

SPECIAL INSIGHTS INTO SADHANA

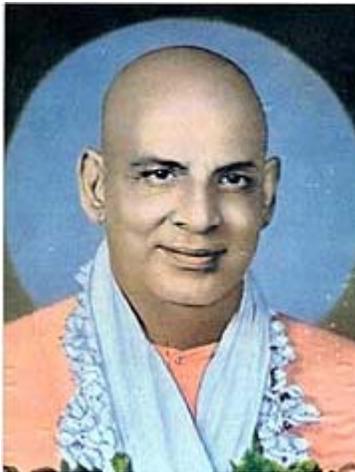
No. 7

By

SRI SWAMI CHIDANANDA

from

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
Thursday: The Day of the Guru

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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

“We have not been sent here to go around in circles. We have not been sent here to grope in darkness. We have not been sent here to wander and stumble and fall, to weep and wail. We have been sent here for overcoming and accomplishment. And until we attain that, we should not rest upon our oars.”

—*Swami Chidananda*

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A SPECIAL TWENTY DAY SADHANA

Blessed Atman! Radiant souls eagerly yearning and longing for liberation from all limitations, all imperfections and all vexing bonds that hold us down to a gross earth consciousness, which is unnatural to us, which is not our true state, which is not our real condition. You are all *mumukshus* longing for liberation, aspiring for liberating wisdom, engaged in Yoga practice and spiritual living, who are lovers of God and righteousness, devotees of the divine life and followers of Gurudev Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj.

Today is Thursday, the day of the Guru, and as a worthwhile exercise and expression of our earnestness to grow in devotion to the Guru, to show how really and truly sincere, earnest and serious we are about our devotion to the Guru, it would be worthwhile to see if we can adopt for our practice over the next twenty days one item per day of Gurudev's Twenty Important Spiritual Instructions. For, we cannot afford to print these Instructions in thousands upon thousands, in innumerable languages, giving them to the whole world, and then have the queer notion that we are exceptions to them, we need not read them, become acquainted with them in depth, nor necessarily practise them and apply them to our own life. Why should such a thought arise? Because we are close to Gurudev, we are doing his service, *seva*. Therefore, his rules do not apply to us so very seriously. He will not bother whether we are following his Twenty Instructions or not. We are doing his *seva*!

This is called *maya*. It is a practical laboratory demonstration of *maya*. This is what *maya* is: to bypass the Guru's instructions with the smug assurance that our *seva* makes us special VIPs, privileged with exemption from his instructions.

Well, if this type of notion takes root in your heart, it is only a disaster to you. It does not affect Gurudev. He does not lose, because he has nothing to lose. Long ago he gave up everything and got everything. And that which he has got is something which cannot be lost. Even otherwise, he has nothing to lose, because he voluntarily gave up everything—friends, relatives, home, property, money, fame, comfort, security, praise, renown, flattery. He gave up everything and became possessionless and desireless. He had only one desire when he came here over seventy years ago—to sit under a tree, get absorbed in God's Name and become absorbed in God.

So, if we are wise enough to follow his golden teachings, his divine admonition, his loving spiritual instructions—given with a great goodwill and a desire that we should all rise to great heights of spiritual experience and blessedness—then they will clear up all obstacles between us and God, between us and Guru's grace. We will open a wide channel through which grace rushes towards us, inundates us, fills us, and lifts us up to sublime heights.

If we do not follow his teachings we invite disaster, not for Swami Sivanandaji, not for the Divine Life Society, but first for ourselves, and then for Sivananda Ashram, which becomes a less effective centre of inspiration and spiritual help to sincere seeking souls. So there might be some minus effect to Sivananda Ashram, and a total disaster for you, but Swami Sivanandaji will not in any way be affected. For he is now in a state beyond being affected. He is established in a changeless state of total perfection, supreme blessedness, immeasurable peace and indescribable bliss. He is not in that state, but he is that state.

Swami Sivananda is pure *satchidananda*. Swami Sivananda is total bliss. This is not Chidananda saying, this is scripture saying, *sruti vakya*. Veda Bhagavan says: “*brahmavit brahmaiva bhavati*”—The knower of Brahman verily becomes Brahman Itself.” “*Anandam brahmeti vyajanat*—That Brahman is verily bliss, the experience is Bliss.” It is in that Brahmic state that he whom the world knew as Sivananda abides eternally, and, therefore, what we do with our lives is going to affect us, but it is not going to affect Swami Sivananda in his Brahmic state.

Therefore, it is wise that we make use of this life for our highest welfare. Or, if not for our highest welfare, we should at least work for our welfare for the simple reason that no one else can work for our welfare. They can assist us in working for our welfare, but there is a saying which is based upon experience and expresses universal human wisdom: “God helps those who help themselves.”

The great scripture called Yoga Vasishtha—which ran into thousands of pages to explain to us that this world is a mere appearance, a figment of imagination, a creation of the mind, there is no abiding truth in it, it is less real than dream—that scripture ends by saying *exert*, you must *exert* to attain that experience. Otherwise that experience will be far, far way, and you will be weeping and wailing, beating your breast, and knowing your head against the wall in frustration and desperation. If you take world to be a solid reality but want to rise to that higher experience—*exert*. No gains without pains. Be up and doing. Exert, exert, *purushartha*. *Purushartha* is the ultimate message, the ultimate thesis of the Yoga Vasishtha. *Purushartha* was the ultimate declaration, admonition and directive so far as you yourself are concerned.

So, Yoga Vasishtha may say that everything is a myth, everything is less real than a dream; it can say it because the one who said it knew it. But Yoga Vasishtha tells you: *exert*. No gains without pains. Have *sadvichara, satsanga*. Do *sadhana*!

Therefore, this morning’s sharing is for a little *purushartha* on your part. Exert a little. Be wise: know the difference between your own present state and experience absolute—an experience absolute from which height you can give Yoga Vasishtha to everyone. In that experience there is no hunger, there is no thirst, there is no fatigue, there is no pain, there is no elation or depression, there is no disease, there is no old age, there is no sorrow, there is no limitation. If you are in that state you are competent to teach, to declare, to presume Yoga Vasishtha—not otherwise.

I am not teaching Yoga Vasishtha, but I am declaring to you the first directive of Yoga Vasishtha: Do *sadhana*, exert, engage in right action. You will not lose. Exert—*purushartha*!

Therefore, from today onwards, for the next twenty days, I earnestly entreat that you exert in one specific way, namely, Gurudev’s Twenty Important Spiritual Instructions. Study them, ponder them, go over them from all sides. Take a good look at them, and try to find out how you are related to them, to what extent they are part of you. Because that will decide to what per cent you are his follower. You may be a disciple, but you may not be his follower. You are not following him. So that means that your discipleship still leaves much to be desired. Because if we are disciples and devotees but do not follow him, then our discipleship leaves much to be desired and our devotion leaves much to be desired. They should be whole-hearted and whole—total.

So let us prepare for a very special *sadhana* this next twenty days and carefully study and put into practice Gurudev's Twenty Important Spiritual Instructions. Then you are on your way to becoming a full, genuine, authentic, real and actual disciple, devotee and follower of Gurudev Sri Swami Sivanandaji, who loved all spiritual aspirants and who loves you too because you are in the spiritual life. He loves you very much indeed—all the more because you are not only a spiritual aspirant, but you are a spiritual aspirant living in his holy Ashram in this divine part of holy India. He has got great love for you in a very, very special way.

As Lord Krishna said in the latter part of the twelfth chapter of the Srimad Bhagavad Gita: All are dear to Me, but, you, My devotee, are very dear to Me, O Arjuna. And He did not have to demonstrate that Arjuna was very dear to Him, because He had already amply proved that His love for Arjuna was very special, very out of the ordinary, exceptionally great, by having given Arjuna the eleventh chapter Yoga experience.

Even so, Swami Sivanandaji does not have to prove his love to anyone, because he has amply proved it to the hilt by drawing you here from your own life, keeping you in his Ashram, surrounding you with this wonderful spiritual atmosphere and providing you with all the facilities for *karma yoga*, *bhakti yoga*, *dhyana yoga*, *japa yoga*, *jnana yoga*, *sankirtan yoga* and *seva yoga*. Everything, everything, everything! Rarely can you find a more fertile and richer field for spiritual evolution, unfoldment and attainment than Swami Sivanandaji's Sivananda Ashram on the right bank of the Divine Mother Ganga in sacred Uttarakhand in holy India.

If you have eyes to see, you will see it. If you have ears to hear, you will hear and understand what is being said. And if you are a real spiritual aspirant, you will be experiencing the truth of what has been said every moment. That there may be distractions, little imperfections and difficulties is only something plus. They are additional factors, irritants, thorns on the rose-bush. They may be. Even the richest cloth sometimes soiled. You may have to have it washed or dry-cleaned. That is inevitable. But the precious nature of that which is precious never varies. Even a diamond may need a little scrubbing and cleaning if it becomes overlaid with dirt and grime. But a diamond is always a diamond.

So, that this is an Ashram offering multi-facilities for a total all round spiritual unfoldment and evolution is one hundred per cent true. Absolutely, without any argument, it is true. Without any doubt it is true, if we relate ourselves as *sadhakas* and true seekers.

Therefore, it is in your hands to make this period into a glorious, grand period of your life, something that is great. It is in your hands. Do it to the best of your ability. This is all God expects of each one of us. He does not expect us to surpass ourselves or do the impossible. But He does expect, and Gurudev does expect, that each one of us try our level best to do the best we can, to do whatever is possible for us.

So, a lot has been shared. How much has been received, the Indweller knows. I cannot really help it, because it is not in my hands. It is in your hands. It is your end of the rope. Anyway, this has been shared. It has been shared in all seriousness, in all sincerity and with all humility. So, leave no stone unturned. Commence the study and practice of the most basic and important set of spiritual

instructions that Swami Sivanandaji has ever given, and which he has left forever for all mankind as his legacy.

KEEP OPEN THE DOORS OF YOUR HEART

Salutations and prostrations to all the *brahmavidya gurus* from the earliest times—even beyond creation—Adi Narayana, Sadasiva to the *tattva vetta brahma jnanis, siddha mahapurushas*, of the Vedic era, the Upanishadic times, to the medieval *acharyas*: Sankara, Ramanuja, Madhva, Vallabha, Nimbarka, Gauranga Mahaprabhu, to all the great, modern illumined souls, seers and sages: Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsadev, Vivekananda, Rama tirtha, Aurobindo, Ramana Maharshi, Swami Ramdas, Gurudev Swami Sivananda, Anandamayi Ma and to all the Great ones who have ever blessed this holy land, *punya bhumi, matri bhumi*, India, with their divine presence, sanctifying their times, sanctifying the very ground on which they trod!

They are all bridges to liberation, immortality. They are all portals to supreme blessedness. They are all gateways to the highest *kaivalya samrajya moksha* (the kingdom of final liberation). *Mahajana yena gatah sa panthah*—that is the way, the way trodden by the great ones. And preceding us they have left their footprints upon the sands of time. May you also go that way and attain the same state of supreme blessedness that they attained!

They are pioneers upon this great path that leads to liberation, illumination, supreme blessedness, attaining which there is no returning into this world of pain and death. They are trailblazers. Therefore, to keep them in the heart, to keep their ideal lives before us as radiant examples to emulate and live up to, is the surest way of attaining that very state of blessedness.

Contemplate, therefore, the saints, the sages, the seers, the illumined masters, the perfected ones. Contemplate them daily—morning, noon, evening and night. Keep them in your heart. Keep them ever before your vision. They are the lights that illumine our path to blessedness. Without them this world would be a dreary desert, a wilderness full of thorns, poisonous trees and venomous creatures. Without them this world would be what it is today on the outer surface. Because of them there is hidden beneath the outer exterior of this present day world of violence, hatred, conflict, clash, selfishness and immorality a radiant spiritual world, a radiant world of purity, of perfection, of goodness. There is here and now a radiant world of Divinity.

Live in that world! not in this external world which, with its strident noise, seems to demand your attention, forces itself upon your consciousness. Reject it! Get thee behind me, Satan! Refuse to recognise it, because there is a greater reality. The seen is not the real; the unseen is the real. The outer, visible one is not the real; the inner, hidden one is the real. The outer is but a pale, ineffective reflection of that which is radiantly real, eternal and unchanging. Focus upon that truth and cross the bridge to eternity that the ideal, exemplary lives of the sages and saints constitute for humanity.

As long as human memory cherishes the sublime, noble and ideal lives of these great ones, there is a future for humanity. As long as human hearts cherish these lofty and radiant examples, we

walk in the light; we do not dwell in darkness. This is the truth. This is verily the truth. This is indeed the truth.

You live where you choose to live. If you close your eyes to the light, you close to live in darkness; but if you choose to help your eyes open to the light, your heart will be flooded by light. You will walk in the light; you will live in the light. And there will be no groping, no stumbling, no wandering. There will be a sure and steady progress towards a clearly perceived ideal and goal.

In firm footsteps you can walk upon the path that is radiantly present before you, lit up and illumined by your own faith, lit up and illumined by your own vision, lit up and illumined by your own awareness that behind the seen there is the unseen, behind darkness there is light, behind the cloud there is sunshine, behind the screen there is the great beauty of beauties, the ever-present radiance, the splendour that the body-house houses. Within this body-temple there is the hidden splendour.

That is to be focused upon. That is to be held firmly in your heart. That is to be cherished in your thoughts. Man without vision perishes. Man with vision is never harmed. No harm can come to that being who lives with a vision and a goal. *Na hi kalyanakrit kascid durgatim tata gacchati* (The doer of good, O my son, never comes to grief). *Kaunteya pratijanihi na me bhaktah pranasyati* (O Arjuna, know for certain that My devotee never perishes).

These are not vain statements. They are the manifestations of truth, the utterances of eternal promises. We should recognise that we live in the Light even in a world of darkness around us. For, beyond and behind the ever-changing, the seen world of unrealities, transcending them, there is an unseen world of the eternal, unchanging Reality. We must live in this truth, in the awareness of this fact. That is the surest way of overcoming all things external, conquering all obstacles and attaining the supreme, for which we have been sent here.

We have not been sent here to go around in circles. We have not been sent here to grope in the darkness. We have not been sent here to wander and stumble and fall, to weep and wail. We have been sent here for attainment. We have been sent here for overcoming and accomplishment. And until we attain that, we should not rest upon our oars.

That is the great glory of human life. That is the grandeur of these times, times that have been endowed with more light, more wisdom, more knowledge, more insight and more vision than any other century, than any other generation within human memory, within known human history.

This closing decade of the twentieth century and the first decade of the twenty-first century form a glorious period in human evolution. Just as the fifteen minutes before and the fifteen minutes after the midday and midnight *sandhis* (junctions) are spiritual moments in time and the two hours before and half an hour after dawn comprise a charmed period, even so, the junction point between the twentieth and the twenty-first centuries has on either side a decade of supreme blessedness and auspiciousness, potent with infinite possibilities for spiritual evolution. This generation is supremely blessed, and you who are now living in this period are more blessed than you can ever imagine.

All the positive forces of radiant and resurgent spirituality are converging upon this period, filled with great blessedness, great possibilities, great potential and immense spiritual help from all the *brahma vidya gurus* from the most ancient times. For they are immortal. They are beyond time; they are eternally present. *Brahmavid brahmaiva bhavati* (He who knows Brahman verily becomes Brahman). They are called *nitya siddhas*, eternally present. Dattatreya, Dakshinamurti, Vyasa and Vasishtha are one with Brahman. They are ever-present spiritual centres, spiritual forces, ever-present centres of light, and they only await our call, our turning to them. They are there as centres of grace, centres of spiritual power, force, energy.

Therefore, to recognise this great truth and to seek to make the very best use of this period, rather than to allow it to pass and later on lament, would indeed be wisdom on your part. Remember the parable of the wise and the foolish virgins in the New Testament. Remember that this is a period when God is knocking at the doors of the human heart. This is a period when God is calling: “*Uttishthata jagrata prapya varan nibodhata* (Arise, awake, having reached the wise become enlightened).”

He may call through an Aurobindo, through a Ramana Maharshi, a Ramdas or a Sivananda. He may call through a Ramakrishna, Vivekananda, Ramatirtha, Nityananda, Sai Baba or Muktananda. He may even call through Venkatesananda, Krishnananda or Chidananda. He may call through anyone. He may call through a dream. He may call through your own sudden intuition. He may even call through a passing, seemingly insignificant incident in your daily life. He has no dearth of ways of calling. He may call from the mouth of a babe. There is no end or restriction to where He may call from.

If you heed the call, then he that hath eyes, let him see; he that hath ears, let him hear. We have to develop the vision and the receptivity. We have to develop the wakefulness, the alertness to catch the call as did the wise virgins, as have all the great ones who responded to the call.

These are all truths which you have to recognise and reflect over. They are being placed before you as so many indicators of the supremely blessed period in which you are living. They are placed before you for your serious consideration and immediate recognition. Let it not be said of you that blessings were poured upon you, showered upon you, and you did not receive. Sri Anandamayi Ma used to say: “There may be a downpour of rain, but if a vessel is kept with its bottom up, then it will not collect even a drop of water. Take care how you keep your vessel. You must keep it right side up.”

Therefore, keep open the doors of your heart. Let it not even require to be knocked upon. Keep it open before anyone comes to knock and ask you to open. Then you are thrice blessed. Even otherwise, ask and it shall be given, knock and it shall be opened unto you, seek and thou shalt find it. But if you already keep seeking, already keep the doors of your heart open, you are indeed thrice blessed. You are indeed most wise and supremely fortunate.

That is how you should be as spiritual children of blessed Gurudev Swami Sivanandaji, who was the awakener *par excellence* of global humanity in this twentieth century. Congratulate yourself and crown your life with glory!

OBEDIENCE IS BETTER THAN REVERENCE

Worshipful homage unto the Divine Reality that is the one unchanging fact, the one unchanging, ever-present Truth behind and beyond these ever-changing, transitory and temporary appearances of names and forms that make up this universal, phenomenal appearance. May divine grace flow from that Reality and awaken within you the awareness of Its presence within your own being, so that you feel yourself as what you really are, namely, a moving temple enshrining the Great Reality. Loving adorations to beloved and worshipful Holy Master Gurudev Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj, who taught and admonished and called upon all to lead a life of being divinely awakened even while living in this prosaic, secular world—a life of God-awareness or God-consciousness. May his benedictions enable you all to come into that state of consciousness where you are aware of your divinity and strive to make your life filled with that divinity. The ancient, illumined seers and sages of this sacred land of India have declared that your supreme goal of life, the purpose of your existence, is to attain liberation—liberation from the vexing bondage and limitation of this earth-bound and body-bound life. They have called it *moksha*. And to attain it they said that you have to exert, you have to be up and doing, you have to make the necessary effort.

So, they have linked that supreme attainment, by which alone your life becomes fruitful and fulfilled, to exertion. You must exert! That is their call to each and every one of you. You must exert, you must do *purushartha*. If exertion, therefore, is the means, if *abhyasa* is the means, if *sadhana* is the means for attaining that supreme state, then it implies that we cannot keep quiet. As the saying goes, we must do the needful.

And what that needful is, is the content of all the scriptures and of all the teachings of the saints and sages. They describe the various means: how you can do it through your emotion, through your sentiment; how you can do it through your mind power, through your intelligence, intellect, discrimination, investigation and enquiry; how you can do it through the physical activity of your body; how you can do it through Name; how you can do it through a combination of all—diverse ways. All the scriptures, the *sastras*, tell us the various methods. But they all say that YOU must do it. And you can attain only by EXERTION.

There is butter inside milk, but unless you put forth the necessary effort and churn it, the milk will remain milk only. The butter will never be obtained. It is only when you make the necessary exertion that the butter appears, it comes out at the top and you are able to obtain it. That is the admonition.

And at the same time that you do the needful—you do *purushartha*, you do *abhyasa*—you must refrain from doing that which is inimical or adverse to the success of your activity. If you want to succeed in what you do, if you want your exertion to be fruitful, you must simultaneously see that you do not do those things which will stand as an obstacle to the success of your endeavour.

You cannot treat yourself for a stomach ulcer and at the same time continue to take alcoholic liquor. You cannot treat yourself for diabetes and at the same time go on stuffing yourself with sweets. You cannot treat yourself for tuberculosis and at the same time continue to smoke. Because all these things successfully nullify whatever effort you are doing on the positive side for gaining some desired objective. They make the effort useless.

Some of your ancients—who were filled with a desire for attaining supreme wisdom, to become divinely perfected beings, who whole-heartedly dedicated themselves to this quest—went away to the forest, lived in seclusion, practised severe austerities, lived on leaves and water, took nothing that would be likely to stimulate their passions; if such people could have a spiritual downfall when a temptation suddenly arose, then what about those who eat all sorts of rich food, have soft beds and nice pillows with all comforts and conveniences, no austerity, no *tapasya*, no penance, no mortification, no self-denial, no fasting, no prayer, no vigil? Then how do you expect such people—calling themselves *sadhakas*, living lives of sense-satisfaction, desire-fulfilment, good food, comfort and convenience—not to have a downfall? How can you expect such people to attain illumination?

If, in spite of what has been said, such people—well fed, well clothed, full of comfort and conveniences and luxuries—attain Self-realisation, then the Himalayan mountains will float upon the Indian Ocean. That is what an ancient Sanskrit *sloka* says: People like Visvamitra and Parasara sustained their penance and their prayerful life of meditation in the forest upon merely air and water and the leaves of trees. If such people had a downfall when they were tempted, do you think that people who live a life of comfort, convenience and good food will attain Self-realisation? If they attain, wonder of wonder, nothing is impossible. Everything is possible. Fire will start burning downwards. The sun will start rising in the west and setting in the east. The Ganga will start flowing towards the Himalayas and if a mountain is thrown into the ocean, it will merrily start floating away. That is what this *sloka* says.

Which all goes to say, that simultaneous with one's effort or exertion or *purushartha* or *abhyasa* or *sadhana* for the attainment of this great liberation, one should at the same time, side by side, also practice self-restraint, self-control, moderation. That is what the scriptures tell us. They speak of do's and don'ts.

Patanjali starts with that. He gives us *yamas* and *niyamas*. He says: *ahimsa*—not hurt anyone. *Brahmacharya*—do not indulge in gross, lower propensities. Be noble, be subtle, rise high into *sattva*. *Satyam*—speak the truth. It also means do not speak falsehood. You cannot just speak the truth when it is convenient to you, and say I am fulfilling the injunctions of Patanjali's *Yoga sutra*. When he says speak the truth, it means truth and truth alone. It cannot be accompanied by falsehoods when they are convenient for you. You cannot play a game of being this and that.

This is the implication in Jesus saying to the fishermen: “Arise, follow Me.” A very simple sentence, but it is filled with a world of meaning: “Arise, come, come! Stop being as you are! Put an end to this state! Change it! Be transformed! Arise! Come out of it! Now I will tell you: Be something else. Follow Me. Be as I am. Do as I am. I stand before you as an example. Walk in My footsteps. Live as I am living. Follow Me. I am teaching you how to live. Don't follow your whims and fancies. Follow Me.”

Long before this significant and most meaningful incident for all humanity, long before that, another Teacher also wanted His disciple to do as He told him to, to act as He told him to act. And the disciple replied: “*karishye vachanam tava*—Yes, I shall do Thy bidding, I shall carry out Thy word, Thy injunction.” And that being in whose presence we are discussing these facts, these truths, that being is the one who said: “Obedience is better than reverence.”

So when Jesus says, “Arise and follow Me,” we must consider: Are we arising from that which we have been? Are we following? What is that righteous way that leads to the Kingdom of Heaven? It is that way which has been trodden by all the great ones of the past—*mahajana yena gatah sa panthah*. Are you following? Are you fulfilling this injunction? Then this is the day. This then is the truth you must deeply reflect upon.

If worship is to be fruitful, if devotion is to be fruitful, if reverence is to be fruitful, if adoration and prayer is to be fruitful, it must be accompanied by obedience. It must be accompanied by carrying out the word of the Guru. Are we doing it or not?

Gurudev says: “At the end of each day before you go to bed, examine yourself, introspect, think deeply, go within, search, do self-examination.” He says to do this every day. Also, keep a spiritual diary, keep a self-correction register. He uses the term self-correction. *Uddharet atmana atmanam*—Each one must uplift oneself by one’s own self. Therefore, you have to correct yourself by your own self. Someone may point out a defect to you, but that person cannot correct the defect in you. You have to make effort and correct yourself. And at the end of his Twenty Important Spiritual Instructions, Gurudev says: “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.”

If you do not observe Gurudev’s instructions strictly and rigidly and if you find that no spiritual progress is being made, that you have no peace of mind, that the same old rubbish is there as before, then you can’t blame the Ganga or the Himalayas or Rishikesh. You cannot blame this holy atmosphere of the forest laden with bilva trees. You cannot blame Lord Visvanatha or the Divine Name being chanted in the Bhajan Hall. You cannot blame the Samadhi Shrine or the Library filled with spiritual books.

Then, who is to blame? You need not blame yourself either. You must blame your disobedience. You are blameless because you are Atman—*aham brahmasmi*. So, if you do not want to blame yourself, blame your sins of omission and commission. And then stop doing sins of commission and start correcting your sins of omission. Someone has to take the blame. Somewhere there is a cause. If walking is painful that means that the shoe is pinching or you have a thorn in your foot. Without a cause you won’t have an effect. Find out!

If, in spite of all these wonderful, sublime teachings and this wonderful atmosphere, we find that we are not making spiritual progress, this much is for sure: this holy environment is not responsible for it. And no use saying that Krishna is responsible, Jesus is responsible, Chidananda is responsible. First of all look at your own life.

“Arise and follow Me.” Are you following the great ones? *Karishye vachanam tava*—O Lord I will carry out Thy word, I will do Thy bidding. “Obedience is better than reverence,” says Gurudev, “Do real *sadhana*, my dear children, do real *sadhana*. How can you expect real peace of mind if you do not do *brahma vichara*? How can you expect real Santi if you do not do *yoga sadhana*?”

SPECIAL INSIGHTS INTO SADHANA

So, today, my beloved *sadhakas*, devotees of the Lord, lovers of righteousness, *satsangis*, realise that success or failure is something whose source you have to trace into your own inner being, into your own *svabhava*, your own nature and life and the manner in which you live your life—your conduct, your character, your action—your day-to-day living of your life. You will have to trace it there.

You will not find the reason for the lack of spiritual progress anywhere else in the world. You have to seek within. Ponder. Reflect. Analyse. Be humble. Be simple. Be honest with yourself. Be truthful. Be sincere. Be earnest. Be serious. Be true.

Today is the right day, the right time to tell Swami Sivanandaji: “Yes, Holy Master, just as I show reverence to you, I shall also obey you, I shall actively follow your spiritual instructions and teachings. I will do all that is necessary to be done. I will avoid all that should not be done. Thus will I be a good disciple, a perfect Yogi, a true *sadhaka* and then I shall rejoice and rejoice and I shall rejoice!”