

₹100/- ANNUAL



The DIVINE LIFE



On
the threshold of
the New Year, convert
yourself into a herald of
Divinity. Lead a Divine Life of
love, service, devotion,
discipline and wisdom. May the
New Year witness you develop
into a perfect and ideal
being!

Sri Sri Sivananda

JANUARY 2021

THE UNIVERSAL PRAYER

O Adorable Lord of Mercy and Love!
Salutations and prostrations unto Thee.
Thou art Omnipresent, Omnipotent and Omniscient.
Thou art Satchidananda (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 temptations 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.

—Swami Sivananda

WHAT IS MIND?

Mind is the cause for bondage and freedom of man. A mind that is filled with impure Vasanas tends to bondage; whereas a mind that is destitute of Vasanas tends to freedom. Mind is no mind when the Vasanas are destroyed. You become mindless. When you become mindless, intuition dawns and you are endowed with the eye of wisdom. You enjoy indescribable peace.

Mind is Vasanamaya. This world is Vasanamaya Jagat. Mind clings to sensual objects through Vasanas and constantly thinks of the objects. If the Vasanas perish, the mind ceases thinking of objects and we attain the state of thoughtlessness.

Swami Sivananda



THE DIVINE LIFE

Vol. LXXIX

JANUARY 2021

No. 06

PRASNOPANISHAD

CHATURTHA PRASNA (QUESTION IV)

SAURYAYANI AND PIPPALADA

एष हि द्रष्टा स्प्रष्टा श्रोता घ्राता रसयिता मन्ता बोद्धा कर्ता
विज्ञानात्मा पुरुषः । स परेऽक्षर आत्मनि संप्रतिष्ठते ॥९॥

9. It is he who sees, feels, hears, smells, tastes, thinks, knows; he is the doer, the intelligent soul, the Purusha. He dwells in the highest, indestructible Self.

महागुरुवर्णमातृकास्तोत्रम्

MAHAGURU-VARNA-MATRIKASTOTRAM

(*Jnana Bhaskara Mahamahopadhyaya Sri S. Gopala Sastri*)

हे योगीश्वर ! सद्गुणाकार ! सतां संसेव्यपादाम्बुज !

स्वात्मानन्दविलीनचित्त ! विजितक्रोधादिशत्रुव्रज !।

हे दीनावन ! हे जगत्प्रियकर ! प्रत्यक्षशम्भो ! गुरो !

हे विश्वश्रुतकीर्तिभूषण ! विभो ! मां पाहि पादाश्रितम् ॥१९॥

19. O King of Yogins! O Embodiment of divine virtues! O Being served by noble-hearted devotees! O Ever-absorbed in the bliss of the Self ! O Conqueror of the enemies like anger, etc! O Protector of the poor! O Cosmic benefactor! O Siva personified! O Adorned with the ornament of world-fame! O My preceptor! Save me, who has taken resort at thy lotus feet.

पद्मावल्लभसेवके परपदप्राप्त्यै लघुं पद्धतिं

प्रीत्या दर्शयति प्रसन्नवदने पीयूषवाग्वैभवे ।

पुष्टयादिप्रदपूतपादनलिने पोते भवाब्धेर्गुरौ

प्रेम्णा मानुष ! धेहि चित्तमनिशं नो चेज्जनिर्निष्फला ॥२०॥

20. Who adores Lord Vishnu, who lovingly shows an easy path to salvation, who has a smiling face, whose words are nectarine, whose lotus-feet are capable of giving all prosperity, and who is a boat to cross the ocean of worldly life; O mortals! Fix your mind devoutly and affectionately on such a Sadguru, otherwise your human-birth will be futile.

(To be continued)



NEW YEAR MESSAGE

Sri Swami Sivananda



Let serenity and Satyam shine in every face.



Let the brightness of Brahmacharya beam forth from each Bharatavasi. Let Ahimsa activate everything you do with positive living spirit of compassion, love and goodwill. These constitute the real heart of India. The great spiritual qualities Bharatavarsha stands for, she has from time to time brought forth personified as some of her most illustrious children. The perfect diamond reveals the multi-hued excellence of its true worth by flashing forth variegated and colourful rays. Even so, this ancient land has revealed the inner Jyoti of her heart through dazzling rays like Satyakama, Harishchandra, Yudhishtira—like Bharat, Buddha, Mahavira—like Bhishma, Hanuman, Dayananda. Catch these flashes, reflect them truly and splash all earth with the benign brilliance of blissful brotherhood and Love. This is your spiritual inheritance that you are to share among all mankind. Let the sacred air of this land resound with the cries of 'Ram' and 'Rahim', of 'Swasti' and of 'Shanti' and not with the harsh shouts of rage and revenge.

The air of Aryavarta, the breeze of Bharatavarsha is to waft over the globe the immortal fragrance of the one Eternal Essence proclaimed in the Vedanta. Let the sacred soil that felt the tender tread of Gauranga and Kabir tremble not under the trample of terror and violence. Let the sun rise and the bud bloom upon scenes of love and brotherhood, purity and peace, help and goodwill. On this New Year day, remember your true spiritual heritage. It is one of Truth, of Purity and of Universal Love. Recall.

सत्यमेव जयते नानृतं ।

“Truth alone triumphs, not falsehood”. Reassert “Hatred is not overcome by hatred! Only, by love will hatred be conquered”. Practise the Divine injunction.

जहि शत्रुं महाबाहो कामरूपं दुरासदम् ।

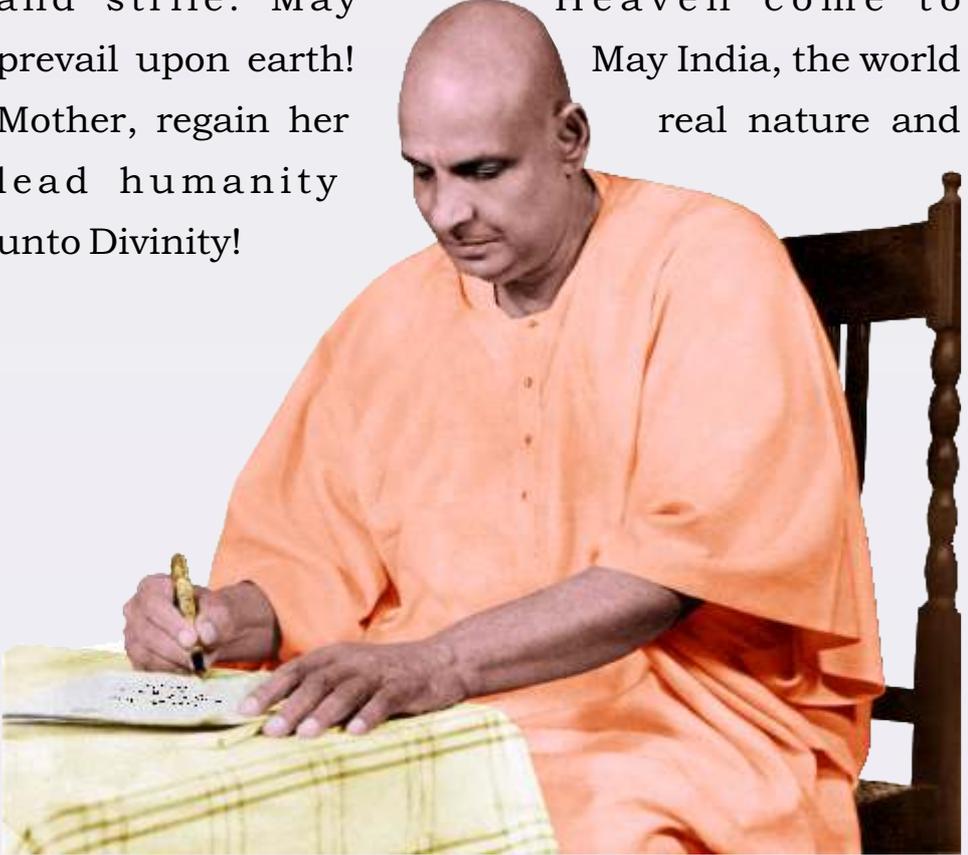
“Slay thou, O mighty armed, this dire enemy in the form of passion”. And again,

त्रिविधं नरकस्येदं द्वारं नाशनमात्मनः ।

कामः क्रोधस्तथा लोभस्तस्मादेतत्त्रयं त्यजेत् ॥

Triple is the gate of this hell, destructive of the self—lust, wrath and greed; therefore let man renounce these three.

Live now this divine life. Put an end to all hatred and strife. May Heaven come to prevail upon earth! May India, the world Mother, regain her real nature and lead humanity unto Divinity!



BE UP AND DOING

H.H. Sri Swami Sivananda

The great work of life is the perfection of character. The task you have set up before yourself now is the development of character. You make up your mind to become a changed man. You determine to make a fresh start, to completely undo past errors and previous neglect. You make strong resolves and take definite vows, yet days pass and weeks go by and the former nature continues to persist. Why should this be so? Human nature is very peculiar. You are puzzled and bewildered by the antics of the mind.

Nature always rebels against sudden changes. Your old self will revolt vehemently against new ideas and habits you force upon it. Use your common sense and discipline the mind cautiously. Changes are gradual. On the path of character-building, do not hope for miraculous results. Then you will certainly progress and succeed. Nothing great is achieved without effort. You must

work hard. It will be foolish to expect to see lumps of butter by dipping a churner into the buttermilk. You must work hard with both the hands and churn it. Yes, you must work hard and work long. No doubt, the saw has sharp teeth but it has to pass and to repass again and again a hundred times over before the log is cut into pieces, even so the breaking up of long standing traits calls for patient and persistent effort on your part.

O l d h a b i t s d i e h a r d .

Tendencies once acquired are found difficult to give up. At the least temptation, they reassert themselves. Your resolves desert you. But never despair. Contend manfully. One habit overcomes another. This is the secret of character. The positive crowds out and drives out the negative. The gradual growth of that which is good, strong and pure soon annihilates all evil tendencies. Stick to this effective aggressive method.

For all this, you must exercise your will force. The laws that operate on the physical plane apply here also. Just as muscles develop by exercise, will-force is effectively strengthened by continuous little acts of self-control. Repeatedly reaffirm resolutions.

It is not enough if you merely sow a seed and then let it alone. For proper growth, you must treat the soil, water it daily, remove weeds and thorns and allow sunshine. Resolutions and vows once made should similarly receive your serious and careful attention. Always protect yourself from wrong and misleading influences. Carefully avoid temptations and counter-suggestions from so-called scoffing friends. Do not allow the new habits and good tendencies to be obliterated.

The chief obstacle to all effort is the lack of confidence. This disables the will. It makes you give up your attempts at the very first difficulty. You easily lose heart and

relax your effort. Get rid of this habit. Many little faults and very many weaknesses require only a decisive effort and a determined push to overcome at once.

You lose confidence in yourself through fear of obstacles. One who fears the future, who fears failure, limits his activities. Failure is only the opportunity to begin intelligently again. Therefore, have firm faith in yourself. Your place here is that of a commander of nature, not its slave. Be confident.

Let your determination be dynamically manifest in action. Ideas get transformed into character by being lived. Therefore, be up and doing. Never mind delay and setbacks. Never accept defeat. Once you have turned the steps towards the Light, keep going forward. Be it by inches or by bounds, go onward till the ideal of a perfect character is achieved. Be up and doing in the path of perfection.

START A NEW LIFE NOW

Blessed Atma Swarupa

Om Namo Narayanaya. Namaskara. May the Grace of Gurudev Swami Sivananda illumine this New Year with the brightness and radiance of Hope, Aspiration, and Inspiration. God grant you all Auspiciousness, Blessedness, Prosperity and Success. I wish you Happiness, Health, Progress upon the spiritual Path, and Triumph over troubles, tensions and problems of life. May this New Year herald for you many more years of joy, peace, and plenty.

With this fourth Sivanandashram Letter, we leave behind a year that has been heavy with many sombre events, and look forward on to a fresh New Year, in which the world might emerge once again, from shadow into bright light, even like the sun unclouded. Traditionally too with the Makarasankranti in January, the sun takes once again the auspicious northern-path, Uttarayana. At this juncture of mankind's periodical reckoning up the debit and credit of life and of the taking of earnest

resolutions, I speak to you all to say, "Blessed Seekers upon the path to Divinity, this year dawns for us without the outward physical presence of the one who was our guide and inspirer in our spiritual life. We have not him to whom our yearly resolutions were addressed hitherto. But this very absence entails the necessity of taking certain new resolutions that were not taken hitherto. These I shall mention. But, even before anything the first and the chief of them shall be that you make your life a dynamic expression of the practical gospel of Sivananda. This is Divine Life."

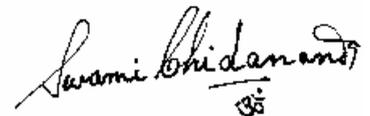
Beloved Member, in addition to your routine new-year-resolutions as a Sadhaka, the dawn of 1964, should see you getting ready to take up the work of Gurudev as his worthy child, pupil and spiritual representative wherever you are. Be you a follower or a disciple or even just a devotee of the Holy Master Sivananda, let your resolve be on record that you determine now at the dawn of this New Year to practise and to propagate his Divine life teachings every day of your life.

Resolve that you will observe the principles of Satyam (Truth), Ahimsa (harmlessness), and Brahmacharya (Purity). Resolve that you will strive each day to be good, to do good, to be kind and compassionate to one and all. Resolve to excel in service, to progress in devotion, to persist in meditation and aspire for realization. Resolve to be charitable and pure, to be detached from worldliness and passing earthly objects and to attach yourself to Dharma and the spiritual ideal of life. Resolve to love all, to see the Lord in all, and to serve the Lord in all. Resolve to adapt, adjust and accommodate to yourself to all changing circumstances, to be tolerant towards all faiths and religions, and to ever seek to unify all by seeing the good in all, and the underlying unity in the midst of apparent diversity. Resolve thus to make your life Sivanandamaya. Let Sivananda radiate through your pure thoughts, your noble feeling, your kind words, and your selfless actions. Thus resolve to make Gurudev Sivananda immortal through your life and actions.

I have more to say, but that I shall keep for the Letter of February. For the present, I shall confine this letter to this main request to you all. Thus loftily resolve and act upon

these resolves with sublime determination. May the idea, the will and the Bhav fuse together into an irresistible dynamic urge to do all that is conceived and to do it now. This would verily constitute the true fulfilment of discipleship in this age when ideals need to be actualised through living practice. I invite you to write to me your ideas briefly on the question of, "the duty of individual disciples towards Gurudev, and how disciples all over the world can each serve the great cause of dissemination of spiritual knowledge and the spread of Divine Life." I shall be glad to receive and consider these letters for the benefit of all. Anyone who communicates to me on this specific matter, may kindly write upon the cover, "Sivanandashram Letter No. 4", thus underlined.

God bless you all, and grant you Vichara and Viveka, firm determination, strong will power, unshakable faith, Sadhana-shakti and supreme attainment. Greetings again, and the very best good wishes in the name of Worshipful Gurudev Sivananda.



Swami Chidananda
1st January 1964

***Dear friends in Spiritual Path,
Blessed Atmaswarupa,***

***Om Namo Narayanaya.
Om Namo Bhagavate Sivanandaya.
Loving Pranamas.***

Now the dawn of New Year 2021 has brought a new hope and new aspirations for all of us. The whole world was under the threat of an invisible enemy i.e. Covid-19 pandemic during 2020, and the whole humanity came together to fight against it and is now moving towards the conclusive victory over it. We hope and pray, that by the grace of Lord Almighty and Sri Gurudev, the flag of success will be fluttering shortly everywhere on the face of the earth.

In the history of mankind, man was always successful in his pursuits, even though he was tested many a times by the cruel hands of destiny as if to uphold the dictum of supremacy of man's legacy over Nature. The spiritual man knows this secret, as the upward flow of life-force is sustained by this principle.

We feel it is the right time to take the words of Gurudev Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj to one's heart and live in their spirit: –
“There is no greatest blunder than to mistake the unreal for the real, the transitory for the permanent and to forget the most important duty in life – SELF REALISATION.”

Our earnest prayer to Lord Almighty and Worshipful Gurudev is to shower courage, strength and insight upon all of you to boldly face the life and its challenges and come out victorious.

May God bless all of us.

With warm regards
Yours, in the service of Gurudev,



Swami Yogaswarupananda
President

THE PRACTICE OF TRUE RELIGION

Sri Swami Krishnananda

In the Veda we have the original proclamation of *satya* and *dharma*, the great principle of our culture. 'Our culture' means not merely of Hindus, but of mankind as a whole. It has been given to us in seed form in two great concepts in the Rigveda, *satya* and *rita*, from which we have also derived these canons of practice. These two terms represent the ultimate nature of Reality and its law, rule or order, as manifest in all creation. *Satya* is the Ultimate Reality, and *rita* is the very same Reality manifest as law and order in this cosmos. This is what is called *dharma*. *Dharma* does not mean Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, or any kind of 'ism'. It is not a creed or a cult. *Dharma* is the law that operates in this world, and to be in consonance with this law would be the virtue of man. We are said to be virtuous and righteous when we live in consonance or agreement with the law that operates in creation. If we violate this law, we are *adharmic*, not *dharmic*, because to violate the law of the universe is to violate our own person in one sense because we are a part of the universe; it is to violate the law of everybody else also because everybody is a part of the universe. It is to create chaos, in another sense.

Corresponding to this beautiful enunciation of *satya* and *rita* in the

Veda, we have also a statement by Christ in the New Testament: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness." The kingdom of God and His righteousness—these two things are clubbed together. We may say the kingdom of God is *satya*, and righteousness is *dharma*.

We have also, in our traditional parlance, the great teaching of the principle of life we call *dharma*, *artha*, *kama*, *moksha*, which is a principle of action, conduct, thought, feeling and understanding, bringing together the principle of ultimate Truth and the principle of its manifestation in the universe. We are said to be following *dharma* in the true sense of the term when we are able to manifest the correlatedness of *satya* and *rita* in our own personal lives and in our social lives. God and man working together in collaboration may be said to be the grosser form of the manifestation of the union of *satya* and *rita*. We can be said to be successful in our lives and to be living a life of virtue, goodness and morality when we are able to harmonise the principles of *satya* and *rita* in our lives. This is also referred to as the transcendent being of God and the immanent being of God. Various terms are used, meaning almost one and the same thing: the invisible form of God and the visible form of God—the

empirical form and the spiritual form.

Many a time we emphasise one side, ignoring the other side, due to a weakness of human nature. Sometimes we become ultra-religious by ignoring the values of the world, which is a mistake. Sometimes we become too inclined towards the world rather than towards the nature of God, and then we become more socialistic, humanistic, sometimes even communistic, and deny the existence of God. Either we deny God or we deny the world. This is what people generally do. We cannot exist without denying something. If we take the world as almost everything, then we deny the transcendent being of Reality.

There are two mistakes that mankind commits, due to which we are in a very difficult situation today. On one side, we have materialism, atheism and communism denying all religious, spiritual and transcendental values. On the other side, we have the pundit type of religion, the pope's organisation of the church, the extreme type of *sanatanist* attitude which leans upon a dogmatic and traditional type of religion, giving the wrong impression that perhaps God is above the world, extra-cosmic, to be reached after death and not now.

This is the cause of the downfall of religion, and the reason why communism has risen in this world. Our pundits are responsible for the rise of communism because they teach religion wrongly. I do not say that communism can be against religion,

really speaking. It is against false religion, and inasmuch as false religion has been identified with religion in general, the whole of religion is dubbed as an opiate, as a kind of narcotic that is administered to the unwary to exploit them, to harness them and get labour from them, to punish them with the dogma that they are poor on account of their karma and it is a virtue to bear this cross and suffering which God has inflicted upon them as a consequence of the law of karma. They are told to work out their karma by working hard in this world, bearing this pain of poverty, and after death they will go to God.

This has been a very painful type of religion which nobody will tolerate for a long time. For some time we may tolerate it, but for all times it cannot be tolerated because the heart revolts against a God who punishes us protractedly while giving us a hope of satisfaction after death. The argument of the communist is, "After death you give me joy. What about my life here? You torture me. I cannot bear this anymore."

We have to become embodiments of true religion, not merely teachers of religion. We do not want teachers of religion. Religion is not a profession, an academic career, or a thesis to be written for a course degree. It is a way of life. Religion is a way of conducting yourself in your day-to-day existence. The manner in which you speak to me is your religion. The attitude that you have towards me in your heart is your religion. What you

think about me is your religion. What you can give me and what you can take from me is your religion. Your idea of God is not your religion. But this we forget. We talk nonsense, think nonsense and act in a very injudicious manner with the environment, with the atmosphere in which we live and with our own brethren, and then we pray to God in the evening as if He will pardon us from all the mistakes that we have committed. Unconscious mistakes will be pardoned; consciously committed blunders will be punished.

If you are honestly of the opinion that we are in a state of civilisation and true culture in this twentieth century, and not boors or animals, and if your heart says that you are really a cultured person, it is now time for you to act according to the true definition of culture. 'Culture' means the recognition of human values. Your attitude towards other people should be one of true humanism: *atmanam sarvabhutani*. The great principle of dharma enunciated by Sage Vyasa in the Mahabharata, which is said to be the quintessence of the teaching of the Mahabharata, is *atmanah pratikulani padesham na samacharet*: What is not good for you, you should not mete out to others. If someone calls you a fool, will you like it? Therefore, when you utter such a word, always think that if this word is uttered in respect of you, will you be happy? Somebody says, "You get out!" If that is told to you, will you be happy? You tell your subordinate, "You quit this place, you

idiot!" Suppose he tells you the same thing; will you be happy?

Dharma is essentially the recognition of the values in life that can be justified on a universal basis. Can a principle be universalised? Then it can be called a virtue. There was a great moral philosopher who said there is a very easy way of knowing whether you are following *dharma*, virtue, morality, or not: If your conduct can be universalised, it should be justifiable.

What does this mean? Suppose you behave in a particular manner; will it be all right for everybody else to also behave in that manner? Just imagine. You speak a word, you think a thought, you behave in a particular manner; would you like everybody else in the world to also think in the same way? Suppose you tell a lie, thinking that good will come out of it. Would you like everybody in the world to tell a lie? The lie will not succeed if everybody tells a lie. Lies succeed because there are a few people in the world who tell the truth. If everybody is a liar, lies will have no meaning. If stealing is a universal principle, stealing will have no meaning. So the test of righteousness is the capacity of a principle to be justifiable universally. Hence, our conduct—social, personal, religious and spiritual—should be capable of being universalised because God is ultimately the highest universal.

Religion is the movement of the soul towards God, and the movement of the soul towards God does not mean walking on the road or soaring into space, but it is an expansion of

consciousness because we say God is *sat-chit-ananda*, pure existence-consciousness. It is a qualitative development of your personality into a wider and wider magnitude and greater depth, so that in your personal life you are in a position to include the values of other people and other things in the world as much as possible, until you become capable of including the values of the entire world. Then it is that you become a world citizen, a God-man or a superman, an *atimanava*, an *avatara purusha*, a veritable representative of God in this world.

Inasmuch as God is the supreme universality, this principle of God has to be manifest in your life in whatever degree possible, and that degree of manifestation of the principle of God in your life is your religion. You are not an Arya Samajist, a Hindu, a Christian or a Buddhist; you are a human being. When you are born from the mother's womb, you are not born as an Arya Samajist. You are not born as a unit of any cult or creed. If you see a small baby, you cannot know whether it is the baby of a beggar or the baby of an emperor. They both look alike. If a small baby is brought before you, can you say whether it is an emperor's child or a beggar's child? You cannot see a distinction. One child becomes an emperor and another child becomes a beggar because of various circumstances conditioning it internally as well as externally. Initially we are made up of the same substance, and God has a common intention

planted in our hearts, which is our movement towards Him.

In the practice of true religion, we have to gradually give up the prejudicial feelings of belonging to cults, creeds, etc., of belonging to South Africa, North Africa, America, India, etc. Ultimately, we may even have to give up the idea of gender—of man, woman, etc. Even that has to be overcome because in the eyes of God, we are not men or women, we are not Hindus or Muslims; we are sparks of divinity, rays of God Himself which have somehow got caught up in other atmospheres, parochial situations from which we have to rise with great effort.

Hence, to clinch the matter, the practice of religion is not the practice of any other-worldly attitude towards a transcendent so-called God of this world, but an inclusive attitude which recognises a brother in other human beings, a value in everything that is in the world, a meaning in every item of creation, a significance even in the worst of things, and a beauty even in the ugliest manifestation because in what we call the *Viratsvarupa* of God, the Cosmic Form, every ugliness is transmuted into beauty. In the *Viratsvarupa* even the so-called evil in this world, the satanic attitude, becomes a part of the magnificence of God, just as in a drama, for example, even the part of a murderer in the dramatic enactment becomes a necessary part in the total picture that the director of the drama wishes to present before us. It may be Macbeth, it may be Othello, it may be Hamlet; we

are not going to look upon each character separately. We are going to assess the total meaning of the entire enactment, and find the moral behind it.

Likewise, God, Who is the Director of the drama of this entire creation, takes a very wide perspective of things. Even the Earth may not have a consciousness of America, India, etc. If we are ten thousand miles above the Earth, we cannot see America or India. There is only a glob of mud, a small ball of Earth, on which we cannot see borders drawn where this is Uttar Pradesh, this is Punjab, this is South Africa, this is Mozambique, this is Egypt. No such lines will be seen on the Earth. The lines are only in our minds. And if we soar higher still, we will find the lines that we draw between men are also not there. The higher we go, the lesser is the demarcation that we recognise. Therefore, we have to soar high, not merely physically but even psychologically and spiritually. When we rise higher and higher in our psychological life—go high into the empyrean of the structure of things—we will not see the difference between the races or nationalities of mankind. We will not even see the difference between one person and another person. Everything will look like a commingling of waves in the ocean of universal forces. It will look as if we are crests of waves in the universe of forces, where each is a part of the same ocean. We have to give up the idea that we are Mr. or Mrs., that we are from Punjab or Madras. These ideas must go.

God has to speak through our hearts and act through our deeds, and God has to manifest Himself through our daily conduct. In essence, you have to see the world as God sees it. If God is to see the world, what will He see and what will He think? That is religion. And to the extent you are able to succeed in entertaining this attitude, to that extent you are a man of religion.

God bless you. Happy New Year to you all! May God bless you with real knowledge that you may be, in your own humble capacities, in your own homes, offices, factories, wherever you are, vehicles of this divine knowledge. When you move from place to place, you move as vehicles of God's message to man. This is what will please God. And if God is to be pleased, man will also be pleased because when God is pleased, the whole world will be pleased, just as when the root of the tree is well-manured, every leaf of the tree is also manured. It gets sustenance. Therefore, the pleasure of God is the pleasure of mankind and the pleasure of the whole world. So try to please God. You need not try to please each individual separately. But to please God is the most difficult of things because you cannot conceive of God. You have to become more and more a God-man in your attitude, and more inclusive in your thought, feeling and action.

Serve God through mankind, and serve mankind through God. Both hold good equally. This is my humble prayer. God bless you.

CELEBRATION OF THE BIRTHDAY OF SRI SWAMI VENKATESANANDA

The 34th Birthday of Sri Swami Venkatesanandaji was celebrated on the 26th and 27th December, 1954. The elaborate programme of the grand celebrations commenced with Brahmamuhurta prayer offered by the Sannyasins and Sadhaks of the Ashram for the health and long life of Swami Venkatesanandaji. This was followed by an informal party organised by Sri Swami Madhavanandaji, Secretary of the Divine Life Society. At 9 a.m., the inmates went in procession from the Vishwanath Mandir to Swami Venkatesanandaji's Kutir, and after conducting Sankirtan for a while on the Ganga Kutir verandah, went to the Diamond Jubilee Hall, together with Sri Gurudev and Swami Venkatesanandaji. Sri Gurudev himself, lending a hand to carry Swami Venkatesanandaji's portrait taken out on this occasion, reminded all of the glorious example of Lord Jesus who took a delight in serving and adoring His own disciples. Ayushya Homa was performed in the Vishwanath Mandir for the health and long life of Swami Venkatesanandaji.

Soon after this, there was the Birthday Dinner at Sri Gurudev's Kutir, in which Sri Gurudev and the Mahatmas of the Ashram took part.

The evening Satsanga had been organised by Sri Swami Paramanandaji Maharaj to include several interesting items. After the Bhagavad-Katha by Sri Ayakudi Venkatarama Sastriar, Sri Swami Vishnudevanandaji piloted the 'aeroplane' which represented Swami Venkatesanandaji "who is descending from heaven to serve Gurudev". The

'aeroplane' moved towards Sri Gurudev and showered flowers at His Feet. Sri Swami Paramanandaji unveiled a wonderful 'statue' of Swami Venkatesanandaji, prepared by Swami Vishnudevanandaji. The effigy was a conical basket clothed in cloth and coat; over this a pumpkin with the eyes, nose and mouth carved on its surface, had been placed to represent the head. This head bore an artistic turban also. Inside the basket was a typewriter with a lovely small statue of Sri Gurudev Himself placed over it!

Immediately Swami Venkatesanandaji introduced the statue to the audience in a humorous autobiographical speech. The speech was followed by his own love-offering of various articles to the senior Mahatmas of the Ashram.

Then, Sri Swami Chidanandaji Maharaj read and presented to Swami Venkatesanandaji the Birthday Address. This was followed by Sri Gurudev's conferment of the sacred title of 'Siva Pada Renu' [dust of Gurudev's feet] upon Swami Venkatesanandaji. Then various presentations were made – all of them sang songs or gave talks, eulogising Sri Gurudev and Swami Venkatesanandaji.

Then Sri Gurudev delivered a thrilling lecture. The entire Sadhak-world and all humanity at large owe a deep debt of gratitude to Sri Gurudev for his most inspiring address. This single soul-elevating address has amply rewarded all efforts made for the celebrations of the Birthday of Swami Venkatesanandaji.

“WHAT I AM”

SRI SWAMI VENKATESANANDAJI'S SPEECH

Now that at Sri Gurudev's Holy Command, Swami Paramanandaji has been gracious enough to unveil to your astonished gaze the statue of Swami Venkatesananda, I have been asked by the Chairman of the Birthday Celebration Committee to introduce to you the person whose statue you see before you. But, before doing so, I would ask you to repeat with me a few Shlokas from Guru Stotra and also sing a few Guru Kirtans:

*Brahmanandam paramasukhadam kevalam jnanamurtim
Dwandwateetam gaganasadrisham tattvamasyadi lakshyam
Ekam nityam vimalamachalam sarvadheesaksheebhutam
Bhavateetam trigunarahitam sadgurum tam namami
Chaitanyam shashwatam shantam vyomateetam niranjanam
Nadabindukalateetam tasmai sri gurave namah
Gururbrahma gururvishnuh gururdevo maheshwarah
Guruh sakshatparam brahma tasmai sri gurave namah
Dhyanamulam gurormurtih pujamulam guroh padam
Mantramulam gurorvakyam mokshamulam guroh kripa
Om namah sivanandaya gurave satchidanandamurtaye
Nishprapanchaya shantaya niralambaya tejase
Guru maharaj guru jai jai; para brahma sadguru jai jai
Guru maharaj guru jai jai; sivananda sadguru jai jai*

I prostrate before that Guru, the Existence devoid of the three Gunas, beyond comprehension, the witness of all mental functions, changeless and pure, one and eternal, transcending the pairs of opposites, expansive like the sky, reachable through the sentences like 'Thou art That', the Bliss of Brahman, the giver of supreme happiness, the mass of absolute wisdom.

Prostrations to that Sri-Guru, who is consciousness, eternal, peaceful, beyond ether, spotless and beyond the primal sound, basis and ray of creation.

Guru is Brahma, Guru is Vishnu, Guru is Siva. Guru is the Supreme Brahman Itself. Prostrations to that Guru.

The form of the Guru is the root of meditation. The feet of the Guru are the root of worship. The teaching of the Guru is the root of all Mantras. The Grace of the Guru is the root of Salvation.

Prostrations to the Guru, Sivananda, the essence of Satchidananda, worldless, peaceful, supportless and effulgent.

Again before telling you who this Venkatesananda is, I would ask you to

consider a very important significance of today's celebration: it is the Ayudha Puja [worship of instruments] of Gurudev's Mission. You might interpret it as you like, but I mean by it the day that comes after the worship of the Nava-Shaktis [nine aspects of Shakti – divine energies]. We have celebrated the Jayantis of the Nava-Shaktis of the Divine Life Mission – Paramanandaji, Chidanandaji, Narayananandaji, Krishnanandaji, Saradanandaji, Satyanandaji, Poornabodhendraji, Govindanandaji, and Satchidanandaji. And we have celebrated the birthday of Vijayalakshmi to represent Vijaya-Dashami].

The statue before you is an instrument which has been produced by the magic of Sri Gurudev! You remember that Swami Chidanandaji Maharaj characterised Sri Gurudev as a sculptor who could shape beautiful monuments (like Chidanandaji) that would forever stand as soul-awakening inspiration. This statue before you reminds you of another important aspect of Gurudev. It shows you that he is a magician. This Venkatesananda is nothing but this Magician's Mango. You now realise the difference too. The statue is made out of solid stuff by the sculptor; the mango is produced out of the thin air, it dangles in front of you in all its tempting colours and curves and then vanishes. More of it in a few minutes.

I shall for a brief while take you off the topic of the moment to listen to my answer to a sincere devotee of Gurudev who questioned me yesterday about Gurudev and myself. I do not know if there is a Hindi or English equivalent to this marvellous expression in Tamil. Paraphrased it means: "Saving a soul by voluntarily going out and obstructing its evil ways and preventing it from getting lost!" This seems to be illogical. It escapes our severe reasoning about deserving and desiring, seeking and finding. Since the expression is current in the South, you might feel that the South Indian Gods have their own ways and are partial to some. No! There is one Upanishadic Mantra which justifies such a seemingly partial behaviour on the part of the Gods and the saints. And that is; *Yamevaisha vrinute tena labhyah*, (not by learning, not by Sravana, Manana and Nididhyasana, but by him on whom the Divine Grace descends has obtained Atmajnana). There can be only one reason why Gurudev should have chosen this most unworthy child to shower His grace, and that is to show to the world that Grace, like Love, has no eyes and is blind; or perhaps to put it a little more conventionally, Grace is beyond reason and logic. While Divine Grace might follow the routine course of descending on those who deserve it, it might at times choose to descend on the undeserving, if only to show that it is omnipotent and is bound by no laws. Sri Gurudev's Grace has demonstrated to you that even I could be here and even into me a little bit of that Grace could be poured.

Not only that I do not deserve it; but I have not even sincerely desired it! And yet, when I look back on the years gone by, I clearly see Gurudev's mighty

divine hands 'obstructing and saving' me in a thousand ways, positively guiding me in a thousand ways, almost from my childhood. In how many forms has he come to teach me; through how many events has His Divine Will worked to 'obstruct and save'! I shall only lay before you a few of them.

The first Upadesha of Gurudev was transmitted to me very early in life by my mother, who for this purpose, was none but Gurudev Himself, for you will at once see that this is today the greatest Upadesha of Sri Gurudev. It was told to me in the form of a short story. It is this:

Once Lord Vishnu was reclining on his serpent couch with Mother Lakshmi at His Feet. Suddenly He got up and ran out of sight. In a minute, He returned to His bed. Lakshmi asked Him, "Lord, why did You run out like that? And why have You returned so soon, if You had a purpose to fulfil?" Lord Vishnu smiled and replied: "Devi, I went out on a purpose no doubt. A Bhakta of mine was walking alongside the bank of a lake. A washerman had spread clothes on the ground to dry. The Bhakta trod over them. The washerman got angry and ran towards the Bhakta to beat him. I thought it was my duty to protect the helpless devotee. So I got up and ran. When the Bhakta saw the washerman coming to beat him, he too took up a stick and began to fight. Since he felt strong enough to deal with the washerman himself, I thought I need not go and so I returned." The moral of the story is clear. Bear insult; bear injury — this is the condition prerequisite to receiving His Help. What Sri Gurudev told me through my mother and in the form of this story, years ago, he repeated soon after I joined the Ashram, as though to confirm that it was he and not my mother or anyone else who taught the lesson.

The second Upadesha came through my school teacher, Sri T.B. Ratnachalam Iyer. This time it was in the form of an experience as also a story with its moral. We used to have what was known as 'Library class' in those days. We were given books to read. I used to complete one book every week without fail. One week I had not been able to complete the book. Sri T.B.R. fined me, and only me, though there were a number of others who had not read their books and were habitually lax in study. I wept. Taking pity on me, the teacher told me a story to justify his conduct.

A beggar lived on alms collected in a particular village. In that village, there was a heartless woman who habitually scolded him and refused to give alms. And there was pious woman who regularly gave him alms. One day it so happened that, when the beggar called, the pious woman was busy with household work and failed to turn up. The beggar got angry! He shouted, "That noble woman who never gives me alms has refused today also — no wonder! But you, wretched woman, who used to give me alms every day, why have you refused today?" The teacher explained the moral. When a good man sins, the loss

is greater than when a wicked man does so. Therefore, saints and wise men always chastised the pious men and prevented them from slipping back into evil ways; and they often seem to be oblivious of the wickedness of confirmed men of evil. This principle I have seen illustrated in the everyday actions of Sri Gurudev. It was he who taught me the lesson through my school teacher.

The third Upadesha came through my step-mother. That was in the form of a practical demonstration of another object-lesson. Far from being hateful as the proverbial step-mothers are expected to be, she was over-kind towards me. Even if I was in the wrong, she would not utter a single unpleasant word. Later, when I specifically asked her, she explained: "If I scold my own son, he may take it in the proper light and not feel it so much. If I scold you, on the other hand, you might be hurt. Therefore, in order not even to give you the least cause to be hurt, I did not mind whatever you did." Here again, were words which Sri Gurudev has been repeating day in and day out. Never hurt others' feelings. We have Sri Gurudev's own glorious example. If there is the least chance that what you say might offend someone, better don't say it. Who but Sri Gurudev Himself, could have given me this great Upadesha?

The fourth Upadesha came through a god-mother whom I met here itself – Sri Leela Deviji. It was in the form of a laconic question: "What for have you come here?" She used to ask this question playfully. But when, sometime later, Sri Gurudev himself repeated the question, not only to me but to others also at the Ashram, and at hundreds of meetings throughout the All-India Tour, I realised that it had a spiritual significance. It was a question that inspired and awakened us from slumber. Here again the Upadesha was Sri Gurudev's, but was conveyed through one of the many forms he had assumed in order to 'obstruct and save' me.

You will readily see that all these are important teachings of Sri Gurudev. And you will also see that they have been so nicely graded that one follows the other.

When the time was ripe, he made me read his writings; that was way back in 1936. I wrote to him and even got permission to renounce the world and join the Ashram. But it was not to be. The instrument had to be put through some more grinding processes. So varied were the experiences: so often had the baby-soul reached the precipice too dangerously close. But the Choti was ever in Gurudev's hands. The Choti which he caught hold of in 1937, he cut in 1945.

These intervening years had revealed to me so many latent vicious Samskaras that I could hardly believe myself that one morning I was prostrating at Sri Gurudev's holy feet, to remain near him for a considerable time. People very often quote the example of Rogue Ratnakar and Jagai Madhai. They were exceptions. But as a rule such a revolution does not take place in man's inner nature.

You may quote Gita's famous verse: '*Api chet suduracharo bhajate mam ananyabhak'* – Even if the worst sinner worships Me with devotion to none else... I have great faith in the Gita and am fond of it. Therefore, do not take it amiss, if I translate that half of the Sloka into: 'If your aunt grows a moustache, you can call her uncle' (Bhagavad Gita IX/30). The student of the Yoga Vasistha might assert that anything can be achieved by Purushartha. A Bhakta might say that Rama-Nama will instantly purify the Antahkarana. But a wicked man who has sincerely tried to remove one little evil trait in himself knows what it really is.

Even in the case of Valmiki, Jagai-Madhai and Mary Magdalene, I would ask you to remember that it was not so much their will-power or determination that transformed them, as the grace of saints and sages. The grace of saints and sages, I humbly admit and assert, can work wonders. It is the magic of that Grace alone that has created this mango of Venkatesananda.

I am sure now that in no other institution in the world would they have permitted me to live for more than a few days – or till such time as I begin to manifest some of the natural evil tendencies. With Gurudev, the compassion is limitless. Lord Sri Krishna assured Moksha even to women, Vaishyas and Shudras. And here is His re-incarnation who has come to offer Moksha to sinners straightaway, without even waiting to reform them very much. Into their ears he pours the Lord's Name; into their hearts he pours his own divine love. Wonder of wonders still, through their hands he serves the world! What more cunning method can you think of?

Thus does Gurudev effect a surreptitious but rapid transformation. He tolerates everyone; he loves the most wicked man perhaps more than he loves the saintly. At the same time, he makes everyone do the Divine Will. This constant flow of Divine thoughts through their being converts them. Here it is not their willpower that works, but the will of Gurudev. Therefore, it is possible that even a wicked man may be transformed. That is Venkatesananda, the effigy standing before you.

Let us take a closer look at the effigy. (The pumpkin head is removed and the basket representing the trunk is also lifted; what remains is a typewriter with Sri Swami Sivananda's statue on it.) Now you have understood the secret. Why has Sri Gurudev showered His 'obstructing and protecting' Grace upon Venkatesananda? Because Venkatesananda is a typewriter – a typist! Venkatesananda is, at best, inert substance. Whatever good is there is nothing but the Divine Will of Sri Gurudev. I crave for your blessings to let this magical product of Sri Gurudev sing his Glories so long as it is allowed to dangle before you all. Glory to the Magician! Glory to Gurudev, the Almighty Lord, the maker of our being, the moulder of our destinies!!

TRIBUTES TO SWAMI VENKATESANANDA AND SWAMI VISHNUDEVANANDA

Chronicler: Swami Gurusharanananda

1st January, 1957

Today the Ashram celebrated the birthdays of Swami Venkatesananda and Swami Vishnudevananda. At the night Satsang, paying his compliments to these two great disciples, Swamiji said, "Today is the birthday of Swami Venkatesananda and Swami Vishnudevananda. Swami Venkatesananda is my right hand, my left hand, my brain and my heart. He is a genius. Whether you recognise him as a genius or not, I recognise him as a genius. He is the author of Integral Yoga and some other books. He is the editor of the Yoga-Vedanta Forest University Weekly. The whole work of this Ashram is practically done by him. He runs the Ashram. He runs the Press. So, he is my right hand, my left hand, my brain and my heart.

Swami Vishnudevananda is an expert in Hatha-Yoga. He is Adviteeya Purusha in Hatha-Yoga. He has taught it to many Europeans. He has done a tour throughout India and delivered lectures on Hatha-Yoga. These lectures have come in a book form entitled "Lectures by Vishnudevananda". He is a first-class engineer. When Ranganathananda was unable to cope up with the work, he worked as the Ashram engineer. He manages the kitchen efficiently. He controls the kitchen. He controls the masons and coolies. I do not know what magic he has got. Perhaps he scolds, I think. This building (eye-block) is built by him. Parvati Kutir is built by him. Sivananda Mandir is constructed by

him. He has built a storey over the Sadhana Kutir. When we were desperate for want of money, he managed to construct these buildings. He has got the knack of extracting work. When the sculptors and masons ask for money, he says, "Come tomorrow"! Without money, he has built the Parvati Kutir costing twenty thousand rupees. He has been invited by French people. His Asanas have come in a nice book. He will go on a tour to Indonesia, Ceylon, Malaya, France, Germany, America. He will make a stir. He is a good teacher of Hatha-Yoga. There is no one to equal him. He knows all Kriyas. He has taught thousands of people. All people love him. The Benares Hindu University students love him very much. He has no selfishness, no anger. Sometimes he threatens the kitchen people. They are afraid of him. The masons are afraid of him. He is a nice man. We wish him perfect success in his tour. It will be a world-tour. He will be touring the whole world, Europe, America. In America, he has got his disciples, Radha and Sushila. He has got more disciples than I have got! I am proud of it.

May Lord bless Swami Venkatesananda and Swami Vishnudevananda with health, long life, peace, bliss, prosperity and immortality."

Swamiji also raised the slogan: "Long live: Swami Venkatesananda and Swami Vishnudevananda" three times, and in the end the slogan, as usual, "Long live: the whole world at large."

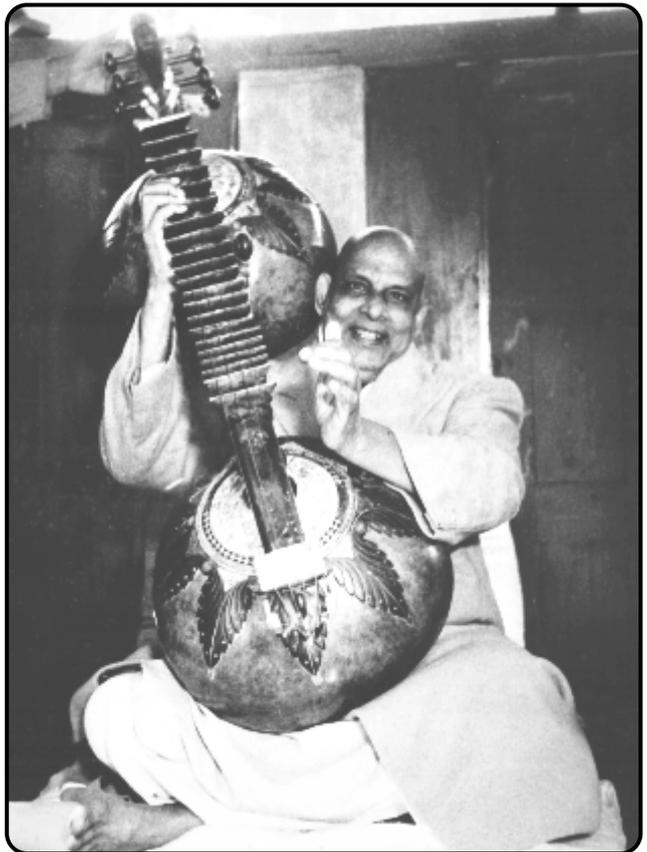
CHILDREN'S WORLD

STUDENTS' SUCCESS IN LIFE

**My dear students!
The hope and glory of India!**

You are the future hope of the motherland. You are the citizens of tomorrow. You should always think over the goal of life and live to attain the goal. The goal of life is the attainment of freedom from all sorts of miseries—the state of Kaivalya or liberation from the cycle of births and deaths.

Open your eyes now. Do not be proud. Develop faith in God and in the power of the Mantras. Study books on Japa. Study the Ramayana, the Bhagavata, the Mahabharata and the Gita. Take Sattvic food. Do not overload the stomach. Follow the twenty spiritual instructions. Keep a keen interest in spiritual matters. Acquire full knowledge of spiritual life. When you grow up, develop into practical



Bhaktas and Yogins and spread spiritual knowledge and light throughout the land.

May you all become filled with divine knowledge! May you all become glorious and enlightened saints and Karma Yogins, rejoicing in the service of humanity! May the Lord bestow success on you in your lifework!

—Swami Sivananda

CULTIVATION OF VIRTUES

CONSIDERATION

Consideration is indeed a beautiful virtue. A man of consideration always attains success in all undertakings.

In consideration, you consider the matter well before deciding. You think about it, closely reflect upon it, you ponder over it, you give close attention to it, you cogitate, you study, you weigh it, you observe closely and carefully.

Consideration is the soil in which wisdom grows. Therefore, cultivate this virtue, consideration, to a maximum degree.

Act with consideration. Weigh your words before you utter them. Consider well every step you take.

Do not plunge suddenly into action. Consider the consequences well and then act. Then alone will you not repent, you will not feel sorry.

A thoughtless man who has not controlled his organs of speech speaks at random without any consideration and weeps for his foolishness in the end. He is put to shame and disgrace. Therefore, be considerate at all times, on all occasions.

—Swami Sivananda



ERADICATION OF VICES

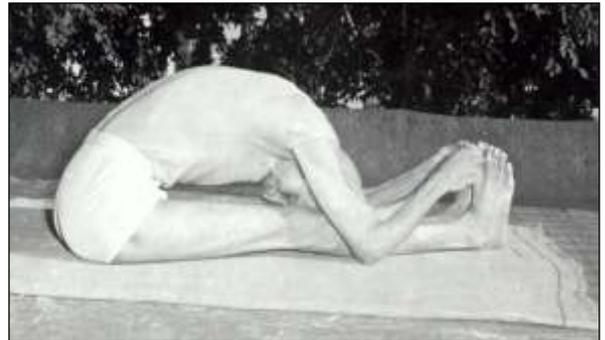
BRIBERY

The habit of taking bribes is very common. If you take bribe, you will be punished for this wrong action and the Samskara of taking bribes will force you to take bribes even in the next birth. You will be a dishonest man even in the next birth. Your thoughts and actions are registered in the subconscious mind. You carry your dishonesty from birth to birth and undergo enormous sufferings. Reduce your wants and live honestly within your means. You will have a clean conscience. You will be ever free from anxieties and worries. You will have a peaceful death. I suppose you now understand the gravity of the law. Become an honest man and be true from this very second you read these lines.

—Swami Sivananda

PASHCHIMOTTANASANA

Technique: Sit on a folded blanket with both the legs stretched and place the two hands on the knees. Slowly exhale, bend forward and catch hold of the big toes without lifting the knees. Bend your head down to touch the knees. Rest the elbows on the ground. Retain the posture for a



few seconds. Gradually increase the duration of the time. Release the toes, and slowly return to the sitting position with inhalation. Take in a few slow deep breaths and exhale slowly. Repeat the posture two to three times. You can also do slow deep breathing while remaining in the posture.



When you gain mastery, you can comfortably stay for three to five minutes in the posture with normal breathing. While remaining in the posture, concentration should be on the spine and back muscles.

Benefits: Stiff back and all sorts of cramp in the back muscles, and other diseases of the back are cured. The elasticity of the spine is increased. The hamstring muscles behind the knees are strengthened. It removes sluggishness and tones up the kidneys and abdominal organs. It also rejuvenates the spine and promotes better digestion.

Note: In the case of many, perfection in this Asana can be achieved only by regular practice for a number of days. Care should be taken not to cause too much of strain to the hip region.

—Swami Chidananda

BHASTRIKA PRANAYAMA

(Rapid movement like that of the bellows)

Technique: Sit in any of the postures. Rapid and deep expulsion and intake of breath through the nostrils should follow one another in quick succession. With each expulsion and inhalation of breath, contraction and expansion of abdomen should be there. Start with six, eight or ten expulsions of breath for one round, according to your capacity. The final expulsion in each round should follow with deep inhalation and retention of breath as long as you feel comfortable. Rest a while after one round of Bhastrika. Care should be taken that unnecessary pressure is not given on the lungs. Beginners may start with two or three rounds, each round consisting of six to ten expulsions, one expulsion per second. Gradually increase the number of the exhalation and inhalation to 20-30 per round, keeping the number of rounds to 2 or 3.

Benefits: Bhastrika relieves inflammation of the throat, increases the gastric fire, destroys accumulation of phlegm, removes the diseases of the nose and chest and eradicates asthma, constipation, excess of wind and bile. It gives warmth to the body. The practitioner will keep good health.

—Swami Chidananda



Celebration of the Seventy Seventh Anniversary of Mahamantra Sankirtan Yajna



अज्ञानादथवा ज्ञानादुत्तमश्लोकनाम यत्।
सङ्कीर्तितमघं पुंसो दहेदेषो यथानलः ॥

“As fire burns up a heap of dry grass to ashes, the holy name of the Lord, chanted whether with knowledge of its greatness or without it, destroys the sins of man.”

Srimad Bhagavata 6.2.18

The Mahamantra Sankirtan Yajna commenced by Sadgurudev Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj on 3rd December 1943, is being continuously carried on for world peace in the Bhajan Hall for the last seventy seven years. The blessed day of the Seventy Seventh Anniversary of this sacred Yajna was celebrated with great devotion at the Headquarters Ashram on 3rd December 2020.

As a prelude to the Celebration, the collective chanting of the Mahamantra was done daily for three hours from 27th November to 2nd

December 2020. On the auspicious day of 3rd December, a special programme was organised from 3.00 p.m. to 5.p.m. wherein Sannyasis and Brahmacharis of the Ashram, carrying the beautiful portraits of Lord Sri Rama, Lord Sri Krishna and Sri Gurudev and joyously singing the Mahamantra in mellifluous tunes, first went to Sri Samadhi Mandir and Sri Vishwanath Mandir, and then circumambulated the sacred Bhajan Hall. It was followed by the Archana of Lord Sri Rama and Lord Sri Krishna to the chants of Ashtottarashata-Namavali and ecstatic singing of Divine Mahamantra. The programme concluded with the inspiring messages of H.H. Sri Swami Yogaswarupanandaji Maharaj and H.H. Sri Swami Nirliptanandaji Maharaj, Arati and distribution of Prasad.

May the abundant grace of Lord Sri Rama, Lord Sri Krishna and Sadgurudev be upon all.

Akhanda means 'continuous' or 'without break'. Kirtan means singing the Lord's Name. Akhanda Kirtan is the continuous singing of Lord's Name. Akhanda Kirtan is a very effective spiritual Sadhana. There is eradication of all evil Vrittis during this period. The mind can be easily controlled by Akhanda Kirtan. The wandering habit of the mind towards sensual objects can be easily checked by Akhanda Kirtan. By the practice of Akhanda Kirtan, the mind has neither time nor opportunity to think of sensual objects. Akhanda Kirtan is a potent and easy means to capture the mind. The mind is filled with Sattva. There is supreme peace and joy in Akhanda Kirtan.

Akhanda Kirtan brings communion or Samadhi quickly. It purifies the heart quickly. It produces high purity of mind and other incalculable benefits.

— Swami Sivananda

Sri Gita Jayanti Celebration at the Headquarters Ashram



“Even if you live in the spirit of one verse of the Gita, all your miseries will come to an end and you will attain the goal of life – Immortality and Eternal Peace.”

Sadgurudev Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj

The auspicious day of Sri Gita Jayanti was celebrated with great sanctity on 25th December 2020 at the Headquarters Ashram. In the forenoon, a special Satsanga was organised at the holy Samadhi Shrine wherein all the eighteen chapters of the sacred Scripture were devoutly recited by the Sannyasis, Brahmacharis and Sadhakas of the Ashram. It was followed by floral Archana to Lord Krishna to the chant of Ashtottarshatanamavali, Arati and distribution of Prasad.

May Lord Sri Krishna and Sadgurudev bless all to strive sincerely to live in the spirit of the glorious scripture i.e. Srimad Bhagavad Gita.

Sri Dattatreya Jayanti Celebration at the Headquarters Ashram



The Purnima (full moon day) of the Margashirsha month is the sacred day of the advent of the Divine Trinity i.e. Lord Dattatreya on this earth plane. This auspicious day was celebrated with great devotion on 29th December 2020 at the Headquarters Ashram. As per yesteryears, a special Satsanga was organised from 9 a.m. to 11.00 a.m. at Dattatreya hillock wherein grand worship, with Abhisheka and Archana to the Vedic chants, was offered to the beautiful idol of Lord Dattatreya enshrined in the Dattatreya Temple. Bhajans and Kirtans glorifying the Avadhut Guru were also offered at His sacred feet. The Satsanga concluded with Arati and distribution of the Prasad.

May the divine grace of Lord Dattatreya and Sadgurudev be upon all.

77th Pratishtha Mahotsava of Sri Vishwanatha Mandir

The blessed day of the 77th anniversary of the Pratishtha (consecration) of Sri Vishwanatha Mandir was celebrated with great devoutness and deep reverence at the Headquarters ashram on 31st December 2020.

Preceding the celebration, the inmates of the Ashram chanted the sacred Panchakshari Mantra in Sri Vishwanatha Mandir for two hours in the afternoon from 27th to 30th December 2020. On the auspicious day of 31st December, a grand worship with



Abhisheka, Alankara and Archana was offered to Lord Sri Vishwanatha enshrined in the *sanctum-sanctorum* with the sonorous chanting of Vedic Mantras and soulful singing of Bhajans and Kirtans. All the inmates of the Ashram joyously participated in the worship and in the devotional singing. The celebration concluded with the Mangalarati and distribution of sacred Prasad.

During the night Satsanga, it being New Year Eve, H.H. Sri Swami Yogaswarupanandaji Maharaj extended his heartiest wishes and also invoked the grace of Sadgurudev Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj upon all. To mark the occasion, two booklets of Pujya Sri Swami Krishnanandaji Maharaj's Birth Centenary series 'What is a New Year' and 'A Slow and Steady Religious Awakening' were released.



The year 2020-21 being the Birth Centenary Year of Pujya Sri Swami Venkatesanandaji Maharaj, one of his inspirational chronicles 'Inspiring Talks of Gurudev Sivananda' was also released in two volumes. Apart

from these, one booklet of Worshipful Sri Swami Chidanandaji Maharaj and five books of Sri Gurudev got released too commemorating the sacred day.



May the abundant blessings of Lord Sri Vishwanatha and Sadgurudev shower upon all.

SEVA THROUGH SIVANANDA HOME

'Sivananda Home is a Centre for the loving care of the destitute and the dying people who are found by the roadside, with no one to care for: the people who are home-less, temporary or permanent, fell sick, got lost or were abandoned'.

(Swami Chidananda)

This month two new patients were admitted in the Home, two males seventy plus. Both homeless, having their permanent residence under the huge open sky. One of them was brought from the side of the Ganga, from opposite the Post Office Muni-ki-Reti. A plastic sheet was his only protection against the icy blowing winds and he was found shivering night after night. One of his fellow ghat-sleepers brought him, since he was no longer able to look after him, as he said. The patient, simple-minded, straight away told that he had never learnt to read and write. After investigations, days of complete separation in a make-shift arrangement within the Home, a negative COVID-19 report followed. His typhoid test came out positive though, and he was treated accordingly. Contented and satisfied with whatever was offered to him, he sighed: at last “shanti mil gaya”, got Peace after years of hardships and suffering.

The other new patient, referred by a local detox clinic, is a patient with a long history of psychiatric illness, for which he had been treated on and off. Hailing from a very well-to-do family in the area, he was removed from his own house, stayed on the roads here and there for years together, became addicted to alcohol and other things, till all his meagre possessions were stolen from him. He landed up in Triveni Ghat, amidst a group of outside-stayers so to say. But he could no longer tolerate the extreme cold, and with nothing left except a small bag with the prescription drugs, he went in search for a place where he could spend the cold winter months. His COVID-19 test was negative too, and though in segregation, he was admitted in the Home, with observance of the needful general requirements at present.

Two people with each having their own life-history, both from our own area, one illiterate, the other highly educated and speaking fluent English, but both

ended up at the bottom, at one's wit's end, with nowhere else to turn to, no other means left out, than to surrender oneself at the Feet of Gurudev, with the immense longing for warmth and security, for a safe haven to be welcomed, to be able to leave behind all worries and pain, and to just take shelter under His protecting wings, with nothing else than a humble "Om Namō Bhagavate Sivanandaya. At Thy Holy Feet I prostrate myself, please accept Thy barren child".

"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."

—**Swami Sivananda**

Announcement

To commemorate the sacred occasion of Birth Centenary of Worshipful Sri Swami Krishnanandaji Maharaj, the Divine Life Society Branches of Odisha have decided to perform a Likhit Mantra Maha Purashcharana (14 Crores) of the Mantra 'Om Namō Bhagavate Sivanandaya' from 22nd November 2020 to 31st January 2022 as their Bhakti Pushpanjali at Pujya Swamiji Maharaj's holy feet. It will also serve as an effective silent Sadhana during the troubled times of Covid-19 pandemic.

The devotees and members of the Divine Life Society Branches of Odisha may participate in this sacred Yajna in large number as their noble Seva to Sri Gurudev's Mission and their personal Sadhana as well to make this Yajna a grand success.

For further information, please contact:

Shri Akshaya Kumar Dash

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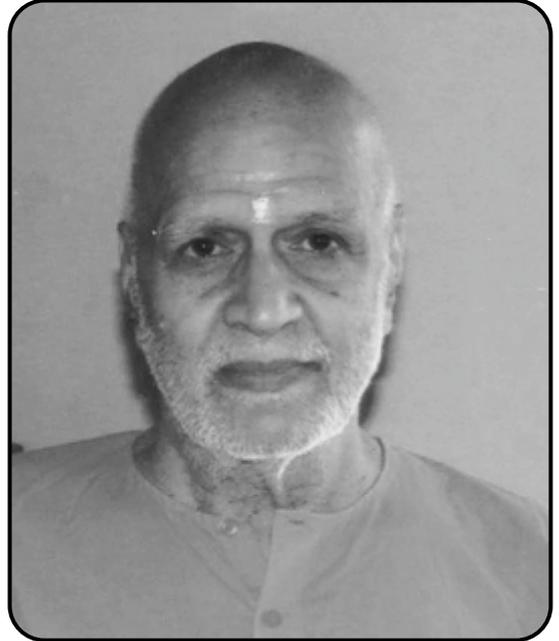
Shri Adwait Chandra Biswal

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In Memoriam

With great sorrow, we report that Sri Swami Gurukripananda Saraswati, one of the senior-most monks of the Ashram, left his mortal coil on 12th December 2020.

Sri Swami Gurukripananda, known as Sri G. K. Krishnan in his pre-monastic life, was born on 24th February 1927 at Gangaikondan village, near Pattamadai, the birthplace of Sadgurudev Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj. After completing his formal education, Krishnanji joined an Insurance Company in Kolkata, where he got acquainted with the close devotees of Sri Gurudev. Being greatly inspired by Sri Gurudev's noble teachings, he started visiting the holy Ashram of Gurudev in Rishikesh frequently.



After retirement in 1984, Krishnanji settled down in the Ashram and served Sri Gurudev's mission, assisting Sri Swami Krishnanandaji Maharaj, General Secretary in the accounts-related works. He was initiated into the holy order of Sannyasa in 1984 on the sacred occasion of Sri Guru Purnima and was given the name Swami Gurukripananda Saraswati. Sri Swamiji remained very lively, energetic and cheerful until his last days and left his body very peacefully at 4.00 a.m. on 12th December 2020 at the advanced age of 93 years.

May his soul rest at the sacred feet of the Lord and Worshipful Gurudev Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj.

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Donations towards the Divine Life Society may be made through cheque/D.D. /E.M.O. drawn in favour of '**The Divine Life Society**', **Shivanandanagar, Uttarakhand**, payable at Rishikesh. A covering letter mentioning the purpose of donation, Post Mail Address, Phone No., Email Id and PAN should accompany the same.

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REPORTS FROM THE D.L.S. BRANCHES

INLAND BRANCHES

Bargarh (Odisha): The Branch continued daily Arati, Rudrabhishek on Mondays and Guru Paduka Puja on Thursdays.

Bhanjanagar (Odisha): The Branch carried on daily Paduka Puja and weekly Satsang on Sundays, and Ekadasis were observed with Bhajan, Kirtan, recitation of Vishnu Sahasranam and Bhagavad Gita. There was Sundarakanda Parayan and recitation of Hanuman Chalisa on Sankranti day. The Branch Prathista day was celebrated on 19th October with Paduka Puja.

Bhubaneswar (Odisha): During the Covid pandemic, the Branch continued daily Paduka Puja and online Satsangs on Thursdays and Sundays. On 22nd November, Punyatithi Aradhana day of H.H. Sri Swami Krishnanandaji Maharaj was observed with Prayers, Paduka Puja, Gita Path and Havan.

Chandapur (Odisha): The Branch had weekly Satsang on Saturdays, Guru Paduka Puja on Thursdays and Sundarakanda Parayan on Sankranti day. Mobile Satsangs were held on 1st and 2nd November. There was recitation of Hanuman Chalisa on 7th and 28th. Besides this, Ramcharit Manas Parayan and Mahamantra Kirtan were conducted from 22nd to 30th. It was concluded with Paduka Puja, Bhajan and Kirtan.

Chatrapur (Odisha): In the month of October, the Branch continued daily Puja and weekly Satsang on Thursdays. Monthly Jayanti ceremonies were held on 8th and 24th of every month with Paduka Puja.

Lucknow (U.P.): During the Covid-19 Lockdown, the Branch had daily Chanting of Mahamrityunjaya Mantra, and special Satsang was conducted at Lekhraj Homes on 1st November.

N a n d i n i n a g a r (Chattisgarh): The Branch conducted daily morning prayers and evening Satsang with Parayan of Vishnusahasranam and chanting of Hanuman Chalisa. The Branch foundation day was celebrated on 23rd November.

Puri (Odisha): Daily Satsang, Paduka Puja on 8th and 24th of every month were the regular programmes of the Branch. Besides this, recitation of Vishnu Sahasranam and Gita Path was done on Amavasya day, and chanting of Hanuman Chalisa was on Sankranti day.

Steel Township - Rourkela (Odisha): In the month of November, free Yoga and Music classes on Mondays, Guru Paduka Puja on Thursdays, Swadhyaya on Saturdays and weekly Satsang on Sundays were continued regularly. Devi Navaratri Puja was conducted from 17th to 25th with Paduka Puja, Study of Durga Saptasati and Archana.

Visakha Rural Branch (A.P.): The Branch had daily Puja and Abhishekam on Mondays. Special Satsangs were held on 4th October and 1st November, with Bhajans and talks on Bhagavad Gita, Patanjali Yoga Sutras, Dhyana and Japa. It was concluded with Narayana Seva. Devi Navaratri was celebrated from 17th to 25th October with Archana. Special Rudrabhishekam was conducted on Mondays during Kartika month.

Visakhapatnam (A.P.): During Kartika month, the Branch conducted Ekavara Rudrabhishekam on Mondays and Mahanyasaka Rudrabhishekam on Ekadasi day, and free Yoga classes, Anjaneya Abhishekam on Tuesdays and Abhishekam for Durga Devi on Fridays were continued. Besides this, Mahamrityunjaya Havan on Trayodasis and Satyanarayana Swami Puja on full moon days were done regularly.

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By H.H. Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj

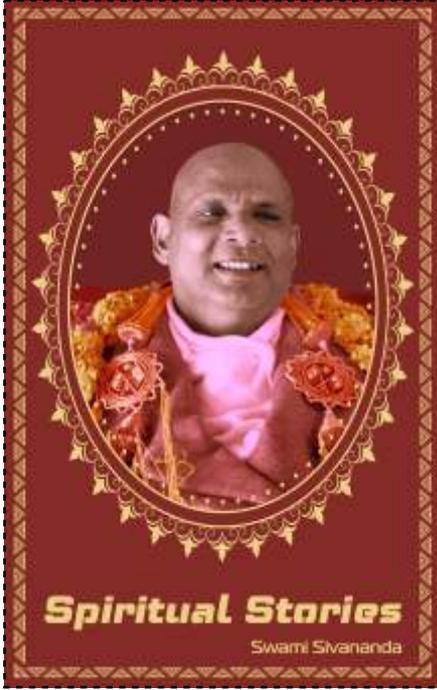
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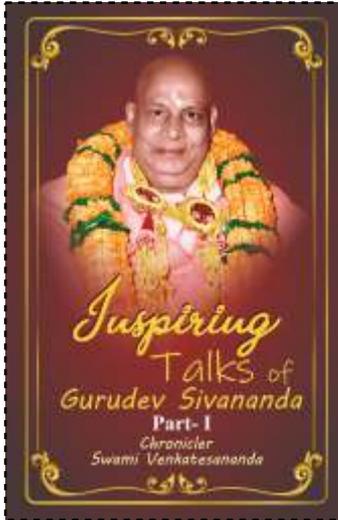


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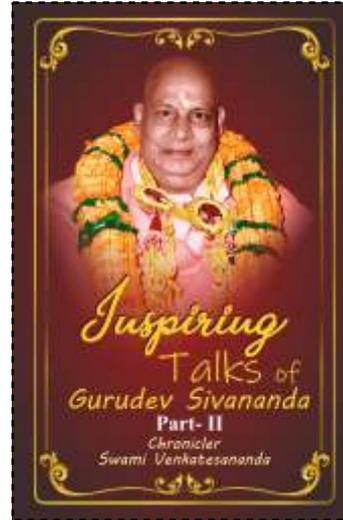


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TWENTY IMPORTANT SPIRITUAL INSTRUCTIONS

By H.H. Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj

- 1. BRAHMA-MUHURTA:** Get up at 4 a.m. daily. This is Brahmamuhurta which is extremely favourable for meditation on God.
- 2. ASANA:** Sit on Padma, Siddha or Sukha Asana for Japa and meditation for half an hour, facing the east or the north. Increase the period gradually to three hours. Do Sirshasana and Sarvangasana for keeping up Brahmacharya and health. Take light physical exercises as walking, etc., regularly. Do twenty Pranayamas.
- 3. JAPA:** Repeat any Mantra as pure Om or Om Namō Narayanaya, Om Namah Sivaya, Om Namō Bhagavate Vasudevaya, Om Saravanabhavaya Namah, Sita Ram, Sri Ram, Hari Om, or Gayatri, according to your taste or inclination, from 108 to 21,600 times daily.
- 4. DIETETIC DISCIPLINE:** Take Sattvic food, Suddha Ahara. 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 in a year. Eat simple food. Milk and fruits help concentration. Take food as medicine to keep the life going. Eating for enjoyment is sin. Give up salt and sugar for a month. You must be able to live on rice, Dhal and bread without any Chutni. Do not ask for extra salt for Dhal and sugar for tea, coffee or milk.
- 5. MEDITATION-ROOM:** Have a separate meditation-room under lock and key.
- 6. CHARITY:** Do charity regularly, every month, or even daily according to your means, say six Paisa per rupee.
- 7. SVADHYAYA:** Study systematically the Gita, the Ramayana, the Bhagavata, Sri Vishnu-Sahasranama, Lalita-Sahasranama, Aditya Hridaya, the Upanishads or the Yoga Vasishtha, the Bible, the Zend Avesta, the Koran, the Tripitakas, the Granth Sahib, etc., from half an hour to one hour daily and have Suddha Vichara.
- 8. BRAHMACHARYA:** Preserve the vital force (Veerya) 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.
- 9. PRAYER SLOKAS:** Get by heart some prayer Slokas, Stotras and repeat them as soon as you sit in the Asana before starting Japa or meditation. This will elevate the mind quickly.
- 10. SATSANGA:** Have Satsanga. Give up bad company, smoking, meat and alcoholic liquors entirely. Do not develop any evil habits.
- 11. FAST ON EKADASI:** Fast on Ekadasi or live on milk and fruits only.
- 12. JAPA MALA:** Have a Japa Mala (rosary) round your neck or in your pocket or underneath your pillow at night.
- 13. MOUNA:** Observe Mouna (vow of silence) for a couple of hours daily.
- 14. SPEAK THE TRUTH:** Speak the truth at all cost. Speak a little. Speak sweetly.
- 15. PLAIN LIVING:** Reduce your wants. If you have four shirts, reduce the number to three or two. Lead a happy, contented life. Avoid unnecessary worry. Have plain living and high thinking.
- 16. NEVER HURT ANYBODY:** Never hurt anybody (Ahimsa Paramo Dharmah). Control anger by love, Kshama (forgiveness) and Daya (compassion).
- 17. DO NOT DEPEND UPON SERVANTS:** Do not depend upon servants. Self-reliance is the highest of all virtues.
- 18. SELF-ANALYSIS:** Think of the mistakes you have committed during the course of the day, just before retiring to bed (self-analysis). Keep daily diary and self-correction register. Do not brood over past mistakes.
- 19. FULFIL DUTIES:** Remember that death is awaiting you at every moment. Never fail to fulfil your duties. Have pure conduct (Sadachara).
- 20. SURRENDER TO GOD:** Think of God as soon as you wake up and just before you go to sleep. Surrender yourself completely to God (Sharanagati).

Om Santih Santih Santih!

This is the essence of all spiritual Sadhanas. This will lead you to Moksha. All these Niyamas or spiritual canons must be rigidly observed. You must not give leniency to the mind.

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APPEARANCES ARE DECEPTIVE

Let not appearances deceive you. There goes the devotee, chanting the sacred Name of Narayana. He sings in ecstasy and dances in rapture for an hour or two. He is vehement in asserting that all indeed is Narayana. Here is a great monist who would not stop repeating: 'I am God', 'I am God', 'I am God'. Profound is his learning, and mighty his swordsmanship in argument. Tarry a while, friend. Watch them under three conditions—when desperately hungry, when bitterly provoked and insulted, and when another man is pathetically distressed. Now if they fulfil their former assertions, all hail to them, veritable gods on earth are they; if they do not, keep yourself aloof from them lest you should be infected.

Swami Sivananda

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