

**PRESCRIPTION
FOR
HAPPINESS**

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An 14 P**

**AN INTERPRETATION OF
SWAMI SIVANANDA'S MESSAGE TO MANKIND**

PRESCRIPTION FOR HAPPINESS

N. ANANTHANARAYANAN, M.A., B.Sc.



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PUBLISHERS' NOTE

A "Prescription for Happiness" is every body's urgent need. Only one who has found Happiness—Real, Eternal Happiness—can give the prescription. Humanity is blessed to have such a doctor in H. H. Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj.

Sri N. Ananthanarayanan has rendered a great service to humanity by making this Prescription available to all. *Sarve Bhavantu Sukhinah*—May all be happy.

Publishers.

DEDICATED
TO
THE YOUTH OF THE WORLD



"Happiness is a mental state. It does not depend upon money or possessions. It has to come from within."

—*Swami Sivananda.*

WHERE IS HAPPINESS ? HOW SHALL I FIND IT ?

(Sri Sivami Sivananda)

Happiness ! The one ceaseless quest in which man is engaged is happiness. No one wants to undergo the least bit of suffering.

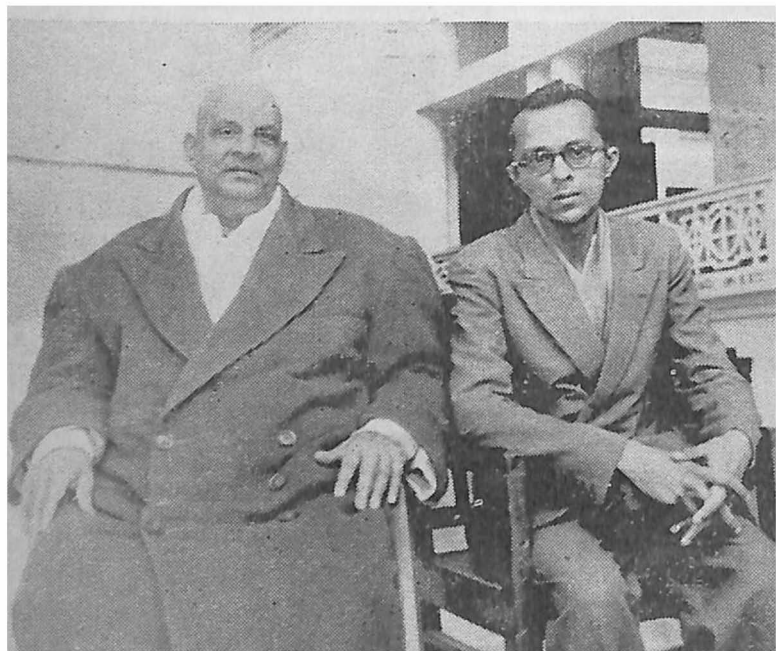
It is this desire to escape suffering that is responsible for the whole gamut of human activities; it is this quest for happiness that drives man ceaselessly to seek wealth, power, name and all material comforts. It is this desire that impels him to invent newer and newer contrivances to add to his creature comforts, and deadlier and deadlier weapons to protect himself, attack others and add to his glory and possessions.

But, alas, happiness always eludes his grasp ! Not merely that ; the sense pleasures that he has been pursuing turn traitors to him suddenly and plunge him into untold misery. Every type of sense enjoyment turns in his mouth to ashes in the very process of his gratification ; what he thought to be an innocent lamb is discovered to be a ferocious

tigress ! Lust eats away his vitals. Intoxicating drinks bring on nervousness. Artificial ways of living subject him to all kinds of diseases. Desires haunt his dreams. Ambitions cloud his intelligence. Wealth brings with it restlessness. Family means worry ! The senses to which he pinned his faith for happiness engulf him and under their crushing weight man cries aloud : 'Where is happiness ? How shall I find it ?' No answer is forthcoming.

Even if by some miracle he is saved from these, even if fortune smiles on him, inevitable old age creeps in. The pleasure centres which sustained him during his youth and manhood mock him now ! Is not this accumulated experience of ages sufficient for you ? Must you go through the mills yourself ? What can be more foolish ? Take the reiterated advice of the sages and seers and fashion your life on it. Acquire a knowledge of the scriptures and follow the ancient path. Practice Yoga and meditation and realise the Truth in this very birth.

Hari Om Tat Sat



THE AUTHOR WITH SWAMI SIVANANDA

P R E F A C E

Swami Sivananda is an embodiment of bliss. He radiates joy and peace which fill the hearts and minds of all those who come in contact with him. Men, women and children from all corners of the globe experience this.

What is the secret of Swamiji's enviable state? The writings which flow from Sivananda's powerful pen reveal, in unmistakable language, the mystery of perpetual bliss. We are told that happiness lies not in woman or wealth, but in the spiritual way of life—in selfless service, cosmic love and deep meditation.

It is true that the above truth has often been proclaimed before by other sages and saints, but Swami Sivananda has given it a modern orientation. Moreover, his efforts at interpreting the gospel of spiritual life to suit different minds are at once gigantic and admirable. Sivananda realises too well that in this Kali Yuga, dynamic spiritual propaganda is necessary to divert the minds of deluded humanity into fruitful channels. While evil spreads itself, conscious efforts are absolutely essential to disseminate moral and spiritual values. The acti-

vities of Swamiji and the beautiful organisations which he has founded are based on this conviction. Sivananda himself has written over 300 books. Besides, his disciples and admirers have, now and then, sought to interpret his teachings from different angles.

In this booklet, one other attempt has been made to trace the hard core of Sivananda's message to suffering humanity. It is written particularly for the benefit of the educated, modern youth.

In this second half of the twentieth century, there are young men, who, despite the soul-less education doled out to them, have a desire in the inner core of their hearts to know more about the real values of life and to live by those values. Backed by this noble desire, they yet find themselves in a dilemma between the unhealthy and artificial attractions of the Sputnik civilisation and their own powerful, inherent tendencies to lead a life of unalloyed purity and unselfish love. These young men and women are in a fix like the proverbial cat-on-the-wall, not knowing which way to jump. This dilemma perhaps reflects more the strength of the materialistic forces than the lack of strength of those who are weighed down by those forces. Many doubts of these struggling aspirants are genuine. Only the powerful words of a God-realised Soul of the stature of Swami Sivananda

could dispel them and raise the aspirants from their state of uncertainty and ensure for them a life of happiness and peace for ever. Educated youth form the root of society and if they are nourished well with spiritual wisdom, the tree of society is bound to flourish and yield its fruit in the form of saints and Yogis. The pages which follow are written with the sincere prayer that Swami Sivananda's teachings embodied therein may bring new hope and light to struggling spiritual aspirants all the world over.

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Sa-vam Paravasam Dukham ;

Sarvam Atmavasam Sukham.

All that is dependent is pain ;

All that is independent is happiness.

—Swami Sivananda.

॥ ॐ ॥

सद्गुरुरपरमात्मने नमः

PRESCRIPTION FOR HAPPINESS

*An Interpretation of
Swami Sivananda's Message to Mankind*

ॐ सह नाववतु, सह नौ भुनक्तु,
सह वीर्यं करवावहै, तेजस्यिनावधीतमस्तु,
मा विद्विषावहै । ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ।

Chapter One

THE MASTER AND HIS MISSION

Swami Sivananda is the darling of thousands. His disciples and admirers are spread round the globe. Some worship him as God. Others follow him as their spiritual guide. To yet others, he is a dynamic preacher whose words pierce the core of their hearts and effect a transformation in their very lives. Swamiji is famous for his unassuming simplicity, universal love, eagerness to help suffering humanity and keen longing to bring about world unity based on eternal spiritual values common to all religions.

Swami Sivananda is among the greatest of living men. Most of us, when we see great men, rarely stop to think how they attained their present eminence. As a consequence, we do not get the remotest idea of the sufferings which built up their greatness. Even so, when people see the Goddess of Prosperity dancing in Sivananda's abode, they do not for a moment realise that for years during his penance, Swamiji slept on the road-side with dry bread for his food and Ganges water for his drink. They have no idea how, with his own hands, he would clean the bed pan and wash the excreta from

a cholera patient's body. The critics do not know that after every Pada Puja during which devotees worship Swamiji's feet with flowers etc., wash them and drink the water so obtained, Swamiji goes inside his room and beats his cheeks with his shoes to prevent the least trace of ego from developing. Sivananda's life is a potent spiritual lesson. He has purified himself to the state of becoming purity itself and continues to maintain himself in that immaculate state by constantly engaging himself in the fire of service.

Swami Sivananda was born to serve. Service is his breath. Though he attained the pinnacle of spiritual glory many years ago, he has not confined himself to a lonely cave in the Himalayan heights, where he could enjoy perennial bliss, all by himself. No. Sivananda is anxious day and night to raise everyone to magnanimous heights of spiritual grandeur. He seems to be crying always, "Come all ye, who want to taste and share with me. I've tasted the eternal bliss." The Himalayan foothills wherein Sivananda has chosen to fix his humble dwelling is symbolic of his desire to live at the level of the common man and serve the God in man to his last breath. Swamiji's glory lies in his easy accessibility. You can talk with him, you can joke with him, you can laugh with him. You can smile at him and receive, in return, the indelible impression of a Divine smile. Sivananda's child-like nature has won for him the hearts of all.

Sivananda has a word of good cheer for everyone, the high and the low, the saint and the sinner. About sins and sinners, just mark what he says! "Sin is a mistake committed by the ignorant Jiva during his journey towards Sat-chit-ananda abode . . . The sinner of today is the saint of to-morrow." There is no wonder that people like Swamiji. From everywhere, men, women and children go to Sivanandanagar on the banks of the Ganges to have Darshan of Swamiji and to benefit by his company. Many stay in his Ashram for different periods and practise various spiritual disciplines under the personal guidance of the Master.

Sivananda believes in the transformation of the individual. All his efforts are directed at reforming the individual. Swamiji argues that if one man perfects himself, hundreds who come in contact with him will be elevated and they, in turn, will influence thousands of people beneficially. It is a cumulative process and produces what the statisticians call a multiplier effect.

Individual transformation requires individual guidance and training. How is this accomplished? Though the substance of Swami Sivananda's message is the same, viz., that everyone should strive to realise his identity with God through concerted effort, Swamiji bestows his attention on each thirsting aspirant separately; his spiritual prescriptions are invariably made to suit individual taste, temperament and ability. No one who meets Swamiji goes

back disappointed. The philosopher, the artist, the doctor, the lawyer, the government official, the student—all are equally well attended to by Swamiji. To a busy man of the world, Swamiji might recommend Japa or repetition of the Lord's name as the panacea for all ills. For a doctor, he might advocate free service to the sick and the needy. He may teach Vedanta to the professor and Kirtan to the child. Sivananda promises God-realisation not for the chosen few, but for everyone who cares to follow his simple teachings by a little sincere exertion.

Sivananda has a special love for young men, the builders of to-morrow. To Swamiji goes the glory of emphasising that spirituality is meant not just for the old and the sick, but equally, and perhaps more so, for the young and the budding. He tells us that we should begin a spiritual life right from childhood and sing the glory of God even from the cradle, because God would appreciate a fresh flower better than a tainted one. During the course of his all-India tour in 1950, Swamiji took special delight in addressing university students. Even today, students who go to his Ashram receive special kindness at his hands. To the youth of the world, Sivananda is like a spiritual father who suggests ways and means not only for material advancement, but also for spiritual upliftment and eternal beatitude.

Sivananda is a unique combination of the best in the ancient and in the modern. He does not insist

on external appearances, meaningless rituals and frills of spiritual practice. At the same time, he is relentless in his emphasis on rigorous practice in so far as the essentials of inner spiritual transformation are concerned.

What is Sivananda's message to mankind? Says Swamiji: "Serve, Love, Give, Purify, Meditate, Realise." It is a message of hope, light, love and strength. It is a message backed by Divine Authority which makes all the difference between Sivananda and other pseudo-sadhus and pulpit orators. Sivananda's is a message which people can live up to. It is intensely practical. It recognises the material wants of man. It is flexible. At the same time, the essence of Swamiji's teachings remains the same. It urges the removal of the various layers of ignorance hiding the bit of God within everyone of us. The integrated development of the human personality to its pristine glory is the ideal behind Sivananda's teachings. To accelerate this process and to aid this development, Swamiji advocates what he calls Synthetic Yoga. Synthetic Yoga is his prescription for eternal happiness. It is a beautiful blend of the four basic systems of spiritual practice. It is a multi-pronged attack.

For the spread of Synthetic Yoga, Sivananda does not want the world to be converted into a forest. Nor does he desire that all men and women should turn into Sannyasins and Sannyasinis with shaven heads. But, he does want the world to be

converted into a heaven where people will live in peace and plenty in the common realisation that they are parts of the same Divine Flame. There is no cause for surprise, therefore, when Swamiji himself goes to a cloth shop to choose a sari for the wedding present of a chosen disciple. He would personally attend to the diet to be given to a sick ashramite. He would advise a disciple aspiring to become a journalist that a regular study of leading articles in newspapers would do much good. Swamiji's universal love is not confined to human beings. For one who has realised the Unity behind all creation, men, animals, stone and wood are the same. That is why Sivananda prays as much for the soul of a dead dog as for the soul of a dead man.

Synthetic Yoga, sometimes called Integral Yoga, has a simpler name too. Sivananda calls it Divine Life. To spread the Gospel of Divine Life, he employs all modern means of communication including the Press, the Cinema, the Radio, the Tape Record and the Post. The Divine Life Society, founded by Swamiji, has branches in every corner of the globe. At the headquarters of the Society in Rishikesh, living facilities are provided for resident Sannyasins to develop perfection. These facilities are also placed at the disposal of visiting aspirants who wish to practise spiritual discipline under the direct guidance of their Master. The students are helped by other Sannyasins who function as professors in the Yoga-Vedanta Forest Academy which is a unique institution run as nearly as possible on ancient

Gurukula lines. Sivananda Ashram also has in it a Charitable Dispensary, an Eye Hospital, a Free School and an Ayurvedic Pharmacy which manufactures various tonics and medicines according to ancient Ayurvedic texts. The Forest Academy Press facilitates the printing of magazines like "The Divine Life," "Wisdom Light," "Health and Long Life" and "The Yoga-Vedanta Forest Academy Weekly" and the numerous books which flow from Swamiji's sacred pen in never-ending stream. Besides books, Sivananda writes innumerable articles in various magazines. He is perhaps the first person who has transformed the teachings of our hoary scriptural texts into simple precepts for scientific practice. It is this feature which distinguishes his works from those of other spiritual giants. The so-called yogic secrets have been, for the first time, put in black and white in simple, understandable English for our benefit. Sivananda has chosen English in order to reach directly the largest possible segment of humanity. Many of his books have been translated into various Indian and foreign languages also. Swamiji's works cover such widely scattered areas of knowledge as religion, psychology, medicine and sociology. Titles such as "Spiritual Experiences," "Sure Ways for Success in Life and God-Realisation," "Mind—Its Mysteries and Control," "A Boon to Diabetics," "Bazaar Drugs," "Moral and Spiritual Regeneration of the World" and "How to become Rich" indicate the versatile genius of this simple soul. Though Sivananda has written so much on so varied

a topic, underlying all his writings is the current of spiritual living, the Divine Life, the perfection of man. Sivananda's inspired writings are truly his greatest gift to humanity. A chance book picked up from a railway bookstall or a public library ; a spiritual tract or a pamphlet casually handed over by a friend—these have completely transformed the lives of many a person. Nearly a lakh of rupees worth of books are distributed free by Swamiji every year. It is because he ardently believes in Jnana Yagna or gift of spiritual knowledge.

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Chapter Two

THE CEASELESS QUEST

The person born to serve mankind must know its needs. What is humanity struggling after ? What does each person look for in life ? People call it happiness. Experience shows that happiness is the one human quest from the cradle to the grave. The new-born babe seeks comfort in its mother's bosom. The dying man seeks solace in a last look at his near and dear ones crowding round his cot. During the course of earthly existence, different people may look for happiness in different places and through different means ; but, their goal remains the same.

Normally, men and women look for happiness in material objects which could satisfy their five senses. Swamiji's first task is to clear this deep-rooted misconception that sense-satisfaction could lead to happiness. His analysis of the problem, which runs broadly on the following lines, can be verified from everyday experience. Happiness, while it is the most sought-after thing in life, is also the most elusive. Worldly happiness is like the will-o'-the-wisp. It always plays a game of hide and

seek. Before you catch it, it recedes. Even if you catch it, it slips. Lasting happiness cannot be had in this world, because this is a world of pairs of opposites. This two-sidedness is the very nature of the world and there is no escape from it. The world we live in is a world of pleasure and pain, heat and cold, smiles and tears, darkness and light, day and night. It is a world of black man and white man, of capitalist and communist, of rise and fall of civilisations, of war and peace. It is only those who have no proper understanding of the laws of God and the nature of the world who will be foolish enough to expect happiness and peace from earthly objects.

Materialists who are ever on the chase after happiness and who apparently enjoy sense-objects can be classified only as poor, deluded souls. On close analysis, it will be found that they do not enjoy continuous happiness, but only moments of happiness. To earn these moments of happiness, they have to exert for hours and exertion is pain. As Sivananda puts it, "There is a grain of pleasure in objects ; but, the pain mixed with it is of the size of a mountain." Pleasure mixed with pain is no true pleasure. Moreover, the so-called happiness which a man feels when he gets a desired object is itself deceptive. It arises not out of the sense-object, but out of the quiescence of mind achieved as a result of the satisfaction of a desire. Ordinarily, man is restless because of so many desires. When a particular desire is satisfied, in the exuberance of

that satisfaction, he becomes desireless for a moment and his mind rests peacefully. It is this momentary desirelessness or tranquillity of mind which gives him the feeling of happiness. Very soon, however, the object attained becomes stale and other desires come to the surface of the mind which is agitated once again. It is the nature of mind always to crave for what it does not have. In fact, quite often, even when a desire is in the process of being satisfied, man is obsessed with desires which are not satisfied. For instance, when a man's son is being married, the father might feel a little sorrow at the thought of his wife who died a few years ago and could not be present at the function. This is just one illustration.

Realisation that sensual objects cannot give happiness is the key to happiness. The world is no pleasure garden. In fact, Sivananda sees the whole world "as a huge furnace wherein all living creatures are being roasted." Unalloyed, lasting happiness can be had only in God. God is Dwandwatita. He is above the pairs of opposites. He is not affected by pain and pleasure. He is Ananda Swarupa. He is of the form of bliss. Bliss is eternal happiness. It is the purest form of happiness. It is happiness unmixed with pain. Worldly happiness is only a poor reflection of bliss. It is by reaching God that we will also be immersed in immortal bliss. By attaining Him, all desires of man are satisfied at one stroke.

The question crops up : "What is the proof that God exists ?" Nobody has yet answered this question in a satisfactory manner. Sivananda, however, gives convincing evidence as to why it cannot be answered. This and other questions like "Why is there evil in this world ?" are termed by him as transcendental questions or atiprasnas. Swamiji argues that these are subjects which are beyond the comprehension of the human mind as it is constituted. God is beyond mind and the five senses which function at the mind's behest. In His original, unmanifested aspect, therefore, He cannot be understood by the mind or be perceived by the senses. He can neither be seen nor heard. He has to be realised by intuition only. Intuition can be developed by crossing the barriers of the senses and the mind. In other words, the spiritual aspirant has to destroy the senses and the mind by making them powerless. In deep meditation, he overcomes world consciousness and attains Divine Consciousness by achieving this destruction of the mind.

Why is the human mind so powerless to understand God ? This is because it is so framed that it can function only within the limits of Time, Space and Causation. For instance, we at once recognise a person, born to other recognisable persons and living at a given time and in a given place. But, God cannot be described in that fashion. He is outside the boundaries of Time, Space and Causation. God is Omniscient. He is beyond Time. He knows

past, present and future. He ever was. He is. He ever will be. God is Omnipresent. He is beyond Space. He exists, not just here or there, but everywhere. God is Omnipotent. He is beyond Causation. There is no cause for His existence. He Himself is the Primal Cause. He is Sat. He is Existence Itself. He is not born to anyone like a mere human being. He is self-existent. It is impossible, however much we may try, to fathom the mystery of God with our limited mind. Sivananda warns all spiritual aspirants against attempting this impossible task. He declares that it is like putting the cart before the horse. It is futile to ask for scientific proofs for the existence of God before attempting spiritual Sadhana. But, for a person who puts initial faith in the words of God-realised souls and perseveres tenaciously, answers to all transcendental questions will stand self-revealed through intuition at the moment of God-realisation.

Faith is the essence of a spiritual life. Faith is an important ingredient for happy living. Without it, little progress is possible in the spiritual path. Vain arguments and intellectual gymnastics will not help anyone to achieve eternal happiness. Faith is absolutely necessary. Faith is not opposed to reason. It transcends reason. Faith is not blind as its critics would make it out to be. The objects and ideas in which we are asked to place our faith by realised souls are not mere figments of their imagination. They have been personally verified

by those seers after indescribable struggle and in the course of their intuitive experiences. At the same time, it is not possible for them to translate those experiences into language which can be comprehended by the human mind. That is why we are asked to realise the Truth directly by spiritual discipline and intense meditation.

In spite of these difficulties, Sivananda does give an explanation of God, world and man as far as language will permit. God willed and the whole creation burst forth into being. That is the origin of the world, man, sun, stars and everything in the universe. Creation, preservation and destruction constitute the leela or sport of God. In relation to Him, the whole creation is an illusory product born out of His illusory power called Maya. In relation to Him, the world is an illusion ; we are illusory beings. All creation is supported by God who is the Absolute Reality. Just as the objects we see in a dream are unreal to us, we are unreal in relation to God. This, in short, is the theory of Maya. Beyond this, it is difficult to explain.

The word 'Maya' and its casual use by many people including self-styled Sadhus without offer of any explanatory remarks confuse many minds. Sivananda clears this confusion in no uncertain manner. He asserts that while God is the only Reality and the whole universe is the play of Maya or God's illusory power, the universe is a relative reality in so far as man is concerned. So long as man's ex-

perience is confined to the senses, he cannot ignore the world and its necessities. He cannot dismiss the world as an illusion till he attains supersensory Atma Jnana or God-realisation.

What is God-realisation ? When a sage realises God, the Soul or the bit of God within him realises Its true identity and laughs at the thought that It should have been fooled by the dream-world which was Its own creation and It rests in Its pristine glory. The sage who realises is like a man waking up from a dream. The world around the sage melts like a dream object and all that he sees around him is God and only God.

If, even after all these explanations are offered, a person still persists in his refusal to believe in God, Sivananda can only feel intense sadness for him. Out of that sadness, he cries :

“O Ram !

Your mother said, ‘Krishna is your father.’

You did not ask her,

‘O mother, prove he is my father.’

Existence of God is Swatah-siddha.

It is self-proved.

It is a great insult, it is quite absurd to say,

‘Give me proofs for the existence of God’

When the Lord is everywhere.

Behold His glory—in the sun, moon and stars ,

In the fire, in the lightning, thunder ;
 In the ocean, in the sky, in the flowers ;
 In the mind, in the intellect and in Prana.”

The proof of the pudding lies in the eating of it. Even so, the Bliss of God and the peace which can be obtained in a spiritual life have to be experienced by living that life. While the aspirant is asked to place initial faith in the words of scriptures and the teachings of saints, as he progresses in the spiritual path, his faith gets confirmed through various supersensory experiences which cannot be logically explained and he feels more and more convinced about the existence of God.

Having attempted to demonstrate that Nitya Sukha (Eternal Bliss) and Parama Shanti (Absolute Peace) can be had only in God, Sivananda proceeds to answer a series of further questions on the path which leads to God. How to reach the Goal ? Who is fitted to tread this path ? Is any special equipment necessary ? Is a guide necessary or can one undertake the journey all by himself ? Are there difficulties and obstacles on the path ?

The path to God is the path of Yoga.

The word ‘Yoga,’ like ‘Maya,’ has been abused and continues to be abused by all sorts of interested people. It is, therefore, necessary to know the various contexts in which the term is generally used.

Fundamentally, Yoga means union with God. It comes from the Sanskrit root 'Yuj' which means 'to join' and signifies the realisation of oneness between the Jivatma or the individual Soul and Paramatma or the Supreme Soul. Yoga is the Goal of man. It points to the purpose of life on the earth plane.

In a secondary sense, Yoga also means the Path to God-realisation. There are four principal Yogas or roads entering into the Kingdom of God. They are : Karma Yoga or the Path of Selfless Service, Bhakti Yoga or the Path of Devotion, Raja Yoga or the Path of Mind Control and Jnana Yoga or the Path of Knowledge. There is no contradiction between these four kinds of spiritual discipline. They are complementary, rather than exclusive. Ultimately, they lose their separate identity and merge in God. At that point, the Karma Yogi attains wisdom and devotion as a result of the purification of his mind and heart by long selfless service. Similarly, the Bhakta's devotion finds expression in selfless service consequent to the flowering of knowledge. The Jnani, when he attains the highest wisdom, is automatically endowed with cosmic love and selfless service which are the very breath of divine wisdom. For attaining God, therefore, it is not the choice of a particular Yoga that matters, but the sincerity and devotion with which the chosen Yoga is practised in all its detail. An aspirant may choose any Yoga that suits his liking

and capacity, but he should practise it with unabated faith and zeal in order to realise the Goal.

In a narrower sense, the term Yoga is also sometimes used exclusively to denote Raja Yoga or the Path of Mind Control.

Nowadays, it is also misused by people (including the educated) to indicate the practice of Yogasans (Meditative Postures) and Pranayama (Breath Control). It must be noted that Yogasans and Pranayama constitute but two steps in the ladder that is Raja Yoga. Raja Yoga is otherwise known as Ashtanga Yoga or the Yoga with Eight Limbs. The eight limbs of Raja Yoga are—Yama (Spiritual restraint), Niyama (religious observance), Asans (Meditative postures), Pranayama (Breath control), Pratyahara (Abstraction of mind from sense objects), Dharana (Concentration), Dhyana (Meditation) and Samadhi (Superconscious state). Asans and Pranayama form intermediate steps in this scientific arrangement where one step naturally leads on to the next till man realises his original Divine Nature. To disturb this arrangement would be to invite trouble. Asans and Pranayama by themselves mean very little and if they are not preceded by self-restraint or ethical discipline, can even be ruinous in their results. The spiritual aspirant should have a clear understanding of the exact place and the relative importance assigned to these practices in the sum-total of spiritual discipline necessary for God-realisation. He

should be familiar with the different connotations in which the term Yoga is used. Otherwise, there is the danger that in the pursuit of a lesser goal like 'Asans and Pranayama,' he might forget the ultimate aim of human life which is to merge with God.

Though the relentless pursuit of any one Yoga will certainly carry the aspirant to Eternal Bliss, in the considered opinion of Swami Sivananda, it would be extremely difficult for a person to practise any one of the principal Yogas in all its detail in the circumstances of the present day. Life has become extremely complex and it is certainly not possible for the vast majority of people to be in a position to command the conveniences to do so. Swamiji has, therefore, hit upon a novel and highly practicable method which could be easily followed by all. This is the now famous Synthetic Yoga of Sivananda. The Yoga of Synthesis is the Yoga for the common man, the Yoga for you and I. In this Yoga, the essential elements of all the four leading systems have been blended beautifully to produce a sweet aroma acceptable to all. Moreover, a person practising this Yoga is assured of speedy progress in the spiritual path even in this material age.

What is Synthetic Yoga? What is this sweet magic pill for God-realisation? The essential tenets of this Yoga have been crystallised by Swamiji in one of his popular songs :

Eat a little, drink a little,
Talk a little, sleep a little.

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Mix a little, move a little,

Serve a little, rest a little.

Do Asan a little, Pranayama a little,

Reflect a little, do Vichar a little.

Do Japa a little, do Kirtan a little,

Write Mantra a little, meditate a little.

Having discovered this simple Yoga, Swami Sivananda is in a position to declare emphatically, "There is neither monopoly nor copyright nor 'All rights reserved' on God or Divine Wisdom. Every thirsting aspirant can enjoy the Lord's Aiswarya or Vibhuti. He can surely abide in Him." Mark his words 'thirsting aspirant'! Spirituality is not for the curiosity-monger and the light-hearted. Only the thirsting Sadhak can drink the nectar of Brahman. While it is true that no one is denied entrance into the Kingdom of God, only the aspirant who has a burning desire to find God will succeed in finding Him. Once the conclusion is accepted that real happiness cannot be had in this world and can be had only in God, a person aspiring for that happiness must also be willing to go ahead on the path of God. In other words, step by step, he must be willing to leave this world behind. He should be willing to renounce little by little the hundred and one artificial necessities and meaningless pursuits of worldly vanity and devote more and more time to the pursuit of Godly life. If he is not willing to do that and wants a miracle to happen, Sivananda is helpless. The

hungry man must himself eat if his hunger is to be appeased. The thirsty man must himself drink if his thirst is to be quenched. Others cannot deputise. Even so, the Sadhak who wants eternal bliss must himself tread the spiritual path. The Guru can only guide and help.

Guidance, of course, is necessary. The spiritual path is a razor-edge path. It is full of snares and pit-falls. Temptations will beset the aspirant at every stage. Obstacles will stare him in the face. Doubts will assail him. To warn the aspirant against the pit-falls, to protect him against the temptations, to help him overcome the obstacles, to clear his doubts, the guidance of a Guru who has already walked the spiritual path and knows its hidden dangers, is absolutely essential. Do we not see in this world that even in the pursuit of petty vocations like cooking and tailoring, a teacher is necessary to impart the knowledge? Does not a junior scientist work under a senior scientist? Does not an overseer undergo apprenticeship with an engineer? While this is so even with the secular sciences, what to speak of Atma Vidya which is the Science of sciences? A Guru is indispensable in the path of Yoga. In the beginning stages of spiritual Sadhana, books written by saints and sages may give sufficient guidance. They will be, so to say, travel guides for the pilgrim on the path to God. At this stage, help can be secured from advanced aspirants also. But, as the Sadhak progresses

in his discipline, the personal guidance of a full-fledged Guru becomes indispensable.

Who is to be accepted as the Guru? This is a very natural and pertinent question, especially in these days when bogus Mahatmas and self-styled Gurus roam the land duping the gullible and bringing discredit on the glorious order of Sannyasa itself. The Sadhak should carefully avoid these charlatans and find the Guru who can kindle the spiritual spark in him into a leaping flame. In this noble effort, he can derive guidance from Sivananda's description of the hall-marks of a spiritual preceptor. Says Sivananda :

“If you are elevated in one's presence,
 If you are inspired by his speeches,
 If he is able to clear your doubts,
 If he is free from greed, anger and lust,
 If he is selfless, loving and I-less,
 You can take him as your Guru.”

Sivananda dismisses as untrue the complaint that proper Gurus are not to be had these days. He asserts that even in this materialistic age, realised souls do live and move about in the world. He affirms that competent disciples are never in want of competent Gurus. If only the aspirant thirsts intensely for a spiritual guide and prays to God fervently for this purpose, God's grace is bound to descend on him in the form of a Satguru. It is a question of supply and demand.

Sages and saints are to be found in every age and in every land. No country is bereft of them. India, the land of ancient Rishis, has always produced an abundant crop of them. Swami Sivananda is a prize fruit in that crop. The whole world turns to Rishikesh to taste of the nectarine sweetness of this fruit.

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Chapter Three

TOWARDS A FULL LIFE

How long will it take to reach the Abode of Immortal Bliss ?° This is a hypothetical question. The answer would depend on the stage of spiritual evolution at which the aspirant is placed and the measure of Sadhana he is prepared to undergo in his present birth. God-realisation is no easy task. The goal is high ; the climb is stiff. But, when the ascent is done, the reward is great. After all, to complete schooling and to become a mere Matriculate, a person has to struggle for 15 years. And, what is God-realisation ? It promises eternal happiness. It promises freedom from the cycle of births and deaths and all the misery attendant thereto. Surely, not one life, but millions of lives can be sacrificed in return for that promise of eternal bliss.

For some people, God-realisation may take hundreds of births. For others who have done various spiritual practices in their previous births, the Goal may be reached in the present birth itself. In either case, the time taken to reach the Goal can be shortened by intense Sadhana in the present birth.

Through prayer and meditation, through Japa and charity, it is possible even for an ordinary man with no previous spiritual practices to his credit to cut down hundreds of births and make, as it were, a dash towards God. This is possible. While the present birth is pre-ordained, the future lies entirely in our hands. Sivananda repeatedly affirms that man is master of his destiny. It is man's fault that he bleats like a lamb where he should roar like a lion. There is no doubt that everyone can make or mar his future by his own power. A man's present birth is only the resultant of his actions in his previous births. Neither God nor man is responsible for the pleasures that we enjoy or the pains that we suffer. It is by our own choice we have brought upon ourselves the circumstances of our present births by our actions in the past. Destiny is only another name for the inevitable fruit of our actions. Everyone is bound by destiny. No one is exempt from it. The Law of Karma or the Law of Cause and Effect is inexorable. Even God cannot alter it, because it is His very nature.

The course of destiny can be changed for the better by Purushartha or conscious good action. Through intense Sadhana over a protracted period, the intelligent aspirant speeds up his progress towards the Goal. Intensity of application and sustained application are both essential. Neither intense Sadhana practised by fits and starts nor dull Sadhana practised over a long period can produce quick

results. Hard, persistent effort is the only secret of spiritual success. There is no other magic in Yoga. Ignorant people alone imagine that the bliss of Samadhi can be experienced just by swallowing a drop of water from the Kamandal of a Mahatma. Sivananda warns spiritual aspirants against such ridiculous notions. Happiness has to be bought by self-effort only. Sages will guide and God will help, but the aspirant should himself tread the path. In fact, even the Grace of God and the Blessings of the Guru do not come about by accident or chance. They too have to be won through prayer, service and self-surrender.

Even if God cannot be attained in this very birth, it does not matter. As a result of spiritual disciplines practised in the present birth, the Sadhak will be placed in more favourable environments in the next birth when he will pick up the thread and register further progress. No effort, however small, is lost in the spiritual path. Every thought that is contemplated, every syllable that is uttered, every little deed that is done is recorded in the Divine Balance Sheet for being rewarded at the appropriate time. Moreover, even while the aspirant is still on the path, even before the Goal is reached, he gets glimpses of the glorious future that awaits him at journey's end. The moments of bliss that are felt, the peace that is experienced, the self-confidence that is gained, the virtuous qualities that are developed and the spiritual personality and character that are built up—these and other beneficial results

are all well worth the trouble of spiritual Sadhana. The integrated personality that is built up and the Grace of God that is attracted during the course of Sadhana help the aspirant immeasurably in material advancement also. In fact, worldly prosperity which the merely material man may or may not achieve in life, is a positive by-product of spiritual Sadhana. That is why Sivananda has said, "God first, world next, if at all you want the world."

That is not all. Once it is established that pure happiness cannot be had in this world and can be found only in God, there can be no third alternative. Either we suffer the cycle of births and deaths with its pangs of hunger and thirst or we speed up our progress towards God by undaunted effort irrespective of the time it would take to reach Him. According to Sivananda, all beings are always struggling, consciously or unconsciously, to reach God. As related to human beings, Swamiji illustrates the principle in the following manner.

No man wants to die. Everyone wants to live for ever, to exist always. Eternal existence can be had only in God. Similarly, no man wants to remain ignorant or be called a fool. Everyone wants to acquire knowledge. Absolute knowledge can be had only in God. Again, no man wants to be unhappy. Everyone wants to be happy always. Eternal bliss, it was shown, is possible only in God. It is only God who is Existence-Knowledge-Bliss

Absolute. He is the only Sat-Chit-Ananda. Every man, when he strives after immortality, absolute knowledge and eternal bliss, is really struggling after the attainment of God. He may do this knowingly, or unknowingly, but the fact remains the same. Reach Him we must and it is only wise to quicken the pace and reduce the period of agony in this Samsara.

The Sadhak who wants speedy progress must realise the immense value of human life and spend every moment of it in pursuit of the chosen goal. Human life is a rare gift, a God-given opportunity for salvation. Sivananda teaches that human birth is a priceless treasure, since it is only as a human being that God can be attained directly. Lower beings like animals and insects and higher beings like angels have to be born in the family of man before they can reach God. Angels live in heaven just as human beings live on earth. Heaven is only a higher plane of living. Angels are not immortal. Their enjoyment of sense objects is more subtle and more intense than in the case of human beings. That is all. Once the fruits of the meritorious acts which earned them their place as angels in heaven are exhausted, they have to be born again in the world. Man becomes angel if he performs certain virtuous actions during his earthly existence. When such a man dies, he is not reborn into this world, but becomes an angel in heaven. Once the fruits of his particular good deeds are enjoyed in heaven, he is returned again to this earth plane as

a mortal. He cannot reach God direct from heaven, because in heaven he cannot perform spiritual Sadhana. Heaven is a place where only the fruits of particular types of previous Karmas are enjoyed. There, no fresh Karmas are possible. As in heaven, so in hell. Hell is also no place for new action. It is only a region where the results of certain evil deeds performed on the earth plane are suffered by the individual soul or Jivatma. There is no such thing as eternal damnation in hell, because once the fruits of the evil actions are exhausted in hell, the individual soul is returned to the earth in a new birth and given a fresh lease of life, a fresh opportunity to reach God. Life as a mortal on earth is, therefore, extremely precious and the diligent aspirant should not lose a single moment of this precious life in striving for eternal bliss.

Life is really energy spent in time. The time at the disposal of man is limited. Similarly, the energy at his disposal is limited. Waste of time is waste of life. Waste of energy is waste of life. At the same time, neither energy nor time is useful in itself. The energetic man who does not work and the weak man who cannot work are both as good as dead. It is only action during time that is productive of results. The intelligent aspirant should, therefore, conserve and utilise his time and energy in such manner as would yield him the maximum spiritual benefit. Acute and constant awareness that with every passing breath our life is cut short and thereby

the opportunity given to us to reach God is getting limited is the key to speedy progress in the spiritual path.

Most people do not recognise the value of time till they near the gates of Death. Swamiji warns us that Death exists side by side with Birth. A baby is born. One moment passes; two moments pass; three, four. With every passing moment, the baby ages; its life is cut short and it is brought nearer its death. The advance towards death begins simultaneously with birth. Life is a relentless march from birth to death—relentless, because time does not stop; the clock does not cease to tick. Time consumes life. No one can escape it. The period of time given to us in this life is pre-ordained as a result of our actions—virtuous and vicious—in our previous births. It is impossible to alter the life-period of an individual even by a fraction of a second. A man who recognises this fact is a wise man. He will so order his life that every moment is well spent and wasted minutes and hours are progressively reduced and altogether eliminated after some practice.

Death always takes man unawares. It never gives a warning: That is why Sadhana should never be postponed. Good deeds must be done immediately the urge occurs. Postponement might mean that they will never be done. D.I.N. Do it now. This is the formula that Swamiji dings into the minds

of his audience. The businessman counts time in terms of money. The Sadhak counts time in terms of spiritual Sadhana. Loss of time is loss of spiritual Sadhana which is the coin current in the Bank of the Almighty.

Time should, therefore, be spent most profitably. An hour spent in the company of a sage or a God-realised soul will uplift the spiritual aspirant in the same measure as days and months of individual practice. That is why Sivananda lays the greatest stress on Sat-sangh or the company of saints.

Similarly, Swamiji says that half an hour of earnest meditation in Brahma Muhurta (4 A. M. to 6 A. M.) will give sufficient strength for the aspirant to pass through a whole week's life of trials and tribulations cheerfully and with a smiling face. The atmosphere is full of beneficial spiritual vibrations in the early morning hours. The mind is also blank and in a receptive mood. If at that time the mind is fed on good, positive, sublime thoughts, it will absorb them wonderfully well. That is the principle. The principles are there for personal verification,

The serious aspirant should never miss a single opportunity for Sat-sangh or a single morning of spiritual Sadhana.

Like time, energy also must be conserved for being canalised into purposeful action. Most people

dissipate their limited energy through aimless thinking, vain gossip and meaningless action from dawn to dusk. Energy, it must be realised, is spent through every action, big or small. For instance, Swamiji draws attention to the habit of some people shaking their legs while seated in a chair. This and similar actions result in considerable waste of energy. It is in drawing our attention to such apparently trivial and unimportant matters, but matters which throw into dramatic relief the point which he seeks to drive into our minds that Sivananda excels other spiritual teachers. His instructions are sometimes minute to the point of being misunderstood by the ignorant as absurdly exaggerated ; but, to the sincere seeker after Truth, they reveal Swamiji's depth of understanding and recollect his dictum that no effort in the spiritual direction should be treated as insignificant. Little things mean much. Little drops of water make the mighty ocean. Take care of the moments ; hours, days, months, years and life itself will take care of themselves. This is Sivananda's sage counsel.

Dissipation of energy in hundred and one unnecessary ways leaves little stamina for spiritual Sadhana. Loud talking, loud laughter even, deplete energy. Besides, loud talking and loud laughter are vulgar and betray lack of true culture. Prohibition of loud laughter does not imply condemnation of a cheerful outlook. On the other hand, without cheerfulness, it is impossible to develop or conserve

energy. But, cheerfulness must be expressed through cultured ways which do not tax energy. Swamiji, therefore, advises the aspirant not to laugh or to giggle but to smile, smile always. Says Sivananda :

“Smile a while
And as you smile
Another smile
And soon there are miles
And miles of smile
And life is worth while
Because you smile.”

Smile, cheerfulness, enthusiasm—these are healthy tonics. Enthusiasm is all energy. Cheerfulness is a powerful source of energy. On the other hand, worry should be completely banished from the mind. Worry results in tremendous loss of energy.

Sivananda reminds us that worry never did nor will ever do any good. Worry is sheer waste. Similarly, all negative thoughts must be given up. Thoughts of fear and hatred, of anger, jealousy and pride eat away man's energy. Idle thoughts, indifferent thoughts, aimless thoughts, castle-building, scheming, planning—all these sap man's vitality and make him weak. Scheming and planning are waste of time. Man proposes ; God disposes. Swamiji's advice is that we should not entertain desires and hopes. “Be hope-less” is his formula for eternal beatitude. By shedding all human hopes about the

future and by casting off all worries and reflections on the dead past, the intelligent aspirant lives a full life in the tangible present and secures Shanti.

Energy is conserved by silence. Swamiji advises observance of Mouna every day for as long as possible. Mouna does not mean mere abstinence from speech. It means control of mind also. It means checking the unfettered jumping of the mind from one thought to another and concentrating it on one good idea or set of ideas. Mouna helps conservation of energy tremendously and develops will power also.

We can add to our energy almost without limit by drawing on the limitless energy of God, by establishing communion with Him, through prayer, Japa, meditation and so on.

Brahmacharya or celibacy helps to store up abundant energy. Sexual energy is highly potent. When wasted through excessive indulgence, it devitalises a man miserably. The sexual act shatters the whole nervous system. On the other hand, Brahmacharya and other forms of spiritual discipline help to transmute this same sexual energy into Ojas Shakti which flows towards the brain and is stored up there as a powerful spiritual force which may be used for contemplation and Dhyana. Ojas Shakti helps the aspirant to develop various wonderful physical, mental and spiritual powers. The

process of transmuting sexual energy into spiritual energy is known as sublimation. It is possible for the sincere Sadhak to effect this sublimation to a remarkable degree. He should not be misguided by the warnings of some psychologists that suppression of sexual energy is bad. Sublimation is not the same thing as suppression. There is an ocean of difference between the two. Suppression means applying a brake on the out-flow of sexual energy through the normal channels without affording an alternative outlet. This is no doubt bad. But, the technique of sublimation not only prevents the waste of sexual energy, but transforms it into the altogether different and infinitely more powerful Ojas Shakri, thus effecting a kind of alchemy. It transforms lead into gold. There is no suppression at all. Psychologists, after all, do not know all about the mind and much less about spirituality which is a supramental science. Modern psychologists are still pitiably groping in the dark and when they begin to advise others, one is naturally reminded of the story of the blind leading the blind. As Swamiji says, psychology is but a branch of Raja Yoga and the part can never be a substitute for the whole. Psychology cannot replace Yoga.

Brahmacharya is a sine-qua-non for success in the spiritual path. Brahmacharya is not mere physical abstinence. It means also abstinence in thought, word and deed from all matters regarding sex. Without Brahmacharya, no progress in the

spiritual path is possible. To dispel any false notion that this would shut out all avenues of Moksha for householders, Sivananda has explained that in the case of householders, restricted indulgence and a controlled married life lived according to Dharmic principles and scriptural injunctions would itself constitute Brahmacharya. Swamiji cites the example of householders like Janaka in support of his argument that Self-realisation is open to all who would care to exert. In advocating Brahmacharya for everyone, he is not unaware of the difficulties involved in its practice. Sivananda concedes that the sexual instinct is the most powerful instinct in a human being. Swamiji does not ask the Sadhak to hide his face to realities. On the other hand, the aspirant is warned to be extremely careful about the sex urge. Says Sivananda :

“A desire to see woman becomes a desire to talk ;
A desire to talk becomes a desire to touch ;
A desire to touch becomes a desire to unite !”

Significant words', these ! Even when the surface manifestations of the sex urge disappear, it acts subconsciously and can ruin a person in a moment of unawareness. Sivananda points out that even Rishis have been misled in this manner. Without minimising the difficulties, therefore, Swamiji comes forward with specific suggestions to overcome those difficulties. There is no ambiguity about his instructions which are easy to follow by a man who

wants to improve himself in every way. The choice of the right type of food is an important element in the practice of celibacy. Certain food articles like meat, onion and garlic excite passion. They should be given up. Having done this, the spiritual aspirant should take to those Asans and varieties of Pranayama which help to control the sex urge and to transmute the sex energy into spiritual energy. Japa, again, is a wonderful aid in practising celibacy. Constant reflection over the benefits of Brahmacharya and the evils, sufferings, disadvantages and fear involved in an indisciplined life would help a great deal in cultivating Brahmacharya.

All acts and situations which excite passion should be scrupulously avoided by the spiritual aspirant. Novels and pictures which excite the animal desires should be shunned like poison. Sivananda is not against the technical invention of cinema. Visitors to his Ashram are often treated to motion pictures depicting the spiritual way of life. What Swamiji is against is the base use to which the invention of cinema is put to in practice. Most pictures that are exhibited on the 'silver screen' are, in effect, lead poison appealing to the baser instincts of man, either openly or subtly. That is why Swamiji is compelled to sound the warning that cinema will stand in the way of Brahmacharya and spiritual progress.

Sivananda suggests another powerful method to annihilate lust. He asks the Sadhak to develop

disguist for the body of woman which, in reality, is a bag of skin containing the filth of flesh, blood, bones, pus, excreta and urine. In suggesting this approach, Swamiji makes it plain that he is not a woman-hater. In fact, he asks the aspirant to revere woman as Goddess Durga. Women aspirants, likewise, are asked to develop disguist for the body of man and adoration for the God in man.

The methods suggested by Swami Sivananda for conquering lust and conserving energy are at once simple and effective. All these methods should be pursued simultaneously by the aspirant who desires to annihilate lust. Lust is a powerful enemy and a multi-pronged attack is necessary to overcome it fully and build up an ocean of reserve power for use in the service of suffering humanity.

The Goal is Eternal Bliss. The Path is Yoga. Every second of time and every ounce of energy should be conserved and utilised to help speedy progress towards the Goal. Conviction in these ideas constitutes the preliminary preparation for the spiritual journey. It would give the Sadhak an unmistakable sense of purpose facilitating his journey to the realm of bliss.

Chapter Four

PERFECTING THE INSTRUMENT

The Kindergarten of spirituality lies in the perfection of the human body with a view to making it a fit instrument for spiritual Sadhana. If the instrument is not kept clean, strong and healthy, no Sadhana is possible. That is why Sivananda places the greatest emphasis on nurturing the body. This emphasis of Swamiji is evidenced by the General Hospital, the Eye Hospital, the Annakshetra or the Free Mess and the Yoga Asana class in his Ashram. Sivananda, however, is no mere physical culturist. The physical culturist exhorts people to build the body beautiful so that they may wallow more intensely in the mire of sensual filth. The Sadhu, on the other hand, considers the body as an instrument provided by God for service of His creation and advocates the perfection of the instrument so that it may be used more efficiently. For Sivananda, therefore, perfection of the human body is not an end in itself. He advocates it only for developing the higher faculties and as the first step in spiritual Sadhana. Control of body and physical perfection are necessary for control of mind. The mind cannot function when the body is ill-fed, ill-exercised,

emaciated and weak. The mind cannot concentrate when the stomach is hungry. That is why Swamiji says, "Bhajan after Bhojan" which should dispel another popular misconception that religion prescribes bodily torture for attaining God.

How to attain bodily perfection ? Sivananda prescribes Asans, Pranayama, light Sattwic food, moderate sleep, moderate exercise, occasional fasting and external and internal cleanliness.

Asans and Pranayama bestow on the practitioner bodily vigour, mental alertness and spiritual tranquillity. The basic difference between Asans and physical exercises is that Asans tone up the vital internal glands while exercises energise only the superficial outer muscles. By preventing the early ossification of bones and keeping the spine elastic and supple, Asans delay the setting in of old age. Asans and Pranayama destroy lethargy and laziness and help to keep an agile body and an alert mind. They make the breath flow harmoniously. Harmonious and smooth flow of breath is the basis of sound health and is the surest insurance against all diseases. Asans and Pranayama are also spiritual by beneficial and help to maintain Brahmacharya.

By themselves, Asans and Pranayama are sufficient to maintain bodily health and vigour, but it is doubly beneficial to supplement them with physical exercise. The outer muscles also will be toned up. Brisk walking in the open air is an excellent form of all-

round exercise. It can be practised by everyone. It is important, however, that Asans and physical exercise should not be practised in succession. Since Asans send blood supply to the internal organs and physical exercises draw blood out to the surface muscles, the practice of both in quick succession would mean that neither the vital glands nor the outer muscles will be nourished for a sufficiently long time with fresh blood. Therefore, if one is practised in the morning, the other should be done in the evening. Morning is the ideal time for Asans which are best practised on an empty stomach after clearing the bowel.

Ladies can benefit from Asans as much as men, but in the case of the former there are certain restrictions which should be observed during monthly periods and pregnancy. Asans result in the gradual disappearance of superfluous fat. To modern ladies who want to reduce fat and develop a graceful figure, Asans are a God-sent boon. They need no longer torture their bodies through vexatious dieting.

Asans and Pranayama are prohibited only in the case of children below twelve. As for the sick and the weak, while some Asans and types of Pranayama may not be possible or desirable, others may be helpful.

There are varieties of Asans and Pranayama. While the advanced Yogic postures and techniques of breath control may be learnt and practised only under the personal guidance of an adept, common

varieties can be done even with the help of just a good book. Sivananda's "Yogic Home Exercises" *is commendable not only for the succinct and scientific treatment of the commoner Asans and Pranayamas, but also for the insight it gives into the physiology of the human body, the choice of food and other principles of health and hygiene, the knowledge and practice of which would enhance the benefits of Asans and Pranayama. In the above book, Sivananda recommends a scientific combination of a few simple Asans and varieties of Pranayama which, while exercising all parts of the body, would take just about fifteen minutes to complete so that even the busy office-goer or housewife can derive immense benefits by their regular practice.

Different Asans exercise different glands and yield different benefits. Sarvangasan, for instance, tones up the thyroid and helps to maintain youthfulness. Sirshasan increases blood supply to the pineal gland situated in the brain and develops brain power. Vajrasan removes drowsiness, strengthens the spine and helps digestion. These are only a few examples. In the same way, varieties of Pranayama also yield different benefits. Bhastrika generates heat in the body and helps digestion. Shitali cools the system and purifies the blood. Kapalabhati tones up the digestive system and improves appetite.

Diseases which are not amenable to treatment under the different systems of medicine can be cured

by suitable Asans in combination with dietary control. Asans are a powerful antidote to wet-dreams and spermatorrhea of boys, uterine and ovarian disorders of women and rheumatism, lumbago and other old-age diseases of the aged people. Almost all diseases can be cured by Asans and Pranayama. Diseases dare not attack the person who maintains his health the Yoga way. A 'regular fifteen minutes' practice of Asans and Pranayama will enable the practitioner to go through a whole day's exacting round of duties with freshness and vigour.

Asans are scientific. For instance, in Sirshasan or the topsy-turvy pose, blood flows to the head and energises the whole region. If it is remembered how in the normal standing and sitting postures, there is inadequate blood supply to the head on account of the gravitational pull, it is easy to appreciate why the topsy-turvy pose is necessary to flush the nerves and cells in the head with a free supply of blood. Some of the more efficacious forms of physical exercise advocated under western systems of physical culture are no better than poor imitations of some Yoga postures.

Asans and Pranayama provide us with the cheapest and most natural form of preventive and curative medicine. They are learnt easily. No extended training is required. No elaborate apparatus need be bought. No gymnasium has to be built. All that is required is a folded woollen blanket on which

the aspirant should practise his Asans and Pranayama. The blanket is necessary to conserve within the body the electricity or current of energy which is generated during Asan and Pranayama practice and prevent it from leaking out.

It is a pity that even some of the educated persons suffer from the fear that Sirshasan and Pranayama will lead to madness and other avoidable trouble. The fear is absolutely unwarranted. It is a truism that anything done in excess or in the wrong way will result in injury. Even milk taken in excess can produce retching, but it certainly does not prove that milk is bad. Taken in moderation, no food can equal milk in its balanced nutritive content. Similarly, practised in moderation and according to prescribed rules, there is nothing to excel Asans and Pranayama to develop and maintain bodily vigour and to ward off disease. Simple Asans should be taken up to begin with; the period of practice should be increased only gradually. For instance, in the case of Sirshasan, the aspirant may stand in that pose for 5 seconds in the beginning and gradually increase the period by 15 seconds each week to 20 minutes or half an hour. While perfection in posture will be attained only by practice, even a little practice is highly beneficial. This point should never be forgotten by those who hesitate to make a beginning because they feel that they cannot do certain Asans to perfection.

Asans and Pranayama should be supplemented by a Yogic diet or a diet which is conducive to the practice of Yoga. Just as Asans help to develop the power of concentration or one-pointedness which, in its turn, reduces mental agitation and brings about peace of mind, so also the Yogic diet is conducive to the development of mental tranquillity. The intellect is rendered keen, subtle and sharp by a Yogic diet. The choice of food—its quality and content—is extremely important, because it is the subtlest portion of the food that we take which goes to form the brain matter and thus to shape our thoughts and character. By being vigilant over the nature of the food that we take, we can exercise considerable influence over the moulding of our character.

Non-vegetarian diet is taboo for the student of Yoga. It excites passion and renders the mind gross. It agitates the mind and makes it restless. Non-vegetarian diet may produce scientists, but never a spiritual hero. From the ethical standpoint also, Sivananda condemns meat-eating, since it indirectly involves the eater in the butcher's violence. Swamiji, who was a doctor of modern medicine in Malaya before he took to the life of an ascetic, condemns meat-eating for hygienic reasons as well. Meat-eating is unhygienic for the reason that the waste-matter lying in the bowel and kidneys of slaughtered animals and which would have been eliminated by those animals if they had not been

killed, also enter into the cooked food. Moreover, the intense fear experienced by the goat or fowl at the time of murder throws out poison in its system and this poison, along with the harmful venous blood is consumed by the meat-eater with the meat of the slaughtered animal.

It is not as if all vegetarian food is good. Onions and garlic says Swamiji, are worse than meat. Excess of mustard, tamariad, chillies and asafoetida ruin health. So do tea, coffee, alcohol and all stimulating drinks. All these should be given up. As far as possible, fried food and heavily spiced food should also be kept at a distance. Eternal happiness demands that the temporary itching of the tongue should be checked.

Milk and milk products, fresh vegetables and fruits are highly beneficial to the Yogic practitioner. Honey is an excellent food. It is a ready-made food which need not be further digested. It is directly assimilable and when taken in, enters the blood stream directly. Lemon juice and honey taken in a glass of water the first thing in the morning is an excellent brain tonic. Numberless recipes of this kind are given in Sivananda's books.

In general, Swami Sivananda suggests a few simple rules in the matter of food. A meal should not constitute too many items. Half the stomach should be filled with food, quarter with water and

the remaining portion left free for the expansion of gas. The breakfast should be light. The main meal should be taken about noon. The night meal should be finished at dusk and should be very light. Fruits and milk or fruits alone would be quite sufficient at night. The principle behind taking light, night food at an early hour is to allow sufficient time for it to be digested before retiring to bed. If the stomach feels light at the time of retiring to bed, sleep will be undisturbed.

Excessive eating wears out the digestive apparatus very quickly and reduces longevity by taxing the system. It is also wasted effort, because each man can assimilate only a certain amount of nutritive content and what is consumed over and above that is just thrown out.

The stomach should be kept clean always. Constipation should never be allowed to affect health. Almost all people suffer from chronic or partial constipation, knowingly or unknowingly. Constipation is the cause of hosts of ailments. There are many ways in which it can be cured. Asans and free intake of vegetables and fruits, together with a generous supply of water to the system, can eliminate constipation in toto.

Occasional fasting helps a great deal in maintenance of perfect health. The aspirant may fast for a complete day once a week or once a fortnight. If

he finds it difficult to do so, he may at least live on fruits and milk on specified days. Even if this is not possible, night meals at least should be given up periodically. How often is it forgotten that the digestive machinery needs as much rest as other parts of the body. Modern man recognises bodily and mental fatigue and writes volumes on rest and relaxation. He works for a few hours in factory or office and wants a rest interval. Welfare legislation provides for such intervals in most countries. Rarely, however, is it recognised that the digestive system which works not only during day, but also during night needs occasional rest. Instead of recognising this fact and allowing it rest after a week's hard work, Sundays are generally spent in feasting which gives added burden instead of the much-needed rest. Occasional fasts are highly beneficial, because they help to give rest to the digestive apparatus and expel impurities and waste matter adhering to various corners.

Cleanliness, external and internal, is essential for good health. While internal cleanliness or purity of mind is certainly more important, external cleanliness should not be neglected. The body should be scrubbed and bathed daily and kept scrupulously clean. This is almost an elementary maxim, but its increasing violation in civilised society makes its mention worthwhile.

The room in which the aspirant lives should be kept spotlessly clean. This is part of external cleanli-

ness. It should be free from too many distracting objects and should be furnished with the barest necessities. Possession leads to misery and minimum possession is itself conducive to great happiness.

External cleanliness cannot by itself ensure health if it is not accompanied by internal cleanliness. Cheerfulness and purity of thought are basic to sound health. The Sadhak, who wants to develop and maintain excellent health should always be cheerful. Worry damages health as nothing else does. What is bound to happen will happen. The best that the aspirant or any man can do under the circumstances is to be in constant communion with God, pray to Him and draw His grace. His grace will give sufficient power of resistance to withstand the trials and tribulations of the world and keep worries at a distance. Once the real hollow nature of the world and its products including the human body is correctly understood by persistent Vedantic inquiry, there is no room for doubt, dejection or despair. The aspirant should always be bubbling with buoyant enthusiasm. There is no place for pessimism and castor-oil face in Vedanta. It is only people, who do not care to study and understand the real glory of the grand Sanatana Dharma or eternal religion of India, who go about under the deluded impression that the practice of religion is for the weak-minded. These deluded souls are not only ignorant themselves, but infect others also with their ignorance. The entire world owes a deep debt of

gratitude to Swami Sivananda, whose writings, translated as they are into the leading languages of the world, have helped to put the role of religion in its proper perspective as a life-giving, energising, smile-creating, heart-warming, Divine tonic. Cheerfulness, therefore, is the essence of religion and spirituality. Without it, success—material or spiritual—is impossible.

The thoughts should not only be cheerful, but also clean, healthy, purifying and strength-giving. Weak thoughts and bad thoughts result in bodily ill-health also. In fact, all diseases originate in unhealthy thoughts. It would be wrong for anyone to assume that through Asans and food alone, a wonderful body can be built up. This is just not possible. It is not so easy as that. A sound mind is a compulsory pre-requisite for bodily health and vigour.

The spiritual aspirant who lives the Yoga way should find no difficulty in getting sound sleep. To further facilitate sound sleep, Swamiji recommends the reading of some thought-elevating and inspiring spiritual book for a short while just before retiring to bed. This practice will help to efface worldly worries from the mind, make it quiescent and induce sound sleep. Quality of sleep is more important than quantity. A sound sleep for two hours can be more refreshing than restless rolling in bed for eight hours and more. For the normal adult, Sivananda advocates retiring to bed at 10 P. M. and getting up at

4 A. M. Those who sleep more than six hours should reduce the period gradually to six hours and even five hours, where possible. This is not difficult. Ill-health can result as much from an over-dose of sleep as from inadequacy of sleep. Both extremes should be avoided. The prize of eternal bliss demands constant vigilance on the part of the seeker. Awareness of God should become a part of the aspirant's nature. Sivananda advises that the spiritual aspirant should always keep his Japa Mala or rosary with him round his neck or in his pocket or underneath his pillow when he retires to bed. When the sleep is disturbed or when the aspirant wakes up in the midst of sleep for micturition, he is asked to repeat the name of God rolling the beads on his rosary in order to induce sound sleep again.

The golden rules for dynamic health, therefore, are : regular practice of Asans and Pranayama, regular exercise, moderate in-take of Yogic diet, occasional fasting, external and internal cleanliness and moderate and sound sleep. These and other secrets of abundant health are beautifully conveyed in the eighteen autobiographical letters of Swami Sivananda known as Sivananda Gita. Says Swamiji : "I lead a simple, natural life. There is a fountain of youth in me. I beam with joy.....I am very regular in doing Asans. I do Pranayama also regularly. These give me wonderful health and energy

observe fasting, resting, airing, bathing, breathing, exercising, sun-bathing and enjoy freedom, power, beauty, courage, poise and health.” When we read these lines, we get the clue to the strength in Swamiji’s gait, the radiance in his face and the sparkle in his eyes.

Chapter Five

IN THE SERVICE OF GOD'S CHILDREN

The bodily instrument perfected through Asans, Pranayama, Yogic diet and so on should be utilised day and night in the service of God's children. Service gives happiness as nothing else does. The man who is out for genuine service continually experiences the thrill of happiness.

The man in quest of happiness should discard all selfish desires and plunge into selfless service. Service purifies. Just as gold is purified in fire, the human heart must be purified in the fire of service. Service gives strength. The feeling that one is able to be of even a little help to a fellow creature gives immense strength and hope and satisfaction which cannot be bought for money. Service helps to develop virtues like sympathy and compassion. It instils a sense of cosmic oneness and brotherhood in the person who engages in service.

Service and charity are not very different. Swamiji advises everyone to spend 1/10th of income in charity, whatever the income might be. Even the poor and the weak can perform Karma Yoga and

charity, because it is not only the giving of riches which is charity. As Sivananda puts it, "Every good act is charity. Giving water to the thirsty is charity. An encouraging word to a man in distress is charity. Giving a little medicine to the poor sick man is charity. Removing a thorn or a glass-piece on the road is charity.. ...To be kind and loving is charity. To forget and forgive some harm done to you is charity." Charity, therefore, is not the monopoly of the wealthy few, but is the privilege of all.

Charity is the secret of a full life. Selfless service is like an oasis in the desert of worldly misery. Without charity, without selfless service, life would not be worth living. Says Sivananda : "You make a living by what you get, but you make a life by what you give. Always give, give, give. This is the secret of abundance and divine life."

It is natural that charity begins at home, but if happiness is the goal, charity should not end at home. The Sadhak should extend his field of service from the home to the neighbourhood, from the neighbourhood to his village or town, from his town to his district and so on till he loses all feeling of isolation and embraces all creation in the supreme bond of love—irrespective of artificial barriers of caste, creed, nation, religion or sex.

Similarly, the aspirant may begin by practising charity with discrimination; but as his heart expands, as his vision widens, as his wisdom increases, he

should do indiscriminate charity. Discrimination in the matter of charity and service betrays unripe wisdom. Why should there be discrimination when the one Lord resides in all? As Swamiji questions: "Does the sun discriminate and shine only on good people? Does Ganga practise discrimination and give water only to the good people? Does a mango tree yield its fruits only to good people? Does air refuse to enter the nostrils of wicked people?" We should not also, therefore, differentiate in giving charity.

Indiscriminate charity, however, does not mean that it should be practised unwisely. It does not mean that the nefarious deeds of wicked people should be supported with money and material in much the same way as divine works of saintly souls are supported. Supporting the wicked in this manner would only amount to sharing sin. On the other hand, indiscriminate charity means that we should not deny, even to wicked people, our hearts and our sympathy. We should pray that God might grant them wisdom and put them in the proper path. Prayer for others is noble service. Prayer for one's own happiness is a selfish act. Prayer for one's family and friends is also selfish. It is only prayer for the welfare of all that can be termed unselfish. Swami Sivananda indicates a simple, easy-for-all act of selflessness when he repeats everyday the beautiful peace chants for the welfare of all :

Om Sarvesham Swasti Bhavatu ;
 Sarvesham Shantir Bhavatu ;
 Sarvesham Purnam Bhavatu ;
 Sarvesham Mangalam Bhavatu.
 Sarve Bhavantu Sukhinah ;
 Sarve Santu Niramayah ;
 Sarve Bhadrani Pasyantu ;
 Maa Kaschit Dukkha Bhag Bhavet.

Daily repetition of these peace chants is a 'must' for all spiritual aspirants, for all those who want to be happy. No man can hope to be happy at the cost of others. It is only by working for the welfare of all that each man can find happiness for himself. The simple prayer given above demands not money, not physical labour, but only an unselfish heart brimming with love for all. It is only in the garden of a large heart that the plant of bliss can grow.

Selfless love for all creation is a basic desideratum for happiness. Without it, no happiness is possible. A selfish man may amass riches, may marry and have children, may live in big bungalows, may eat delicious dishes, but, so long as his heart is contracted, he cannot be happy. Who can be happy ? Sage Sivananda gives the clue :

"God Indra is not happy ;
 An emperor is not happy ;
 A dictator is not happy ;
 A president of a state is not happy.
 Who is happy then ?
 A sage is happy ;
 A Yogi is happy ;
 He who has controlled his mind is happy.
 Glory to such Yogi and sage !"

What is the secret of happiness that the sage should succeed where the king fails ? Swamiji unveils the mystery in a single sentence : "Ten saints may sleep under one blanket, but two kings cannot live in a kingdom."

Possession multiplies misery. Possession is a selfish act. Charity is voluntary dis-possession in a useful direction. Charity stimulates happiness. Charity is unselfish. Only selflessness and a sense of unity with all creation can bestow happiness. Service must be selfless. It must not be done for name and fame or for power and prestige. There should be no motive behind service, no expectation of reward. If the service is motivated by some desire, that service cannot bring in happiness, because the unalterable axiom is that where there is selfish

desire, there can be no happiness. Service must be for its own sake. Building hospitals or schools or giving other forms of charity, in however large a measure, will not form Karma Yoga, if it is motivated by the desire for name and fame. Swamiji says that a Karma Yogi should not expect even a thanks when he renders some help or does a good deed.

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Service must not be engaged in with the sense of separateness, with the sense of I and Thou. The aspirant should crush his ego or spirit of I-ness and Mine-ness, the spirit of exclusiveness. The Karma Yogi should feel that in serving the poor, the sick and the suffering, he is serving himself, because all are one ; all are forms of the Lord. God is one. He appears as many--as man, woman, animals, trees, sun, stars and so on. He manifests in different names and forms for His sport. This is the Leela of Brahman. The essence in all names and forms is one only and that one is He. The essence only is real and the superficial encrustation is false. The spiritual aspirant should repeatedly contemplate over this idea and affirm his faith in it. This will lead him on to a feeling of cosmic oneness which is necessary for active service and happiness.

The feeling of cosmic oneness is the root of bliss. When the spiritual aspirant realises that the soul in him and the soul in others is the one God, he begins to share the joys and sufferings of others. By so doing, he not only cheers others, but cheers him-

self and attains satisfaction at heart. This emphasis on cosmic oneness runs through all exhortations of Sivananda in regard to practice of selfless service. Whether he advises the Sadhak to serve the aged and the sick pilgrims on their way to Badrinath and Kedarnath or tells them to feed the fish in the Ganges and the monkeys on the Himalayan slopes, he cautions them to do it with Narayana Bhav i.e., with the feeling that they are serving not the pilgrims or fish or monkeys as such, but the Narayana or God who resides in the pilgrims, the fish and the monkeys alike. Every kind of service—service of parents, of relations, of friends, of the spiritual preceptor, of the sick and the poor—yields its best benefits when executed in a selfless spirit and with Narayana Bhav. This question of 'Bhav' or attitudinal feeling is very important in all spiritual practices, whether it is selfless service or Japa, or prayer or Kirtan or anything else. Of course, it is not possible to develop the right Bhav overnight; but, with faith and zeal, the correct Bhav would manifest automatically after a little practice.

It is difficult to attain eternal happiness by abstract meditation on an impersonal God, without any reference to suffering humanity. For the seeker after Truth, there is no escape from selfless service of the scething, writhing humanity. Therefore it is that Swami, Sivananda, gives the clarion call :

"See God in the poor,
Behold the Lord in the down-trodden,
In the naked,
In the hungry,
In the homeless,
In the sick,
In the distressed and the afflicted.
Burn your incense, wave your lights,
Offer your flowers,
In the form of cloth, food, medicine,
education and shelter.
Nurse the sick with Atma-Bhav.
Serve the poor with Divine Bhav.
Educate the illiterate.
Run up to villages and the slums.
This will purify your heart.
This will lead to the descent of Divine Grace.
This will lead you to God-realisation "

There is a limitless field for Karma Yoga. There is endless scope for selfless service. The only limit is the Sadhak's own resources. He should always be on the alert and watch for opportunities for service. The genuine aspirant should be spiritually aggressive. He should himself go to the side of the sick and the suffering, the poor and the needy without waiting to be called. When he does so, he should thank God for providing him those opportunities for service. **A humble man is a happy man.**

The exact form that selfless service should assume depends upon the qualifications, aptitude and circumstances of the individual. Swamiji points out that even scavenging done with the proper Bhav, would constitute worship and be Karma Yoga in the highest sense. Helping any good activity, any spiritual activity would be Karma Yoga.

Doctors have wonderful scope for service. They have almost a limitless field for disinterested service, because the world abounds in sick people. Doctors should serve the poor people without fees in the thought that they are serving God. They will derive immense happiness and peace at heart. Swamiji advises the spiritual aspirant, even if he is not a doctor, to learn first-aid and homoeopathy so as to be of help to the sick and the suffering.

Those who have money can distribute food, clothes and medicines among the needy. Literate persons can teach illiterate fellow-beings and educate them. That is also great service. Spreading of spiritual knowledge and Bhakti among the people is first-rate service. Such service helps to transform human beings into Divine beings. As Sivanānda has pointed out, "If you give food to a poor man, he again wants food when he becomes hungry. The best form of charity is Vidya-Dana, imparting wisdom. Wisdom removes ignorance, the cause for taking a body and destroys in toto all sorts of miseries and suffering, for ever." Organisation of centres of spiritual

activity, holding of Divine Life Conferences, and such other activities would form dynamic service.

Meditation is also active service. God-realisation is the service of services. It is the greatest service. It is the supreme duty of man. All other duties—duties towards parents, family, society and so on—are subservient to this primary duty of God-realisation for which the individual soul is sent to this earth in the form of a human being. By realising God, the aspirant purifies not only himself, but a long line of forefathers and descendants as well. As for serving humanity, a God-realised soul need not physically go out into the world to help mankind. It should not be forgotten that a meditating Yogi seated in a solitary cave in the Himalayan heights is doing much more service to humanity than the social worker actively functioning in the field in cities and towns. While the labours of the social worker benefit a few hundreds or thousands in a limited circle, the spiritual vibrations set up by the meditations of the Yogi beneficially influence the entire humanity. The sublime thought currents of the Yogi add strength to and energise all the good thoughts in the world and neutralise the bad thoughts. The aspirant must know that every good thought of his is supported by similar good thoughts of all other human beings and the powerful spiritual vibrations set up by saints and sages, including the Rishis of yore. Practises like group meditation and common chanting

are extremely scientific and beneficial for this reason. These principles cannot be understood or appreciated by the rank and file who know nothing about thought force, thought waves, etc. Every thought has a definite size, shape, colour and weight even as a material object has. That is how the Yogi who has developed his inner vision is able to read the thoughts of others. The inquisitive reader will find a wealth of detail about thought culture in Swamiji's monumental work, "Mind—Its Mysteries and Control".

The wrong notion that the silent Sadhu is a social parasite should be given up altogether. Meditation is much better work than mere physical labour.

Selfless service of every type is a form of worship. Any work is transformed into worship if it is offered to the Lord in the thought that one is functioning in this world only as an instrument of God to carry out His Divine purpose. This feeling that we are but puppets in the hands of the Supreme Showman called God and that we live and act only to serve His will is called Nimitta Bhav. He who maintains this Bhav always converts every action of his into Yoga. By acting with Nimitta Bhav, the Sadhak will not be bound by his actions, because the responsibility for his actions is transferred to God.

If action is to be performed without expectation of reward and with Nimitta Bhav, it only amounts

to absolute self-surrender to the Will of God. In other words, it amounts to burning of the individual will. The last trace of egoism should be obliterated. There should be no selfish desire on the part of the Karma Yogi. He should entertain no hopes for himself. Hopes and desires create endless misery and the intelligent Sadhak should give them up completely and make unreserved surrender to the Divine Will.

Giving up of hopes and desires means shedding attachment for all perishable objects. Where there is no attachment there can be no selfish desire. Therefore, all clinging to body, wife, relatives and friends should be given up. All attachment for perishable, worldly goods like radios and automobiles, bangles and bracelets should be thrown to the four winds. The mind should be completely detached from the external world, turned inside and focussed on the in-dwelling Atman. Atman, Brahman, God are all synonymous terms. They indicate the supreme, imperishable Reality. The rays of the mind should be made to converge on that Reality. No doubt, the aspirant should take care of his body for utilising it in efficient service, but he should not be attached to the body itself. Only thus can he do selfless service with concentration and efficiency.

Chapter Six

TAP THE SOURCE

The thirsty man will find water only if he goes to a tap or a spring. The person who wants a Dhoti or a Sari must approach a cloth merchant. The man of aesthetic taste, who desires to drink deep of the beauty of the Himalayan scenery will have to go to the Himalayas. The bare-headed traveller who is scorched by the hot sun can secure release only if he reaches for a shady place. Even so, the spiritual aspirant who longs for bliss must reach for the source of bliss.

God is the source of bliss. He is an ocean of bliss. Not only that, He is all-full. Of Him, it has been said :

Om Purnamadah Purnamidam Purnat Purnamu-
dachyate
Purnasya Purnamadaya Purnamevavasishyate.

The reservoir of bliss will not diminish even if millions should drink of it. The devotee can drink of this reservoir to his heart's content, provided he masters the technique of tapping it.

The electric bulb is lit only when it is connected to the battery which is the source of electricity. Even so, the mind can be filled with bliss only if it is tuned to the fountain-head of bliss. Prayer, Japa, Kirtan, Sat-sang and Swadhyaya—all these establish such a connection. They attune the mind to God.

Prayer establishes communion with God. Prayer invokes God's grace. Prayer is an appeal from feeble man to almighty God for succour and help. It is an expression of helplessness. It is an avowal of human inability. Prayer develops humility. It kills the ego. It is self-effacement which is the secret of spiritual progress. Prayer, to be effective, must spring from a sincere heart. Such prayer purifies. It cleanses the heart and makes it a fit place for the descent of Divine Grace. Prayer elevates and inspires. The aspirant should pray always—in prosperity and in distress, in affluence and in misery.

What should the Sadhaka pray for? Not for worldly things. Not for perishable pleasures. Not even for release from misery. Prayer does not mean approaching God with a begging bowl. Sivananda repeatedly cautions the aspirant to pray not for worldly gains, but for wisdom and peace and strength to bear sufferings. He advisedly tells us not to pray for the removal of sufferings. Whatever we are destined to suffer as the fruit of our past misdeeds, we have to suffer and it is no wisdom to postpone the opportunities for washing away old sins.

All can pray. The poor man and the illiterate man can open up their hearts to God as much as the rich man and the scholar. Sincerity is the only requirement. Where sincerity is lacking, all else is of no avail. Where there is devotion in the heart, little else is required. Sivananda assures us that this is so. Says he :

“The child does not know grammar and
pronunciation.

It utters some sounds ;

But the mother understands !

The Indian butler of a European officer

Is not a professor of English :

He talks some predicate-less sentences,

But the officer understands !

When others can understand the language of
the heart,

What to say of the Antaryamin ?

He knows what you wish to say !

Even if you make mistakes

In your prayers to Him, .

Even if there are mistakes

In the Mantras you recite,

If you are sincere,

If the prayer comes from your heart,

He listens to it ;

Because He understands the language of your heart."

God has always answered and will continue to answer the sincere prayers of devotees made in absolute self-surrender. There is no limit to the power of prayer. The power of prayer is the power of God. On the other hand, man can do very little. Worldly wisdom has its strict limitations. That is why Swamiji exhorts : "When the wisdom of politicians and social leaders fails, kneel down and pray; for, a pair of praying hands are mightier than rulers of state and winners of battle."

Like prayer, Japa is another powerful means of comfort. Japa is also extremely easy. In this iron age or Kali Yuga, Japa alone is sufficient to attain God-realisation. In the earlier Yugas or cycles of time, more rigorous spiritual practices like Yaga or sacrificial offerings, meditation etc., were ordained by the scriptures to attain God-realisation. But, in view of the bad times and the difficult conditions of life obtaining in this Kali Yuga, scriptures themselves have sanctioned that Japa alone is sufficient to attain God. That is why Japa or repetition of the name of God holds a pride of place in Swamiji's Synthetic Yoga.

The benefits of Japa are incalculable. It purifies the mind rapidly and destroys evil Vasanas or mental inclinations. It gives courage, poise, strength and wisdom. The names of God are words of power. They have very high potency. Ceaseless repetition

of these words of power opens up new grooves in the thought processes of the mind and cuts new channels of wisdom. In Swami Sivananda's own words: "Mantra is Divinity encased within a sound structure . . . The repetition of a Mantra has a mysterious power of bringing about the manifestation of the Divinity, just as the splitting of atom manifests tremendous forces latent in it." While even mechanical repetition of the Mantras would bring in their benefits, repetition with knowledge of their meaning and with the proper devotional Bhav, heightens their efficacy tremendously.

It is a betrayal of ignorance to argue which Mantra is more powerful. All Mantras are equally beneficial. The name Jesus is as potent as the name Allah. God is one. He appears in many forms to please the tastes of different devotees. While one person may like Krishna, another may cling to Kali; but, fundamentally, there is no difference between Krishna and Kali. An aspirant may, therefore, worship any God or Goddess he likes and do Japa of the Mantra of that God or Goddess; but, he should on no account despise other deities. On the other hand, he should see his own God or Goddess (Ishta Devata or Favourite Deity) residing in those other deities also.

God in his original state of pristine purity is incomprehensible to the limited human mind. Man has, therefore, to worship God in manifested

form or incarnated form which can be seen and heard. Arjuna could see Krishna and converse with Krishna. Sabari could see Rama, speak with Rama. But, neither Arjuna nor Sabari nor anyone else could *see* or *hear* the unmanifested Brahman. It is just not possible. In fact, what are called and normally understood as Gods and Goddesses of the Hindu pantheon are nothing more than manifested forms of the one Supreme Deity or God. These manifested forms are called angels in other religions. They are Devatas. It is, therefore, wrong to say that Hinduism has many Gods. No religion, be it Hinduism or any other religion, preaches more than one God. God is absolute and there cannot be two absolutes. It would falsify logic.

For speedy spiritual evolution, the aspirant should stick to a particular Mantra and a particular Devata. A question may arise as to how to choose the personal deity. This is a matter for individual inclination, but where there is no tangible preference towards a particular deity, Sivananda offers two suggestions. The aspirant, if he has the correct horoscope or knows the exact time of his birth, can ask a good astrologer to fix his deity from the planetary positions at the time of his birth. It is not necessary to hunt out an expert astrologer for this purpose; anyone with a reasonable knowledge of astrology can do this. The other clue to the favourite deity is given by the names usually uttered by the aspirant at times of shock such as a scorpion sting. Where

there is a sudden shock, some may cry instinctively, "Rama ! Rama !" Others may cry, "Govinda ! Gopala !" And so on. This instinctive reaction would give the correct answer to the question as to what deity should be chosen.

There are three ways of doing Japa—loud repetition, repetition in a whisper audible only to the aspirant and silent mental repetition with closed lips. Repetition in a whisper is much more powerful than loud Japa and mental Japa is even more powerful than Japa in a whisper. The obvious explanation is that the more beneficial forms of Japa require greater concentration on the part of the aspirant.

Japa can also be practised with paper and pen. This is called Likhit Japa or Japa through writing. The same Mantra is written again and again in a note-book, one below the other, with the eyes following the writing of the nib and the ears mentally tuned to the sound form of the Mantra as it is written. Likhit Japa thus becomes a powerful aid in the development of concentration also.

Japa is very easy to practise. While there are certain simple restrictions with regard to external cleanliness in the matter of loud repetition and repetition in a whisper, mental Japa can be practised anywhere by anyone under any circumstance. Mental Japa, in fact, is the easiest Sadhana and a very potent Sadhana which is available to man living in

the turmoil of the twentieth century, be he in the sky-scraper apartments of dizzy New York or in the sublime solitude of the silent Himalayan forests. Mental Japa can be practised in peace and in war, in the office and in the battlefield. It can be done while waiting for a bus and during intervals in a conversation. With some practice, it can be done even while engaged in other work. After prolonged practice, it becomes a sort of second nature to the practitioner. His mind will be repeating the Mantra of the Ishta Devata round the clock, even while sleeping, sub-consciously. The benefits of such practice are incalculable. The Mantras thus repeated build, as it were, an impregnable fortress round the aspirant and protect him from many dangers and guide him through many pitfalls.

The rosary or Japa Mala is a scientific aid in the practice of Japa. It helps concentration and the beginner should always use a Mala while practising Japa. When he is advanced, the rosary may not be absolutely essential.

The practice of Japa simultaneously with other actions heightens the efficacy of those other actions. Japa should always be practised. The benefits of Asans, Pranayama and, in fact, every other work are increased manifold if Japa is simultaneously combined with those other practices.

Japa is a secret of success, material and spiritual. There are Mantras for drawing the grace of particu-

lar deities towards attaining specific benefits. There are Mantras to cure scorpion bites and to get children as there are Mantras to get riches and to improve knowledge. To achieve specific ends, however, Japa should be done according to certain prescribed rites. The interested reader will find a wealth of detail in Swamiji's classical work titled, "Japa Yoga".

Like prayer and Japa, Kirtan is a means of communing with God. It is a wonderful aid to develop peace of mind. Music soothes the agitated mind. Music purifies. Music uplifts. Music ennobles. Singing the praise of God helps to develop humility and self-surrender. In the case of beginners in the spiritual path, it helps to relieve the tedium of meditation and other austere spiritual practices. No wonder then that Sivananda encourages devotional music as conducive to spiritual upliftment. He affirms that God can be reached through music alone. He has raised music to the level of a Yoga in itself. Regular Kirtan forms an essential part of the Ashram's routine in Sivanandanagar. Akhanda Kirtan or non-stop singing of the Maha Mantra,

Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare
Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna
Hare Hare"

instituted by Swamiji in his Ashram has also been going on day and night since December 3, 1943 gene-

rating an all-powerful, spiritual current invisibly helping all Sadhaks in their spiritual endeavour.

Prayer, Japa, Kirtan and other such spiritual practices purify the atmosphere wherein they are practised by setting up powerful spiritual vibrations in the atmosphere around the place. That is why Swami Sivananda advises the aspirants to set apart a room for spiritual Sadhana, to keep it under lock and key and not to allow others to enter the room. Presumably, the idea is to keep intact the spiritual vibrations set up in the room and not let them be disturbed or polluted by materialistic thoughts or thoughts of desire, greed, anger, jealousy and lust which occupy the mind of the average man of the world. If a separate room cannot be kept in each house for spiritual Sadhana, at least a corner of a room should be exclusively reserved for this purpose. After some time, the practitioner will find that the very atmosphere in the reserved corner or room is conducive to contemplation and meditation. The meditative mood will naturally manifest itself when he enters and sits in that place wherein he has already meditated for months on end. This is also the principle behind the feeling of purity, sanctity and holiness that one experiences in famous temples and in sacred places. The atmosphere in these places is Sattwic or pure as a result of the heart-felt prayers of countless devotees and the meditations of Mahatmas, saints and sages.

The man who wants peace of mind should avail himself of every opportunity to benefit by the company of saints and sages. He should resort to Sat-sangh as frequently as possible. Sat-sangh is company of the wise. It is an educational process. Association with Mahatmas begets wisdom. Wisdom is real education. Wisdom teaches simple living and high thinking, the combination conducive to happiness.

In the presence of a God-realised sage, doubts and fears vanish. Wisdom dawns. Peace prevails. Quarrels between enemies end. A few hours spent in the company of a sage can transform the very life of a person. Sat-sangh is infinitely more potent in moulding and perfecting the life of an individual than years of hollow education in college where everything is taught except the culture of the human personality itself. Real education lies in perfecting body, mind and soul with a view to realising the Immortal Self or Atman within. Real education consists in teaching man how to be happy under all circumstances. Real education should develop in him virtuous qualities like courage, selflessness, universal love, spirit of service, serenity, honesty, truth, integrity, celibacy and so on. Real education should teach man the techniques of eradicating the last traces of various vices such as cowardice, anger, jealousy, lust etc. It is for the lack of life-giving education that boys and girls, men and women go about with frustrated looks, downcast demeanour

and heavy hearts. The growing social indiscipline and the decadent morals leading to degeneration in the physical and mental health of the nation are all directly traceable to this lack of purpose in present-day education.

In a thrilling address delivered to the students of Roorkee University some years ago, Swami Sivānanda beautifully summed up the inadequacies of the present system of education and the means to rectify them. He told the budding engineers at Roorkee : "You have to earn your daily bread. For that, this secular education too is necessary. But, remember : Man does not live by bread alone..... Immortality is not attained by proficiency in Engineering... ..In the Infinite alone is Bliss, not in these perishable objects. Side by side with your other activities, you should study Brahma Vidya. Side by side with your text-books, you should study the Gita and Upanishads."*

Study of Gita, Upanishads and books written by realised souls is called Swadhyaya. Swadhyaya sharpens the intellect and awakens wisdom. As wisdom dawns, miseries vanish. Swadhyaya constitutes indirect Sat-sangh where direct physical company of Mahatmas is not available.

Besides bestowing wisdom, Sat-sangh and Swadhyaya develop devotion. Devotion is concentrated

* Please see APPENDIX 2 for full text of Swamiji's Address.

love for God. Devotion is unselfish love. The aspirant who develops devotion establishes a direct link with the object of his devotion viz., God. Like prayer, Japa and Kirtan, Sat-sangh and Swadhyaya are tried techniques to draw on the fount of bliss.

Prayer, Japa, Kirtan, Sat-sangh and Swadhyaya are all purificatory processes which make the bodily temple fit for God to reside. By calming the surging emotions and stilling the perplexing thoughts, they make the mind one-pointed and turned towards God. Wherever there is one-pointed concentration, there is happiness. The man who loves his wife intensely, whose wife is the sole object of adoration for him, finds happiness in her. The mother who tends her new-born babe with selfless devotion round the clock and pays exclusive attention to the comforts of the baby forgetting her own needs, finds satisfaction in that baby. A scientist who is ceaselessly engaged in a research project without caring for his food and sleep, who thinks of that project, talks of it and dreams of it alone, finds an inexplicable fulfilment in his task. Sivananda says that the happiness of the husband, the joy of the mother and the satisfaction of the scientist are but poor reflections of the ineffable Atmic Bliss which can be experienced by concentrating all our attention and energy on God who is the source of immortal bliss and lasting peace. The wife will perish, the baby will

die, the research project may end—but, God will never cease to be. He is immortal. Bliss derived from Him is also immortal. The call of Divine Life is the call to drink of His bliss.

Chapter Seven

TEAR THE VEIL OF IGNORANCE

Synthetic Yoga is an exact science. Asans and Pranayama perfect the body. Service and charity expand the heart. Prayer, Japa, Kirtan and other devotional practices purify the mind and make it more subtle. The aspirant is now fully equipped for the last lap of the journey. It is the toughest part of the pilgrimage to God. It is full of darkness and the aspirant has to pierce this darkness with his purified mind. The purified mind is the most dependable weapon in the armoury of the spiritual aspirant. Without it, God-searching becomes a vain quest.

God is the substance of everything ; but, when seen through the mind, He appears as man, woman, tree, animal and the infinite objects of the universe. This is the trick of Maya. Mind is Maya's creation. It is like a coloured mirror through which Reality is seen in distorted form. Ignorance is the dark paint used by Maya to colour the mind. Removal of this ignorance is the object of spiritual discipline.

The brilliant sun, when reflected in the yellowish, muddy waters of a disturbed pond, will

present only a coloured and grotesque shape, having no similarity whatsoever with the white circular disc of the sun. Similarly, God when reflected in the Mayaic waters of the turbulent mind lake, presents the image of this miserable world. In truth, only the sun is the reality and not its false shadow. Even so, God is the only Reality ; His reflection called the universe lies only in the imagination of the mind.

It is the mind in man which forces him to see only the reflected image of God, hiding His original splendour from man's view. If the mind is destroyed, man can cognise God directly. Destruction of mind, therefore, is the ultimate aim of spiritual Sadhana. This has to be carried out systematically.

Purification of the mind is only the first step in the process of its destruction. Purification thins out the mind. It makes the mind more subtle.

The purified mind must be made to concentrate. Concentration is mental focussing. The mind can be focussed on an object or an idea. For the spiritual novice, concentration becomes easy if the object of concentration is concrete. The beginner should also choose a pleasing object on which to concentrate. Only thus can he prevent the mind from wandering away from the object of concentration. To start with, concentration can be practised on the flame of a candle, the tick-tick sound of a clock,

the star in the sky, the picture of OM or the picture of one's Ishta Devata. This should be followed by concentration on a suitable spiritual centre within the body. The Sadhak may concentrate with closed eyes on the space between the eyebrows or on the tip of the nose. There is nothing which cannot be achieved by concentration. Concentration is power for prosperity—material and spiritual.

A word of caution is necessary. As a result of earnest and sustained purification of mind, practice of various Asans, Pranayama, concentration and other forms of spiritual discipline, the aspirant may acquire certain Siddhis or supernatural powers. Sivananda unmistakably warns the spiritual aspirant against the danger of being lured by such Siddhis. The aspirant is told not to run after or misuse these Siddhis, because they will certainly result in his downfall. Where there is a fall in the case of a Sadhak, it is a steep fall; it is a fall from a height. So, it hurts all the more. It hurts much more than in the case of the ordinary worldly man. A second climb will be infinitely more difficult after sustaining such injury.

Concentration should be followed by meditation. Meditation is nothing but protracted or sustained concentration. A scientist has to concentrate on a problem, on a given subject, on a riddle to bring out the answer, to solve it. He has to think, think and think. Then only the answer is forthcoming.

Similarly, meditation is intense concentration, concerted concentration, on the problem of life, on the problem of the inexplicable triad of God, man and the universe. While concentration becomes essential even to solve small problems in science, what to speak of the problem of life which has baffled humanity since time immemorial? The Sadhak who wants God must meditate, meditate and meditate.

Meditation can be practised on any image of the Lord. This is concrete meditation. After some practice, the aspirant will be able to visualise the form of the image even with closed eyes. Meditation can also be practised on abstract ideas and on various Vedantic formulae such as "I am Immortal OM OM OM," "I am Infinity OM OM OM" and so on.

Reading of scriptural texts like the Upanishads and the Brahma Sutras with Shraddha (faith) and Bhakti (devotion) and intense concentration is itself a mild form of meditation. Such Swadhyaya should be followed by contemplation on what was read. Repeated concentration and meditation on a single idea will bring out a wealth of knowledge on that idea. Swami Sivananda advises the aspirant to practise meditation on virtuous qualities like courage, mercy and truthfulness—one at a time, for a month or so on each quality, till that quality becomes part and parcel of the very being of the practitioner.

While meditating on a particular object or idea, various extraneous thoughts will try to enter the mind of the aspirant and interfere with his meditation. The aspirant should ignore these extraneous thoughts, be indifferent to them and repeatedly try to concentrate on the object of his meditation. Gradually, the frequency of interruption in meditation will be reduced and a time will come when meditation will give uninterrupted peace and bliss.

Meditation is the key to world peace. Meditation is the solution for all problems of the world. Without meditation, life would be difficult. Meditation is digging deep into the mine of truth and wisdom. Swamiji asks the Sadhaks to meditate and meditate and bring out their own Gitas and Upanishads. Meditation confers peace and strength. Sivananda affirms that half an hour's meditation is sufficient to enable the aspirant smilingly to pass through a whole week's life in this world of problems and misery.

Meditation is churning of the mind. The mind is churned so that it may throw up its essence which is God. It is like churning curd to get at butter. There is no disease which cannot be cured by meditation, because meditation tries to get direct at the Truth. It is a frontal attack. All diseases, all troubles are born out of ignorance. Ignorance lies in the mind. Behind this ignorance, behind this mind, behind this whole Mayaic jugglery.

behind Maya itself is God who is the only Reality and who is a mass of bliss (Ananda Maya). By meditation, the aspirant churns the mind to get at God and simultaneously with the realisation of God, the falsity of worldly miseries is also realised. Thus, there is an end to imaginary evil and the aspirant realises his real Self or Atman. He at once becomes fully aware of his Godhood and swims in the ocean of Immortal bliss.

Meditation must be regular. Whenever the Sattwic mood manifests and divine thought currents flow, the aspirant must sit down for meditation. The Brahmamuhurta is the ideal time for meditation. Why? Sivananda gives the answer :

“There is Sattwa in the atmosphere
 In Brahmamuhurtha.
 The atmosphere is calm
 And the world is asleep.
 The Raga-Dwesa currents
 Have not yet started flowing in your mind,
 You are just returning from deep sleep
 When you enjoyed bliss without objects ;
 You can then easily convince the mind
 That real happiness is within.
 Only Yogis, Jnanis and Sages are awake at this
 time.
 You will be greatly benefited by their thought-
 currents.
 Never miss the Brahmamuhurtha even for a day.”

It is not possible to meditate the whole day, even for serious aspirants. It is very difficult. Without variety, the mind—especially the beginner's mind—will be tired. It is necessary to guard against this possibility. It is important that the aspirant should be protected from the monotony of one-sided spiritual practice leading him to worldly channels of activity with a vengeance. The beauty of Synthetic Yoga lies in the fact that the seriousness of meditation is tempered with the joy of Kirtan, the happiness and strength of service, the peace of Japa, the understanding of Swadhyaya and the glory of Sat-sangh.

While meditation in itself constitutes a very powerful attack on ignorance, Swami Sivananda suggests that the spiritual aspirant should open up a second front also. The second front is Vichara or enquiry into the real nature of things. Vichara results in Viveka or discrimination between the real and the unreal. It helps the aspirant to sift the true from the false. Swamiji asserts that without cogitation, the Truth cannot be known or realised. Vichara sharpens the intellect and leads to discernment of the Truth that lies behind the phenomenal universe.

How should the aspirant reflect? Sivananda shows the way: "Who am I? What is Brahman? What is this Samsara? What is the goal of life? How to attain the Goal? How to attain freedom from births and deaths? What is the Swarupa of

Moksha ? Whence ? Where ? Whither ? Thus should the aspirant of liberation ever enquire, seeking to achieve the purpose of life." The *modus operandi* of this method is seen in the saying, "As you think, so you become." Constant reflection on the Reality behind appearances leads to the attainment of oneness with the Reality which confers immortality and everlasting peace.

Enquiry opens our eyes to new vistas of knowledge. It steadily leads us to Truth. For instance, if the aspirant starts the "Who am I?" enquiry, he will soon find that he cannot equate himself with any one of his sense organs like nose, eyes or ears, because even without one or more of these, he can live and life can pulsate in his veins. So then, he is not the body. Nor is he the mind, because even during unconscious and deep sleep states, when the mind ceases to function, he exists and his heart throbs. Then, what is this "I" in everybody ? Sivananda declares that the real "I" is none else than Brahman or Atman who is the motive force behind all existence. It is He who thinks through the mind, sees through the eyes, eats through the mouth, hears through the ears and so on. He is the witnessing consciousness who dwells in all beings. When a person gets up from deep sleep and says, "I enjoyed a sound, dreamless sleep", it is this Witnessing Consciousness which remembers the fact that the body and mind rested in sound sleep. It cannot be otherwise. The mind which was dead during the deep sleep

state, could not itself have consciously enjoyed a sound slumber and remembered it. The enjoyer is the Atman. Sivananda repeatedly advises the aspirant to identify himself with this Atman which is his real Self and not with his perishable body. Constant identification with the Atman or Witnessing Consciousness in oneself is a short-cut to spiritual success. The aspirant who adopts this technique will soon rise above body-consciousness and will float in bliss.

The secret of spirituality lies in realising one's essential nature. It is not becoming something outside of oneself. It is not as if man and God are separate and that man should go to a God who is external to him and merge in that God. No. God is already there, everywhere, within us and outside of us. The body and mind in which man is clothed are mere illusions of an ignorant mind which itself does not exist. God only is. All else is not. Meditation and enquiry enable the aspirant to feel, to realise that he is after all Brahman and not a bundle of body and mind. When Divine Wisdom dawns, the aspirant realises the original nature of his Being. His body and mind fall to the ground of their own accord. The mind melts in Brahman as camphor melts in fire. The separate identity of the individual soul vanishes. Only Sat-Chit-Ananda prevails. It is a glorious state, beyond all description. The living God of Rishikesh has, nevertheless, attempted to capture its grandeur in words. Says Sivananda :

"I stand on the heights of the Vedantic hill.
I entered the heart of Bhuma or the Infinite
wisdom.

Master of destiny am I.

No evil, no human element, no pain, no sorrow
are here.

There are infinite Good, perfection and freedom,
Perennial joy, supreme peace and sweet harmony.

It is the land of fullness, happiness and felicity.

The law of cause and effect does not operate
here.

There is neither sunrise nor sunset here.

It is all eternal Sunshine and effulgence.

There is no smell of mind, egoism or intellect
here.

The senses are burnt to ashes.

Pure consciousness reigns supreme.

There is neither 'I' nor 'you' nor 'he',

Neither 'here' nor 'there', neither 'today' nor
'yesterday'.

It is an abode of "Ananda Ghana",

"Vijnana Ghana", "Prajnana Ghana".

We can also get on to the heights of the Vedantic hill, if we would care to exert and tread the path shown by the Master. The path is : "Serve, Love, Give, Purify, Meditate, Realise."

Chapter Eight

BLISS ABSOLUTE

It is fashionable to argue that it is only people in difficulties who resort to God and religion. It is needless to point out that those who argue in this manner are ignorant people. Out of temporary material affluence, they lose their sense of discrimination. Being puffed up by vanity, they eat, dress, brag and sleep. They live under a spell of false contentment. They imagine that they are happy which they really are not. Their minds are full of greed, jealousy, pride, vanity, anger and a host of other vicious qualities which bar all approach to happiness. These pitiable people forget that Lord Buddha was a king who left his queen and palace at the height of his glory. They forget that Mira was a princess. They forget that Sankara and Vivekananda were not beggars in rags. They by-pass the fact that Swami Sivananda was having roaring medical practice in Malaya when he renounced name and fame, power and pelf. Their intellect clouded by Maya in the garb of some woman and some tit-bits of gold and silver, these deluded souls do not stop to realise that Mahatma Gandhi could certainly have afforded a gaberdine suit if he had liked. Then,

why did Buddha and Sankara, Mira and Gandhi voluntarily discard worldly comforts? It is because they were not only in search of happiness as all are, but were also willing to strive for that happiness. They realised that happiness could be had only by plain living and high thinking. Without these, happiness is impossible. Contentment is the secret key which unlocks the door to the golden chambers of the realm of bliss.

Happiness, peace of mind and tranquillity can be secured only by stilling the mind. Oscillation of mind set up by various cross-currents of thoughts motivated by likes and dislikes is the cause of so much displeasure and unhappiness. Curbing this oscillation of mind is the *sine qua non* for happiness. All Yogas seek to achieve this object only. Whether it is the selfless service of Karma Yoga, single-minded devotion of Bhakti Yoga, one-pointed meditation of Raja Yoga or the enquiry into the nature of the Indivisible Self of Jnana Yoga, the one aim is to focus the mind on a single objective and ultimately bring about the destruction of the mind itself. Synthetic Yoga which harmonises in itself the more important constituents of the four diverse Yogas has the same end in view viz., to steady the mind by withdrawing it from the multifarious objects of the world and to focus it solely on God and His attributes with a view to the ultimate melting of the mind in Brahman.

Happiness is not in outside objects. Happiness is within. As such, it cannot be bought or sought, but only

thought. Happiness is a state of mind, irrespective of surroundings or circumstances. People are unhappy mostly on account of self-created wants and desires. They are unhappy because of their pride, lust, greed, jealousy, hypocrisy, anger, hatred, fear and so on. If these negative qualities are eliminated by conscious spiritual discipline and self-correction, there is no reason why anyone should be unhappy.

If money is the cause of happiness, all rich people must be happy, which is not the case. If woman is the cause of happiness, all men having beautiful wives must be blissful. This also is not the case. If name and fame are the harbingers of happiness, all men who have attained positions of power and prestige must have peace of mind and radiate joy around. On the contrary, it is common experience that the greater the name and fame and the higher the position and power, the greater is the restlessness. Desire feeds on itself. The more it is satisfied, the greater the urge. There is no end to it. It is by cutting at the root of desire that a state of quiescence of mind can be achieved. In the beginning stages, gross desires for women, wealth, name and fame etc., should be substituted by finer and nobler desires for spiritual wealth, for Sat-sangh with Mahatmas, for opportunities to serve the sick and the suffering and so on. Later on, even these will have to be given up and the ego completely surrendered to the will of God. God-realisation can come only when one is in a state bereft of even

the laudable desire for God-realisation. This is because entertainment of a desire for God-realisation implies the subject-object relationship between the realiser and the realised, whereas there is nothing except God. For God-realisation, all sense of duality must be lost.

To be desireless does not mean cessation from work. It is a mental attitude. All work should be done without attachment, as dedication unto the Lord. This is the secret breathed into the ears of Arjuna by Sri Krishna, on the battlefield of Kurukshetra. Incessant work, non-stop work is necessary for happiness. Stoppage of work means worry, restlessness. During intense work, the mind is actively engaged. It has no time for worry. If relaxation is required, there can be change of work. Change of work is a kind of rest. That is why Swamiji's system of integral Sadhana combines in itself such varied items as Kirtan, Asans, Pranayama, physical exercise, concentration, meditation, oral Japa, Likhit Japa, selfless service, Swadhyaya, Sat-sangh and so on. The object is to relieve monotony. Stoppage of work is dangerous. Physical rest is no relaxation. Mere physical rest harms the mind. The mind wanders into sensual grooves ; energy is wasted ; time is lost ; there is retardation in spiritual progress ; peace of mind is disturbed. Eternal vigilance is therefore necessary. Work must always be done, though without attachment.

It is attachment to objects which causes bondage. If the knot of attachment is cut asunder by a wise inquiry into the why and wherefore of earthly existence and its concomitant evils, no one will be unhappy. What, after all, are father, mother, brother, wife and all other relationships? There is no limit to the number of fathers, mothers, wives, husbands, etc., that an individual soul has over countless births. If "X" has a father to-day, that father could die and be re-born as "X"'s son to-morrow even while "X" is living. The lady whom a person adores as his wife might have been a goat or an ass in the previous birth and might be someone else's wife or husband in the next birth. Names, forms and sex are all superficial encrustations of Mayaic jugglery to be-fool the individual souls. A person who understands this will have no serious regret when his wife, son or daughter, father or mother dies. He will rightly view this world as a Dharamshala or a public inn where diverse people assemble and part ways. On the other hand, a person who runs after the flitting shadows of wife and children and misses the substance of God behind them cannot but come to grief.

It is only attachment which causes pain. Otherwise, there is no pain in the world. For instance, if someone dies in a stranger's house, a person does not feel any regret or shed any tears. He goes about his business merrily. On the other hand, if someone to whom he is attached--a friend or a relative--dies, he weeps. The cause of pain is

attachment only. Similarly, we feel pain and misery on account of hunger and disease, because we are attached to the body. A sage who has risen above body-consciousness in his meditation by cutting himself away from his mind literally feels no pain even if his stomach is ripped open. It is no mere figurative exaggeration.

People suffer pain for want of wisdom in the real sense. Acquiring of wisdom is the first step in the eradication of pain. Wisdom alone is not enough unless it is put to use, just as wealth alone is valueless unless it is utilised. Unutilised knowledge is as good as ignorance. Sivananda's Synthetic Yoga or Integral Yoga crystallises the wisdom required for happiness.

What is the secret of happiness? The craving for objects which tickle the pleasure centres in the human mechanism should be renounced. More important still, the sense of ego, the sense of doership should be renounced. Action should not be renounced but the actor should go about his work with the feeling that he himself is powerless to do anything and that he is acting only as an instrument of God to work out His Divine Will.

If God has blessed a person with health, wealth, a good home, wife and children, Integral Yoga surely does not want him to run away from all these. It helps him, on the other hand, to develop that state

of mind wherein even if he were to suddenly lose any one or all of these things, he would not feel the least tinge of sorrow on account of that. Similarly, the pursuit of simple living and high thinking does not demand that the aspirant should run away from his home and job, but does insist that he should run a good home and do a good job and live his family life according to Dharmic principles and bring up his children in such a way that they would later on shine as heroes in the spiritual field. It is only those who have an amazingly shallow understanding of eternal spiritual values who shudder to think of God and religion even in their dreams for fear they may be asked to desert their dear home and run away to the forest the next morning. The sooner this wrong notion is dispelled from the minds of people, the better for all concerned. Synthetic Yoga, far from demanding that people should run away from their homes, brings to their very doorsteps the very thing which they are all craving after viz., eternal happiness. Bhagawan Sivananda stands in the forefront of those who are specialising in this home-delivery service of happiness.

Integral Yoga brings in eternal happiness through two stages. Firstly, through ethical discipline, it transforms the animal in man to the human. Secondly, by rigorous and conscious spiritual discipline, it transforms the human into the Divine by awakening the latent divine qualities in man. Manifesting the Divine in man in daily life in all activities, big and

small, is Divine Life. The ordinary human being eats and drinks, engages in fratricidal strife during day-time and sleeps at night. It is little better than animal life. It is life without a purpose. There is no satisfaction in such life. That is why man is restless. In Divine Life, all these actions are consciously directed to the one supreme purpose of life viz., God-realisation or achievement of eternal bliss. The spiritual aspirant eats, drinks and sleeps, not with a relish, not for the purpose of so-called enjoyment of food, drink and sleep, but for the only purpose of keeping his physical mechanism in order so as to utilise it in constructive spiritual Sadhana. He uses the body and mind as instruments given by God for His realisation and rests in peace.

Integral Yoga teaches man not to run away from actions, but to divinise all actions. Instead of seeing a picture and wasting time, eyesight and money and polluting the mind with foul thoughts which later on are likely to ripen into foul deeds, the seeker after happiness could attend a Kirtan party. Kirtan is elevating, inspiring. Two hours spent in Kirtan or Japa will give genuine peace of mind, whereas the movie tickles the mind momentarily but makes it more restless afterwards and fills it with base desires. Integral Yoga teaches the Sadhak to avoid novels and cheap books and to read Gita, Ramayana, Yoga Vasishta and other elevating spiritual literature written by God-realised souls. The novel fills the mind with base thoughts, crude

thoughts, vulgar thoughts. It debases the mind and weakens it. Novels womanise a man. They destroy character. Spiritual literature, on the other hand, elevate the mind and strengthen the mind. They destroy doubts and fears. They are energising, man-making, character-building. Integral Yoga prescribes and prohibits various other actions. For instance, listless rolling in bed beyond sunrise weakens body and mind. It is unhygienic and harmful. It induces lethargy and clouds the brain. Getting up at 4 A. M., having a wash and sitting for meditation, promotes health and sharpens the intellect. The whole day will be spent usefully as a result of the morning meditation. Chatting with friends and idle gossip is waste of time. It is dying one's life. Japa is use of time. It is living one's life. Time spent in clubs, cards and gambling, in the company of women and of materialists is evil company. It will retard the spiritual growth of man and the realisation of eternal happiness. Company of Sadhus, Mahatmas and spiritually inclined people is Sat-sangh or good company. It is elevating, ennobling. It will accelerate the spiritual growth of man and speed up the day of his God-realisation. Asans and Pranayama tone up the system to a remarkable degree. An indolent life without proper exercise results in diseases. Selfless service purifies the heart and develops cosmic love. Selfish pursuits constrict the heart and breed hatred jealousy, pride, anger and fear which destroy happi-

ness and make life unpleasant and not worth living. Devotion to God strengthens and supports. Devotion to mere man or woman disappoints and frustrates and lets go in time of need. Enquiry into the nature of Atman acts like a powerful mental tonic. Building castles in the air, idle thinking and brooding shatter peace of mind and result in illness.

Sivananda gives one easy-to-remember formula for happiness. The formula is: "Detach, Attach." The mind should be detached from the world and attached to God. It should be weaned away from transitory, perishable, imperfect objects of sensory perception and irremovably glued to the immortal, eternal, God who is the creator, sustainer and destroyer of the universe and all objects therein. The mind should be withdrawn from negative thoughts, attitudes and moods and fixed on positive and character-building thoughts. Old vicious habits must be destroyed and in their place, new, virtuous habits must be implanted. The root cause of all negative qualities such as fear, jealousy, worry, hatred, anger and so on is attachment only. Destroying attachment to worldly objects is like cutting at the root of misery. There is no other known method for perpetual happiness.* The object of attachment should change. The mind should be fixed on God. Then, there is no fear of the object of one's attachment being taken away or stolen or destroyed. All people can enjoy God simultaneously, because He is All-Full.

* Please see APPENDIX I for a discussion on the subject by Swami Sivananda.

So, there is no room for jealousy or hatred between man and man. If every human being develops whole-hearted, one-pointed devotion to God, then the whole humanity will be welded into one unity in the common cause of God. There is no other short-cut to world unity. Half-hearted devotion to God or a semi-material, semi-spiritual life can lead only to re-doubled misery. It is deceiving oneself. As Sivananda says, light and darkness cannot exist side by side.

It would bear repetition to say that this does not mean running away from one's family, one's duties and responsibilities. That would be betrayal of one's duty. That would be dereliction of duty. That would amount to an act of cowardice. On the other hand, total devotion to God means giving a spiritual orientation to all acts in life. It is the dedication of all acts to God. It is incessant purification of mind and constant listening to the shrill inner voice of God which speaks in a purified mind. It is abiding by the Will of God, however unpalatable it may be to one's individual tastes. It is sacrificing the individual will in the cause of God in man. It is real-life worship of God in creation, of God in every living being, be that an insect or an emperor. To such a man of cosmic love, selfless service and deep meditation, happiness and peace of mind come of their own accord. He need not go in an elusive search of happiness. To him, peace of mind is a natural by-product of his God-guided

and dedicated activities. Every act of his is turned into Yoga.

The world would become heaven and man would turn angel if all things were to the liking of everyone on this earth plane. But, this is not to be. God has ordained the world to be a training ground for the individual soul in its onward progress towards its final destiny or goal. Once it is recognised that the world is, after all, the world and man is man, it will be easy for the Sadhak to keep his mental balance in prosperity and adversity alike. Man's duty is to absorb the best in the world around him, discard the evil and speed up his progress. In this effort, he can succeed only when he learns to bend to the weight of worldly burden placed on him. If he does not learn to "adapt, adjust, accommodate," as repeatedly advised by Swamiji Maharaj, he will break under the weight of worldly worry and be washed away in the eternal tide of birth and death. "Adapt, adjust accommodate." That is the triple motto for peace of mind. Swamiji gives down-to-earth advice which is, at the same time, spiritual advice. Spirituality, let it be repeatedly emphasised, is not something which is ethereal. Rightly practised, it gives both Bhukti (worldly prosperity) and Mukti (final liberation).

An aspirant cannot progress in the spiritual path if he does not follow these golden rules of worldly wisdom. If he cannot adapt, adjust and accommodate, if he cannot bear insult and bear

injury, he will fall a prey to the vicious poisons of anger, frustration, enmity, jealousy and so on and all his Japa and meditation will be brought to nought. On the other hand, if he can follow these injunctions, he can make life smell sweet. Then, his whole life will be a steady ascent on the spiritual ladder. Step by step, ladder by ladder, the climb has to be made. At each step, the gain must be consolidated. Perfection must be achieved in lower practices of spiritual discipline, before proceeding to higher practices. This is important. With each little act, each good thought, the aspirant reaps a harvest of happiness. And when he attains the *Summum Bonum* of God-realisation, he attains all. He becomes happiness itself. He becomes a fount of bliss, of which all who want can drink. He becomes another Sivananda. May God bless that every one of us may become a Sivananda or a living embodiment of Auspiciousness-Bliss Absolute !

OM TAT SAT

APPENDIX

1

**THE NATURE OF HAPPINESS AND
HOW TO ATTAIN IT**

*(Swami Sivananda's Conversation
with A. Sceptic)*

2

EDUCATION FOR PERFECTION

*(Text of Swami Sivananda's Address to
Students of the Roorkee University
delivered in July, 1954)*

1

THE NATURE OF HAPPINESS AND
HOW TO ATTAIN IT

SWAMI SIVANANDA'S CONVERSATION
WITH A SCEPTIC

*(Extract from "The Yoga Vedanta Forest
University Weekly" dated 28th March, 1957.)*

Now started the conversation between Swamiji and the other visitor, who seemed to have been much influenced by materialistic ideas.

The visitor asked, "I think God has created everything in this world for man's enjoyment. Therefore, I have a right to enjoy them. I have a right to taste everything that is sweet. On the other hand, I find so many Rishis including Your Holiness advocating a self-imposed renunciation. These two things are quite contradictory."

Swamiji replied, "Why these are contradictory? You must renounce evil. You must renounce your anger, your egoism."

Visitor : I have a right to eat to the maximum. Why should I fast ?

Swamiji : Don't fast. Eat. Be a glutton !

Visitor : I am not arguing. I will be the last man to argue.

Swamiji (smiling) : You can argue.

Visitor : Is fasting necessary for God-realisation ?

Swamiji : By fasting, you get a prayerful mood. After eating a heavy meal, you will get sleep

Visitor : I think renunciation is contrary to the law of nature.

Swamiji : You must have goodness. Anger is not good. Is anger good ?

Visitor : No.

Swamiji : Is selfishness good ?

Visitor : No.

Swamiji : Remove them. Then only you can enjoy.

Visitor : Why should I renounce certain things in this world ? Renunciation appears to me as contrary to the law of nature.

Swamiji : There is no contradiction. There is nothing here to enjoy

Visitor : Honey is sweet. I can enjoy.

Swamiji : It will produce diarrhoea , and, when you do not get honey, it will produce craving.

Visitor : I would like to have everything in this world. I have a right.

Swamiji : You can have.

Visitor : Which path should I follow ?

Swamiji : Whichever you think is beneficial for you, you can follow. Whichever path will give you lasting happiness, you can follow it. If you take four cups of milk, it will produce vomiting. Is there happiness in milk ?

Visitor : Yes.

Swamiji : In the fourth cup ? It will produce vomiting. The first cup is all right. The third or fourth cup will produce vomiting. If there is happiness in an object, it should continue to give happiness at all times. You should use discrimination. God has given you discrimination. You should find out where there is happiness. If there is homogeneous experience of happiness, that is real happiness. In sleep everybody enjoys, because there are no objects. You like fish. Someone else does not like fish. You should enquire whether there is real, lasting happiness in these objects. The objects are illusory. You have to follow the teachings of sages.

*Ye hi samsarsajaa bhogaa dukkhayonaya eva te,
Aadyantavantah Kaunteya, na teshu ramate budhah.*

The pleasure that you get from contact with objects is the womb of pain. Wise persons do not revel in these.

Visitor : So, happiness comes out of renunciation ?

Swamiji : Yes. You go to the Atma. It is the infinite source of happiness. For a man of ignorance, the worldly things appear to give happiness. If you scratch an itching part, it is happiness ! Similarly, for an ignorant man sensual pleasures is happiness ! For a man of enquiry, there is no happiness in the objects. He who has discrimination will try to get happiness from Atma. If you want to have happiness from Rasagulla (a sweetmeat), you can have it !

Visitor : I fail to understand whether renunciation is necessary for a seeker after Truth.

Swamiji : Renunciation makes the mind steady and strong. It gives you peace. The mind generally runs like a strolling dog. Through renunciation, the mind will be steady. Rishis say so. Those who have experienced it say so. You have to renounce your cravings, egoism, likes and dislikes.

Visitor : I should renounce food ?

Swamiji : "You should renounce egoism which says, 'I know everything', 'He does not know anything.' That principle, the ego, that you will have to renounce ; and not food.

Visitor: Swamiji asks us to fast.

Swamiji: Occasional fast will give you good health. It makes the internal organs function efficiently. The kidneys and the liver will function well. Man normally overloads. There will be too much of bile and indigestion. Fasting will remove impurities and make the organs work well.

Visitor: So, Swamiji suggests that there is no contradiction?

Swamiji: Man must be moderate in everything.

Visitor: But, moderation is not renunciation. Swamiji has suggested that the secret of happiness is renunciation.

Swamiji: When you are attached to things, you cannot think of God. Therefore, you will have to detach the mind from the objects and attach it to the Lord. Attachment to worldly things binds you makes you worldly, makes you miserable. If you are attached to tea, and if one morning, you do not get tea, you will be upset. But if you renounce attachment to worldly things, you will be peaceful.

Visitor: Too many people do not renounce. Why should I renounce and observe Brahmacharya?

Swamiji: Who asked you to renounce?

Visitor: I am not arguing, but these are my difficulties.

Swamiji : Observe Brahmacharya for a month and see how is your mind and health. You will have greater peace and better health.

Visitor : Does it not come in the way of one's other obligations and responsibilities in life ?

Swamiji : Your duty is God-realisation. You yourself have created other responsibilities. Your highest duty is to find out the way to attain peace ; your highest duty is to attain the Infinite. In Infinity or Bhuma alone you can have happiness, but not in finite things. To attain the Infinite is your duty.

Visitor : Duties are different in the different Ashrams.

Swamiji : What is your highest duty ?

Visitor : To work for the uplift of humanity.

Swamiji : This is not the highest duty. The highest duty is realisation of God.

Visitor : I am a Grihastha. I have to support my family.

Swamiji : Do your duty and leave the rest to God. God is taking care of your family.

Visitor : If I think that everything is given by God, then I will shirk my duty, and I will become lethargic.

Swamiji : Do your duty unselfishly and offer whatever you do, to God. Remain in your station of life and do everything as an offering to God. That is Yoga. Feel that you are a trustee and not an owner. Feel that your children and all others are manifestations of the Lord. Serve them. Do your duties with Ishwararpanabuddhi.

Visitor : How to practise it ?

Swamiji : Whatever you do in the day, at night you can offer to the Lord. Thus, you will not be bound by your actions; otherwise, you will be bound and you will have to take birth again. Say 'Om Tat Sat Brahmaarpanam' and offer everything that you have done in the day to the Lord.

Visitor : Suppose I have committed sin, should I offer it to the Lord ?

Swamiji : All good and bad, offer to the Lord. He takes them.

*Kaayena vaachaa manasendriyairvaa buddhyaat-
manaavaa prakritesswabhaavaat,
Karomi yadyat sakalam parasmai Naaraayanaaveti
samarpayami.*

"Whatever I do through body, speech, mind, senses and Buddhi, I offer it to the Lord." So, the works will not bind you.

Visitor : Am I to offer to the Lord everything I do, immediately I have done it ?

Swamiji: At night you can offer them to the Lord: 'Whatever I do, I offer to the Lord.' Offer everything, good or bad. In that way, you are free from the bondage of Karma. You become more divine.

Visitor: How to get rid of attachment to worldly things?

Swamiji: By repeating God's Name, Panchakshara. By practising meditation, Japa, Kirtan. All these things will help you. Study Tulasidas Ramayana. Have Sat-sangh. *Bina sat-sangh vivek na hove*. Whenever there is Sat-sangh, go there and attend. Clear your doubts. Study Gita daily. Study Ramayana and try to follow the instructions contained therein and *Bedapar* (you will cross the ocean of Samsara). If you do not want *Bedapar*, remain in the world! Do Japa for fifteen minutes daily. Do Namasmaran. See everything as God's manifestations.

Visitor: I had some doubt about renunciation. Now, of course, I have received illumination on this. I shall think about it. If some doubts occur to me again, I will write to Swamiji.

Swamiji: Study Gita again and again; your doubts will be cleared. You will find an answer to each of your doubts somewhere or other in the Gita. You will get answers also from within. If you go

to bed with a doubt in your mind, the subconscious mind will work during your sleep and when you wake up in the morning, you will get the answer. When you get holidays, come here.

May Lord bless you !

EDUCATION FOR PERFECTION

*(Text of Swami Sivananda's Address to Students
of the Roorkee University delivered
in July, 1954.)*

Adorations to our worthy President, the adorable Vice-Chancellor ! Adorations to you, all Atma Swarup, the manifestations of the One Self or Atma or Brahman !

I had been here previously, some fifteen years ago, when I addressed the students of the Engineering College. I was then accompanied by Professor Ganga Saran Seal of Chandausi. I spoke to the students on the message of unity, love, service, and sacrifice. I also did Kirtan of Lord's Name, which is my favourite.

Roorkee University is the famous Engineering University in India—I should say in the whole world. It has produced many wonderful engineering geniuses. Many of our famous Railway Engineers were students of this University. Just as every country has its own special characteristics, every college has

also its own characteristic features. Kumbakonam is famous for mathematicians. England is famous for coal and iron ; Germany for philosophers like Kant, Hegel and others. So also, this University has got its own special feature. Something in the atmosphere there is, that produces brilliant engineers !

NOT ENGINEERS, BUT ASSISTANT CREATORS

Engineers are assistants to Lord Brahma in creation. Artists, Painters and Engineers—they are all assistants to Lord Brahma, for they have creative talents. They all add to the wealth of the world. The engineers construct dams and promote irrigation of the fields ; this, in turn, helps the agriculturists to grow more food. This college is, therefore, the fountain-source of wealth and beauty. Remove the engineers ; there will be no beauty in this world. It will be quite dry. It is these engineers who produce beautiful plans, designs, for beautiful pieces of architecture. All the beautiful things of the world are created by you, engineers. I am happy, therefore, that God has given me a chance to serve you all. Through God's Grace and also through the grace of our Vice-Chancellor, I am here amidst you all to share my thoughts with you.

There is something dearer than wealth ; there is something dearer than wife and children, there is

something dearer than your life itself. That dearest something is your own Atma, the Indweller of all beings—*Eko Devah Sarva-bhuteshu Gudhah Sarva-vyapi Sarva-bhutaratma*. That Indweller, the All-pervading Essence is hidden in all these names and forms, like butter in milk, like electricity in these wires. That is the dearest thing. You must realise that.

He who dwells in this hall, whom the hall does not know, whose body is this hall—He is the Inner Self, Antaryamin, Pure Consciousness, the Indwelling Inter-penetrating Presence. He who dwells within this mind, whose body is the mind, whom the mind does not know but who rules the mind from within—that is your Atma. That is your essential nature, Pure Consciousness. Know That.

THE NEED OF THE HOUR

For this, religious education is essential. The most urgent need today is to introduce in our schools and colleges an elementary religious education. By all means, let us avoid sectarian dogmas. But, on that account, religion should not be left out of our educational institutions. Select such texts as would instil in the minds of the youth, healthy ideas and would enable them to grow into real men and women. Real religion is universal. If the youth is taught that fundamentally he is one with all his

brethren all over the world, that the one soul pervades all beings—“*Eko Devah Sarva-bhuteshu Gudhah, Sarva-vyapi Sarva-bhutantaratma*”—you would then have effectively sown the seed of harmony, peace and brotherhood.

Real religion is selflessness. To live for the sake of the Lord's Creation is Divine Life. The spirit of selflessness should take possession of every fibre of every Indian. Then will India regain her glorious position as the World-Preceptor which she occupied in days of yore. Her life-breath has always been Yoga and spirituality. That is our heritage, a very rich heritage.

If the law does not permit of imparting religious instruction in schools and colleges, this should be done as a part of the extra-curricular education. There should be regular study of the Gita by the students themselves assisted by some teachers well versed in Gita. Gita contains the essence of spirituality and Gita has also been acclaimed a non-sectarian universal scripture.

VIRTUE IS KNOWLEDGE

What do you find in the Gita? Again and again the Lord exalts the man of virtue. Lord Krishna defines wisdom, knowledge, as virtue. *Amanitwam Adambhitwam*, etc. Study the Thirteenth

Chapter. "Humility, unpretentiousness, non-injury forgiveness, uprightness, service of the teacher, purity, steadfastness, self-control, indifference towards the objects of the senses, absence of egoism, reflection over the evil in birth, death, old age, sickness and pain, non-attachment, non-identification of the Self with son, wife, home and the rest, constant state of balanced mind whether one gets the desirable or the undesirable, unswerving devotion to God, love of seclusion, distaste for company, constancy in Self-knowledge, perception of the end of true knowledge—this is declared as knowledge and what is opposed to this is ignorance."

Of what use then is your biology, physiology, psychology, and the other *ologies*? Of what use are your text-books which give you every kind of information other than what your inner self needs? Saunaka, a man full of wisdom, approached sage Angiras and asked: "O venerable sir, what is that supreme science knowing which all other sciences become known?" Angiras replied: "It is Brahma Vidya or Para Vidya or the Science of the Self" and then instructed Saunaka in Brahma Vidya. Is such instruction found in your text-books? Is Brahma Vidya taught in your schools and colleges?

UPANISHADIC CONVOCATION ADDRESS

Look at the way in which the Upanishadic seers instructed their pupils. The Rishi's Convocation Address is reproduced in the Taittiriya Upanishad. You should all study it diligently every day. Look at the sublime soul-awakening instructions that the Upanishadic seers imparted to the students :

"Satyam Vada, Dharmam Chara. Speak the Truth, Be righteous. Be good and do good." (Do the present-day Universities impart such education ?)
"Matri Devo Bhava—May the mother be thy God.
Pitri Devo Bhava—May the father be thy God.
Acharya Devo Bhava—May the preceptor be thy God.
Atithi Devo Bhava—May the guest be thy God."
 Do you receive such instructions now ? These are the seeds, if sown in the young heart, that will later produce the abundant fruits of domestic harmony and national peace and prosperity. The spiritual seed must be sown in the young. Where is one sentence in all that you read which is comparable to this Great Mantra : "Give in plenty with modesty and sympathy" ? That was what the Upanishadic Masters taught their pupils.

Let me remind you of the last word of the Upanishads—*Tat Twam Asi.* Thou art That, the Immortal Sat-Chit-Ananda Atma full of Bliss, Peace and Glory.

THE FOUNDATION OF EDUCATION

Nowadays, we have secular education in our schools and colleges. Secular education is no education at all. Education loses all its value if it does not have ethical discipline and spiritual culture as its foundation. Education is introduction to life. It must certainly be non-sectarian. It must surely aim at cultivating a fellow-feeling and brotherhood among students belonging to different communities. Religious sectarianism should not be taught in the schools and colleges. But, on that account, do not neglect the spiritual side. This is most important.

Owing to the influence of dark, antagonistic, materialistic forces, most of the students of the present day turn out to be spiritual bankrupts. There is no moral culture in them. They have no understanding of the principles of Brahmacharya and right living. Hence, they suffer much when they come out of the College and face the stark realities of life. They have no spiritual basis which alone will enable them to face the problems and win the daily battle of life with balanced mind, sturdy heart and strength of will.

The soul is the root. The mind is the trunk. The body constitutes the leaves. The leaves are no doubt important; they gather the sun's rays for the entire tree. The trunk is equally important, perhaps more. But, if the root is not watered,

neither would survive for long. That system of education does more disservice than service to man, which does not seek to appease the spiritual hunger of man, whatever else it achieves.

BLEND THE SACRED AND THE SECULAR

No doubt, this secular education is necessary. The scientists, too, are "external Raja Yogins." They have great powers of concentration. They, too, enjoy flashes of intuition. You, engineers, are all assistants to Lord Brahma and Lord Vishwakarma. You create a new world within a short time. You have produced marvels in the field of science. We enjoy great comforts and conveniences on account of your genius and your work only. People have to live in this world. For that, a knowledge of engineering and other sciences is necessary. You have to earn your daily bread. For that, this secular education too, is necessary.

But, remember : Man does not live by bread alone. There is something greater than all this. These are all of secondary importance. Remember · *Yo Vai Bhuma Tat Sukham, Na Alpe Sukham Asti.* In the Infinite alone is Bliss, not in these perishable objects. Side by side with your other activities, you should study Brahma Vidya. Side by side with your text-books, you should study the Gita and Upanishads.

For, your goal is not to die like worms after a brief life here on this earth. Your goal is to attain Self-realisation. That only will make you King of kings, Emperor of emperors, Shah of shahs. Immortality is not attained by proficiency in Engineering. *Na Karmana Na Prajaya Dhanena Tyagenaike Amritatwamanashu*: Not by actions, nor by progeny, nor by wealth, but by renunciation alone is Immortality attained.

NACHIKETAS AND MAITREYI

A young boy Nachiketas realised this truth. You should daily read the sublime story of Nachiketas which occurs in the Kathopanishad. This young boy went to Lord Yama and asked him to teach Brahma Vidya. Yama wanted to test the boy. He offered him all the pleasures of the world and a very long life, thousands of years. But Nachiketas was not tempted at all. He said : "Oh Lord Yama, keep all these chariots, damsels, wealth and years of life with you. They only wear out the power of the senses. In the end, I have to come into your cultches only. Teach me that Brahma Vidya which will make me Immortal." That should be your aspiration. You should cultivate this Nachiketas-element from now. Offer a fresh, fragrant flower to the Lord. Do not wait for old age ; you will be able to do nothing then.

Girls should develop the Maitreyi-element. Maitreyi was a Brahma-Vadini. She was the wife of sage Yagnavalkya. Yagnavalkya wanted to renounce the world. He wanted to divide his property between his two wives. Wise Maitreyi asked : "My Lord ! If you give me the wealth of the three worlds, will I become Immortal ?" He replied : " Beloved Maitreyi, no ! Immortality is not attained by wealth. You will only lead the luxurious life of a rich woman". She said : "Then I do not want this wealth. Teach me that Brahma Vidya which will make me Immortal." Yagnavalkya was supremely pleased at her wisdom and imparted the knowledge of the Self to Maitreyi. Such should be the aspiration of every woman of today, not to wear colourful *sarees*, paint her lips and cheeks, adorn herself with ornaments and go to offices and work.

CULTIVATE THESE DIVINE VIRTUES

What is wanted is the cultivation of divine virtues like serenity, regularity, absence of vanity, sincerity, simplicity, etc. Just as you have in the Bhagavad Gita a catalogue of the divine virtues you ought to cultivate, I have put together in the form of a small song eighteen all-important virtues which you ought to develop. What are they ?

Serenity, regularity, absence of vanity,
Sincerity, simplicity, veracity,
Equanimity, fixity, non-irritability,
Adaptability, humility, tenacity,

Integrity, nobility, magnanimity,
 Charity, generosity, purity.
 Practice daily these eighteen 'ities',
 You will soon attain Immortality.
 Brahman is the only real entity.
 Mr. So-and-so is a false non-entity.
 You will abide in Eternity and Infinity.
 You will behold unity in diversity.
 You cannot attain this in the University.
 But you can attain this in the Forest
 University !

All the virtues end in 'ity' ; so it is easy to remember them. Just as you have in the well-known 'tion' sentence : "Examination is a great botheration for the Hindu nation whose sole occupation is cultivation."

THE CREAM OF DIVINE LIFE

Serve, love, give, purify, meditate, realise.
 Be good ; do good ; be kind ; be compassionate.
 Enquire 'Who am I ?' Know the Self and be
 free.

This is the central teaching of all the scriptures of all religions—*Be good : Do good.* This is the cream of Divine Life.

Adapt, adjust, accommodate.

Bear insult, bear injury, (this is) highest
Sadhana.

Adaptability is a peculiar knack of winning the hearts of others and the battle of life ultimately by a little bit of bending. Egoistic and proud man finds it very difficult to adapt himself with others. He is always in trouble. He always meets with failures. When one student does not know how to adapt himself with his fellow-students living in the same room, friction starts and there is quarrel and disharmony. Adaptability makes friendship last long. Adaptability demands the spirit of sacrifice, feeling of unity, humility, universal love and selflessness. The idea of superiority must die.

Do not waste time. Do not procrastinate, Decide and do. But—D. I. N. *Do It Now*. Procrastination is the thief of time. Possess an unblemished character. Character is a mighty soul-force. A man of noble traits and good character possesses a tremendous personality. Change your thoughts and aspirations; your character will also change. New, healthy, strong, virtuous habits will replace old, morbid, abnormal, vicious habits. Character is the garb of saintliness. Build up your character. This will ensure your success in life.

BLUE-PRINT FOR SUCCESS

You who have understood these truths, have much to do. You must discipline yourself and waste not even a second. Be attentive and industrious in the class. Have regular habits in all walks of life. Be regular in going to bed and in rising up early in the morning. What you can learn by an hour's study in Brahmanuhurtha—4 to 6 A. M.—you cannot learn in four hours' study at other times. In Brahmanuhurtha, the mind is calm and it is easy to concentrate. Whatever you study will be indelibly impressed on your mind.

Take Sattwic food. Be regular in your studies and physical exercises. Regularity should be your watchword. Then, you will have success in life. Chalk out a daily routine and stick to it. Regularity, punctuality and discipline go hand in hand. College students in India imitate the Westerner in dress, style etc. But, have you imbibed from him the important virtues such as punctuality and regularity? Be punctual and regular.

You should cultivate patience and perseverance. No success in life or at school is possible without these qualities. All great persons of the world have achieved greatness, success and eminence through patience and perseverance. A patient student always keeps his head cool, mind balanced; he is not afraid of difficulties and obstacles. Patience helps you to

conquer your temper. It gives you immense strength. Be always cheerful and spread joy everywhere.

Speak the truth. Write in bold letters **SPEAK THE TRUTH** and place it in your study and other prominent places in your house. Meditate upon the glory of truth. Never utter falsehood. Punish yourself by fasting, if you tell a lie. You will soon get established in truth. Be honest and sincere. Be free from crookedness cheating, hypocrisy, diplomacy and double-dealing. Sincerity is the greatest virtue.

REAL EDUCATION

Real education will enable you to attain perfection in these. Real education enables you to control the mind, annihilate egoism, cultivate divine virtues and attain Knowledge of the Self or Brahma Jnana. Real education must aim at helping the student to develop a strong healthy body and mind, self-confidence, courage, ethical perfection, initiative in all things and a good character. It should implant in you the ideals of simplicity, service and devotion. These ideals should pervade your very being and perfume all your actions, words and thoughts every day.

Getting a couple of degrees and then a petty job should not be your goal and ideal. Education must instil the spirit of service in you. A wealthy man

ought to regard his wealth as the Lord's and that he is only a trustee to look after its proper utilisation. Similarly, the knowledge that you acquire here should be utilised in the service of the poor and the depressed, in the service of the country and the world at large and of saints and devotees of the Lord. That should be your ideal.

Does the present-day system of education place these ideals before you? No. Many of the students go through their academic education without a proper aim or ideal before them. Even if they have an aim, it is the worthless aim of getting a job to earn the daily bread!

There must be a re-orientation in the sphere of education. The students must be the torch-bearers of the message of Rishis, saints and sages. They must acquire the highest knowledge, put their learning into daily practice and spread the message among our brethren.

ESSENCE OF THE RISHIS' MESSAGE

The very essence of the Rishis' Message I have put in the form of a few songs. I will sing them in the Maha Mantra tune. This Maha Mantra itself is the best talisman for attaining health, long life, peace, prosperity and Moksha in this Kali Yuga. Kindly, therefore, sing along with me :

*Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare
Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna
Hare Hare*

Is there not a nobler mission than eating, drinking
and sleeping ?

It is difficult to get a human birth ; therefore, try
your best to realise in this birth.

Time sweeps away kings and barons ; where is
Gandhiji, where is Jinnah ?

Can you expect real Shanti if you waste your time in
cards and smoking ?

When your throat is choked at the time of death,
who will help you for your salvation ?

Be up and doing in Yogic Sadhan, you will enjoy
Supreme Bliss.

Eat a little, drink a little, talk a little, sleep a little.

Mix a little, move a little, serve a little, think a little.

Do Asan a little, Pranayam a little, reflect a little,
meditate a little.

Do Japa a little, Kirtan a little, write Mantra a little,
do Vichar a little.

God is Truth

Govinda

God is Bliss

Govinda

God is Love

Govinda

Control the mind

Govinda

Control the senses

Govinda

This is the teaching

Govinda

Of all the Vedas

Govinda

Of all the scriptures	Govinda
The Goal of life	Govinda
Is God-realisation	Govinda
Never forget this	Govinda
Attain this	Govinda
Through meditation	Govinda
Through selfless service	Govinda
Through Japa Kirtan	Govinda
Practise Ahimsa	Govinda
Do not study	Govinda
Herbert Spencer	Govinda
This will make you	Govinda
An atheist	Govinda
But study	Govinda
Gita Upanishads	Govinda
This will make you	Govinda
A Yogi Sage	Govinda
Don't smoke	Govinda
This is bad	Govinda
This is very very bad	Govinda
It will produce	Govinda
Nicotine poisoning	Govinda

Give up this most unhealthy habit of smoking today. You will live long and a healthy life. Smoking spoils your eyes, spoils your heart and lungs.

Control of all the senses is indispensable if you are to live a glorious life and realise your spiritual ideal. Reading of novels and newspapers, going to cinemas and dance-parties, playing cards, eating in restaurants all kinds of exciting foods—these should be immediately given up. Then only will your mind be clear, intellect keen and conscience pure.

A WORD ON BRAHMACHARYA

Observe Brahmacharya. Passion is the deadliest enemy of spirituality, of life itself. Brahmacharya alone will make you a superman and Yogi. Kill this lust through practice of Asans and Pranayama, through taking of Sattwic food, through Sat-sangh and Vichar. Even a lustful thought should not enter the mind. Never utter a vulgar word. Continence has tremendous creative power. You will get Ojas Shakti. Continence is the key to intuition. If you observe Brahmacharya for twelve years, the Medha-Nadi will operate and you will have intuitive wisdom. Control of tongue is a most essential pre-requisite to continence. Guard your speech. Speak the truth. Speak a little. Speak sweetly. Restrain the cravings of the tongue for exciting foods and stimulating drinks. Then you will be established in Brahmacharya.

Sirsasan is a boon to students. Practise Sirsasan daily and regularly. It will help you maintain

Brahmacharya. It will transmute the sex-energy into Ojas Shakti. It will develop your brain-power and memory.

SECRET OF HEALTH

Sarvangasan is the Yogi's recipe for eternal youth. Matsyasan will keep your lungs healthy and prevent asthma and tuberculosis. Paschimottanasan is a wonderful abdominal massage ; it will keep your spine elastic. Similarly, Bhujang, Salab and Dhanur Asan, as also Halasan--all of them keep your internal organs healthy and strong. Pranayama will infuse wonderful strength and vitality in you. Suryanamaskar is an all-round exercise which you should never miss even for a day.

Asans and Pranayama enable your inner organs to function properly; they strengthen the vital inner organism. Only if you enjoy good health can you win the battle of life and attain God-realisation also through systematic meditation.

THE LAST WORD : PRACTISE !

You have heard many lectures and read many books. Now, I pray that you should practise. Practise whatever you know already. All knowledge is within, Divine Guidance will come from within. Practise from today, from this very second. That is my fervent prayer to you all.

I am grateful to you all for giving me an opportunity to serve you all and for giving me a patient hearing. I am grateful to Sri Bijawatji for his kindness and cordial reception he gave me. May God bless him ! May God bless you all with health, long life, peace, prosperity, Eternal Bliss, success in all undertakings, Vidya, Tushti, Pushti and divine Aiswarya !

*Om Tryambakam Yajamahe Sugandhim
Pushti-wardhanam
Urvarukamiva Bandhanan-mrityormuksheeya
Mamritaam.*

This is the Mahamrityunjaya Mantra which I earnestly request you all to recite daily. It will ward off all accidents, disease, old age and death. It will also give you Immortality.

*Om Sarvesham Swasti Bhavatu ;
Sarvesham Shantir Bhavatu ;
Sarvesham Purnam Bhavatu ;
Sarvesham Mangalam Bhavatu.

Sarve Bhavantu Sukhinah ;
Sarve Santu Niramayah ;
Sarve Bhadrani Pasyantu ;
Maa Kaschit Dukkha Bhag Bhavet.

Asato Maa Sat Gamaya ;
Tamaso Maa Jyotir Gamaya ;
Mrityor Maa Amritam Gamaya.*

*Om Purnamadah Purnamidam Purnat
Purnanudachyate
Purnasya Purnamadaya Purnamevavasish-
yate.*

Om Shanti Shanti Shanti I

PEACE UNTO ALL BEINGS I

STORY OF SWAMI ŚIVANANDA

STORY OF SWAMI SIVANANDA

God is said to be possessed of Ananta Kalyana Guna. People would have only heard of it. But I, like a few other rare souls, had the fortune of knowing some of the Kalyana-Gunas in the divine personality of Swamiji. Swamiji stands unparalleled in the present-day world.

Let me enjoy drops of bliss derived through the study of "Lord Krishna—His Leelas and Teachings."

—Sri Kalyanasundaram,
Thirupathi.

As one who craves for real happiness, I humbly realise that it can be had only through the Religion of Universal Love. Our Divine Gurudev Sri Swami Sivanandaji is the very image of Universal Love. The present generation is supremely blessed in having His Holiness as the guide and Saviour.

Sri V. Narayana Mallaya.
Cochin.

I want to thank you more than words—or any material thing—can express for the happiness that I experienced here in your Ashram.

I wish I could give more than this token, for I know that you will put it to a good and worthwhile cause.

My gratitude for your kindness, generosity and liberality.

—Elizabeth,
New York.

Prostrations on thy lotus feet. Kindly make me feel thy presence in my heart always.

I have to acknowledge receipt of the parcels of books and medicines. The books—Elixir, First Aid and Lord Krishna : Sivananda's Elixir is a wonderful tiny volume which contains the essence of Bhagavan's writings on a variety of subjects. One can easily brush up one's memory of thy writings by glancing through those pages.

The tins of Chyavanaprash are in surplus. Thy benevolence is more than I need. Daily I start my life with a cup of milk and Chyavanaprash. I feel the presence of your Divine Touch.

I always think of Bhagavan many times during day-time. Many times I hope to see thy divine face in my sleep as well. How I wish I could see you once daily in my sleep. That will give me lot of satisfaction.

—Y. Ramakrishna Prasad,
Madras.

Pray accept my sincerest homage of reverence and gratitude for all the blessings streaming from

Ananda Kutir. I always regard my contact with Sri Gurudev as the most precious and beneficial influence on my life. The ceaseless flow of divine love and compassion from Sri Gurudev has lifted me up and made life smooth and sweet for me and geared it to the pursuit of worthwhile ends. It is impossible for me to express in words how much I owe Sri Gurudev, in the matter of determining ultimate values and shaping my outlook and conduct Padma's attitude to Nadopasana has been purified and exalted by her contact with Sri Gurudev.

—R. Rangaramanuja Iyengar, B. A., L. T.,
Madras.

I live there, more-or-less most of the time, in mind and spirit. Yet I am very grateful for all goodness and graciousness bestowed upon me.

—Savitri Devi,
San Francisco,
U. S. A.

I will always remember with deepest gratitude Sri Swami Sivananda of Rishikesh.

During a four months' sojourn in Ceylon and India during the early part of 1959, I received unlimited hospitality and generosity at the hands of Buddhist Bhikkhus and Hindu Swamis. But Swami Sivananda, by allowing me—a non-disciple—to stay at his Ashram free of charge for an indefinite period (which eventuated to two complete months) showed

the purest hospitality I have ever met with. Moreover, by gladly allowing me to do my own Sadhana while here to suit my particular type of spiritual experience, by never once questioning or interfering with my method of making my inner being open to the influence of the Divine Grace, he showed the most amazing insight and spiritual comprehension—not to mention sublime tolerance—I have ever encountered in the course of my spiritual quest of 12 years.

It is well known that, of those who are helping to spread the message of Vedanta, the name of Swami Sivananda is very prominent indeed.

Thank you, Swamiji, for your wonderful kindness to me and for whatever of your manifold work is proving or has proved to be for the welfare of my fellows.

—Sri Cameron S. Willson,
Australia.

I have received the wonderful parcel of books at this time. I have received these in high esteem. And I cannot forget your kind thought over us.

Your publications are most useful for us.

—Sri M. Sadapasu,
Kyoto Prefecture,
Japan.

My daily prayers go every day to you and your wonderful work and to all people who love and admire you. I feel with them like one great family,

pecially after this wonderful experience Barbara Mayer and I had at Geneva at the masterfully conducted Sat-sangh Doctor Vishwanathan held there. I wrote you already every thing in a letter and I do hope you got it in due time.

—Sri S. Saraswati Candida Harrach,
Germany.

Gradually the mixed impressions fade to be replaced by an ever-growing admiration for your selfless service and that, also, of all the devoted and active Swamis and laymen under your guidance.

—Mr. Murray Latimer,
Australian Artist.

I admire all the work you are doing at Rishikesh. Swamiji, I have accepted you as my Guru.

—Miss Sundari T. Danyanani,
Casablanca (Maroc).

The abundant generosity in literature sent and your invaluable guidance in correspondence have widened my understanding and knowledge ; reduced the influence of emotions ; stabilized my life and, thank God, life around me in peaceful harmony and prosperity. You have taught me the oneness of Self, humility, simplicity, non-injury, and through Japa, a slow purification of the brain.

—Nicholas J. J. Munster,
Australia.

You have so kindly presented me two books—Triple Yoga and Sure Ways for Success in Life and God-realisation—which are kept in my library as treasures.

Due to God's grace, besides the above two books, I have also read your other two esteemed works—Raja Yoga and Practice of Yoga. You have revealed all secrets of God-realisation and the very problem of ours—birth and death. From your books, I have come to know the way that can transform the human being into God-hood. You have given me a great encouragement and hope now.

I have met sages like Sri Aurobindo, Sri Ramana Maharishi and others, but you gave me the deepest impression because you have great compassion in your heart to save human beings from Samsara.

—Sri Chou Hsiang-Kuang,
Professor of Chinese,
University of Allahabad,
Allahabad.

I am glad to inform you that Shakuntala has been discharged from the hospital and come home today. It is all due to the grace of God and by your prayers, she has been healed up. I have to thank you for the trouble you have taken for her.

—Sri K. Janaki M. A.,
Kurnool.

