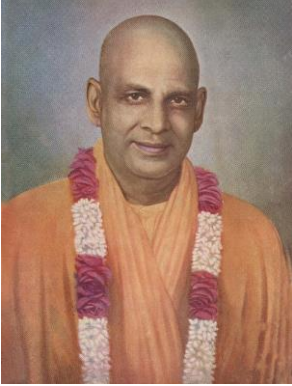


EPISTLE OF SWAMI SIVANANDA

Sivananda Daily Readings

(20 February – 4 March)



These writings of Swami Sivananda are from the book, 'Sivananda Daily Readings', compiled from the writings of Swami Sivananda by Swami Venkatesananda. These particular selections were taken from the letters of Swami Sivananda to sincere seekers who wrote to him by postal mail. You can imagine how blessed they felt to receive one letter, here, you have the most inspiring selection in one place for your inspiration. The three dashes that separate content indicate selections from different letters.

What is divine life? To shed the animal in man and to sublimate the human in him to the divine; to express the sublimation in his daily life, in his hourly life, in thought, word and deed. That is divine life.

To pray, to do japa (repetition of God's name), to sing His glory, to do kirtan (chanting), to meditate on the Lord, is divine life.

Treat all kinds of work, domestic, official, etc., as service of God. Surrender all your actions and their fruits to the Lord. Give up agency. Feel you are an instrument in the hands of the Lord.

Actions will not bind you. Your heart will be purified. The grace and light of God will descend on you.

This is the way to spiritualise all your actions.

See God in all beings and things. See the world as a manifestation of God. It is not necessary to abandon the world in order to have a vision of God, because the world itself is a manifestation of God.

Listen! Wake up now. Develop dispassion. Do sadhana (spiritual practice). Beware of the senses. Become desireless.

Understand life. Live divinely. Seek good company. Fear not. Waste not time. Depend on God.

Spiritual discipline is the key to God-realisation. Discipline the body and the senses and the mind.

May you attain God-realisation now and here.

Be regular in keeping your spiritual diary. Spiritual progress will be greatly quickened. Kindly be regular in sending me a copy of your diary at the end of each month for review and further instructions. I am immensely pleased to note your regularity in sadhana.

Go to bed early (10 p.m.) and get up early (4 a.m.). The early morning hours are most favourable for meditation.

Understand life's supreme purpose. Seek the eternal. Realise the underlying essence.

Have intense thirst for liberation. Die to live. Discipline the mind. Have self-control.

Learn to be wise. Make the best use of this human birth. Realise the oneness of existence.

Serve untiringly. Serve selflessly. Pray devotedly. Live truthfully. You will soon enter the kingdom of God.

Remain cheerful. Do japa whole heartedly. Rejoice heartily. You will attain the state of blessedness.

Reflect ceaselessly. Meditate intensely. Realise perfectly. Rest peacefully.

Think rightly. Act righteously. Meditate regularly. You will attain eternal bliss.

Aspire fervently. Pray sincerely. Introspect seriously. Reflect vigorously.
You will enjoy supreme peace.

Speak sweetly. Speak softly. Speak lovingly. Speak truthfully. You will
attain unalloyed felicity.

Never leave your sadhana (spiritual practice), your meditation, even for
a day. Constant practice and eternal vigilance are indispensable till God-
realisation is attained.

As long as you do not realise the truth, practise self-control and
meditation.

Conscious attempts to unite oneself with God is called spiritual sadhana.

Subjugate the senses. Slay this egoism. Curb the mind and enter the
illimitable domain of immortal bliss.

Om Krishna.

Faith creates, faith heals, faith works wonders, faith moves mountains.

Faith is the secret light for finding God. Faith makes the weak strong and
the timid brave. Faith makes the impossible possible.

Therefore, have unflinching, perfect faith in the Lord.

Please remember always that renunciation is the essence of spirituality
and the secret of Self-realisation. Renunciation is getting rid of egoism,
desires and cravings.

Renunciation is the only way to perfection and bliss eternal. Renunciation
leads to complete unification with the Supreme Being.

Renounce and be free.

Dharma is the pivot of life. Dharma means duty, righteousness, religion,
eternal law.

Where dharma is, there victory is. Dharma supports life. Dharma brings perfection. Dharma is a way of life based on virtues and perfect moral conduct. Dharma bestows immortal bliss.

Control of the mind is the first step to spirituality. Victory over the mind means victory over the world. Conquest of the mind is the greatest victory.

The mind becomes unstable and restless through desires for objects. When the mind is not centred in the Atman, man desires objects. Become desireless, control the mind, be happy for ever.

Satsanga is association with saints and sages. Without satsanga the mind cannot be turned towards God.

Satsanga is a formidable and impregnable fortress to protect aspirants from the temptations of maya (illusion). Live in the company of sages, hear their valuable instructions and follow them implicitly.

God is love. Bhakti is the experience of divine love.

Do your duty in a spirit of worship. Perform all actions in an attitude of prayer.

Your heart should overflow with divine love at the sight of any object in this world. Then alone you will become an ideal devotee.

Bhakti is devotion unto the Lord. Prayer, japa (repetition of God's name), kirtan (chanting), remembrance, worship, meditation, self surrender are all limbs of bhakti yoga. Bhakti yoga is suitable for the vast majority of persons. Para (supreme) bhakti and jnana (self-knowledge) are one.

God is very close to you. He abides in your heart. Closer is He than the breath; nearer than hands and feet! He is your very Self or Atman.

Strive to know God. Seek the company of sages. Lead a life of selfless service, renunciation, dispassion, prayer and meditation.

Have self conquest. Control the mind. You will attain perfection and peace.

The divine grace is life's greatest treasure. If there is self-surrender, there is the inflow of grace. Lord's grace will descend in proportion to the degree of surrender. The more the surrender, the more the grace.

Supreme love comes only by the grace of God. Grace of God will make you stick to the spiritual path.

Japa is the recitation of Lord's name. Japa is an important sadhana (practice) for God-realisation.

Japa yoga is the easiest, safest and surest way of attaining the goal in the present age.

Repeat 200 malas (rosary of 108 beads) of japa daily. Do more mental japa. Practice of japa brings the devotee face to face with God.

Japa yoga is the yoga of recitation of a mantra (or name of the Lord). There is a mysterious power in every name of the Lord. A name or mantra is recited in three ways, viz. verbal or loud utterance, semi verbal or humming, and mental. Mental japa is more powerful.

Let the recitation of japa become habitual. Do purascharana - do one lakh (one hundred thousand) of japa for each letter (of the mantra). Live on milk and fruits. Observe brahmacharya during this period.

Prayer is not asking. It is the yearning of the soul for communion with God. Sincere prayer draws the grace of the Lord.

Prayer is a mighty spiritual force. It should spring from the bottom of your heart.

Pray sincerely, fervently, whole heartedly. Then alone will God listen to your prayer.

True and sincere surrender unto the Lord is the essence of bhakti (God love).

"I am Thine. All is Thine".

"Thy will be done, my Lord."

This is the best Sharanagati Mantra or prayer (of self-surrender).

Seek His will. Do His will. Surrender to His will. You will become one with the cosmic will.

Hatha yoga is mainly concerned with the physical body and the pranamaya sheath. It prepares the aspirant for raja yoga.

Hatha yoga deals with the practice of asanas, pranayama, bandhas and mudras. It treats of sad kriyas too. It gives splendid health, removes various sorts of diseases and awakens the kundalini.

The practice of yoga asanas bestows mental poise. If you practise asanas for even ten minutes daily, you will derive immense benefits. Be regular in the practice of asana - this is important.

Sirshasana bestows brain power and develops the intellect and the memory. It is useful in maintaining brahmacharya (celibacy). It cures many diseases. Sarvangasana gives longevity and makes the spine elastic.

Be steady in your asana. Gradually try to sit on one asana for three hours at a stretch. Regulate and restrain the breath through the practice of pranayama (yoga breathing). Withdraw the senses from the object. Now you will be able to practise concentration and meditation.

Regularity in the practice of concentration is of paramount importance.

For success in brahmacharya (celibacy) intensify your japa (repetition of God's name) and meditation. Keep up constant mental repetition of the Lord's name, even during your work.

Have three sittings for meditation - morning, evening and night, just before going to bed.

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Vairagya is dispassion, desirelessness or non-attachment.

Vairagya liberates man from bondage. Vairagya is the foremost virtue.

Look into the defects of sensual life. Live in the company of saints. You will develop vairagya.

Vairagya is born of discrimination. It will help you and will be permanent. Without vairagya, not even an iota of spiritual progress is possible.

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Mind is the atma shakti (power of self). It is the dividing wall between the individual soul and the supreme soul.

Mind creates this universe. It is the principle of thinking and sensation. It is a bundle of vasanas (habit patterns), thoughts, likes and dislikes. Slay the mind through destruction of the vasanas in Brahma vichara and attain Self-realisation.

Egoism is your arch enemy. It is born of ignorance. The real secret of divine life is only in the renunciation of this dire egoism.

The tree of egoism can be destroyed by the fire of wisdom only.

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These are the ways to control the senses. Cultivate dispassion or non-attachment to objects; practise pratyahara (or withdrawal) and self-restraint.

Give up love or hate for objects. You can control the senses and the mind.

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It is better to practise concentration on one form of God and to repeat one mantra (mystic formula). Concentration will thereby be greatly increased.

If the mind wanders bring it back again and again to the form. Practise a little pranayama (yoga breathing). It will steady the mind. Observe mauna (or silence) for two hours. It will conserve energy and produce more concentration.

Behold! You must be diligent and vigilant always. Do not give leniency to the mind.

Be regular in your meditation. Meditation is the very essence and life of all spiritual sadhanas.

Meditate on the form of Lord Krishna with flute in His hand. Concentrate on trikuti (the space between the eyebrows). Repeat mentally - Om Namo Bhagavate Vasudevaya.

May Lord Krishna be your centre, ideal and goal.

Meditation is a sound and safe method by which you can unlock your inner power and attain God-realisation.

When you are in meditation you will touch the level of cosmic consciousness in a flash of illumination.

You will know that life is eternal and that you are eternal. God is the only reality. God is the only truth. God alone exists. Know this, realise this.

God is love. He dwells in your heart. Recite His name always. Sing His glories, do kirtan (chanting).

Conquer the whole world by truth and love.

In silence alone you can hold communion with God. When there is conflict of duty, sit and meditate. Hear the inner voice and act immediately.

During meditation one enters into a half sleepy state - this is called tandra. If one is really meditating, his body will be light and his mind will be cheerful.

If he is sleeping, the body will be heavy, the mind will be dull and the eye lids will be heavy.

During deep meditation you will forget the external world first and then the body. You will feel that there is no body. You will experience immense joy, indescribable peace.

Natural retention of the breath, without inhalation and exhalation, will come by itself.

Meditate on a concrete form in the beginning. Meditate on any form of the Lord. Think of his attributes: omnipotence, purity, perfection, etc. Gradually the mind will be prepared to take up the higher, formless meditation.

Be patient. Be persevering. Cultivate burning dispassion, burning longing for God-realisation. Gradually you will enter into deep meditation and samadhi.

Meditation is freeing the mind from thoughts of sense objects. Mind dwells on God and God alone during meditation. Have perfect ethical perfection. Then alone you will be established in deep meditation.

Meditation follows concentration and samadhi (super-conscious state) follows meditation.

Be courageous. You will come across various obstacles in meditation. You will have to conquer sleep, distraction, a taste for sensual pleasure, laziness, etc.

Practise asanas regularly.

Do a little tratak (gazing) and pranayama (yoga breathing). Do vichara (enquiry). Cultivate vairagya (dispassion). You will conquer all obstacles.

Samadhi is that state of pure consciousness, the supreme blissful state where the jivatma (soul) becomes one with Paramatma (Supreme Being).

Light diet, dispassion, discrimination, contact with a teacher, are necessary for the practice of meditation.

Meditation when persisted in and perfected, brings about the experience of super-consciousness or samadhi, the ultimate state of self-awareness or realisation.

When there is tension in the mind, when you cannot meditate, do kirtan or singing the Lord's name. You will get relaxation and concentration.

Kirtan is nectar. Kirtan is divine food for the soul Kirtan develops divine love. Kirtan produces bhava samadhi (ecstasy of devotion).

Samadhi leads to direct, intuitive realisation of the infinite. It is an inner divine experience, beyond the reach of speech and mind.

A jnani or sage will always be in samadhi, although engaged in worldly actions.

One without full even mindedness will never be able to go into samadhi even though he sits in padmasana for several hours. When all cravings cease, when one gets equal vision, he attains jnana vision and Brahmic bliss.

Spiritual experiences differ in sadhakas (seekers) according to the nature of their sadhana (practice) and the yoga they are practising. Some hear anahat (mystic) sounds in the ear. Some see brilliant lights. Some have vision of rishis (sages), mountains, rivers, etc.

Some experience cosmic consciousness. This is a rare experience. It cannot be expressed in words.

Maya is the illusory power of the Lord. Maya hides the real and makes the unreal appear as real. Maya is shuddha (pure) satva.

Do not enquire now into the origin of maya. Strive for its destruction. Maya is indescribable. It can be crossed - through the grace of God acquired by self-surrender. When jnana is attained, then you will know all about maya.

Avidya is ignorance. It is the cause for bondage. Vidya is the cause for liberation.

Destroy the root of avidya through knowledge of Atman.

Avidya is the causal body of the individual soul. It is impure satva. It is mixed with rajas (activity) and tamas (inertia).

Avidya is the cause for births and deaths. Mind and body are the effects of avidya.

Samadhi is union with God. It is a state of eternal bliss and eternal wisdom. It cannot be described in words. In savikalpa samadhi there is the triad, knower, knowledge, and knowable.

In samadhi mind, intellect and senses cease functioning. All dualities vanish in toto.

Meditate ceaselessly and enjoy the supreme bliss of nirvikalpa samadhi.

Please note the difference between sleep and samadhi. Sleep is an inert state. But samadhi is a state of pure awareness or pure consciousness.

When a man returns from sleep, he is heavy and dull. He has no experience of wisdom of Atman. But when the yogi comes down from samadhi, he is full of wisdom of Atman.

Jnana yoga is the yoga of wisdom. It is vedanta. It is the culmination of all the other yogas. It teaches that the individual soul is in essence identical with the supreme Soul. When avidya (ignorance) is destroyed the individual soul merges in the supreme soul.

The aspirant should equip himself with the four means of salvation, study the scriptures (Upanishad) under a guru and meditate. He will attain Self-realisation.

The mind alone is the universe. The body with its organs, etc., is no other than mind.

The slayer of Atman (self) is the mind only. The actions of the mind alone are, indeed actions, but not so those of the body.

The mind contemplating upon the body becomes the body itself and then, enmeshed in it, is afflicted by it.

Slay the mind and attain eternal bliss.

He who has a guru knows Brahman. A guru alone can remove doubts, pitfalls and snares. Guru is God Himself.

All that a guru can do is to tell his disciple the method of knowing the truth or the path that leads to the disclosure of the intuitional faculty.

He will clear your doubts, remove pitfalls and snares and inspire you. He cannot give you samadhi (super-conscious state). You will have to place each step yourself on the rung of the ladder of yoga. Do not expect a miracle from your guru, to put you into samadhi.

Every man wants everlasting happiness. This is his innate feeling. This indicates that his soul is an embodiment of bliss.

Everybody wants full knowledge of everything. This gives the clue that Atman is a mass of knowledge.

Every man wants freedom. It gives the clue that his Atman is ever free.

Search within and attain the ever blissful and ever free Atman.

Now I will tell you what vichara is. Vichara means enquiry. It is an enquiry into the nature of Brahman or Atman. Enquiry of "Who am I?" is also vichara.

What is bondage? What is freedom? What is the relation between the jiva and Brahman? How was this Universe born? Who is the Creator? These constitute vichara.

Vichara leads to Brahma-jnana (realisation of the Infinite).

You are imprisoned in this cage of flesh for a long time on account of your identification with the body. Cut this illusion with the sword of knowledge. "I am the all-pervading Sat Chit Ananda Brahman" - and be ever blissful.

Give up "I ness, mine ness", agency or doership. Become a silent witness. This is wisdom.

Brahman or the Absolute is the only reality. Mind and the universe are unreal. Mind alone is the universe. Action of the mind alone is karma.

Renunciation of egoism and desires constitutes real renunciation. This leads to atma jnana (self-knowledge). Practise Brahma vichara and you will soon attain Self-realisation.

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Identification with the body is bondage. Identification with the Atman or soul is liberation.

"I am body", "This is mine", "He is my son", "She is my wife" - this is bondage.

"I am all-pervading immortal soul", "Nothing belongs to me", "All is Brahman" - this is liberation.

If the mind is attached to objects, this is bondage. If it is unattached, this is liberation.

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Where there is no duality, there is immortality. When the three knots are cut, one attains immortality.

If your object in life is immortality, shun sense-objects as poison. Where there is nothing to be seen, or heard, or thought of, there is immortality.

Immortality is the very nature of Atman. The road to immortality is steep and thorny. The help of a realised sage is necessary - at every step.

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Walk the Brahman way. Brahmacharya is walking with God or Brahman. Brahmacharya is the Brahman way.

Regard a woman as mother or Devi (goddess). This is brahmacharya of the eye. Hear not lustful talks. This is brahmacharya of the ear. Speak not of woman. This is brahmacharya of the tongue. Entertain not lustful thoughts. This is brahmacharya of the mind.

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Brahman is supreme goodness. Rajas and tamas are the causes for evil, Evil is a mere appearance. It exists to glorify good. Evil is a kind of

knowledge which shows the superiority of goodness, by way of comparison.

An evil man is a saint of the future. See good in everything. Destroy the evil finding quality. Develop the good finding quality. Rise above good and evil.

Your real nature is essentially satchidananda Brahman. Thou art-the infinite, all pervading, self-luminous, eternal Atman, the supreme soul.

Tat Twam Asi. Thou art That.

Roar OM - Sivoham. Soham. Satchidananda Sivaroopoham. Come out of this cage of flesh.

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Know thy essential divine nature. Thou art the whole, the infinite, the Absolute, the eternal, the immortal.

Thou art above pleasure and pain, joy and sorrow, all pairs of opposites.

Knock within. Search within. Gaze within. Within you is the immortal soul.

Aim at perfection. Fight life's battle bravely. Live wisely. Strengthen your resolution. Become one with the eternal.

Have tenacity of purpose. Climb the peak of perfection. Self-realisation is here and now. Attain life's goal.

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If you observe perfect physical brahmacharya (celibacy), you will have control over your temper. You will not become irritable. Gradually you can attempt to attain mental brahmacharya, through japa (repetition of God's name), meditation, discrimination and enquiry.

Brahmacharya is the first requisite for God-realisation. Brahmacharya is the pathway to the kingdom of God.

May you be established in perfect brahmacharya.

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Self-realisation is not a process. It is not a becoming. It is pure being. It is not a new thing to be attained.

The aspirant knows that he is the all-pervading, immortal soul. To know that is to become that.

Self-realisation is direct, intuitive perception of the Atman. All distinctions vanish. The sage is freed from fear, sorrow and pain.

Do not get false contentment. Do not imagine that you have reached the highest nirvikalpa state, and stop your sadhana (practice).

Slay spiritual pride. Shun the company of worldly persons who always talk on sexual matters, money and worldly topics.

Observe the laws of health and hygiene. Be moderate in eating and drinking. Do not overwork. This will produce fatigue.

Fight bravely in this battle of life. Be bold. Be cheerful. Be patient. Be wise.

Arm yourself with the shield of discrimination and the sword of dispassion. March forward courageously, O brave spiritual soldier. Yield not to temptations.

Yoga is an exact science. It aims at the harmonious development of the body, the mind and the soul.

Thou art divine. Live up to it. Feel and realise thy divine nature.

Yoga of synthesis is a unique yoga. It is suitable for the vast majority of persons.

Man thinks, feels and wills. He must develop his heart, intellect and hand. Then alone can he attain perfection or integral development.

Everyone should have one yoga as a basic yoga. He must combine karma yoga, hatha yoga, raja yoga, bhakti yoga and jnana yoga. This is the yoga of synthesis.

Take stock of the past year. Turn back the leaves of your spiritual diary. Mark your spiritual progress. Note how far you have advanced in

cultivating virtues, like humility, courage, truthfulness, cosmic love, purity, etc., and in the control of the senses.

Even if there is a setback in certain things, *nil desperandum*. March forward, O adhyatmic (spiritual) hero. Look not back. A brilliant future is awaiting you.

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God is the source of all happiness. All beings abide in Him. He is an embodiment of peace, wisdom and bliss. He is truth, love, beauty and goodness. All beings abide in Him.

God is one, God and His laws are one. God is love and law. God is pure spirit. God is the path and the goal. God alone is your real father, mother, friend and guru.

Realise God now and here and be happy for ever.

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The deeper a man's love of God is, the greater is his spiritual knowledge, in due proportion to his capacity and depth of love.

The final consummation of the love of God is union with God.

Love of God is inborn in a man by virtue of his spiritual evolution.

May you live in God.

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To realise God is your duty. God-realisation is your birth right. Develop strong yearning for God-realisation.

Have confidence in your self. Be self-controlled. Be fiery in your determination. Stick to your resolves tenaciously.

Cultivate a very strong faith in God. Do total self-surrender and obtain His grace.

May you be established in God-consciousness.

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I shall tell you about the nature of the Atman or Brahman.

The Supreme Self or Atman abides in the chambers of your heart. It is the substratum of this world, mind, prana (life), body and senses.

It is satchidananda. It is immortal, infinite, eternal, ever pure, ever free, perfect and independent. It is one without a second. It is truth and wisdom. It is formless and attributeless.

