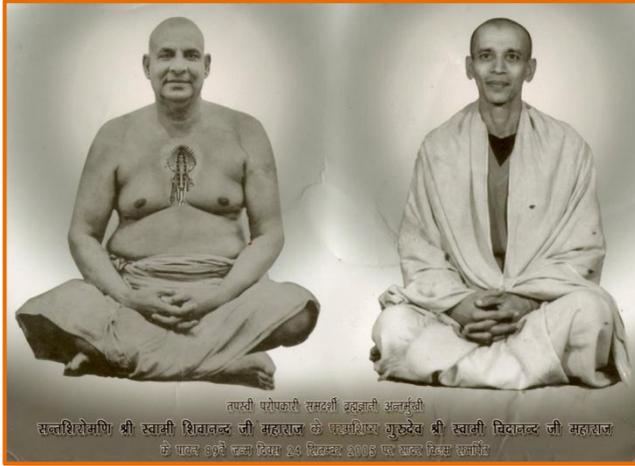


ESSENCE OF SPRITUALITY

By H.H Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj



20 IMPORTANT SPIRITUAL INSTRUCTIONS

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

1. BRAHMAMUHURTA

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

2. ASANA

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

3. JAPA

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

4. DIETETIC DISCIPLINE

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

5. MEDITATION

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

6. SVADHYAYA

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

7. ELEVATE THE MIND

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

8. BRAHMACHARYA

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

9. CHARITY

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

10. HAVE SATSANG

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

11. FAST

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

12. JAPA MALA

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

13. OBSERVE MOUNA

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

14. DISCIPLINE OF SPEECH

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

15. BE CONTENT

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

16. PRACTICE LOVE

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

17. BE SELF RELIANT

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

18. HAVE SELF-ANALYSIS

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

19. DO YOUR DUTY

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

20. REMEMBER GOD

Think of God as soon as you wake up and just before you go to sleep, and at all other times whether engaged in any work or not. Repeat His Name always. Surrender yourself completely to God (Saranagati).

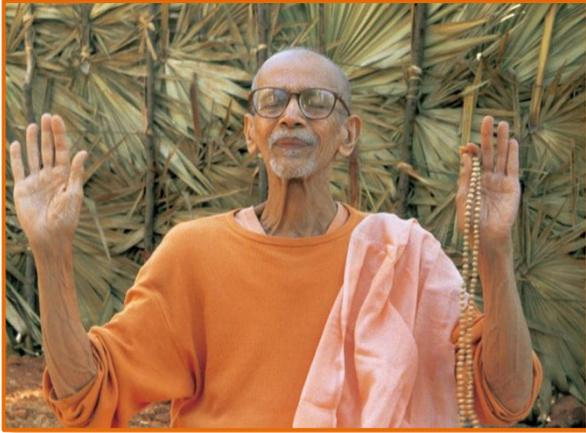
This is the essence of all spiritual Sadhana. It will lead you to liberation. All these spiritual canons must be rigidly observed. You must not give any leniency to the mind.

Within you is the immortal soul, Within you is the fountain of joy and happiness, Sour high always in realms of spiritual knowledge and realize the goal of life

-Swami Sivananda

SADHANA TATTVA

OR THE SCIENCE OF SEVEN CULTURES for Quick Evolution of the Human Being



INTRODUCTION

(a) An ounce of practice is better than tons of theory. Practice Yoga, Religion and Philosophy in daily life and attain Self-realization.

(b) These thirty-two instructions give the essence of the Eternal Religion (Sanatana Dharma) in its purest form. They are suitable for modern busy householders with fixed hours of work. Modify them to suit your convenience and increase the period gradually.

(c) In the beginning take only a few practicable resolves which form a small but definite advance over your present habits and character. In case of ill-health, pressure of work or unavoidable engagements replace your active Sadhana (spiritual practice) by frequent remembrance of God.

HEALTH CULTURE

1. Eat moderately. Take light and simple food. Offer it to God before you eat. Have a balanced diet.
2. Avoid spicy and hot foods, like chillies, garlic, onions, tamarind, etc., as far as possible. Give up tea, coffee, smoking, betels, meat and wine entirely.
3. Fast on Ekadasi days or once in a fortnight. Take milk, fruits or roots only.
4. Practice Yoga Asana (Hatha Yoga exercises) or physical exercises for 15 to 30 minutes every day. Take a long walk or play some vigorous games daily.

ENERGY CULTURE

5. Observe silence (Mouna) for 2 hours daily and 4 to 8 hours on Sundays.
6. Observe celibacy according to your age and circumstances. Restrict the indulgence to once a month. Decrease it gradually to once a year. Finally take a vow of abstinence for whole life.

ETHICAL CULTURE

7. Speak the TRUTH. Speak little. Speak kindly. Speak sweetly.
8. Do not injure anyone in thought, word or deed. Be kind to all.
9. Be sincere, straightforward and open-hearted in your talks and dealings.
10. Be honest. Earn by the sweat of your brow. Do not accept any money, things or favour unless earned lawfully. Develop nobility and integrity.
11. Control fits of anger by serenity, patience, love, mercy and tolerance. Forget and forgive. Adapt yourself to men and events.

WILL CULTURE

12. Live without sugar for a week or month. Give up salt on Sundays.
13. Give up cards, novels, cinemas and clubs. Fly from evil company. Avoid discussions with materialists. Do not mix with persons who have no faith in God or who criticize your Sadhana (spiritual practices).
14. Curtail your wants. Reduce your possessions. Have plain living and high thinking.

HEART CULTURE

15. Doing good to others is the highest religion. Do some selfless service for a few hours every week, without egoism or expectation of reward. Do your worldly duties in the same spirit. Work is worship. Dedicate it to God.
16. Give 2 to 10 percent of your income in charity every month. Share what you have with others. Let the world be your family. Remove selfishness.
17. Be humble and prostrate yourself to all beings mentally. Feel the Divine Presence everywhere. Give up vanity, pride and hypocrisy.
18. Have unwavering faith in God, the Bhagavad-Gita and your Guru. Make a total self-surrender to God and pray: "Thy Will be done; I want nothing." Submit to the Divine Will in all events and happenings with equanimity.
19. See God in all beings and love them as your own Self. Do not hate anyone.
20. Remember God at all times or, at least, on rising from bed, during a pause in work and before going to bed. Keep a Mala (rosary) in your pocket.

PSYCHIC CULTURE

21. Study one chapter or ten to twenty-five verses of the Gita or your scriptures with meaning, daily. Learn the original language of your scripture, at least sufficient to understand it in original.
22. Memorize important and inspiring portions of your sacred scripture according to your capacity. Memorize also any inspiring quotations from other spiritual books. Keep a pocket version your scripture with you at all times.
23. Read the Ramayana, the Bible, the Quran, the Bhagavata, the Upanishads, the Yogavasishtha or other religious books daily without fail. Study more during holidays.
24. Attend religious meetings and seek Satsanga (company) with saints at every opportunity. If not, create opportunities. Listen to spiritual discourses from learned and holy people. If possible, organize such functions on Sundays or holidays.
25. Visit a temple or place of worship daily. Preferably before you leave and upon your return from work, even if only for 5 or 10 minutes.
26. Spend holidays and leave-periods, when possible, in the company of saints or practice Sadhana at holy places in seclusion.

SPIRITUAL CULTURE

27. Go to bed early. Get up at four o'clock. Answer calls of nature, clean your mouth and take a bath.
28. Recite some prayers and Kirtan Dhvanis (devotional songs). Practice Pranayama (breathing exercises), Japa (repetition of the Divine Name of God) and meditation in the early morning. Sit on Padma, Siddha, or Sukha Asana throughout, without movement, by gradual practice. While you meditate, forget the outside world totally. Gradually increase the period of meditation.
29. Perform the daily prayers of your religion. Do not fail to fulfill your obligatory duties.
30. Write your favourite Mantra or Name of God in a notebook for ten to thirty minutes, daily.
31. Sing the Names of God (Kirtan) and pray for half to one hour at night with family and friends.
32. Make annual resolves on the above lines. Regularity, tenacity and fixity are essential. Record your Sadhana in a spiritual diary daily. Review it every month and correct your failures.

THE UNIVERSAL PRAYER

O Adorable Lord of Mercy and Love !

Salutations and prostrations unto Thee.

Thou art Omnipresent, Omnipotent and Omniscient.

Thou art Existence-Consciousness-Bliss Absolute.

Thou art the Indweller of all beings.

Grant us an understanding heart,

Equal vision, balanced mind,

Faith, devotion and wisdom.

Grant us inner spiritual strength

To resist temptation and to control the mind.

Free us from egoism, lust, greed, hatred, anger and jealousy.

Fill our hearts with divine virtues.

Let us behold Thee in all these names and forms.

Let us serve Thee in all these names and forms.

Let us ever remember Thee.

Let us ever sing Thy glories.

Let Thy Name be ever on our lips.

Let us abide in Thee forever and ever

-Swami Sivananda

***** OM TAT SAT *****

Love and Offerings at Thy Lotus Feet on the auspicious occasion of Most Worshipful Holy Master Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj 125th birth Anniversary celebrations and also to rejoice on the 13th Anniversary of Param Puja Gurubhagvan Sri Swami Chidanandaji Maharaj visit to Australia and Consecration of the Hindu Temple & Cultural Centre in Canberra on Holy Akshay Tritiya (18 April 1999)