourselves, we are in company with ourselves all the time. Our inner being, therefore, is everything to us. It is the positive as well as the negative, the greatest strength as well as the worst weakness. It is our hope as well as our despair. And unless the Sadhak, the spiritual aspirant, the Yogi, resolves this situation first, there can never be a cessation of all problems. The true prayer, therefore, is that we may be given the insight, we may be given the help, we may be given the wisdom to know this situation, to realize this situation and we may be given the resources to save ourselves from ourselves, to overcome ourselves, to liberate ourselves from ourselves, and maybe, cast ourselves out of ourselves so that what remains is light, what remains is wisdom, what remains is a clear path, uncomplicated, straight and sure without any obstacle. Heaven and hell lie within us. God and devil lie within us. Pandavas and Kauravas lie within us. Devas and Asuras lie within us. Obstacles and solutions lie within us. Problems and their solutions lie within us.

Radiant Atman! Do not delude yourself and do not blame the world outside. The world outside is innocent. It never comes and presents itself before you and says: “Now here I am, deal with me”. We go and start dealing with it and find ourselves in a mess, get ourselves into situations. Hundreds and thousands of fires are burning all over the world in hundreds and thousands and millions of homes. But we live without threat and danger as long as we do not create a fire within the kitchen in our own house. We can live without fire, we can live without any threat or danger or risk or catastrophe or calamity if we are careful in our house. Whole cities may burn down, whole forests may be reduced to ashes. We may hear news of it on the radio, we may see it on TV, but it is only when we create a fire in our own bed-room that we get into a catastrophe. So it is not what exists outside that is a threat, but it is what we create within that becomes the danger, the real danger and threat.

This is an important thing to be clearly pondered. For, we have to live with ourselves, we have to contend with ourselves, and through ourselves, we have to go beyond ourselves and attain to the state of Purushahood or Brahmanhood. And if within ourselves we have forces that will not allow us to go beyond ourselves, then we get stuck. And no matter how wonderful, glorious, grand and powerful Brahmanhood may be just above your head, you cannot reach It, because there is something in you that does not allow you to come out and go beyond your head. Not all the Brahmanhood that exists, not a thousand Brahmanhoods can do anything to you, unless you transcend yourself, unless you liberate yourself from yourself.

Think deeply. What are you? What is this thing called yourself? What are all the ingredients that go to make up this “I”? What are all those ingredients?

The greatest strength, the greatest power, the greatest wisdom, the greatest ability, capability—they were all centered in Hanuman, in the Ramayana. And all these he put at the feet

of Lord Rama. Hanuman did not use them for himself. He did not run amuck. He did not go berserk. He did not use his talents to promote himself or to dominate over others or to glorify himself. There was no self in Hanumanji. It was all Ram, Ram, Ram... So, it is true devotion and dedication that does the trick. Otherwise, Hanuman could also have become a big threat. Because he had that power, he had that capability. He had the strength, he had the valour, he had the fearlessness, he had the daring. He could have become the greatest menace in the whole of Ramayana and terrified everyone, bullied everyone and become a major hazard to all life at that time. But he became the most benign helper, a good Samaritan. Why? How? Hanuman effaced himself. And he put everything he had at the feet of Lord Rama, in the service of God, for God, for Divinity, for a higher cause, for a greater ideal. Therefore He is worshipped. His image is in the Visvanath Mandir. His temple is there on the bank of the Ganga in front of the Ashram, beside the Ashram Ghat. He is worshipped there. That is because he ceased to be, he ceased to exist, he reduced himself into a zero. All that he had, all that he was, all that he was capable of, he did not make use of for his own little self, but for Divinity, for a sublime cause.

Perhaps these angles of these great personalities we always miss. The right perspective from which to look and understand, grasp and receive, is not within us, because we are too busy skimming the surface, far too busy. Therefore we come to this request, this supplication: “O Lord! Help us to save ourselves from ourselves”. Egoism does not attack you from outside. Selfishness does not come from outside and waylay you, ensnare you, entrap you. It does not come from outside. Everything Gurudev has said. A Sadhak must save himself from crookedness, cunningness, deceit, subtle cleverness, hidden motivations, suppressed desires, justifications for the unjustifiable and excuses for everything. They do not get us anywhere. All these are in our make-up; they lurk within us. They do not come from outside. They do not assail us from the right side or the left side, from the front or the back. And they do not jump upon us from above. They are within us. Kama, Krodha, Lobha, Moha, Mada, Matsarya—they are there, these dacoits, these thieves, to plunder our wealth even while residing within us. Therefore beware, beware, beware. “We have to beware of these things which reside within us” said Sankara, a thousand and two hundred years ago.

Therefore, these aspects also are worth pondering when we are making an appraisal of ourselves, so that we may suitably equip ourselves for 1991. Again I reiterate, all these truths shared with you are entirely with a positive purpose behind, entirely with a constructive and a creative objective. Not to make you diffident, not to make you feel small, but to make you see that which perhaps you may not be able to see, may not have seen at all; to ask you to be awake, to be alert, to be prepared. They say, “Forewarned is forearmed”. If one knows all the good points and all the bad points of the road ahead, one would know how to steer clear of the bad points and take one’s vehicle towards the destination. If one is not told about the pitfalls on the road ahead, then one is likely to come a cropper, meet with an accident and the journey is likely to be held up. Therefore it is necessary that we know our road; and our road lies within ourselves. Therefore, I make my exhortations entirely with a positive purpose, to make you alert, to make you enthused in facing yourself and dealing with the problem. For, there is no time to lose. And I want to make you awake, make you keenly aware. I want to put into your hands the necessary weapons to deal with situations as they may arise.

My intention in sharing these thoughts is that you may become more capable, more prepared, more equipped to deal with yourself as you proceed upon the path. May they be received with the same intention. And may they be applied in your lives as they are meant to be applied. May 1991 prove to be a glorious year to you upon this path of progressive ascent towards the supreme state of divine perfection and liberation, of God-experience and universal consciousness. That is the quintessential purpose of this sharing—that you may be the better able to keep up this unceasing movement towards your grand divine destiny.

NEGATIVE SOLUTIONS WILL NOT WORK

You are your own very best friend. Within you there exists total solutions to all problems in your life, total solutions, not negative solutions. The ostrich also has got a negative solution. If someone comes to attack it, it does not want to feel threatened; it buries its head under the sand. Then it cannot see anyone attacking it. Like the ostrich, people try to have a negative solution. “No, there is no enemy.” “Why?” “I don’t see anyone.” And so they think that they have solved the problem. But this kind of solution—burying the head in the sand—does not work. It does not work, because the attacker comes and kills the bird.

There is a lovely story in Brindavan in connection with child Krishna. He was worrying His mother to give Him milk. She said: “What do you mean ... I’ve just now given you milk ... and it is still not time for the next ... “When is it time?” the child asked. “Night time” said the mother. “What do you mean by night time?” “When the sun sets, when it is dark, that is the time for your supper. At that time you can have milk.” “What do you mean by ‘dark’?” “Dark” is when you cannot see anything, when nothing is visible. Then is the time to drink milk.” So the child Krishna closed His eyes and said, “Mother! It is dark and I can’t see anything. Nothing is visible. So now ... please ... it is time for my ... give me my milk”. This also is a type of solution! It is a very clever solution.

In the case of the ostrich, it was a foolish solution. In the case of child Krishna, it was a very clever solution. But both of them do not achieve anything. But solutions that are contained within you for all problems of life—those solutions are positive, creative. Because, everything here is creative. Life is an evolution; it is an upward ascent. It is a process which is progressive, not regressive. Neither is it stagnant. Life is neither stagnant nor regressive; it is progressive. The law of life is progression, ascent into a state of perfection. The Divine Plan of God for man, for each individual soul, is for the individual soul to become like Him, to become like the Creator who made him. So, that is the Divine Plan of the Maker for each individual soul He sends forth here, made in His own image, fully divine. *Jivatma Paramatma Ke Amsa Hai*. Divinity is your goal, and therefore, all the potential for overcoming everything, for solving everything and arising victorious and attaining the Goal has been put into you by the Good God who made all things great and small.

So, within you lies a total solution to all problems. There is a strength to support every weakness of yours. There is a light to banish every darkness that lurks within you. And there is a total force working within you, as it is working within every little egg laid by a bird in its nest, as it is working in every seed which contains the potential for a tree, as it is working in every

chrysalis within which there is held a potential butterfly with beautiful wings. Even as such perfection lies in all these things, within you is the potential for Godhead, for God-experience, for divine perfection. Within you is the potential for Satchidananda consciousness and liberation. Within you is the light to overcome all darkness. And you yourself are your best friend in this world, in this life.

YOU ARE YOUR BEST FRIEND: RAISE YOURSELF BY YOURSELF

Take keen interest in yourself. Take keen interest in your self-study. No one else is going to take interest in you as much as you can, as much as you are capable of. Because you have constantly to live with yourself. Therefore, you alone are capable of giving full attention to yourself by night and by day. You only stand in a position of advantage to do maximum good to yourself. All others can try to give you occasional help, but you only are in the unique position of being able to be your greatest benefactor. Not the sole benefactor, certainly, but the greatest benefactor. And in this task, you are not alone. He who dwells within you is constantly with you.

Each human being is his own best friend. For you, there is no friend greater than yourself. You are your own best friend. Because, other friends are available at times, under certain circumstances, in certain places; whereas, you are available to yourself all the twenty-four hours, day and night. Any problem that hits you, anything that crops up within, immediately has your help in order to be solved and overcome. So you are available to yourself all the twenty-four hours, all the time. So, you are a never-failing friend to yourself. Therefore you are your best friend. You are a friend in need. Therefore you are a friend indeed. And therefore you will never let yourself down. You can always rely upon yourself. A hundred per cent you can rely upon yourself.

This point is to be grasped firmly. And in the light of this very, very comforting, convincing supportive thought, you must forge ahead upon the path that leads to God-consciousness and divine perfection. “Within you,” Guru Maharaj used to say, “within you there is a magazine of power, a magazine of tremendous power”. When he said “Magazine”, he did not mean a monthly journal or periodical. When he said “Magazine”, he meant a place where they store ammunition, where they store gun-powder that has got tremendous explosiveness. Magazine ... they call it magazine. So, within you there is a magazine of power, there is an infinite mind.

*“Full many a gem of purest ray serene,
The dark unfathomed caves of ocean bear.”*

The purest gems, shining and radiant, precious gem—they are there under the ocean. Even so, within you is hidden God. Within you is an ocean of bliss. Within you is a fountain of joy. Within you is divine perfection awaiting to be unfolded, developed and made gloriously manifest as your reality, as your true Self, as your real eternal identity, as your essential nature.

That is the truth. Therefore, within you is infinite power, within you is the resource for overcoming all obstacles, for meeting all challenges. This is your inner being.

Therefore, just as conflicts and tensions and obstacles and difficulties are created from within, simultaneously, there is also light. It is not *only* darkness. There is *also* hidden light. There is a fountain of joy, an ocean of bliss, a mine, a magazine of power that has to be tapped. If you know this and if you live in the knowledge of this truth, then there is no diffidence, there is no faltering, there is no hesitation. You know you can conquer. You know you can overcome. Everything is under your control. You have power over all circumstances. All external factors are powerless before your inherent inner power. You have got the resources and potential for every need, every need of yours. Only, you have to focus upon them.

May we live in this awareness. We thank God every day upon waking: “Thank You for my being what I am at this moment. Thank you, God, for making me what I am”. We have to start off from where we are. Nature accepts totally everything as it is. It does not make any demand. But even while accepting everything just as it is, Nature expects each thing to go on improving, to go on becoming better and better, day by day to go on improving from better to still better, day by day. That is what Nature, life, divine will, expects from each one of us. Not to stay where we are, but ever to excel, ever to plod onward, ever to step higher and higher until we reach the pinnacle. That is the grand adventure of life, ever trying to ascend to the peak of perfection in life.

Sankaracharya made it convincing and certain beyond doubt that this state of perfection was not to be achieved in some distant postmortem existence after death, in some heaven. No. He said, “Now and here”. Liberation is now and here, in this life. This is what Sankaracharya insisted upon. This perfection, this pinnacle-point of perfection is to be attained and achieved, now, here. That is life. Minus that, life is no life.

Therefore, to live is to move towards that grand consummation, the pinnacle-point of perfection, the spiritual Mt. Everest, the supreme state wherein we become what God expects us to be. That we are now far from it, that we are what we are now—that is not the problem. But, not to make any effort to rise towards that perfection—that is the problem. To forget to keep in view that pinnacle-point of perfection every moment, with every breath, with every step that we take each day—that is the problem. But if we keep the Goal always before us, the ideal ever shining and radiant before our mental vision and keep on plodding step by step, keep on moving towards it, then there is no problem. Then life is purposeful; then life is meaningful. Life becomes very significant. Life becomes full of interest, full of interest. That is how one should live and in that you have the supreme advantage of having a twenty-four hour helper and friend, always on call.

This friend never fails to lift the telephone. The moment you ask for Him, He is there. Immediately He is there. He is only awaiting to be called, awaiting to be invoked. He says, “Yes, here am I. What can I do to help you?”. You have got the supreme advantage, of having in yourself this ever-present, never-failing best friend and that is your Self. *Uddharet Atmanatmanam*.

This is the great secret, this is the great truth that the Gita reveals. Tarry not. Do not tarry and do not allow anything to come in the way of your determined and resolute progress towards that grand Goal. Brush aside all obstacles. Affirm and assert your sure mastery and march on boldly and confidently and attain the Goal and be free; be crowned with glory.

The life spiritual is the only true life, the authentic and genuine movement of your inner being towards your eternal source and origin, this journey back homeward. May divine grace and the benedictions of the masters grant you unhampered progress and success in this true inner life of yours for which alone you have come here into this earth plane, which is otherwise a plane of *Janma, Mrityu, Jara, Vyadhi, Duhkha*—birth, death, old age, disease, sorrow, pain and suffering. Life on this earth plane is essenceless; it is subject to a thousand afflictions. It is chaotic and fragmentary. Nevertheless, this one inner purpose, this spiritual objective makes it precious, most invaluable and most meaningful. Therefore, most fortunate and blessed are you all, that this inner depth of meaning has been given to you, that you have been enriched with this knowledge of the spiritual dimension to your life. Your life is gifted with this inner depth of a higher meaning and purposefulness. And therefore you must deem yourselves blessed. You must deem yourselves rarely fortunate, and therefore, with a heart filled with gratitude and with sustained enthusiasm and keen eagerness, you must pursue this path and move towards the Goal, each day drawing nearer and nearer to it. And each day you must go on devising ways and means of facing challenges and overcoming obstacles. And you must be ever intent upon living your life as a seeker, as a Jijnasu, as a Mumukshu, being fully aware all the time of its implications. To this end, ponder the lives of saints and sages, mystics and seekers who have gone before us, who have blazed a trail and have left for us great shining ideals, examples of what the life spiritual is like, examples of what a true devotee of God is like and how he lives his life.

Saints and sages are to us the great lights upon the spiritual path by which we can guide our own lives towards the ultimate fulfillment of our existence, viz., God-experience, divine perfection, total transcendence of our limitations in consciousness and shining with the splendour of our pristine true nature, our essential reality, our true eternal identity which is divinity. No less and no more. For, He has made us in His image. To be perfect as the Maker—that potential lies within each one of us. It is inherent in us, awaiting to be made manifest. And that is life—exerting every moment to manifest the Divinity that lies within us.

So, let us take hold of every opportunity, and let us make use of every moment for this lofty purpose. And let us convert even the inevitable earthly experiences of ours into means of rising higher upon the spiritual path. As the great Rama Tirtha used to say, “Make stumbling blocks into stepping stones to success”. Our very obstacles and handicaps may become the occasion for exercising spiritual qualities like courage, determination and endurance, like wisdom, Viveka, Vichara and will-power—all these and more. It is when one faces obstacles and temptations and difficulties upon the way that one is called upon to invoke from within resources lying dormant. So it becomes an opportunity for putting forth from within ourselves qualities which would not have been called forth had it not been for these adverse circumstances and obstacles. Adversity can make you shine like burnished gold, can impart to you a greater strength, a greater determination, a greater power of what Mahatma Gandhi used to call Atma-

bal, soul-force. Nothing comes to us in life without meaning. Nothing is sent to us by God without a purpose. There is some hidden meaning and purpose behind everything and that hidden purpose is always positive. When this is understood, every experience can be turned to gainful and profitable use.

365 VIRGIN DAYS—24 GOLDEN HOURS—60 DIAMOND MINUTES

We are nearing the conclusion of the year 1990, and soon you will enter into a new gift of 365 virgin days in which you can sow the seeds of any grand and glorious future, sow the seeds of a harvest of peace, bliss, illumination and divine perfection. It is yours to do as you wish. The New Year is like a book with all the pages unwritten and blank for you to enter into it anything that you wish to write. You may write in letters of gold if you wish and make it all a thing of beauty. We are moving forward to receive that great gift of a New Year in our life. Let these few intervening days be days of preparation, days of deep introspection, days of a retrospective view of the past eleven months and odd. Try to make an appraisal, an evaluation of what you have been throughout this year that has gone by, what these past months and days have meant for you.

Have you grasped each day and made it a gainful step upwards towards your destiny, upward and Godward? Or have you let the days go by, pass by? Have you made the experiences that you encounter into things of vexation and frustration? Or have you converted them into things of profit, into things of increased wisdom and greater inner strength? What has been your use of these eleven months and odd, especially from the point of view of your ethical unfoldment? As a spiritual seeker, as a Sadhak, as a Yogi pursuing the path of your chosen Yoga, as one who is engaged in Abhyasa, how have you fared in these past months? And in the light of this evaluation, this appraisal, this special knowledge, this analytical knowledge in depth about your own self and how you have fared in the last year, in the light of this new knowledge, be better equipped to move towards this great new wondrous gift of God, one more year of life.

Each day, as I mentioned earlier, is filled with twenty-four golden hours, set with diamond minutes, precious, invaluable, beyond compare. They are yours to utilize and fill with divinity, with love, compassion, wisdom, spiritual aspiration, sincere Sadhana. All these things and more you can do to enrich yourself. And to that end make the closing days of this year a period of spiritual inner searching and spiritual consolidation of your experience of the past one year of life and a period of new resolutions and determination to do better. You have been good. You have been very unique and wonderful. But be better. Let the New Year stretching before you prove that these years that have gone by have been meaningful and gainful, have been profitable and enriching, have lifted you up higher on the scale of spiritual evolution. Let it be a year to prove that God's gift to you has not been in vain. Let it be a year to prove yourself worthy of this great gift of human status. God speed you upon this onward ascent towards the pinnacle of life's great adventure, the pinnacle-point of God-experience, of Satchidananda consciousness, of illumination and enlightenment. God speed you upon this upward ascent. This is my sincere prayer at the feet of the Almighty and at the feet of beloved and worshipful Guru

Maharaj, who is the light of our life, who has brought into us this great awareness that we are inherently divine.

Therefore, divine should be our life and divine experience our goal. And we should make a determined movement towards the Divine, the inner meaning of our life to us. We should make a determined ascent towards divine perfection, divine experience, God-realization. In spite of what life today is in this world of ours, let life become to us some thing of great deep significance, something of the utmost value. That value, that one truth has been vouchsafed to us, has been given to us by all the scriptures and all the saints. You are related to the Cosmic Divinity. You have come here to attain that Divinity. This one great truth which overcomes all imperfections and limitations and more than compensates for all imperfections and limitations has been brought to us forcefully by these great awakeners, by these great enlighteners of mankind like Gurudev Swami Sivanandaji. Gurudev, and others like him, are shining lights that beckon to us in the right direction and towards the true goal. May we be worthy of this blessing of God, and may we put away behind us all that has been unsatisfactory, insufficient and look forward and move forward with a new spirit and a new determination and a new strength. Looking neither to the right nor to the left, focussing entirely upon the Goal and Goal alone, and making our entire life a total integrated movement, a concerted movement, towards that supreme consummation, may we progress towards the Goal each hour, minute and second.

LET DIVYATVA OR DIVINITY BE THE KEYNOTE OF OUR LIFE IN THE NEW YEAR

As we all approach the gift of the coming New Year, 365 virgin days for us to fill with sublime thoughts and actions, Gurudev, we ask for thy guidance and grace that these coming days and weeks and months, this year of 1991, may truly be a divine year for us. May this be a year where we strive earnestly to unfold and express our divinity, a year when we try to make our entire being in all its parts and movements what it ought to be, what it is meant to be, viz., filled with a divine quality, filled with a quality of godliness. May we strive to make these twelve months, twelve months of divine living. Let divine life be our one thought. Let it beat with our heart, course with our blood, vibrate in each cell of our being. May this one thought that we should make our life divine fill our heart, mind and intellect. May 'Divinity' be our one keynote. With every breath, at each step, each moment of our day-to-day life, may we keep this one word, this one term, the most meaningful term, as the guideline for our living. Be with us, guide us, give us inner strength to resist temptations. Give us the will power, to truly be divine, to truly move towards the divine destiny, which is our birthright. Give us the solution to truly make our life divine in every part of our being, in every thought, word and action. This is the one thing that would justify our existence as members of this spiritual brotherhood, this fraternity that has sprung up out of your Sat-sankalpa, out of your intense austerity, out of your penances, out of your lifelong efforts to create in the human heart, in the entire global humanity, an awareness of their divinity.

May, therefore, 1991 mean to us but this one thing, divinity, divinity in all that we do, in all that we feel and think. Let us strive every moment to be what we are. Make our life a true radiance of that which we are in reality, namely, divinity. Let us try to express and manifest this

divinity every moment. Let our life be authentic, let our life be genuine. Let our life be true, be what it is. Let it not be a living falsehood. Let it be, therefore, what it is, what it is meant to be, what we are in reality. To that end, let us be alert, let us be vigilant, let us be earnest and sincere and strive purposefully with awareness, with great earnestness, to bring out from within us only divinity, and overcome, within us, all that is other than divinity. Let this be our struggle, our inner struggle with ourselves. Let this be the one task we set before ourselves for this entire year. Let divinity be the keynote. Let it be the maxim with which we live. Let it be our motto. Let it be our driving force. From the top of our head to the tip of our toe-nails, let divinity be the one ringing note, the one vibrating note in our lives. Let this great idea, this grand idea of divinity permeate us. Let this idea enter into our brain cells, into our nerve fibres. Let us live to be divine. Let us make everything about us divine.

May this be a worthy gift that we bring, a flower offering, at the feet of the Master who lived all his life to make us aware of our divinity and make us consciously live to unfold and express this divinity. There can be no greater good fortune than to engage in this task with humility and sincerity. Sincerity should be the keynote; and with perseverance, with indomitable will, with tenacity, the task can be achieved. May all the powers at our command be directed towards this one ideal of making our life divine, being what we are, striving to manifest our reality, our inner truth, our essential nature, our true being, our true identity—Divyatva. Divyatva, not Hindutva or Christuvatva or Islam, but Divyatva.

In this task, may the Almighty Supreme Being be your constant help. In this task, may Gurudev's love and his grace be with you and let the 31st of December, 1991 see you a transformed being, see you a being that is radiant, illumined, full of beauty, full of joy, full of purity, full of sublimity, a transformed being. Let us make that the goal, the target; and let us strive to achieve it through the twelve months that are going to unfold before us within the next few days. It is such things that make life worth living. Otherwise, what is there? Eating, drinking, sleeping, urinating, defecating? Living in a cage full of dirt, slime and phlegm? And what is there in this body? It is but food for the worms. What is there in this body which has to be cleaned every day, with discharges through the ears, through the eyes, with nasty, filthy stench accumulating in the mouth? What is there in this body, made out of gross food, polluted food, poisoned food, artificial dead things, devitalized white flour and white sugar? What is there in this body, the very residence in which is itself an imprisonment, a bondage, a punishment? Yet the one redeeming feature of this residence in this nasty cage of flesh and bones is that if you are wide awake, if you are wise, if you are determined, you can make this tenancy in this filthy, perishable body subject to disease, decay and dissolution a great saga of liberation, an adventure unto perfection. Otherwise, there is nothing to recommend it.

Therefore, make it worthwhile, your residing in this body-prison. Live in such a way that you may emerge out of it a shining, radiantly divine, perfect and liberated soul. That is what imparts meaning to life. That is what makes life wonderful, makes life worth living every moment of it. Yes, if this task is absent in life, life is a dreary waste, life is a cipher, a nothing, a burden, a meaningless nonsense. Therefore, make it meaningful. Make it valuable by bringing into it this task, this great adventure, this great quest and live meaningfully.

Radiant Atman! Sadhaks! Mumukshus! Jijnasus! Devotees of the Lord! Lovers of righteousness! Satsangis! I address you as all this, because to become all this you have come here. You have come here to love righteousness so that you may become fit to enter the Kingdom of Heaven, the Kingdom of God “Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall inherit everlasting life.” *Dharmo Rakshyati Rakshitah*. God is the root of Dharma, source of Dharma. *Acharya Prabhavo Dharmah; Dharmasya Prabhurachyutah*. He is the Lord of Dharma. To love righteousness, to devote oneself to God, to be devotees of the Lord, to aspire for knowledge and wisdom, to be Jijnasus, to have a keen longing for liberation, to be Mumukshus—all these constitute the true being of a Sadhak, because to attain liberation, to acquire wisdom, a Sadhaka engages in Sadhana, various types of Sadhana. To remind you about what you are, about what you should be, about what you should become, is the purpose of addressing you in all these ways. The most important need is to become constantly established in the awareness of the fact of your divinity.

You are divine. Therefore, everything that you allow to grow and develop inside you must also be divine. You should not allow in your consciousness, in your personality, in your interior, place for anything that is not divine, for anything that is not of the Spirit. For, that would then create a conflict, a duality, a dichotomy, a situation of anomaly.

Therefore, all the great ones admonish, more than anything else, that you must have Chitta Suddhi. A Sadhaka should have Chitta Suddhi. The interior should be pure. The Sadhaka should have a purified interior. The removal of Mala leads to Chitta Suddhi. This, then, is the most important aspect of the entire process of Sadhana and Self-realization. They speak of the Atman as Nitya-suddha, as eternally pure. And, if you want to worship the Divine, you must become like the Divine. *Devo Bhutva Devam Aradhayet*. Then alone can you approach the Divine, and place yourself in the proximity of the Divine, and worship and adore the Divine, so that you may enter into the Divine. Only if you become like the Divine, these things are possible. So, to grow into the likeness of the divine is one of the important aspects of Sadhana. Sadhana means growing into the likeness of the Divine, becoming like God. Growing into godliness is an essential aspect of Sadhana. It is one of the objectives of spiritual Sadhana.

CULTIVATE DAIVI SAMPAT: ELIMINATE ASURI SAMPAT

There should be no inner duality. There should be no confrontation of two things within. If you have this, it has to be eliminated. That also is a part of Sadhana. To root out, to eradicate, to throw out of our being anything that is unspiritual—that also is a part of Sadhana. Anything that is undivine, anything that contradicts our Truth, our own essential real nature, anything that contradicts our eternal identity—that should be carefully searched out, found out and thrown out. That is an important aspect of Sadhana. If that is not done, if you try to accumulate dross, it is like decorating a room with a lot of dirt under the carpet and in the nooks and corners. Then the decoration becomes just outward decoration. Swami Vivekananda said: “If there is no spirituality within, if there is no beauty of ethical life within, if there is no Daivi Sampat—all the divine qualities—within, life is like a decorated dead body.” He said, “A decorated corpse”. When you take a body to the funeral, oh, they decorate it very very nicely—silk and velvet—and they put a lot of flowers and a lot of scent, because there is stench. The body is covered with rich

cloth, brocade, silk, velvet and a lot of flowers. Incense is burnt. But then, inside, there is nothing. It is only rotting dead flesh and bones. Swami Vivekananda said, “It is like decorating a corpse”. It looks grand from outside, but there is nothing inside.

Therefore, a Sadhak should be keen, very keen, very earnest that under no account will he allow such a state to prevail. On the contrary, if one is not so very beautiful outside, it does not matter. But the beauties of the Spirit should fill the interior. Godliness, pure unalloyed divinity, should fill the interior. The interior should be full of light; it should be shining, it should be full of divinity. And anything contrary should be eradicated, thrown out.

Therefore, this is Sadhana, the inner Sadhana of bringing about Chitta Suddhi, of cultivation of Daivi Sampat and elimination of Asuri Sampat, as the Sixteenth Chapter of Srimad Bhagavad Gita demands. This is Sadhana. Therefore, every Marga or path—whether it is Jnana Yoga or Bhakti Yoga or Raja Yoga or Japa Yoga or Karma Yoga—always insists upon certain essential positive divine qualities as ‘a must’. All the Yoga Margas insist upon this and they also list all the vices which are to be thrown out.

*Trividham Narakasyedham Dvaram Nasanamatmanah
Kamah Krodahs Tatah Lobahs Tasmata Etat Trayam Tyajet*

Triple is the gate of this hell, destructive of the Self—lust, anger and greed; therefore one should abandon these three. (Gita, Ch. VI-21)

*Kamah Krodascha Lobhascha Dehe Tishtanti Taskarah
Jnanaratna Apaharaya Tasmata Jagrata Jagrata*

That is Sankaracharya --in “Vairagya Dindima”. Lust, anger and greed are the thieves staying in the body to steal away the pearl of knowledge; therefore, be awake, be awake.

And Vyasa Bhagavan says:

*Moksham Icchasi Chittaata Vishayaan Vishavat Tyaja
Brahmacharyam Ahimsam Cha Satyam Peeyushavat Bhaja*

If you want liberation, shun sense-objects as poison and observe celibacy, non-injury and truth as nectar.

So, from ancient times they have been trying to focus our attention upon this point and they have been trying to tell us, “You are divine. And only that which is divine should be tolerated within you. You should not tolerate anything that is contrary to your essential real nature. Be aware. Look within. Try to introspect analyses and wisely eliminate from within yourself everything that contradicts that which you are”. Therefore, divinely should you live your life. Then alone your life will be authentic, genuine, true. There will not be any more of conflict. There will not be waste of inner energy, spiritual power, in needlessly trying to come into clash with avoidable opposites. So, much of energy will be saved if it is not wasted away in

a negative process of trying to contend with these things. Therefore the ancients said: “Be wise. Economize on your inner potential. Let it not be frittered away in an avoidable negative process. Engage it in a positive creative process only so that your entire force and energy, hundred per cent of your spiritual power, is available for the upward ascent unto Divinity”.

Therefore, divinely live; be divine within. Know that you are divine. Let your life be divine. Thoughts, words, actions—let them all be permeated, filled with this divine quality. Divine life is your birthright. Divine life is your real life. Divine life is the natural and spontaneous expression of your inner being. Be it so. Make it so. Understand Sadhana to be this, viz., to manifest that which you are. So, again I reiterate: make Divinity the keynote of your life in 1991. Let this word ‘Divinity’ be ushered into your heart. Let this word blaze into your mind. Let it always be there in letters of fire before your mental vision—this word Divinity. At every step, recollect to yourself, “I am divine. Everything about me should be divine. Divinity is my real nature. Divinity should be the quality of my life. Divinity should be my goal. Divinity should be the direction in which my life should move”. Divinity! We are part of God. God is supremely divine. We are also supremely divine. This consciousness must dominate your life. Let that be 1991.

WE ARE DIVINE BECAUSE GOD DWELLS IN OUR HEART

The Divine Spirit is not remote. It is not removed. It is not far. It is something nearer than the nearest, dearer than the dearest, in fact, the very centre of our being. We dwell in the Divine; the Divine dwells in us. Let this truth be the central awareness in our life as we move about. We move about never separated from God. We move about as moving temples of the Living Spirit abiding within us with the splendour of a million suns.

O God! Grant us this gift that all our life, as long as we have to dwell in this body and take breath, all our days may commence with this inner silence, inner abidance with Thee—evoking and awakening the awareness of Thy Presence within us. Grant us this gift that as we enter each new day, we may enter it in a divine way. This is the prayer that comes into the heart of this servant of Thine at this moment when we draw near to you in worshipfulness and adoration.

The great God, Devadideva, God of gods, Mahadev—He is invoked through a popular verse, which all of you have by heart. This verse concludes with a most significant revelation, with a most significant truth.

*Sada Vasantam Hridayaravinde
Bhavam Bhavani Sahitam Namami*

I bow to Lord Siva, who always dwells in the lotus of the heart with Goddess Parvati. Mahadev is not in Mt. Kailas. He is not in Sivalok. Sivalok is in the very centre of your being, your inner being. Mt. Kailas is your heart. Those who realized this fact, those who entered into an experience of the truth of His indwelling presence, they thus hymned Him again and again.

Sada Vasantam Hridayaravinde. Thou who art constantly dwelling within the lotus of our heart, within our spiritual heart-centre! Not occasionally, but constantly. You are not a visitor there. You are not sometimes absent from there even when we may be absent moving away from that centre and getting involved in a hundred different occupations outside. We may be absent moving away from that centre, but not You. *Sada Vasantam* Always ... constantly .. dwelling in the lotus of the heart. To Thee, with all Thy glories, with all Thy power, with all Thy divine splendour—*Bhavani Sahitam*—to Thee I bow, to Thee I pay homage. Thou who dwellest constantly, always, in our heart, with all the divine splendours, with Goddess Parvati, O Lord, to Thee my homage and obeisance.

As we close the year 1990, we have before us this grand, glorious, wondrous gift of God, a whole new year of virgin un-lived days-like a beautiful, wonderful book with all the blank fresh shining white pages to write on. Write in it all that shines, all that is wonderful, in letters of gold, so that each page—each day—may be a thing of beauty, filled with aspiration and inspiration, with Bhakti and Bhav, with Vichar and Vivek, with all that is divine, so that your record of 1991 will be an unforgettable one, filled with divinity.

I reiterate again and again this one fact of your divinity. You are divine. You are immortal soul. You are ever-free, ever-perfect, without birth and death, without name and form, without time and space.

*Ajo Nityah Sasvatoyam Purano
Na Hanyate Hanyamane Sarire*

Thou art the unborn, the eternal, the permanent, the ancient, beyond time. You have ever existed.

*Nasato Vidyate Bhavo
Nabhavo Vidyate Satah*

The Reality has never, at any time, ceased to be. It has always been there; It is always there, ever present. Thou art that timeless Divinity. Therefore, let divine be your life, divine all your thoughts, divine all your emotions and sentiments, divine your outlook, your approach to life. Let divine be the way in which you speak, think and act. Make your life, the whole of your life, a radiant process of divinity in expression, of divinity in dynamic manifestation. Let that be your life, nothing less than that. Opt for nothing less. Opt for no second-hand thing. Always aspire to be the best. That is the least that you can do as a gesture of saying “Thank you!” to God who has showered His divine grace upon you. Let divinity be the keynote of your 1991—all the 365 days of it, all the twelve months of it, all the thirty days of each month. Let divinity be the key note. Always be aware, always be awake, always be alert, always be fully conscious, always feel: “I am divine. My life must be divine. Divinely shall I live my life, and if possible, leave my divine influence upon everything from morn till night. Upon everything, let me leave my divine expression, the impact of my divinity”.

With this aspiration, live; and He who dwells within you with all His splendour will help you to succeed in this noble endeavour. For, He is there to help you, at the very centre of your being.

*Karpuragauram Karunavataram
Samsarasaram Bhujagendraharam
Sada Vasantam Hridayaravinde
Bhavam Bhavani Sahitam Namami*

I bow to Lord Siva who is white as camphor, an incarnation of mercy, the essence of the world, who has the king of serpents as His garland, and who always dwells in the lotus of the heart with Goddess Parvati.

Let there be constant wakefulness within you spiritually. Even when the body slumbers in sleep, let there be wakefulness of the Spirit, the awareness, "I am divine. I am divine. I am a part of God, I am a wave upon the ocean of Satchidananda, the infinite ocean of Satchidananda. I am a radiant ray of that Light of lights beyond all darkness. *Param-jyoti-svarupa Paramatma*. I am a radiant ray. I shine always. In me there is no darkness, in me there is no obscurity, I always shine. There is radiance within me. There is light within me". Let this awareness be your inner state at all times, in all conditions. And from that inner centre of radiant awareness, act a light-filled life, shining with the splendour of your true identity, of your essential nature. Make everything bright. Whatever you touch, make it bright. Wherever you are, make everything bright. Let everything shine because of your being there. For, you are a centre of light.

"I am in the Light. The Light is within me. I am the Light." Thus western mystics have given to us this affirmation of Light.

"I am in the Light. The Light is within me. I am the Light."

*Jyotisham Api Tat Jyoti Tamasah Param Uchyate
Jnanam Jneyaln Jnanagamyam Hridi SarvasyaVishtitam*

Live in this great truth. Live to manifest this truth. Then you will be really living. Then God's gift is not wasted upon you. And all the blessings that Gurudev has showered upon you will not be in vain, will not be in vain. It will be fruitful and make your life sublime and crown your life with glory, with the supreme experience. That is for sure. Now let us start doing it. Let us start living in a dynamic divine way, ever aware, ever aware, ever alert, ever eager, ever aspiring, ever enthusiastic, to shine and make our life a radiant life of divinity in manifestation. That is our privilege. That is our great good fortune. This is the grand opportunity and this is the occasion to rededicate ourselves to this grand and sublime way of living. Let us do it without postponing it further, without hesitation, immediately, now and here. "Do it now" as Gurudev says.

TIME IS LIFE: LIFE IS TIME

Radiant Atman! Time is the stuff of your life. Endowed with the faculty to think, the faculty to feel, the faculty to reason in a logical manner, endowed with these faculties—to apply them, to utilize them, you have been given time. Time and life are obverse and reverse of the same coin, identical and not different. Life is a succession of days and nights, of weeks, months and years, one year emerging into another fresh year. Time is a succession of moments, of days, of weeks and months. Your destiny depends entirely upon how you receive this gift of time and how the living of your life is initiated and carried on in this mysterious illusive factor called time, which does not exist, but which has been brought into being by the limiting adjunct, which is the mind. Most mysterious is this cosmic power of illusion, this Yogamaya Bhagavan.

Time is a factor that has been brought into being with the semblance of an awareness of past, present and future. This Tattva that has been brought into being, through the mind, if well applied, opens up in this very mind a hidden inner essence, a principle, in which mind has the ability to transcend itself, in which mind ceases to be and lifts up the consciousness into eternity. Mind has inherent within itself something that transcends mind, something that is beyond mind. This is the mystery of the mind. It operates in time and has the potential within it to take you into an experience of timelessness, to lift you up into a state of transcendence where time ceases to be and you enter into an experience and become established in a state of the eternal. Living in time, acting in time, wisely applying our faculties in a creative right direction in time, utilizing this time, one ultimately goes beyond time. One ascends into a state of timeless eternity that is ever-present as a substratum of time.

*Dinamapi Rajani Sayam Pratah
Sisira Vasantau Punarayatah
Kalah Kridati Gachchatyayuh*

“I am Time, the all-devouring One. In Me all things vanish, subside.” Thus the Lord declares in the Gita wisdom teachings. And at the same time, He says, “Enveloping all that exists, everything that exists—*Ananta Koti Brahmanda*, infinite number of universes—by a small fraction of My being, I exist supremely transcending all. I am the swallower of time itself. Time ceases to be. I am the state attaining which one does not return again into this realm of time. That is My supreme state”. *Tat Dhamam Paramam Mama*. That is My supreme abode.

LIVING IN THE STATE OF TRUTH AWARENESS IS THE ONLY REAL LIFE

You are a part, an Amsa, of that great transcendence, though now you are in time. But, time is now your one precious gift, wealth. Ponder well this mysterious Tattva or principle of time that is always present, but is conceived of as passing, as moving. Act, act in the living present, heart within and God overhead. That is Sadhana, that is life, that is your foremost duty. That is wisdom. To act in the living present, not allow one moment to pass away without being filled with spiritual consciousness, without being filled with awareness, not to allow one single

moment to pass away without making it luminous and radiant with self-awareness, with the awareness of your being, utilizing every moment, each day, as and when it comes, taking hold of it beforehand and filling it with radiant divine consciousness—that is true life. It is then that you live. Then alone you live. You are alive when each moment of each day is filled with a light of radiant divine consciousness where you know, “I am That I am”. Thus live your life in a state of ever-progressive divinity, dynamic divinity. Fill yourself with the light that you are.

Let 1991 be to you a year of such light, a year of such luminous consciousness, a year of a constant affirmation of your true nature.

*Mano Buddhyahankara Chittani Naham
Chidananda Rupah Sivoham Sivoham*

Let that be your ever-recurring note. Assert, affirm, live this. This is the heart of Yoga-Vedanta. This is the heart of Bhakti and Bhajan. This is the heart of Sadhana.

This is the truth to proclaim which Gurudev came into this world. “I am this body. I am so-and-so. I am such and such. That person did not give me respect. This person abused me.” Thus to think is falsehood; it is a negation of your truth, a negation of your reality. Raga, Dvesha, Kama, Krodha...envy, jealousy—all the things that operate upon the little confined sphere of your false consciousness—that is false. That is Mithya. That is a contradiction of your nature.

“*Ahamatma Nirakarah Sarvavyapi Svabhavatah*. I am the Self without name and form, all-pervading by my very nature. I am that glorious Satchidananda-consciousness.” That is truth. In 1991, live to affirm truth, live to assert truth, live to ever abide in, and function from, this centre of truth. And this truth will make you free, not anything else. Nothing in this world, nothing in this universe, nothing in this Ashram, nothing in your room, nothing in your mind or intellect can make you free, but this Truth ... Truth.

If you constantly live in this state of Truth awareness, that alone can make you free—not ringing of bells, not anything. Truth alone can make you free. And you are that Truth. Therefore, know thyself. Every moment of your waking consciousness, be rooted in the Truth of your eternal being. This is the Abhyasa.

Life is short, time is fleeting. We have no time to lose in vain thinking, vain imaginations, vain discussions, tall talks, fights and quarrels, littleness. Do not get caught in the meshes of your lesser self. Rise above it. Be what you are, divine, and divinely live. Mind well what little time there is. Be up and doing, and before the body is dropped, shine with divine consciousness.

You are not this physical body. You are not this cage of flesh and bones. You are the light that shines within this body-house, an eternal light that never wanes. For, you are a part of the Light of lights beyond all darkness.

Jyotisham Api Tat Jyotis Tamasah Param Uchyate

You are an inseparable part of that Light of lights beyond all darkness, the eternal Light of the Spirit. You are a centre of luminous, radiant divine consciousness. You are ever that. You are a fountain of joy. You are an ocean of bliss. You are immeasurable peace—profound—that nothing can disturb, nothing can touch. You are all this and more. Thus, in your innermost reality, from the point of view of your essential nature, from the point of view of your true identity, you are a child of God. You are a child of God from the point of view of the ancient illumined seers, the enlightened sages, the liberated knowers of Brahman who have kept alive this blazing fire of living spirituality in this world of ours, in this world of pain and death, in this world characterized by birth, death, old age, disease and sorrow where the individual soul that has come into embodiment is assailed by the Tapatraya or the three-fold afflictions. First of all, there are the afflictions arising from causes beyond human control—the fury of the elements, tidal waves, cyclone, earthquake, volcano, typhoons, hurricanes and epidemics. Then there are the afflictions arising out of other living beings, living creatures—microbes and bacteria that cause disease and infection. And lastly, there are the afflictions arising out of one's own self through envy, jealousy, anger, passion, greed, hatred, delusion, lack of self-control, absence of discrimination, avarice, greed and selfishness. They ever afflict the individual soul, make one restless, make one suffer in the midst of the bliss that is ever there within, make one restless and agitated in spite of the deep abiding profound peace, immeasurable peace that is ever there at the very centre of your being.

In this world of afflictions, we are the inheritors of this blazing fire of living spirituality. From our human standpoint we are heirs to this great tradition handed down to us by an unbroken line of illumined sages, enlightened seers and liberated knowers of Brahman. They are our forefathers. They are our ancestors. We belong to that line. We are inheritors of this great spiritual tradition. We are the ones to take this torch, this blazing torch of spirituality and keep it alive and hand it down to the next generation. We are the ones to thus keep up this continuity, this unbroken continuity of Aparoksha Anubhuti of Brahma Vidya, this unbroken continuity of the wondrous experience, this great glorious state of liberated consciousness.

So, recognize your good fortune. Realize what you are. Do not think small, do not think petty, do not think mean, do not think little. Think great, think nobly. Have sublime thoughts about yourself and do not enter into delusion. Do not enter into imagination, hallucination, but have real, substantial, sublime right thinking. Have the right noble attitude towards yourself. Treat yourself with reverence. Salute yourself. Give great respect and veneration to your true being. You are a child of the eternal divine Spirit, the immortal Universal Soul. You are a part of It. Do not take yourself lightly. Do not stoop to anything that is below this high status that God has bestowed upon you. *Tat Tvam Asi*: that is what the Upanishads declare about you. This Atman is no less than Brahman: *Aham Brahmasmi*. I am in essence pure consciousness, the universal pure consciousness. Know this and be this and live ever to be in this state of consciousness. That is your privilege, that is your great good fortune. That is what you are capable of doing.

SPIRITUAL INDIA IS THE REAL INDIA

You have been endowed with human status. You have been brought to this hallowed northernmost part of sacred India, the land of spirituality, the land of Buddha, the land of Mahavira, the land of Yajnavalkya, the land of Sankara, Ramanuja, Gauranga Mahaprabhu, the land of Madhava, Vallabhacharya, Nimbarkacharya, the land of Aurobindo Ghose, Ramana Maharshi, Ramakrishna Paramahamsadev, Vivekananda and Rama Tirtha, the land of Swami Sivananda, the land of Anandamayi Ma, the land of Nityananda Avadhut. You belong to this land of Mira and Kabir, this land of Narsi Bhagat and Ramananda, this land of Tulsidas, Valmiki and Vasishtha, this land of the Bhagavad Gita wisdom teachings, this land of the lofty Upanishadic experience, this land of illumined sages, liberated seers, great Bhaktas, Siddhas, perfected masters, this land of Yogis. It is a land of renunciation. It is a land of penance and prayer. It is a land of Yoga practice. It is a land of Sadhana. It is a land of devotion. It is a land of meditation. Spirituality is the keynote of the real India, the hidden India, the vibrantly alive spiritual India. Real India is not the India of chaos and conflict, terrorism and murder. Real India is not the India of filth, dirt and disease. That is not the real India; it is only the geographical India or the historical, social India. The real India is pure gold; the real India is a blazing fire. The real India is an ocean of peace. That is where you abide.

In your true Self, you are in the real, hidden, sacred spiritual India. Your body may be functioning, the physical world may be functioning upon the surface India, the apparent India, the visible India of good and bad, of light and darkness, which prevail everywhere in this whole world. Physically you may be in this visible India. Mentally you may be in a world of your own. Mentally you are neither of India nor of anywhere. Mentally you are in a world of your own. You are in a universe of your own. Each one lives in a universe of oneself where there is neither India nor Japan nor America nor Russia. It is a no-man's land. It has no name, no nationality. It is your own realm, full of your own Vasanas, Samskaras, imaginations, memories and concepts, your own opinions, your own coloured view of things. It is a realm in which each individual soul is caught and in which each individual soul lives, running round in circles day after day, thinking the same thoughts, imagining the same imaginations, having the same sentiments, going up and down, like a rat on a tread-mill, day after day, week after week, month after month. Unless you take a determined stand and make up your mind to break this vicious circle, this monotonous going round and round in this accustomed thought-trap of yours and say, "No, I shall not be in this cage created by myself. I shall smash it and come out into the open, into the limitless, boundless outer space of spiritual consciousness", unless you do that, you will always be there in this little petty inner cage of your mental world. That has to be smashed and thrown aside and you should come into your own. For, you are a child of the Divine, the eternal Divine Being, and you are an heir to this glorious tradition of living spirituality. Know yourself in these two capacities, not in any other capacity.

Refuse to identify yourself with any other lesser personality consciousness, lesser individual identity. Refuse to identify yourself. Come out and be great. Be what you are, an heir to this immortal tradition of spiritual experience where one knows that one is the Brahmic bliss—Aham Brahmasmi—where one knows that one is the Divine. Always be established in that sublime plane of consciousness. That is life. That is life worth living. That is the great gift

of life. Shine with that awareness. Refuse to give in to any other lesser thought form, lesser self-identification. You are neither body nor mind. You are immortal Spirit. You are divine. And that is the business of life. Every day, from morning till evening, this is what you should be engaged in. In the midst of all physical functions and activities, in the midst of all mental pre-occupations, the Spirit within should be ever awake, ever active, ever affirming Itself and asserting Itself. Your consciousness should be dominated by this radiant spiritual force, this power which you are. You should be filled with this great light. That is life. Therefore, live in this radiant awareness of your higher Self, the highest consciousness. Live in this radiant awareness. Do not go about like a centre of darkness, of Self-forgetfulness. Move about like a prince, like a king. Move about like a lion in this forest of Samsara, not like a petty fox or a jackal. Move about in a manner befitting your birthright. Refuse to come even one step lower. Keep your consciousness pitched upon that high state, which is its legal, legitimate state. That is the serious business of life. That is what you have come here for. That is why you have been endowed with this indescribable treasure and wealth of being and living in this sacred northernmost part of this holy land of Bharat Varsha, the land of God-realization, the land of Sadhana, the land of Yoga Abhyasa, the land of Tapasya, penance, the land of Japa and meditation, Kirtan and Bhajan, the land of Karma Yoga and Yoga-Vedanta. What greater good fortune, what greater privilege, can one ever hope to get? Blessed are you all, but only realize your blessedness. Do not allow the mind to ensnare you and entrap you and pull you down. Reject the mind, affirm the awakened intellect, qualified by discrimination, qualified by the highest spiritual enquiry. You have to diligently, wisely, patiently keep on striving to do this. It does not come by itself. That is Sadhana. Diligently, wisely, patiently, determinedly you must keep on striving to do this day by day. If you engage thus in this constant inner ascent, inner process, then nothing in this universe can withhold from you that which is yours, nothing can, no power on earth can deprive you of that which is your deserved fruit. This is the truth; and it has been shared with you for what it is worth. Ponder well its implication to you, today, here, now, at this moment, in this life. And in the light of this truth, live. You will be blessed. You will not regret. You will rejoice. This I promise.

Appendix 1

20 IMPORTANT SPIRITUAL INSTRUCTIONS

Sri Swami Sivananda

These twenty instructions contain the very essence of all Yoga Sadhana, Karma, Bhakti, Jnana and Yoga will all come to one who follows them whole-heartedly. They are the unfailing keys to quick and effective development and culture of the physical, mental, moral and spiritual self of man.

1. BRAHMAMUHURTA

Get up at 4 a.m. daily. This is Brahmamuhurta which is extremely favourable for Sadhana. Do all your morning spiritual Sadhana during this period from 4 a.m. to 6:30 or 7 a.m. Such Sadhana gives quick and maximum progress.

2. ASANA

Sit on Padmasana (lotus pose), Siddhasana (adept's pose) or Sukhasana (any pose you like) for your Japa and meditation for half an hour, facing east or north. Increase the period gradually to three hours. Practice Sirshasana (headstand) and Sarvangasana (shoulderstand) for maintenance of health and Brahmacharya. Take light physical exercises as walking, etc., regularly. Do twenty rounds of easy, comfortable Pranayama (breathing exercises). Do not strain yourself while doing Pranayama.

3. JAPA

You can repeat any Mantra (sacred syllable), such as pure Om or Om Namō Narayanaya, Sri Ram, Sita Ram, Sri Ram Jaya Ram Jaya Jaya Ram, Om Namah Sivaya, Om Namō Bhagavate Vasudevaya, Om Saravanabhavaya Namah, Hari Om, or Gayatri (a sacred Vedic Mantra), according to your taste or inclination, from 108 times to 21,600 times daily. Devotees of Christ may repeat the name Jesus or Hail Mary, Mother of Jesus. Parsis, Sikhs and Muslims may select a name or Mantra from the Zend Avesta, Granth Sahib or Koran respectively.

4. DIETETIC DISCIPLINE

Take Sattvic food. Give up chillies, tamarind, garlic, onion, sour articles, oil, mustard, asafoetida. Observe moderation in diet (Mitahara). Do not overload the stomach. Give up those things which the mind likes best for a fortnight once or twice in a year. Eat simple simple food. Milk and fruits help concentration. Take food as medicine to keep the life going. Eating for enjoyment is a sin. Give up salt and sugar for a week or a fortnight. You must be able to live on rice, dhal and bread without any pickle. Do not ask for extra salt for dhal, and sugar for tea, coffee and milk. People taking non-vegetarian diet should try their best to gradually give up flesh-eating as completely as possible. They will be immensely benefited.

5. MEDITATION

Have a separate meditation room under lock and key. If this is not possible then a corner of the room should be set apart with a small cloth screen or curtain drawn across. Keep the room spotlessly clean.

6. SVADHYAYA

Study systematically the Gita, Ramayana, Bhagavatam, Vishnu-Sahasranama, Lalita-Sahasranama, Adityahridaya, Upanishads, Yoga Vasishta, Bible, Imitation of Christ, Zend Avesta, Quran, the Tripitakas, the Granth Sahib and other religious books from half an hour to one hour daily, and have Suddha Vichara (pure thoughts).

7. ELEVATE THE MIND

Get by heart some prayer — Slokas (prayer verses), Stotras (hymns) and repeat them as soon as you sit in the Asana before starting Japa or meditation. This will elevate the mind quickly.

8. BRAHMACHARYA

Preserve the vital force (Veerya (seminal energy)) very, very carefully. Veerya is God in motion or manifestation (Vibhuti). Veerya is all power. Veerya is all money. Veerya is the essence of life, thought and intelligence. This instruction is not for bachelors only. Householders also must follow it as far as possible. They must be extremely moderate in their marital connections with their spouse. This is very important.

9. CHARITY

Do charity regularly, every month, or even daily according to your means. Never fail in this item. If necessary forego some personal wants but keep up this charity regularly.

10. HAVE SATSANG

Give up bad company, smoking, meat and alcoholic liquors entirely. Have constant Satsang (association with holy people). Do not develop any evil habits. Deliberately exert to develop positive virtuous qualities.

11. FAST

Fast on Ekadasi (11th day of the Hindu lunar fortnight) or live on milk and fruits only. Christians must fast on alternate Sundays, Muslims on alternate Fridays, and Parsis on a suitable day every fortnight.

12. JAPA MALA

Have a Japa Mala (rosary) around your neck or in your pocket or underneath your pillow at night. This will remind you of God. Twirl the beads during your leisure. You should repeat the Name at all times, whatever task you may be engaged in.

13. OBSERVE MOUNA

Observe Mouna (vow of silence) for a couple of hours daily. Do not make gestures and inarticulate noises during the period of silence.

14. DISCIPLINE OF SPEECH

Speak the truth at all cost. Speak a little. Speak sweetly. Always utter encouraging words. Never condemn, criticize or discourage. Do not raise your voice and shout at little children or subordinates.

15. BE CONTENT

Reduce your wants. If you have four shirts, reduce the number to three or two. Lead a happy, contented life. Avoid unnecessary worry. Be mentally detached. Have plain living and high thinking. Think of those who do not possess even one-tenth of what you have. Share with others.

16. PRACTICE LOVE

Never hurt anybody. Ahimsa Paramo Dharmah (Non-injury is the highest virtue). Control anger by love, Kshama (forgiveness) and Daya (compassion). Serve the sick and the poor with love and affection. This is service of God.

17. BE SELF RELIANT

Do not depend upon servants. Self-reliance is the highest of all virtues.

18. HAVE SELF-ANALYSIS

Think of the mistakes you have committed during the course of the day, just before retiring to bed (self-analysis). Keep a daily spiritual diary and self-correction register as Benjamin Franklin did. Maintain a daily routine and resolve-form. Do not brood over past mistakes.

19. DO YOUR DUTY

Remember that death is awaiting you at every moment. Never fail to fulfil your duties. Have pure conduct (Sadachara).

20. REMEMBER GOD

Think of God as soon as you wake up and just before you go to sleep, and at all other times whether engaged in any work or not. Repeat His Name always. Surrender yourself completely to God (Saranagati). This is the essence of all spiritual Sadhana. It will lead you to liberation. All these spiritual canons must be rigidly observed. You must not give any leniency to the mind.

Appendix 2

UNIVERSAL PRAYER
Sri Swami Sivananda

O Adorable Lord of Mercy and Love !
Salutations and prostrations unto Thee.
Thou art Omnipresent, Omnipotent and Omniscient.
Thou art Existence-Consciousness-Bliss Absolute.
Thou art the Indweller of all beings.

Grant us an understanding heart,
Equal vision, balanced mind,
Faith, devotion and wisdom.
Grant us inner spiritual strength
To resist temptation and to control the mind.
Free us from egoism, lust, greed, hatred, anger and jealousy.
Fill our hearts with divine virtues.

Let us behold Thee in all these names and forms.
Let us serve Thee in all these names and forms.
Let us ever remember Thee.
Let us ever sing Thy glories.
Let Thy Name be ever on our lips.
Let us abide in Thee for ever and ever.

Appendix 3

RESOLVES FOR QUICK SPIRITUAL PROGRESS

Sri Swami Sivananda

1. Maintain a daily spiritual diary, and at the end of every month send a copy of it to your spiritual guide who will give you further lessons for your progress.
2. Keep a daily Mantra note-book and regularly write a page or two of your Ishta Mantra or Guru Mantra in ink.
3. Chalk out a daily routine for daily practice and stick to it at any cost. Distractions and obstacles are many. Be ever careful and vigilant.
4. Make a few resolves for practice during the New year as shown below. Any of the resolves may be crossed out, added to or altered, to suit the individual temperament, convenience or stage of development.
5. Do not abruptly change the mode of living. You can grow and evolve quickly in the spiritual path, and develop your will power and control the mind and the senses by sticking to the resolves. Do not try the impossible at first. Take your resolves very cautiously and ascend step by step on the ladder of Yoga.
6. If you fail in any of the resolves through lack of self-control, unknowingly or by force of circumstances, you should perform some extra Malas of Japa or give up one meal to remind yourself of the resolve and to impress the mind of the importance of these resolves (self-punishment).
7. The resolves form should be prepared in duplicate and one copy duly signed should be sent to your Guru so that you may not be tempted to relax your efforts or ignore the resolves of break any other under the slightest pretext or lame excuse.
8. Request all your spiritually inclined friends to maintain such resolves, daily spiritual diary and Mantra note-book. Thus you can elevate many from the quagmire of Samsara (worldliness).

IMPORTANT RESOLVES

1. I will perform Asanas and Pranayamas for _____ minutes daily.
2. I will take milk and fruits only in lieu of night meals once a week/fortnight/month.
3. I will observe a fast on Ekadasi days or once a fortnight/month.
4. I will give up _____ (one of my cherished objects of enjoyment) once every _____ days/month or for _____ days/months.
5. I will not indulge in any of the following more than once every _____ days/weeks or for _____ months. (A) Smoking, (B) Cards, (C) Cinemas, (D) Novels.
6. I will observe Mouna (complete silence) for _____ minutes/hours daily and _____ minutes/hours on Sundays/holidays, and utilize the time in concentration, meditation, Japa, and introspection.
7. I will observe Brahmacharya (celibacy) for weeks/months at a time.
8. I will not utter angry, harsh or vulgar words towards any one during this year.
9. I will speak the truth at all costs during this year.
10. I will not entertain hatred or evil thoughts towards any one.

A NEW BEGINNING

11. I will give away _____ cents per dollar of my income in charity.
12. I will perform selfless service (Nishkamy Karma Yoga) for _____ hours daily/weekly.
13. I will do _____ Malas of Japa daily (Mala of 108 beads).
14. I will write my Ishta Mantra/Guru Mantra in a note-book daily for _____ minutes or _____ pages.
15. I will study _____ Slokas of Gita daily with commentary.
16. I will maintain a daily spiritual diary and send a copy of it every month to my Guruji for getting further lessons.
17. I will get up at _____ a.m. daily and spend _____ hours in Japa, concentration, meditation, prayer, etc.
18. I will conduct Sankirtan with family members and friends daily for _____ minutes/hours at night.

Signature: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Date: _____