

SPECIAL INSIGHTS INTO SADHANA

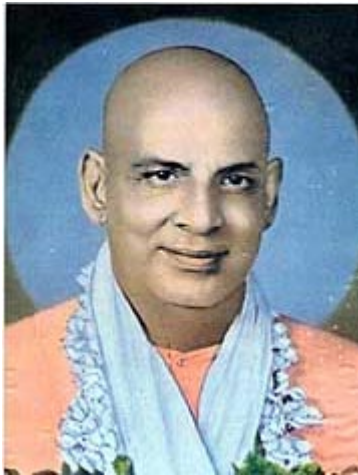
No. 8

By

SRI SWAMI CHIDANANDA

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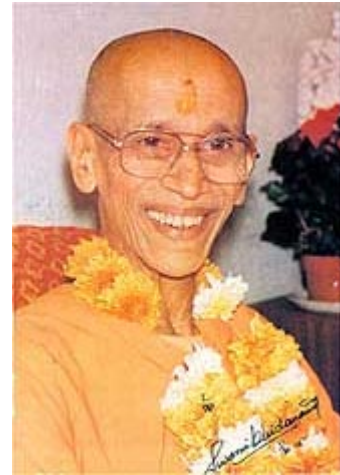
Early Morning Meditation Talks



Sri Swami Sivananda
Founder of
The Divine Life Society



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



Sri Swami Chidananda

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on
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Krishna Jayanti
Vinayaka Chaturthi
Receiving a Guest

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PUBLISHERS' NOTE

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

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

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

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

THE DIVINE LIFE SOCIETY

PREFACE

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

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

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

Swami Chidananda

“With perfect faith and belief, really and truly make God your all in all. Then you have nothing to fear. You are absolutely secure. No harm can befall you.”

—Swami Chidananda

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TIE YOUR RAKSHA TO THE SUPREME BEING

Radiant Atman! Long ago, when this Ashram had only seven or eight inmates, Gurudev established a school for children—Sivananda Primary School. It was inaugurated in the year 1942, and the school room was the first room in the press building, just behind where you now enter the press. Next to it was smaller room where the teacher lived. The teacher was revered Satchidananda Maithaniji, the retired manager of the Sivananda Ayurvedic Pharmaceutical Works. He had about 12 to 15 students, and he was called Masterji. Many of the students are still in this area.

Occasionally Gurudev would drop in, and he would often give the students a brief four line lecture on one of the Yogas or on Divine Life. One of the lectures went: “I shall now deliver a lecture on Bhakti Yoga. Bhakti Yoga is divine love. Sing like Mira. This is my lecture.” Another lecture was: “Insure your life with God. All other insurance companies may fail. But the Divine Insurance Company will never fail. This is my lecture.”

So, insure your life with God. Insure your life, not with the LIC or any other public or private company, but insure your life with God. Companies may fail. Even banks and large industries fail; you may lose your investments. But the Divine Insurance Company will never fail.

There is a story of a Muslim fakir whose cottage was destroyed by monsoon rains. He lived near Delhi, and as the emperor Akbar was known to be a generous man, he approached him. At the time, the emperor was at prayer, and as he listened, the fakir overheard the emperor praying for all sorts of things—more money, larger armies, etc. After listening for a while the fakir quietly left. The emperor, sensing that someone had been near him, had his guards call the fakir back so he could enquire as to what he wanted. After being questioned, the fakir told him: “I came to ask you for something, but when I found that you yourself were asking for something from someone else, I thought that if that Being is so great that my emperor is asking for things from Him, why should I not directly ask from that Being myself. Why not ask from the Highest rather than ask from someone who himself has to ask for things.”

These thoughts occurred to me this morning because there is a tradition, a custom, which takes place all over the north, especially in Punjab, U.P., etc., where, upon this full moon day, people tie a shining contraption upon their brother’s forearm. If they don’t have a brother they sometimes tie it on some close friend whom they regard as an elder brother. This friend thus becomes their well-wisher, their protector, their friend in time of need. He becomes a support to them, an insurance of safety, security, protection and help. They call this shining thing, made of various patterns of silk and tinsel, *raksha*.

And, today is the day of Rakshabandhan. Rakshabandhan is adopting a brother as it were, depending upon someone to grant you security, protection and help, to be a support, a source of assurance that “I am not alone, I am protected.”

Now, it has occurred to me, that instead of making a human being your source of protection, support, security and help, why not tie your *raksha* to the Supreme Being? As Gurudev said: “Insure your life with God. The Divine Insurance Company will never fail.” For if you depend upon a human individual with all his inevitable foibles and shortcomings, you may find that just when

you need help, the other person may be in a condition where he himself needs help. He may need help more than you do. Such things happen. It happened to Arjuna, a person upon whom a whole army was depending. He broke down and started crying. At that time, if some lady, who had tied a *raksha* to Arjuna, went to him for help, what would she have got from him? He was a nervous wreck, in a state of collapse.

So, when you want to have one hundred per cent security, unfailing, absolutely assured security and guaranteed help, support and strength, then make the Divine all this and even more. *Tvameva sarvam mama deva deva*. Then you are absolutely secure. For he declares: “*kaunteya pratijanihi na me bhaktah pranasyati*—O Arjuna, know this well, My devotee never comes to grief. I will not allow him to come to grief.” When He says that because He is omnipotent, His assurance is one hundred per cent absolutely certain. Therefore, the famous ending lines of a Sanskrit verse: *anyatha saranam nasti tvameva saranam mama; tasmad karunyabhavena raksha raksha mahesvara; raksha raksha janardana* (There is no refuge for me elsewhere; Thou art alone my refuge. Therefore, out of a sense of compassion protect, protect, O Supreme Lord; protect, protect, O Lord Janardana).

Time and again in our scriptures, in the Puranas, episode after episode proves this to be true, totally true. All other support may fail, but never the divine support. Draupadi proved it. Markandeya proved it. Savitri proved it. Many others proved it. And it is not only in the context of Indian spiritual history. It has been proved in the lives of mystics throughout human history in the West and in all parts of the world—the unfailing hands of God.

Therefore, this should be the firm conviction in the heart of a believer, in the heart of a devotee: “When I have God, what do I lack? Even if I have everything in this world, but have not God, I have nothing, I am lost, I am finished. But if I have God, even if the whole world is against me, I have everything.”

“*Jako rakhe saia, mar na sake koi*—One who is protected by God, no one can even harm a single hair on his head.” This is the experience of the great devotees and mystics, the real, dedicated devotees and mystics, who always dwelt in God and for whom God was sufficient, their all-in-all. God alone was their wealth. He alone was their support, strength, helper—everything. “When I have You, I have everything.”

Thus, one of the psalms in the Old Testament says:

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want;
he makes me lie down in green pastures.
he leads me beside still waters;
he restores my soul.
He leads me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I fear no evil;
for thou art with me;
thy rod and thy staff,

they comfort me.

Thou preparest a table before me
in the presence of my enemies;
thou anointest my head with oil,
my cup overflows.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life;
and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Thus the prophet tells about God's protection when he befriends a man: "When I have Him, I shall not lack anything. He will make me invincible. I shall go through the valley of death fearlessly. He will support me. My enemies cannot approach me." Then man has nothing to fear. Be fearless!

These assurances are given here and there in different parts of scriptures like the Ramayana, the Mahabharata, the Puranas. Many thrilling episodes are there, when those who interfered with the lives of true devotees had to realise their mistake and apologise for it. Someone tried to interfere with a great devotee called Ambarisha. He was also not an ordinary man, but he had to pay for his arrogance. He had to eat humble pie and kneel before Ambarisha in order to escape the wrath of God, because he tried to interfere with the life of one who had totally surrendered himself into the hands of God.

So, this practice of Rakshabandhan or tying a *raksha* around someone's hand gave rise to this thought in this new direction. Is it not one hundred per cent better to make the Supreme Being our protector, our helper, our support, our brother, our friend in need? What wiser step could one take than to make of Him what you are trying to make of a frail, imperfect human being?

So, just as Gurudev taught in his lecture to the children "Insure your life with God, He is unfailing," even so, with perfect faith and belief, really and truly make God your all-in-all. Then you have nothing to fear. You are absolutely secure. No harm can befall you.

This has been the experience of many *bhaktas*. And what has been, is true even today, and shall always be true in the lives of firm believers and true devotees of God who do *atmanivedana* or *atmasamarpana* (self-surrender). As long as the sun, moon and stars shine in the sky, this will be a fact that can never be cancelled, never be falsified. It will be proven again and again. It is an eternal truth: one who depends upon God lacks nothing.

Therefore, if you want to have a sure, certain, unfailing and fully capable supporter, helper, well-wisher, you can depend upon Him. He will be the most unfailing, absolutely certain and totally capable helper to you, at all times, in all circumstances, amidst all difficulties and problems. For, some things may be possible for man and some things may be impossible for man, but nothing is impossible to God.

Therefore, the greatest thing you can do is to tie your Raksabandhan to your divine father, mother, brother, sister, friend, helper, supporter, well-wisher, protector, security. What could be wiser than this? Let us, therefore, be wise and rejoice and be carefree in the sure protection, the

unfailing protection, the omnipotent protection of God, Who is our nearest and dearest. God bless you!

KRISHNA AVATARA

Radiant Atman! As we move towards the auspicious and blessed day of Sri Krishna Janmashtami, we are moving towards a divine advent that was extraordinary in its nature—extraordinary in the sense that there could not have been a more unimaginable set of negative factors all combining together than when the Supreme Being, Adi Narayana, was born as Bhagavan Sri Krishna. We cannot help wondering how and why such a thing could come about, that the moment of Lord Krishna’s advent was a moment filled with everything undivine, everything *tamasic* and *rajasic*, everything unspiritual and *asuric*.

On the other hand, it is said that at the time of the advent of Lord Buddha, everything became auspicious and beautiful. Though it was not the season for flowers to bloom, suddenly flower trees were full of flowers, trees bereft of fruit became laden with fruit, lotuses bloomed in the lakes. Waters of rivers that were muddy suddenly became crystal clear, and everywhere cool breezes wafted the fragrance of the flowers. Everything auspicious, everything beautiful, *satyam*, *sivam*, *sundaram*, took place. Lord Rama, too, was born in a palace—wonderful, auspicious surroundings.

Lord Krishna, however, was born in a set of circumstances most undivine, most unspiritual, most negative. He was born in prison; both his father and his mother were shackled to the walls, their hands chained. Their cells were closed, cut off, barred and locked with cruel guards watching them. It was midnight in the month of Sravana. It was pitch dark; the sky was overcast and it was raining heavily. Thus everything that the Bhagavad Gita says is inauspicious—night time, the dark half of the month, the sun on its southward journey—were present.

Lord Krishna, thus, had everything inauspicious; but even in such a set of absolutely inauspicious circumstances, there was ultimately a glorious triumph for the Divine. All that stood in opposition, all the *asuric* forces that time and again most determinedly tried to put an end to this advent were overcome. And one feature here that is noteworthy is that in spite of the most dire, inauspicious, unfavourable, *asuric*, dark circumstances, which seemed hopeless, Devaki and Vasudeva never lost faith.

They were absolutely certain that the divine advent would overcome everything that stood against it. There was in their hearts *parama sraddha*; there was in their hearts great *visvasa*, faith and trust in the promise of the Divine. It was this that enabled them to face all opposing circumstances and never lose faith. They had absolute trust in God, which made them strive through all the difficult circumstances and to ultimately have the blessedness of being liberated directly through the hands of the Lord.

Perhaps this is an indication of how the spiritual seeker, the *sadhaka*, the devotee, the aspiring soul has to be rooted in firm faith no matter how adverse the circumstances, how dark the

prospects may seem. For, ultimately, if you persist in absolute faith, trust and devotion, and carry out the divine injunctions to the letter, then triumph is yours. You overcome all obstacles, become free and attain *bhagavat svarupa*. Lord Krishna Himself came to the prison house, took away their chains and made them free. This is the speciality of Krishna Avatara—extraordinary from start to finish.

May that Supreme Lord, who was born in adverse circumstances, in the dark of night under great danger and stress, who triumphed over all and came and liberated his bound parents, may this Lord shower divine grace and blessings upon you all and grant you success in your journey from darkness to Light, from unreality to Reality, from death to Immortality. This is my humble prayer. God bless you!

A GOOD BEGINNING

Loving adorations to the spiritual presence of worshipful and beloved Gurudev Swami Sivanandaji who has graciously drawn us all together in a serene, holy spiritual fellowship at this early morning hour in his sacred samadhi Shrine Hall! May this *guru kripa* be upon you all!

I had reason and occasion to dwell upon the plain truth that as the tangible fruit of his *guru kripa*, he has granted to all of us this holy Ashram in Uttarakhand which is *tapo bhumi*—not *bhogabhumi* but *tapo bhumi*. It is a place for *samyama*, for *tapasya* and for *titiksha* (restraint, penance and endurance). As Mahatma Gandhi put it, it is a place for simple living and high thinking.

But much more, it is a place on the right bank of Divine Mother Ganga that provides an all-round, total facility for human unfoldment—physically, mentally, intellectually, morally, ethically, spiritually—where all the four Yogas are integrated. It is an Ashram offering facilities and scope for the practice of *nishkama-karma-yoga*, *bhakti yoga*, *dhyana yoga*, *jnana yoga*, *japa yoga*, *sankirtan yoga* and *hatha yoga*. It is a place for the study of the Upanishads, the Gita and the Brahma Sutras, for *yama* and *niyama*, and *navavidha bhakti*. It is a place for *tapasya*, *yoga abhyasa*, *vairagya*, *vichara*, *viveka* and for the development of *shad-sampatti* to support your *mumukshutva*. It is a place for everything good, the like of which is very difficult to find.

In such a place, if we do not utilise our time and life in the direction that this place provides for, then we do a great injustice towards Gurudev, his life-work and his *kripa*. And if we fail to recognise the worth and value of his *kripa*, great will be our regret. Scriptures take a very serious note of such a lapse.

Worse still, if in this place one behaves unspiritually, in an undivine manner, contrary to the minimum requirements of the spiritual life, then one is courting disaster, one is inviting much sorrow in the future. There is a saying: “*anyakshetre kritam papam, punyakshetre vinashyati; punyakshetre kritam papam, vajralepo bhavishyati* (Sin committed at other places is destroyed in a holy place, but the sin committed in a holy place becomes firmly attached).” That means that it

cannot be taken away, shed afterwards. It is a manner of speaking, a way of stressing a point, of focussing our attention upon what should be done and what should not be done.

Time should not be wasted—*kalakshepo na kartavyah*. It should not be wasted because time is precious. We have not come here to spend our time doing anything other than the practice of spiritual life—the practice of *vairagya*, *viveka* and *bhratritva* (brotherhood), the practice of tolerance, mutual goodwill, and *paropakara* (doing good to others), the practice of Yoga, *bhakti*, Vedanta, Gita *jnana upadesa* and Upanishad *udbodhana* (awakening by the Upanishad). We have come here for that. This is a place meant for that.

And today of all days is a great day for making all good beginnings. It is a day dedicated to Ganesa Who removes all obstacles on the path of good undertakings. He is *siddhidayaka* (the bestower of success). He gives success if you work in the right direction. And, therefore, it is deemed to be a very auspicious day, a very appropriate day—just like Vijaya Dasami—for making good beginnings. Where shall we begin?

We shall begin by stopping all activities of thought, word and deed that are not good, all the activities of *vyavahara* that are not good. They say read the Vedas daily and engage in actions that have been laid down or declared in the Vedas as actions that are to be engaged in—*taduditam karma suanusthiyatam* (we must act according to the injunctions of the Vedas)—which means we must not act contrary to the injunctions of the Vedas. It is already implied in the declaration. Speak the truth means do not speak falsehood; it is implied. Practise *ahimsa* means do not practice *himsa*; it is implied. Be a vegetarian means do not eat meat or non-vegetarian food; it is implied. Be a *brahmachari* means do not be a *vyabhichari*; it is implied. Fast today means do not take food. It need not be told. It is already implied; one contains the other.

Divine, godly qualities lead you towards liberation—*daivi sampad vimokshaya*. And if the highest goal of life is *moksha*, then we must not only practice *daivi sampada* which will help us to obtain *moksha*, but we must also give up all *asuri sampada*, because it says that *asuri sampada* leads to greater bondage. Therefore we must not only cultivate *daivi sampada* but guardedly, with alert vigilance, avoid the contrary. It is implied in it.

In his book *Satsanga Lectures*, Gurudev said: “Today I will tell you of a simple path to God-realisation, three simple *sadhanas* that will grant you liberation. The first *sadhana* is to eradicate negative, unspiritual qualities and cultivate positive, spiritual qualities. Secondly, constantly remember God in the midst of all *vyavaharic* activities. And thirdly, dedicate all your activities at the Feet of God.” So, the first *sadhana* is to eradicate negative, undivine qualities and cultivate positive, divine qualities.

Therefore, on this auspicious day of the worship of Lord Ganesa, the remover of obstacles and the bestower of success, let us begin by eradicating wrong qualities and cultivating sublime, noble, spiritual qualities and divine virtues. In his “Universal Prayer” Gurudev says: “Fill our hearts with divine virtues.” If we pray to the Lord to do this, then we must assist God by ourselves also trying to fill our heart with divine virtues. Then He will help us and make it a success.

What quality to eradicate? What divine virtue to cultivate? The great Holy Mother Saradamani Devi, the divine consort of Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsadev of Dakshinesvar, giving advice said: “My dear child, take away *doshadrishi* (looking at the faults of others), take away this negative habit of picking upon the faults of others. Life is too short; there is not enough time to remove our own faults. We have so many faults that if we will start introspecting, trying to analyse and recognise our own negative qualities, we will have a full time work to do. Even a whole lifetime will not be sufficient to get rid of all the faults that each one of us has. So, if instead of doing your own house cleaning, you start picking on the faults of others, you will remain what you are.”

Perhaps it may be worse still, because if you focus on negative things, on the defects of others, trying to pick holes in their *svabhava* (nature) instead of focussing upon God, your *ishta devata* or *guru charana* (the feet of the Guru), then you are doing a great injustice to yourself, an injustice to God, an injustice to Gurudev and an injustice to this wonderful Ashram that he has created for you and offered to you as his parting gift, complete with all the facilities required for self-unfoldment. You ignore all this and make your vision low-down by dwelling upon the defects of others. This is a still greater blunder.

And it is also a very serious thing. God is offering you facilities for becoming divine and you are ignoring that and focussing upon things which are unnecessary for you, which waste your life and create negative *samskaras* within you. It will retard your spiritual progress. Your *sadhana* will go down the drain because it is one of the *chhidras* through which spirituality can go away.

That which you focus upon, that you become. If you think upon silly, negative qualities of others instead of improving yourself, you draw upon yourself negative qualities. You make your *drishti alpa* (vision petty) instead of making it *mahat* (lofty, great). It is a great blunder.

And so Holy Mother Saradamani Devi said: “Better start by minding your own spiritual welfare. It is too important to be neglected by thinking of other things. Mind your highest good. Be mindful of your own supreme welfare, for which a human birth has been bestowed upon you. Do not divert your mind here and there in petty things. Life is short; time flies away. Before you know it, the time of departure will come. If you have made a mess of your life by allowing your mind to be diverted to miscellaneous, unnecessary things, then you will regret bitterly, you will weep bitterly.”

Therefore, save yourself from such a fate. Be sincere and serious. Let your entire mind, heart, thought and intellect be focussed upon God and the *sadhana* for which you have come into this sacred Uttarkhand. Be not be a “Nosey Parker,” do not poke your nose into affairs that are of no concern to you or your spiritual life. Some people cannot remain without doing this and thus creating trouble. What is still worse, they have a warped sense of enjoyment and even enjoy creating trouble. It is a spiritual blunder of the first magnitude. It is a great harm that you are doing to yourself and your spiritual life, quite apart from the *himsa* that you may cause in the minds of other people or the agitation that you may cause in their hearts. The harm that you are doing to yourself is tenfold.

Therefore, today, on this sacred Vinayaka Chaturthi day, why not take a cue from the blessed Holy Mother Saradamani Devi and say, “O Lord, I have been made to see. Until now I did

not realise that this was an obstacle, because it has become part of my own nature, *svabhava*. I must change this habit of mind, change my second nature and be established in my essential divine nature. Therefore, from today I will begin by not finding fault with anyone; I will not allow my mind to be diverted away from the central purpose of my human existence. I must not succumb to this old, inveterate habit of the mind. Henceforward I shall not commit this blunder. I shall not allow *maya* to direct my mind to anything that is not part of my spiritual evolution. O Lord, help me in this task.”

Therefore, every day you must awaken yourself and be concerned with the main purpose of your life, with the centred objective with which you have come here and the reason why Gurudev brought into being this *sadhana kshetra*, this great facility for Yoga Vedanta, for spiritual unfoldment, for the attaining of divine perfection and fulfilling the purpose of life. May Lord Ganesa help you and remove all obstacles in your way!

PREPARING TO RECEIVE THE MOST HIGH

Radiant Immortal Atman! We were speaking of preparing to receive the Most High. Presently the entire Ashram is engaged in a face-lifting—cleaning, scrubbing, painting—in order to receive an important secular dignity. How much more, a hundredfold, a thousandfold, should be a similar housecleaning and preparation within the personality of the spiritual seeker, of the *sadhaka*, of the Yogi, in order to prepare for the advent of the Supreme Being, the Cosmic Spirit, the Universal Soul, *paramatman*, into one’s own life!

What does this preparation mean? What does it imply? The preparation means and implies becoming in our own being a replica or the likeness of that Supreme Being whom we wish to receive, experience, enter into, and become established in. When a secular dignitary, a President, comes, we try to duplicate the conditions to which his high status has accustomed him. We give him the best building, make it spic and span. We change the furniture; we roll out the red carpet. We may not be able to exactly duplicate, either in scale or quality, what he has been accustomed to; nevertheless, we go out of ourselves to bring the very best we have. That is what we can do.

Similarly, the human individual soul should rise to the ultimate height it is capable of. It says: “This is the best I can do, O Lord. I shall try to shine with divinity to the limit of my capacity. I shall try to make myself spiritual in every respect to the limit of my capacity.” That is what the Srimad Bhagavad Gita admonishes: Eradicate *asuric* qualities and cultivate, develop and manifest divine qualities. Try to be as much like God as it is possible for you to be within the limits of your own capacity. Each one has a ceiling limit. And God only expects each one of us to do our ultimate best—and leave it in His hands.

But if we do not try to do our ultimate best—if we fail to do our Ultimate best—then we fail. We do not answer the requirements; we do not rise up to the expectation. We are not perfect in Yoga; we do not display *karmasu kausalam* (skill in action). If we do not put forth what is expected of us, what is within our capacity, then we fail to meet the requirement.

God does not expect us to become a Ramakrishna Paramahamsadeva. God does not expect us to become a Chaitanya Gauranga Mahaprabhu, a Mirabai, a Prahalada, a Dhruva, a Markandeya or a Bhagiratha. But He does expect us to try our best to approximate them within our own self, within the limits of our own capacity.

We may not become a Ramana Maharshi. But we may try to grow in the qualities that made him what he was. We may not be in a position to have the self-sacrifice of a Ravana who cut off his head and sacrificed it to Lord Siva, but we must grow in self-sacrifice and self-denial. We may not become a St. Francis of Assisi, but we may try to emulate. This is what is expected of each one of us. Having lived before us, they have left footprints on the sands of time. Therefore, try to emulate! We may not be able to duplicate them in scale and quality, but we can try to emulate.

That is the very meaning of idealism. We keep a lofty ideal and try to emulate that ideal. Try to be as non-violent as Mahatma Gandhi. Try to be as abstemious as Vinoba Bhave. Try to be as brave as Mira. Try to be as patient as others who waited and prayed, who *waited long* and prayed. Trying to be like an ideal we set before us is the hallmark of a *sadhaka* and a seeker: “Lives of great men oft remind us that we can make our lives sublime.”

Never lower your ideal. Even if you cannot approximate it in every way, do not lower your ideal. Say: “I shall try my best,” but do not lower your ideal. Do not compromise; do not dilute your spirituality.

Aim for the stars. Swami Krishnanandaji used to say: “It is better to aim at a lion and miss it than to aim at a jackal and hit it,” Try to become like God. Try to walk the earth like Gods. Do not dilute your spirituality. That is what idealism means—trying to become as brave as Bose, trying to become as self-sacrificing as Florence Nightingale, trying to become as truthful as Harischandra.

Try to be as non-violent as Gandhi. Try to become as patient as Buddha. Try to be as compassionate as Christ. In this way, you may then become something. At least you can become the best of what you are capable of becoming. And that is not a mean achievement; that is not an ordinary thing. If you are a diamond, shine like the best diamond. If you are a ruby, shine like the best ruby. If you are an emerald, shine like the best emerald. An emerald is not expected to shine like a diamond. A ruby may not be like an emerald, but it can be a best ruby. In the same way, be a *tyagi*, be a *virakta*, be a Yogi, be a *bhakta*, be a *jnani*, be a *viveki*, be a *vicharasila*, be a self-controlled being, be a *samyami*.

We expect in God peace. We expect in God harmony, where all things meet together and are balanced, where there is perfect silence. And there is great beauty in that harmony and silence. There is peace, and where there is peace there is joy. Try to be all this. Try to have a harmonious nature; try to harmonise with others. Try to harmonise with life around you; try to harmonise with conditions.

“If I go on harmonising with others, if I adapt, adjust, accommodate, where will I be? I will become a cipher.” That is exactly what Vedanta wants you to be. Vedanta wants you to disappear. It wants you to reduce yourself to a cipher, become a nothing. That is the highest good. Losing yourself, you gain the whole universe. You gain the All. Holding on to yourself, you lose

everything—he who gives up his life will attain everlasting life; he who clings to his life will enter into spiritual death.

That is the paradox of spiritual life. Those who want to cling to the life of this little “I”, they enter into spiritual death. Those who die to the little “I”, they inherit everlasting life. Therefore, Sri Krishna Chaitanya Mahaprabhu said: “Lesser than a blade of grass, more forbearing than a tree”—more forbearing than a tree which bears heat, cold, rain, sun, dust, grime, everything, and yet continues to give shade, flowers, fruits, itself. It bears everything and yet goes on giving of its abundance. It gives to those who tend it, and it also gives to those who take an axe to it and cut off its branches or even lay an axe to its roots. Till the very end it continues to give. “Blessed are the meek, the humble in spirit, for they shall inherit the Kingdom of Heaven.” What you keep you lose. What you renounce, you get.

A poet has said: “He who has renounced desire, who wants nothing, is an emperor of emperors.” Gurudev was such an Emperor of emperors. We saw in him the forbearing nature referred to by Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. We saw in him the humility of something “lesser than a blade of grass.” We saw him literally fulfil the third quarter, *amanina manadena*, ever rejoicing in giving respect and reverence to others. Thus it is that one tries to approximate in spirituality, in divinity, in godly qualities, that nature which we attribute to God.

Lord Krishna washed the feet of the sages and the august guests who came to attend the *rajasuya yajna* of Yudhishtira. He also acted as an ordinary chariot driver for His own disciple Arjuna. And being a chariot driver meant that at the end of the day you had to wash the horses down and cleanse their wounds. And He performed this function publicly within the gaze of thousands of army men, who may have smiled in derision, made fun of Him. He did not mind, and it was not just a passing incident. He worked as a driver of the chariot for 18 days, from sunrise to sunset.

Lord Krishna also washed the feet of His poverty-stricken boyhood schoolmate and friend whose wife had compelled him to go to Krishna: “If you don’t want to go for yourself, go for your starving family. He is a king, He is rich, He can give you anything that you want.” Clad in rags, poor, humble, penniless, famished, he approaches the palace. When Lord Krishna hears that he has come, He rushes out to greet him. He doesn’t send a servant, but He Himself receives him, takes him by the hand and offers him His own personal seat and takes a lesser seat.

How easily we tend to forget these well-known but little remembered incidents. They are of the very essence in the spiritual quest, in the spiritual life. They may not be meant for the generality of readers or devotees, but they are specially meant for *sadhakas*. Jesus said: “Love one another even as I loved you... Greater love hath no man than he lay down his life for his friend.” And He demonstrated it by giving His life. He said: “Love God and love your neighbour as you love yourself.” Chaitanya Mahaprabhu demonstrated such God-nature.

Overnight one does not become a God. Growing into God-nature is not a miracle; it is not a revolution. In rare, exceptional cases—one in million—it may be; otherwise, it is an evolutionary process, slow, steady, by day and by night, even as the petals of a flower-bud gradually unfold in the silence of the night, unfelt, unobserved, unseen by man. One grows into divinity over a period of time through patient effort, unremitting, persevering effort, through sincerity and earnestness,

through longing, through deep yearning for it, through much prayer and supplication at the feet of God.

Vigilant among the heedless, wakeful among the slumbering, diligent among the indolent, ever actively striving, climbing up step by step among the lethargic and the lazy who rest by the wayside, the Yogi, the *sadhaka* and the devotee of God make their life fruitful in attainment. That is called *sadhana*. That is called spiritual life.

And you start where you are. Harmonise with your own spiritual family amongst whom God has ordained that you must live for your evolution. The conditions that God has given you are the very best for you. He knows best; and, therefore, He has given you what is your necessity. This is a truth that has to be recognised, and it requires humility to recognise the truth that God is right. "I may be wrong, I may not understand, but God knows. And if He wants to change it, He knows how to." We need not be anxious that God may forget or that He may make a mistake.

Thus, make use of the conditions He has given you. Harmonise with your own environment. Harmonise and cultivate love for the beings amongst whom, in His infinite wisdom, love and justice, He has placed you. If He wanted to do something else, He has the power in Him to do it. For He is omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent. One does not have to invite Him: "Look here, I am in a situation. Please come and take care of it!" There is no coming for God. He is in the middle of the situation already. You may call out to Him, but you don't have to invite Him. He is already there.

Therefore, in every factor that constitutes your present here and now situation, start exercising loving kindness, patience, forbearance, tolerance, harmony, prayerfulness and a keen appreciation of that which you have. These are the ingredients of victory, of conquest, of overcoming, of spiritual strength. Then more shall be given. To him who hath more shall be given. For he has recognised the worth of what he has and has started to enrich himself thereby. Then God says: "Yes, yes, he has understood its worth. Let Me give more." And you will be filled until you overflow.

This servant of the master does not say all these things. It has been stated. Therefore, he brings you the wisdom of the ages that belongs to you, which you have inherited as a child of the twentieth century. What is yours is being brought to you. For often we ignore, we fail to focus upon what we have. We forget, we neglect, we bypass. It needs to be restored to your life's central-place once again. Therefore, that is what is being done by the will of the Lord morning after morning. You are getting what belongs to you, that which you have perhaps forgotten or have failed to recognise the value of.

Thus it is that God makes Himself and His love manifest in your life. This you must recognise. Knowledge is God's love. Trials and tribulations are God's love. Scope for evolution is God's love. Facilities for spiritual progress is God's love. Life on the bank of Ganga is God's love. Life in Sivananda Ashram is God's love. Life with the possibility of practising Yoga and Vedanta and *karma yoga* and meditation is God's love, His abundant love, His great love. It is His wealth also.

SPECIAL INSIGHTS INTO SADHANA

The chance to utter His Name is God's love. And more than anything else, spiritual fellowship with fellow *sadhakas* and devotees, such as you are at this moment experiencing, is God's great love. Is it ordinary to be put in the company of spiritual people, seekers, *sadhakas*, Yogis, devotees of the Lord, lovers of righteousness, and people with idealism and *sattvic* tendencies? It is heaven on earth. It is a gift of God. It is His abundant love being showered upon you.

I close by saying: "He that hath ears, let him hear. He that hath eyes, let him see. Seek and you will find." God bless you all! He has already blessed you. May He bless you to recognise His blessings. May He bless you to feel the abundance of His love and blessings enveloping you from all sides. God bless you to know how richly endowed you are and enable you to recognise these endowments, to rejoice in them, and to put them to the very highest and best use!