

Twenty Important Spiritual Instructions.

By Swami Sivanand Saraswati.

1. Get up at 4 A. M. daily. This is *Brahmamuhurta* the (Divine Hour) which is extremely favourable for meditation on God.

2. **Asana:**—Sit on *Padma*, *Siddha* or *Sukha Asana* for *Japa* and meditation for half an hour, facing East or North. Increase the period gradually to three hours. Do *Sirshasana* and *Sarvangasana* for *Brahmacharya* and health. Take light physical exercise as walking, etc. regularly. Do twenty Pranayamas.

3. **Japa:**—Repeat any *Mantra* as pure *Om* or *Om Namō Narayanaya, Om Namah Shivaya, Om Namō Bhagavate Vasudevaya, Om Saravanabhavaya Namah, Sila Ram, Sri Ram, Hari Om, or Gayatri* according to your taste or inclination from 108 to 21, 600 times daily (200 malas×108 make 21,600).

4. **Dietic Discipline:**—Take sattwic food (*Suddha Ahara*). Give up chillies, tamarind, garlic, onion, sour articles, oil, mustard, asafoetida. Observe moderation in diet (*Mitahara*). Do not overload the stomach. Give up those things which the mind likes best for a fortnight in a year. Eat simple food. Milk and fruits help concentration. Take food as medicine to keep the life going. Eating for enjoyment is sin. Give up salt and sugar for a month. You must be able to live on rice, dal and bread without any *chutnee*. Don't ask for extra salt for *dal* and sugar for tea, coffee or milk.

5. Have a separate meditation room under lock and key.

6. **Charity:**—Do charity regularly every month or even daily according to your means or one anna per rupee.

7. **Swadhyaya:**—Study systematically *Gita, Ramayana, Bhagavata, Vishnu-Sahsranama, Lalita-Sahsranama, Aditya-Hridaya, Upanishads* or *Yoga Vasishtha* from half an hour to one hour daily and have *Suddha Vichara*.

8. Preserve the vital force "*Veerya*" very, very carefully. *Veerya* is God (in motion or manifestation, *Vibhuti*). *Veerya* is all power. *Veerya* is all money. *Veerya* is the essence of life, thought and intelligence.

9. Get by heart some prayer in Slokas or *Stotra* and repeat them as soon as you sit on the *asana* before starting *Japa* or meditation. This will elevate the mind quickly.

10. Give up bad company (have constant *Satsanga*), smoking, meat, and alcoholic liquors entirely. Do not develop any evil habits.

11. Fast on *Ekadasi* or live on milk and fruits only.

12. Have a *Japa-mala* (rosary) in your neck or pocket or underneath your pillow at night.

13. Observe *Mauna* (vow of silence) for a couple of hours daily.
14. **Discipline of Speech**:—Speak truth at any cost. Speak little. Speak sweet (*madhura-bhashana*).
15. Reduce your wants. If you have four shirts, reduce the number to three or two. Lead a happy, contented life. Avoid unnecessary worry. Have simple living and high thinking.
16. Never hurt anybody (*Ahimsa Paramo Dharmah*). Control anger by love, *kshama* (forgiveness) and *Daya* (compassion).
17. Do not depend upon servants. Self-reliance is the highest of all virtues.
18. Think of the mistakes you have committed during the course of the day just before retiring to bed (self-analysis). Keep daily diary and self-correction register as Benjamin Franklin did. Don't brood over the past mistakes.
19. Remember that death is awaiting you at every moment. Never fail to fulfil your duties. Have pure conduct (*sadachara*).
20. Think of God as soon as you wake up and just before you go to sleep. Surrender yourself completely to God (*Saranagati*).

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

Om SantI I SantI II SantI III

