

## Religion in the Modern Day

### Christianity: Ten Commandments - King James Version

And God spake all these words, saying, I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

1. **Thou shalt have no other gods before me.**
2. **Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth.** Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.
3. **Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain;** for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.
4. **Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.** Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.
5. **Honour thy father and thy mother:** that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.
6. **Thou shalt not kill.**
7. **Thou shalt not commit adultery.**
8. **Thou shalt not steal.**
9. **Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.**
10. **Thou shalt not covet** thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's.

<http://www.godstenlaws.com/ten-commandments/#.Uliyhbm6bcc>

### The Essence of Christianity

It is important in just about everything one does to be able to discern the essential from the incidental, to be able to distinguish between those things that are central and those that are peripheral. Knowing what lies at the core or heart of any matter is often the most important thing to understand. Once we understand the essence of a thing we are then able to make sense of all the parts and minor components. It is when we cannot get a clear picture of the sum and substance of a thing that we get confused or end up wasting our efforts. This basic truth applies when it comes to our understanding of the Bible and Christianity. So let me ask you, what is the essence of Christianity? What is at the very heart and core of it? What one thing makes sense of

all the rest of it, what one thing is at the center and to which all other features of it relate? It appears to me that there is sometimes, among some of God's people, either confusion about the answer to this question or a failure to answer it at all. Is this an important question? YES! We are never going to be the kinds of Christians God wants us to be if we do not have a good grasp of the essence of Christianity. How we answer this question, you see, determines how we practice our religion. If we have the wrong answer here then we will not be living as we should. What we do may resemble Christianity, but unless we can hit the bulls-eye with our answer to this question we will not have arrived at the real thing.

Some people think that the essence of Christianity is some vague notion of being a good person or doing good things. While Christians are good people and they do good things, this is not their essence, nor is "doing good" the essence of the gospel message. The same is true of "going to church." I suspect that many people think of Christianity primarily in terms of going to worship services at the church building. While this is part of what we do as Christians, it is by no means the heart and soul of it. The essence of Christianity is not church attendance, good deeds, doing your best, being a happy person, etc. These are all parts, but they are not the center. One might answer: "The essence of Christianity is being Christ-like." That is a good answer, but it is possible to be even more precise than this.

The center of Christianity is the death and resurrection of Jesus. Everything else in the New Testament, whether it be a command to love others, God's demand that we keep ourselves pure from sin, the New Testament teaching about divorce, and every other topic all stems from the death and resurrection of Jesus. Everything Jesus Himself said and did revolved around this. Take that away and Christianity has no foundation, no basis, no rationale, no center. Without a thorough appreciation of the centrality of the death and resurrection one will never truly learn how to live the Christian life. He/she may do something similar to it, but it will only be a pale imitation if at the heart of it there is not Jesus crucified and raised from the dead.

The New Testament tries hard to impress us with the death and resurrection of Jesus as being the center of the whole gospel and of Christianity. Did you ever notice how the gospels do not all tell us exactly the same events from the ministry of Jesus, or they do not always give specific details about exactly where Jesus went, how long it took Him to get there, etc.? And then did you ever notice that when it comes to the death and resurrection of Jesus all four gospels suddenly begin to get very detailed? They tell us when Jesus was arrested, how long His trials took, what was said at His trials and who said it, how long Jesus was on the cross, what day it was, what time it was when he was buried, the day of the week it was when Jesus was raised, etc. That's the authors' way of telling us that the parts of the gospels that tell of Jesus' death and resurrection are the parts about which we must know the most. They gave us the most details about that event because everything else in the gospels points there.

Jesus Himself tried to get His disciples to see the centrality of the cross in His mission. On at least three separate occasions He gathered His disciples together for the specific purpose of telling them about His death and resurrection in Jerusalem. His teachings were full of hints about that dual event. He mentioned giving His generation the sign of Jonah the prophet (Matt 12:39). At the very beginning of His public ministry He talked about destroying the temple and raising it up in three days (John 2:19). He compared Himself to the brazen serpent of Moses' day (John

3:14). He spoke parables about a king who had a son that was killed (Matt 21:38). When Greeks came to see Him he responded by talking about going to the cross (John 12:20ff). Over and over again Jesus tried to make it clear that the core of His mission was wrapped up in the cross and the empty tomb that followed it.

When the apostles went out preaching, they did not start with baptism, the kingdom, the sin of fornication, or any such thing. Sure, they taught about those things in the course of their preaching and teaching, but the one thing that made sense out of all those other subjects was the death and resurrection of Jesus. When Peter preached the gospel for the very first time, his subject was the death and resurrection of Jesus (Acts 2). When Paul went from place to place preaching, the first thing that came out of his mouth was the story of the death and resurrection of Jesus (Acts 13). To the Corinthians he said plainly "For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified" (1 Cor 2:2). To that same group Paul said that the gospel is "that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures" (15:3-4). That was the primary message, that came first. Everything else in Christianity was the corollary and the manifestation of that.

Christianity is possible only because Jesus died and was raised. Without His death there would be no forgiveness for our sins. His blood paid the price for our sinning. And without His resurrection we would have no hope of eternal life. If Jesus had remained in His tomb we would have no reason to pay attention to anything He said, for He said He would be raised again. If He had been wrong about that, then nothing else He said would have been worth hearing and there would be no way out of death.

Furthermore, the death and resurrection is not just a historical event. It is much more. It is the pattern by which we are to live. Being Christ-like means living a life that is characterized by death to sin and new life for God. We die to sin and are buried with Him in baptism, then we are raised out of the water to live a new life with Him (Rom 6:1ff), and that dying to sin and living to God is not a one-time thing. Our lives are to be a constant death to sin and living with Jesus. As His disciples we too must follow Him in the way of the cross, the way of sacrifice, the way of dying unto sin in obedience to the will of God. Every other moral command in the New Testament is simply spelling out how a crucified-and-resurrected person ought to live. We all must be able to say with Paul "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I that live, but Christ lives in me" (Gal 2:20). Crucified with Him, and living a new life with Him: that is the essence of being a Christian. If we do the good works and attend church services without that being at the core of it, we have yet to practice real, true Christianity.

By David McClister  
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<http://www.bible.ca/ef/topical-the-essence-of-christianity.htm>

## **Relevance Of Ramayana To Modern Life**

The whole universe is under the control of God. God is governed by Truth. Noble souls are the guardians of Truth. Such noble souls are verily the embodiments of Divinity.  
(Sanskrit *Sloka*)

Embodiments of Love!

All are essentially the embodiments of Divinity. *Eswara Sarva Bhoothanam* (God dwells in all beings). *Isavyam Idam Jagat* (God permeates the entire universe). Where is the need to search for such an all-pervasive Divinity?

*Sarvata Pani Padam Tath Sarvathokshi Shiromukham,  
Sarvata Sruthimalloke Sarvamavruthya Thisthati.  
(Sanskrit *Sloka*)*

How can you search for Him who is moving about with thousands of feet, thousands of eyes and thousands of ears? So, it is utterly foolish to search for God. God is within you. As you have forgotten your true Self and are carried away by the temporary and transient physical body, you are unable to understand the Divine. When you get rid of body attachment and develop attachment towards the Self, only then you can understand the divine *Atmic* Principle.

### **Values Contained in Rama's Story**

Embodiments of Love! Life is like a game of chess; not merely that, it is like a battlefield. The story of Rama teaches us the threefold *Dharma* (code of conduct) pertaining to the individual, the family and the society. You have to make every effort to understand the duties of the individual, the family and the society. Rama is the ocean of compassion. He is love personified. It is possible to understand His divinity only through the path of love. Love is the undercurrent of human life. Man will be able to manifest his innate divinity only when he develops love within.

The modern society needs to follow the *Dharma* that is contained in the epic Ramayana. What is the reason? Today, the son is not paying heed to his father's advice and the parents are not concerned about the future of the son. Devotion to the *Guru* should be the aim of the students. But, the students are not having regard for their teachers and the teachers are not imparting anything good to them. In such a situation, everyone needs to follow the ideals of the Ramayana. The Ramayana speaks of the true identity of the individual, the real significance of the family and the sanctity of the society. The Ramayana teaches the importance of human values. Today corruption is rampant in all fields such as business, education and politics. Under these circumstances, the principles of the Ramayana are very important. It explains in detail the relationship that should exist between brothers, the father and the son, the preceptor and the disciple.

All of us live on the same earth. The same sky is above all of us. We breathe the same air and drink the same water. Ignoring this underlying principle of unity man visualizes multiplicity, which is a big mistake. The Ramayana centers on the principle of unity in diversity. Today as man has lost the ability to see unity in diversity, he is immersed in restlessness. What we need today is to see unity in diversity and the divinity behind this unity.

The culture of Bharat says: *Sathyam Bruyath, Priyam Bruyath, Na Bruyath Sathyamapriyam* (speak the truth, speak sweetly and softly and never utter truth in an unpalatable way). *Sathyam Bruyath* is the moral value. *Priyam Bruyath* is the social value. *Na Bruyath Sathyamapriyam* is the spiritual value. So, the moral, social, and spiritual values are all contained in the above statement.

The Ramayana teaches these values in the simplest way. But, man has forgotten the message of the Ramayana and is leading the life of a Ravana. Ravana did not understand this principle of divinity. There was no transformation in him though he had acquired all forms of knowledge and had done severe penance. He ruined himself on account of excessive desires. Before his death, he gave a message to the people: "O people, with all my skills and expertise in different forms of knowledge I became a victim of desires. I lost my sons, ruined my clan and burnt my kingdom to ashes, as I could not control my desires. Do not become a victim of desires like me. Follow the path of truth and righteousness and be like Rama. Experience divinity"

### **Put Ramayana's Teaching into Practice**

The relationship that existed between the brothers of Rama is an ideal to the rest of the humanity. They lived in unity in spite of troubles and turmoil. Mother Kaikeyi wanted her son Bharata to ascend the throne of Ayodhya, but Bharata never had any such desire. He went to Chitrakoota mountain, fell at the feet of Rama and prayed, He, being the eldest, should take over the kingdom of Ayodhya. But, Rama did not yield to his request. Quoting the Vedic dictum *Mathru Devo Bhava, Pithru Devo Bhava*. He exhorted Bharata to obey the command of the father and fulfil the desire of his mother by becoming the king of Ayodhya. Rama promised him that He would render all help and support. That is why even today people extol Rama as *Sathyavakparipalaka* (one who adheres to truthful speech).

Today many people read the holy Ramayana, but few understand its essence. They spend their time in acquiring bookish knowledge and superficial knowledge, but fail to have practical knowledge. There are many people who can explain the teachings of Ramayana in a beautiful way, but how many of them obey the command of their fathers in their daily life? Not many! What is the use of reading various texts, if we do not put into practice the message contained in them? Can anyone enjoy the taste of various delicious items such as *Mysore Pak, Gulab Jamoon, Jilebi*, etc., by merely repeating their names? No. One can enjoy the taste only when one eats them. Mere textual information is of no use. But, man today is interested only in information, and not transformation. Intellect will blossom only when there is transformation.

If your ambitions are not fulfilled, do not waver or get depressed. He is a realized one who is cheerful in the face of all adversities.

One has to face many obstacles in one's life, but one should never get depressed. Life is a challenge, meet it. Life is a dream, realize it. Life is a game, play it. Life is love, enjoy it. Be cheerful and courageous in the face of adversities, never give scope to any weakness whatsoever. The *Vedanta* declared: *Na Ayamatma Balaheenena Labhya* (a weak-minded person cannot realize the *Atma*). A weak-minded person cannot accomplish anything. So, you should be strong-minded. Develop faith in that which is good.

As there is no fear of sin and love for God, humanness is on the decline in human beings. This is the cause for lack of peace in the world.

Therefore, man should cultivate *Daiva Preeti*, *Papa Bheeti* and *Sangha Neeti* (love for God, fear of sin and morality in society). Though Rama and Ravana were equally well versed in all forms of knowledge, sage Valmiki extolled Rama as Divine and condemned Ravana as a foolish one. What is the reason? Ravana did not translate into action the knowledge he had acquired and on the contrary he used it for wicked purposes. On the other hand, Rama translated all his knowledge into action and gave joy to one and all. *Sarvaloka Hithe Ratah* (Rama was engaged in the welfare of all). *Sarvajnanopasampannah* (He was the master of all forms of knowledge). *Sarvasamudhita Gunaihi* (He was the embodiment of all good qualities). These are the three aspects that manifested Rama's divinity. Whoever has these three aspects is essentially divine. In fact, everyone is divine. But because of attachment to the body, man is not able to understand his divine nature. Man can experience and enjoy divinity only by treading along the path of love. Love is God; God is love. So, live in love.

Start the day with love  
Spend the day with love  
Fill the day with love  
End the day with love  
This is the way to God.

### **The Best Sadhana: Love Everybody**

The cause for man's suffering is that he has constricted his love to himself and his family. He should develop the broad feeling that all are his brothers and sisters. Expansion of love is life; contraction of love is death. All are the children of God. All are sparks of the Divine. Lord Krishna declared in the Bhagavad Gita: *Mamaivamso Jeevaloke Jeevabhutha Sanathana* (the eternal *Atma* in all bodies is a part of My Being). So, man should have the broad feeling to identify himself with everybody. Humanity can never progress without broad feelings.

See no evil, see what is good  
Hear no evil, hear what is good



Talk no evil, talk what is good  
Think no evil, think what is good  
Do no evil, do what is good  
This is the way to God.

When there is such an easy path to divinity, why do you trouble yourself by undertaking rigorous spiritual practices such as *Japa*, *Thapa* and *Yoga*? Divinity cannot be attained by all these austerities. How easy it is to love everybody!

Love all and think of divinity. Moses used to think of Jesus all the time. As a result, his face shone with divine effulgence. He resembled Jesus so much that people used to mistake him for Jesus. Ratnakara, a robber, on being advised by Narada started chanting the name of Rama incessantly, as a result of which the radiance of Rama was seen on his countenance and he became sage Valmiki. Rama is *Lokadatha* (the giver of the world) and Valmiki became *Slokadatha* (composer of the holy hymns). There is no difference between the giver and the composer. The *Vedas* declare: *Brahmavid Brahmaiva Bhavathi* (the knower of *Brahman* becomes *Brahman* himself). So, you should always think good, do good, talk good and hear good. Only then you can become good. A true human being is one who is good. A wicked person can never be called a human being.

There are four qualities in man - the divine, demonic, animal and human. What is the divine quality in man? *Sarvaloka Hithe Ratah*. (engaged in the welfare of everybody). That is the divine nature. What is the human quality? Always undertake meritorious deeds (*Punya*). Never indulge in sin (*Papa*). *Paropakara Punyaaya Paapaaya Parapeedanam* (rendering help to others is merit, harming others is sin). Help ever, Hurt never. What constitutes the animal quality in man? *Jnanena Sunya Pasubhir Samana* (devoid of wisdom man is equivalent to an animal). The purpose of human life does not lie in merely eating, drinking, sleeping and indulging in materialistic comforts. Even animals indulge in such activities. But unlike man animals do not possess the evil qualities of amassing, robbing and stealing. Today man is human only in form, but not in behavior.

### **Less Luggage, more Comfort**

*Janthoonam Narajanma Durlabham* (human life is the most difficult to attain of all living beings). The good that you experience in this life is the result of meritorious deeds done in several past lives. This human life is not new. This message is contained in the word *Manava*. *Ma* means 'not' *Nava* means 'new', which means human life is not new.

Today man has degenerated to the level of an animal due to excessive desires. Less luggage more comfort makes travel a pleasure. But, the desires (luggage) in man are multiplying day by day. Human life is a long journey. One should lead a divine life (*Divya Jeevanam*), not a mean life (*Deena Jeevanam*). Always be happy. Difficulties do come in life. That is the law of nature. Never get disheartened by them. Difficulties are like

passing clouds. Difficulties come and go, but morality comes and grows. Unfortunately, there is decline in moral values in the society today.

Rama stood as a shining example of upholding the moral values in the society. Even when he was asked to leave for the forest at a time when he was supposed to be coronated, he was not perturbed in the least. *Sukhadukhe Samekruthva Labhalabhau Jayajayau* (he is an equal minded one who treats the dualities of life pain and pleasure, victory and defeat, gain and loss - alike). Rama displayed this virtue of equanimity. Today, man aspires for positions of authority though he does not deserve them. But, Rama relinquished the position even though He deserved it. Rama was courageous in the face of adversities. He never gave any scope for weakness. He led the life of a *Dheera* (courageous one), not a *Deena* (weak-minded). Same is the case of one who is in His company. Hanuman, by contemplating on Rama incessantly, became a *Dheera*. He displayed this quality of courageousness in the court of Ravana. But the same Hanuman stood like a *Deena* (humble one) in Rama's presence. **This drives home the point that one should be a *Deena* (humble one) in front of divinity and *Dheera* (courageous one) in the face of evil.**

Annihilate the evil qualities of *Kama* (desire), *Krodha* (anger) and *Lobha* (greed). Ravana ruined not only himself, but also his dynasty because of *Kama*. Therefore, to the extent possible control your desires. Today Government has imposed ceiling on land and property through legislation, but what is essential is ceiling on desires. Not only did Hiranyakasipu refrain from chanting the name of Lord Hari, he also insisted that his son Prahlada should follow suit. He developed hatred towards his own son for singing the praise of Lord Had against his wishes. This evil quality of anger led to his doom. Duryodhana was greed personified. He was not prepared to part with even a small piece of land. He subjected the Pandavas to enormous hardships. What happened to him ultimately? He became a victim of his own greed.

**Desire, anger and greed are the greatest impediments in the path of spirituality. Render help to others, if possible. Never hate anybody under any circumstances. The essence of 18 *Puranas* is contained in these two maxims: Help ever, Hurt never.**

### **Spirituality Promotes Spirit of Unity**

The story of the Ramayana reveals the ideal relationship that should exist between brothers. Lakshmana and Satrugna served Rama and Bharata respectively with utmost devotion and sincerity. When Lakshmana fainted in the battlefield, Rama lamented, "In this world I might find another mother like Kausalya, a wife like Sita, but definitely not a brother like Lakshmana." A brother should be like this - one who respects elders and brings name and fame to the whole family. It is the unity amongst the brothers that brought reputation to the whole family.

The same was the case with the Pandavas also. The five Pandavas could defeat hundred Kauravas as they stood united. Even though Vali and Sugriva were just two, they fell apart because of lack of unity. Rama restored the kingdom to Sugriva as he



completely surrendered to Him. Similar was the case with Ravana, Vibhishana and Kumbhakarna. Any big task can be accomplished if the five fingers are united. Otherwise even a small task becomes extremely difficult. So, everyone should strive for unity.

Spirituality destroys narrow mindedness and confers unity, cooperation and universal peace.

Unity is very essential. Through unity you can understand spirituality. Do not hate anybody. Do not develop ill feelings towards others. Then you can become a true human being. Spiritual practices are just a waste of time if you cannot overcome your selfishness. Do not engage in spiritual activities aspiring for your own liberation as it would amount to selfishness. Work for the redemption of one and all. Let everybody attain divinity and experience divine bliss. You should have such broad feelings. Your welfare lies in the welfare of the society.

Embodiments of Love!

You do not need to undertake any spiritual practices. Experience the innate divinity in everyone by following the path of love. Love is God. Spend your life in selfless service. This is the teaching of Rama.

### **Lakshmana's Sterling Character**

In order to demonstrate to the world the ideal character of Lakshmana, Rama subjected him to a test. When Sita, Rama and Lakshmana were residing on Chitrakoota mountain, one day Lakshmana went into the forest to fetch some food. Taking this opportunity, Rama decided to test Lakshmana. He requested Sita to play her role in this divine drama. As Lakshmana was returning with food, Sita pretended to be asleep under a tree, keeping her head on the lap of Rama. Rama asked Lakshmana to keep Sita's head on his lap without disturbing her sleep as He had some other important work to attend to.

Rama wanted to observe the feelings of Lakshmana. So, He assumed the form of a parrot and perched on the same tree. Considering Sita as his mother, Lakshmana closed his eyes and went into deep contemplation of Lord Rama. Rama in the form of a parrot started singing: "It is easy to wake up someone who is fast asleep, but is it possible for anyone to wake up a person who is pretending to be asleep?" (Telugu Poem) Sita pretended to be fast asleep and even started snoring! In all respects Sita and Rama were a perfect match for each other. After some time, Rama returned as if from somewhere and 'woke up' Sita. Sita opened her eyes as if from deep sleep and expressed her satisfaction to Rama that she had a sound and undisturbed sleep. The *Leelas* (pranks) of God are mysterious, wonderful and sacred. God tests a devotee in order to shower His grace on him and protect him. Lakshmana fell at Rama's feet and said, "I am Your servant. It is my duty to serve You in the way You want me to."

When Sita was being taken away forcibly by Ravana, she bundled all her jewels and dropped them from above. The *Vanaras* found the jewels and took them to Sugriva. When Rama and Lakshmana met Sugriva, he showed them the jewels and asked if they belonged to Sita. As Rama did not know, He asked Lakshmana to see. Lakshmana replied, "Brother, I don't know whom these earrings and bracelets belong to. But I am sure that these anklets belong to Mother Sita." On being questioned as to how he could recognize Sita's anklets, Lakshmana said, "It was my practice to prostrate at her lotus feet every morning. While doing so I had noticed Mother Sita's anklets." Rama was pleased with Lakshmana's sincerity and devotion and showered praises on him and said, "He could not find a brother like Lakshmana anywhere in the world." Later Rama said that it was because of Lakshmana's strength and support that He could defeat Ravana and bring Sita back to Ayodhya.

The Ramayana demonstrates that anything can be achieved through sincerity and devotion. The story of the Ramayana is so enchanting and captivating that one feels like listening to it again and again. Bharatiyas have been singing the story of Rama since ancient times. Everyone should try to understand the essence of the Ramayana. The Ramayana teaches that one should have a good character, one should obey the command of the father and respect the parents, and there should be unity among brothers. If you follow these teachings in letter and spirit, your life itself will become a living Ramayana.

### **Heart is the Real Temple**

Students should understand that God is their best friend. All the worldly friends are lured by your position, power and pelf. Once your position and power are gone, gone are your friends too. God is the only friend in the real sense of the term. The whole world is a book and your conscience is your real *Guru*. Why trouble yourself going after various worldly *Gurus*? Follow your conscience and experience divinity. The Principle of the *Atma*, which reveals the secrets of your mind, is your true *Guru*. *Guru* is one who is formless and beyond all attributes.

*Gurur-Brahma Gurur- Vishnu  
Gurur - Devo Maheswara,  
Guru Sakshath Param Brahma  
Thasmai Sri Gurave Namah.*

Consider God as your mother, father, friend and everything. Take God as your *Guru*, follow Him and merge in Him. If you have God as your *Guru*, you can achieve everything in life. Develop love for God and be recipients of His love and grace. Develop friendship with God and the whole world will be under your control. Troubles and turmoil are part and parcel of one's life. Overcome them by chanting the divine name. Be fearless.

Do not restrict God to temples and pilgrimage centers. He is *Hridayavasi* (indweller of the heart). He is in you, with you, above, you, around you. You do not need to visit

various pilgrimage centers. Your heart is the real pilgrimage center. Mira also echoed the same feelings. When her husband asked her to leave the temple premises, she said to Krishna, "None can separate You from me. My heart is Your temple." In the Gita Lord Krishna declared: *Kshetrajnam Chapi Maam Viddhi* (recognise Me as the indweller of all beings). The body is the field and the *Atmic* Principle is the indweller of all fields. So, the *Kshetra* (field) and the *Kshetrajna* (knower of the field) are within you. Bliss is not present in a foreign land; it is present within you. In order to experience bliss, develop love in your heart.

You should pray to God to grant you that which He possesses and you do not. What is that you lack? Peace and bliss. Ask and it shall be granted. Do not ask God for the fulfillment of mean desires. All the worldly things are fleeting and momentary. Only God is immutable, pure, eternal and immortal. So, spend your time in singing the glory of God. By sincere prayer, you can discover your latent divinity.

At the time of his departure to the forest along with Rama and Sita, Sumitra counseled Lakshmana thus: "Never be under the impression that you are going to the forest. Wherever Rama and Sita are present, that itself is Ayodhya. This Ayodhya without Sita and Rama is a veritable forest. Consider Sita and Rama as your mother and father and serve them to the best of your ability with all love, sincerity, faith and devotion." You cannot find a woman greater than Sumitra in this world. She blessed her son to serve God wholeheartedly. The term Sumitra mean good friend (*Su* - good, *Mitra* - friend). Such noble mothers like Sumitra and sons like Lakshmana with total devotion to God are needed today.

Unity is the need of the hour today. It is unity that protects the world. The prosperity and welfare of the society depends upon the individual. Our thoughts are our greatest asset. If the thoughts are sacred, you will have sacred results. Pleasure and pain are the consequences of your thoughts. So, sanctify your thoughts. When thoughts are good and powerful, you can achieve any thing.

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<http://www.saidarshan.org/baba/docs/d990325.html>

## Listening to Ramayana

As it is normal for anyone to ask questions about the utility of anything, one might raise a query on the use of listening to a discourse on the Ramayana.

The Ramayana has 24,000 verses, with each one having special significance, said Kidambi Narayanan.

It is said that listening to Bala Kandan will result in one being blessed with **progeny**. If one listens to Sita Kalyanam, a **long postponed marriage** may materialise. Listening to Paduka

Pattabhishekam will make one get **boons** from the Lord. If one listens to the story of Guha's friendship with Rama, that person will gain the **friendship** of good people.

That is why many people have written the story of Rama. Besides Valmiki's Ramayana, there is the Kamba Ramayanam in Tamil. There is Tulsidas' Ram Charita Manas in Hindi and there is a Sanskrit work called Mahavira Vaibhavam about the Rama avatara. Vaishnavite Acharya Vedanta Desika composed the Raghuv eeragadhyam, recording the life of Rama in verse. Kalidasa wrote the Raghuvamsa. Acharya Mudaliandan gave the essence of the Ramayana in just 10 words. Kooratazhvar wrote the Athimanushyasthavam, marvelling at Rama's greatness and Supremacy. Kulasekhara Azhvar has also composed verses about the Rama avatara.

It is said it would be good if we recite all the 24,000 verses in Valmiki Ramayana every day. If we cannot do this, we should at least recite the Sundara Kandam every day. If this is not possible, we should try to recite five or 10 verses from the Ramayana every day. If this is not possible, one must attend discourses on the Ramayana. When the Rama avatara came to an end, Hanuman said all he ever wanted was to stay back on the earth and listen to the praises of Rama. So wherever the Ramayana is being spoken of, one can be sure that Hanuman will be there. That is why people are urged to attend Ramayana discourses and reap the benefits thereof. If Hanuman, who was present during the Rama avatara and served the Lord, is so anxious to listen to His praises, we who did not have such good fortune have more reason to listen to a Ramayana discourse.

<http://www.thehindu.com/features/friday-review/religion/listening-to-ramayana/article894285.ece>

## Samskara

The **Samskaras** (Sanskrit: संस्कार saṁskāra) are **rites of passage** finding varied acceptance among religious adherents of **Hinduism** (Vedic), **Jainism** and some schools of thought in **Buddhism**. *Sanskār* is a commonly used **Hindi** pronunciation of the word and signifies "cultural heritage and upbringing" in modern speech. *Samskaram* is the proper and commonly used word that would be universally understood and refers to someone having proper upbringing and behaviour.

## Hinduism

The *samskāra* (samskaar) are a series of **sacraments**, sacrifices and rituals that serve as **rites of passage** and mark the various stages of the human life and to signify entry to a particular **Ashrama** (i.e. stage of life). All human beings are required to perform a number of sacrifices with oblations for gods, Ancestors and Guardians in accordance with the Vedic dictums for a **Dharmic** or righteous life and become **Dvija** or twice-born by the performance of these acts. Basically all these rituals are of the nature of purification and/or bestow good qualities (*gunas*). A person does not have to foster a relationship between religious-spiritual knowledge and the practice of religious-rituals. It means a person having deep religious spiritual knowledge may or may not be involved in the ritual processes. Similarly a person involved in rituals may or may not have the religious knowledge.<sup>[1]</sup>

Most Vedic rituals consist of **Homa** - fire sacrifices of elaborate and intrinsic designs and complex methodology, accompanied by recitation of Vedas by qualified Priests in honor of a particular Demigod or God (i.e. aspect of divinity), fire offerings of various ingredients, gifts to be given in charity, presence of elders for blessings, amidst sanctified sacrificial grounds, sacred herbs and good omens. Each important milestone of a Human life is to be celebrated by undertaking a particular Samskara wherein the significance of that milestone is ritualistically conveyed.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sa%E1%B9%83sk%C4%81ra>

## Peace And Love Are The Essence Of Islam

The Qur'an is the true Book revealed to people as a guide to the true path and in this Book, Allah commands man to adopt moral perfection in the light of Islamic tenets. This morality is based upon concepts such as love, compassion, understanding and mercy. The word "Islam" is derived from the word meaning "peace" in Arabic. Islam is a religion revealed to mankind with the intention of presenting a peaceful life through which the infinite compassion and mercy of Allah manifest on earth. Allah calls all people to Islamic morals through which compassion, mercy, peace and love can be experienced all over the world. Allah addresses believers as follows:

***O You who believe! Enter absolutely into peace (Islam). Do not follow in the footsteps of satan. He is an outright enemy to you. (Surat al-Baqara, 208)***

As the verse above suggests, Islam is a religion purely based on love and compassion. The Qur'an emphasizes a love that stems from faith and has a profound effect on the soul. Altruism, fortitude, generosity, care and protection all fall within the scope of the concept of love revealed in the Qur'an. This being the case, Islam intrinsically calls for peace and fosters a life in absolute sincerity and honesty before Allah. Therefore it is vitally important for an individual to live by the religion of Islam to be a Muslim with his own will and aspiration and observe Allah's commands and advise from heart and soul through personal conscientious contentment.

This tenet is the basis of Islam which is described by the verse:

***There is no compulsion where the religion is concerned. (Surat al-Baqara: 256)***

As stated in the verse, no-one can be compelled to live by Islamic morals. Conveying the existence of Allah and the morals of the Qur'an to other people is a duty that believers are charged with. Muslims who desire to perform their duty spread the message of religion in order to guide other people. They instruct goodness and rule out evil as to Allah's provision to "command what is good and forbid what is wrong" and call people to the path of Allah with words of purity. Meanwhile they never force them, for they know that it is only Allah Who guides people to the right way. This is related in the following verse:

***You cannot guide those you would like to but Allah guides those He wills. He has best knowledge of the guided. (Surat al-Qasas, 56)***

The Qur'an also provides an environment where people can fully enjoy freedom of thought and freedom of religion and allows people to live by the faith and values they believe in. According to Islam, everyone has the right to live freely by his beliefs, whatever they may be. Anyone who wants to found a church, a synagogue or a mosque must be free to do so. In this sense, freedom of religion, or freedom of belief, is one of the basic tenets of Islam. There is always freedom of religion wherever the moral values of the Qur'an prevail.

Indeed, freedom of thought, belief and expression are at the heart of Qur'anic moral values. Therefore, true freedom of belief can prevail only when the moral values of the Qur'an are followed. Islam is a religion that offers freedom of thought, worship and expression, protects people's all kinds of rights and brings with it true freedom.

That is why Muslims also treat Jews and Christians, described in the Qur'an as "the People of the Book," with great justice, love and compassion. Allah says in the Qur'an:

**"Allah does not forbid you from being good to those who have not fought you in the religion or driven you from your homes, or from being just towards them. Allah loves those who are just." (Surat al-Mumtahana, 8)**

Muslims who share the same basic values believe in the need to act together with Christians and Jews. They therefore strive to eliminate prejudices stemming from provocations by unbelievers and fanatics. Jews, Christians and Muslims strive together to spread moral virtues across the world. They base themselves on the principles of love, respect, toleration, understanding, harmony and collaboration with the People of the Book.

Allah also provides Muslims the rationale of this approach in the Qur'an. Allah explicitly states that the existence of people from different faiths and dissenting opinions is something that we have to acknowledge and welcome heartily, for this is how He created and predestined humankind in this world:

**We have appointed a law and a practice for every one of you. Had Allah willed, He would have made you a single community, but He wanted to test you regarding what has come to you. So compete with each other in doing good. Every one of you will return to Allah and He will inform you regarding the things about which you differed.** (Surat al-Ma'ida, 48)

In acknowledgment of this fact, Muslims have an inner love and compassion for people of all faiths, races and nations, for they consider them as the manifestations of Allah in this world and treat them with an heartfelt respect and love. This is the very basis of communities administered by Islamic morality.

While talking about a peaceful society, "security" is a vital concept to focus on. Unless security prevails, peace can never be attained. In this sense, Islam again brings about the preconditions for peace, and the only way to ensure security is "entering into Islam", that is, as stated above, living by the values of the Qur'an. This fact is related in the verse Surat al-Baqara, 208:

**O You who believe! Enter absolutely into peace (Islam). Do not follow in the footsteps of satan. He is an outright enemy to you.**

The values of the Qur'an hold a Muslim responsible for treating all people, whether Muslim or non-Muslim, kindly and justly, protecting the needy and the innocent and "preventing the dissemination of mischief". Mischief comprises all forms of anarchy and terror that remove security, comfort and peace. As Allah says in a verse, **"Allah does not love corruption"**. (Surat al-Baqara, 205)

The concept of love as revealed in the Qur'an is much different from what people generally understand as love. The love taught in the Qur'an is the true love based on love of Allah and on His approval. It is never weakened despite being tested on many times and can withstand time, difficulties, deficiencies and errors.

There is one aspect of love that people are unaware of: It is Allah Who bestows love on hearts. One can only attain true and lasting love by striving to earn the approval of Allah, Who inspires love in people's hearts. Only people who love Allah above all else and who make no concessions in exhibiting the moral character that He desires love one another with genuine respect and love.



### **"Lack of Trust Damages Love"**

"People not loving one another is one of the worst problems of our day. Without trust, people regard one another as threats. They regard one another as dangerous. For example, they can easily attack one another on the streets. Their anger can explode at any moment. **But love happens when there is trust. Love happens when people are valued and when there is compassion and when there is forgiveness.** If everything about someone makes you angry, if you look for defects in everything, then you cannot love anyone. **One must seek beauty in everything and see the best in everything. Then we can love very much. We must look for the best in everything.**"

**(Mr. Adnan Oktar - November 29<sup>th</sup>, 2012, A9 TV)**

#### **Quotations from Prophet Mohammad (saas) Recommending Love**

*Mikdam Ibnu Mâdikerib (radiyallâhu anh) relates*

*"Rasulullah (saas) said: "If one of you loves his brother's moral virtue (for Allah), let him know it"( Qutub al-Sitta [The Six Books], Vol. 10, p. 135; Abû Dawud, Edeb 122, (5124); Tirmidhi Zûhd 54, (2393) )*

*Atâ el-Horasân relates: "Rasulullah (saas) said: "Shake hands so the hatred in your hearts departs, and give one another gifts so that love for one another is born and enmity between you ends." (Muwatta, Husnû al-Hulk 16, (2, 908))*

*"Give one another gifts and love one another. Give gifts of food to one another. This will amplify your own sustenance." (Qutub al-Sitta [The Six Books], Vol. 16, p. 239)*

*"The dearest of you in the sight of Allah is the one who build friendship with Him. The least dear to Allah among you is he who falls out with his friends." (Hujjat al-Islam, al-Ghazzali, Vol. 2, p. 365)*

*"Two brothers (two friends) are like two hands, one washes the other." (Hujjat al-Islam, al-Ghazzali, Vol. 2, p. 394)*

*"Do not turn your backs on one another. Do not envy one another. Do not cease being one another's friends. Be brothers, O servants of Allah." (Hujjat al-Islam, al-Ghazzali, Vol. 2, p. 407)*

*"Love Allah beyond the blessings that He bestows on you, and love me because Allah loves me." (Hujjat al-Islam, al-Ghazzali, Vol. 4, p.594)*

*"Allah raises those who are humble for Him. Allah brings down the proud. Allah loves those who remember Him much." (Hujjat al-Islam, al-Ghazzali, Vol. 4, p.655)*

<http://harunyahya.com/en/Articles/162113/peace-and-love-are-the>

### **Malaysia court rules non-Muslims cannot use 'Allah' (14<sup>th</sup> October 2013)**

A Malaysian court has ruled that non-Muslims cannot use the word Allah to refer to God, even in their own faiths, overturning a 2009 lower court ruling.

The appeals court said the term Allah must be exclusive to Islam or it could cause public disorder.

People of all faiths use the word Allah in Malay to refer to their Gods.

Christians argue they have used the word, which entered Malay from Arabic, to refer to their God for centuries and that the ruling violates their rights.

One Malaysian Christian woman said the ruling would affect the community greatly.

If we are prohibited from using the word Allah then we have to re-translate the whole Bible, if it comes to that," Ester Moiji from Sabah state told the BBC.

### **'Disappointed and dismayed'**

The 2009 ruling sparked tensions, with churches and mosques attacked.

It came after the government said that a Catholic newspaper, The Herald, could not use the word in its Malay-language edition to describe the Christian God.

The newspaper sued, and a court ruled in their favour in December 2009. The government then launched an appeal.

Upholding the appeal on Monday, chief judge Mohamed Apandi Ali said: "The usage of the word Allah is not an integral part of the faith in Christianity. The usage of the word will cause confusion in the community."

The Herald editor Reverend Lawrence Andrew said he was "disappointed and dismayed", and would appeal against the decision.

"It is a retrograde step in the development of law in relation to the fundamental liberty of religious minorities," he said.

The newspaper's supporters have argued that Malay-language Bibles have used Allah to refer to the Christian God since before Malaysia was formed as a federal state in 1963.

"Allah is a term in the Middle East and in Indonesia it is a term both for Christians and Muslims. You cannot say that in all of the sudden it is not an integral part. Malay language is a language that has many borrowed words, Allah also is a borrowed word."

However, some Muslim groups have said that the Christian use of the word Allah could be used to encourage Muslims to convert to Christianity.

"Allah is not a Malay word. If they [non-Muslims] say they want to use a Malay word they should use Tuhan instead of Allah," Zainul Rijal Abu Bakar, a lawyer representing the government, told the BBC.

Dozens of churches and a few Muslim prayer halls were attacked and burned in the wake of the 2009 ruling, highlighting the intensity of feeling about issues of ethnicity and faith in Malaysia.

Some Malaysians believe the governing Malay-Muslim party is using the case to boost its Islamic credentials among voters, the BBC's Jennifer Pak reports from outside the court in Putrajaya.

Malay Muslims make up almost two-thirds of the country's population, but there are large Hindu and Christian communities.

Prime Minister Najib Razak's coalition won elections in May, but it was the coalition's worst result in more than half a century in power.

**Jennifer Pak** BBC News, Kuala Lumpur

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The verdict does not come as a surprise to the two million Christians in Malaysia. Many of them believe that the case stems from a tight race between the governing Malay-Muslim party, UMNO, and the opposition Islamic party, PAS.

The Allah ban is seen as an attempt by UMNO to boost its Islamic credentials and win back votes. It's an issue that crops up in the government-linked media ahead of an election and promptly dwindles after the vote.

Christians are so convinced that this issue is about political posturing that most followers say they will continue to use the offending Bibles and use the word Allah in their worship.

Not all Muslims back the ban. But one of the most outspoken supporters is an influential group called Perkasa, which is backed by former prime minister Mahathir Mohamad - a champion of Malay-Muslim rights.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-24516181>

## **The 10 commandments of fitness**

**Sydney Morning Herald – Executive Style:** October 9, 2013

It's that time again ... **Droptober**. A month-long focus on fitness, promoting weight loss and an improved lifestyle while raising money for charity. It's my baby, although I have some pretty heavyweight backing from the health and fitness industry.

Walking down the street I still notice plenty of flabby bellies, and beefy paws clutching super-size takeaway treats and soft drink cups by the litre. They're exactly the people I created Droptober for, because you can change your life in one month. So let there be a bit of "thou shalt" and more importantly, plenty of "thou shalt not", as we present my 10 Commandments of Health and Fitness.

### **1. Thou Shalt Not Covet Thy Neighbour's Cake**

Control your portions and stop eating so much. You don't need more. You had yours, and you don't need another serving. Portion control is key to a healthy life. Eat less.

### **2. Thou Shalt Not Seek Out Shortcuts**

Pills, powders, diets, and Ab Dominators for \$49.95 over three easy payments? Please. You might be sent to Health and Fitness Hell.

### **3. Thou Shalt Listen to Thine Body**

Missing work 'cause you're sick? Got gout? Scatter bombing the toilet, and your skin is unsightly? Your body speaks to you. These are signs, the small jabs to the chin. The next messages are uppercuts like diabetes and heart disease. And they hurt. Listen early, and make changes as soon as possible, or the knockout punch is coming.

### **4. Thou Shalt Drink Water**

Energy drinks, fruit juices, fizzy and sports drinks – you drink them because marketing has you in its grasp. You. Are. Weak. Toughen up by turning on the tap and get some water in your body. Water works.

### **5. Thou Shalt Lose Weight**

Fourteen million Australians are overweight. Obesity costs Australia \$120 billion per year. By 2025, 80% of Aussies will be overweight. Are you kidding? We have sun, water, fresh fish, and too much land. Lose some weight before diabetes becomes the common cold. It's coming, so start tomorrow.

### **6. Thou Shalt Not Seek Perfection**

Stop waiting for Hollywood to call. None of us will make next month's glossy mag cover. Be healthy and be happy – aim to look good in your best pair of jeans and a t-shirt. That's the goal, and we can all get there.

### **7. Thou Shalt Control Your Booze**

Be classy, not a drunk idiot. Men, be gentlemen. Ladies, be ladies.

### **8. Thou Shalt Exercise**

In the gym, bedroom, on the beach and playground...our bodies were meant to move. With aggression. Strength. Passion. Sweat, swear, laugh, and get moving. You must exercise.

### **9. Thou Shalt Be a Man, Not a Boy ... a Woman, Not a Girl**

A man should be able to drop and give 20 push-ups, and all parties should stop grocery shopping like kids with credit cards. You built it, you live in it; so you own it – change your body.

### **10. Thou Shalt Not Make Excuses**

'I don't have time. I don't have the energy. Nothing works for me.' Excuses are cliché and boring. Move your body. Feed your body with healthy food. Find a way to get it done.

And a bonus commandment:

### **11. Thou Shalt Cut the BS**

If you forget 1-10, just focus on 11. Turn off the television. Stop sleeping outside queuing for the next phone. Video games? Please. Teach your children a healthy lifestyle. Don't be an obesity statistic. Be better than all that BS time wasting. You know exactly what you should do.

<http://www.smh.com.au/executive-style/fitness/blogs/boot-camp/the-10-commandments-of-fitness-20131009-2v72u.html>

**Health News of Friday, 11 October 2013**

**Source:** Dr. Kojo Essel

## **The ‘Ten Commandments’ for a Healthy and Enjoyable Life**

Our health is arguably our most essential asset. It determines our level of relationship with our creator; how much we enjoy life; what work we do, and how successful we become. Unfortunately, we take our health for granted and hardly invest in it. We set up business appointments and honour them religiously, but our health can always wait.

There are several ‘commandments’ for a healthy life, but you are about to encounter the Ultimate Ten Commandments for a healthy and enjoyable life – and this will change your life forever.

Make a copy and stick it onto your refrigerator, office table, bedside, or any place where you can see, read, and ‘digest’ it daily.

Behold... Dr. Essel’s ‘Ten Commandments’ for a healthy and enjoyable life:

### **1. Be focused mentally on achieving good health**

Good health is a life-long commitment. It is not only for a short period (“I will exercise and eat right till my wedding day”). We may go off course sometimes, but hey, everybody does... just get back in line. Don’t forget to reward yourself for meeting your realistic goals.

### **2. Get right with God and people**

Good health is not merely the absence of disease, but also the physical, mental and social well being of an individual. Thus sayeth the wise men at the World Health Organization. Ever wondered why people who are God-fearing seem so content?

Do not bear grudges. You waste precious time (you could use this time to exercise to relieve stress); you waste precious sleep; and you actually injure your health.

There is very interesting data from recent research, for people with similar conditions (such as high blood pressure): it was found that after surgery (assuming all other factors remain the same), the prayerful one gets a better outcome. So, prayer does work!!!

### **3. Exercise appropriately and regularly**

Exercise your mind and body regularly, and your heart, brain and all other organs will sing a melodious tune for over three-score and ten years. Read wide and often. Solve puzzles when you can – these exercise the brain and ward off forgetfulness, etc. Many are those who say, “My work involves standing all day, or carrying heavy weights, so I do not need exercise”.

To reap the full benefits of exercise, you need to tackle three areas:

- Aerobic exercise – such as walking, jogging, using a treadmill or bike etc. This is manna to the heart and lungs
- Strength training – use of weights or resistance. This is feared by many, but when done right, has tremendous gains.
- Flexibility training – also referred to as ‘stretching’. This increases the flexibility of our joints, and reduces our chances of injury.

Unless you have been advised by your doctor to avoid one or all of the above, you are doing yourself a great disservice by restricting your options. Exercise, the ‘Wonder Pill’, has so many proven benefits for us; it is essentially a ‘deadly sin’ to avoid it.

Some of the benefits of exercise include, but are not limited to:

- Preventing or controlling many chronic/lifestyle diseases such as hypertension, diabetes, high cholesterol, obesity, depression, osteoarthritis and osteoporosis.
- Improving our brain power and performance in all spheres of life
- Giving us the energy to do the things we love most
- Prolonging our life

So whatever your exercise excuse is: “too old”, “no time”, “too tired” ... Start exercising today (get clearance from your doctor first), and you will never regret it.

#### 4. Eat right

Who eats once a day and has his or her weight in check? I haven’t seen many. What about all those ‘diet plans’ to help you lose weight in a blink of an eye? They do not work!!! This is what we call ‘yo-yo dieting’; we may lose some weight on these magic potions, but we put more on in a flash, and it becomes even more difficult to take it off the next time round.

Let’s do ourselves a favour – food is the fuel that our bodies need to function well, and for optimum performance, we need to eat well balanced meals at least three times a day. What we need to watch is the quantity, contents and timing of our eating.

Breakfast is a must, to jump-start our metabolism, and, for kids to do well in school, they definitely need to break the long fast by 8.30am. Lunch between 12 noon and 2pm is ideal, and it would have been nice to have supper by 6.30pm, but our schedules make this almost impossible. Let’s strive for good timing, but on occasion, when we have no choice but to eat late, supper should be light – healthy cereals, soft rice and light soup, at the most.

In between our main meals, we may take a snack (a fruit is a wonderful option).

Sometimes you may need supplements, especially if you exercise vigorously. However, for the average person, a good multivitamin may just be what the doctor recommended.



#### 5. Drink adequate amounts of water

‘Drink deep or taste not the waters of the Pierian spring where shallow waters intoxicate the brain and drinking deep makes the mind sober again’. Fortunately for us, our bodies do not follow the ‘all or none’ law. Water is extremely important for the proper functioning of our body, and there are several sources of this water – food, beverages, etc.

Several factors determine how much water we need: physical activity, weather conditions, disease states, and so on, but on the average, two litres of water a day is adequate (about 8 glasses of water). There are minor differences in the needs of the sexes, but this is a good approximation.

How do we lose water? Through sweat, talking, urine and stools. Some of us hate the idea of drinking water and will only go near a glass when we feel thirsty. Thirst itself means we have deprived our body for too long. Drink frequently, and do not use thirst as the measure. The chances of a healthy person drinking much more than the body can tolerate are slim.

#### 6. Get rest

‘...on the seventh day, he rested’. If the Almighty found it prudent to rest, how come mere mortals think we can keep going continuously and still perform well? Rest is good, but sleep is even better. Ever wondered why after a good night’s sleep, a difficult task appears so simple? Or why we virtually get out of bed with the answer to a puzzle? The pillow, ladies and gentlemen, is powerful, and our ancestors knew this.

Six to eight hours of sleep a day is great and refreshing, and it even makes us look good. Remember ‘beauty sleep’?

I need to let you in on this secret: exercise promotes sleep, so drop those pills. The best time to exercise is when you have difficulty sleeping: do your exercise four to six hours before bedtime, since this coincides with the dip in temperature caused by exercising.

Take a vacation each year, if it means just watching TV and strolling in your neighbourhood. No need to keep ‘selling your leave’.

#### 7. Avoid smoking, and minimize alcohol

Very few things can be as addictive and harmful as cigarette smoking. If you smoke, make a conscious effort to stop today. Do not even go close to people who smoke: second-hand smoke is injurious to your health.

Telling people to minimize alcohol and not saying ‘no alcohol’ always gets me into trouble. If you have no self control, please avoid alcohol, lest ‘wine makes a mockery out of you’. It can also be very harmful to your unborn baby, so beware, pregnant women.

#### 8. Ensure environmental and personal hygiene

It is said that cleanliness is next to godliness, and you had better take that seriously. The mosquito still reigns, and diarrhoea from multiple causes still prevails. Washing our hands with soap and water will reduce the incidence of diarrhoea. Take a bath - it's important. And those pools of water will breed mosquitoes – get rid of them.

#### 9. Get regular medical check ups

“I am so healthy, I have not been to hospital for over 20 years” is a statement out of ignorance. Discard it. Hospitals are not only for the sick. If your doctor will not allow you to suggest a check up, it may be time to fire him/her. No one cares more about your health than yourself – so take control.

You need to know your numbers – Blood sugar (for diabetes), Blood Pressure, Lipids (cholesterol)... Oh! and all males over 40 years, kindly check your prostate health. Maybe your PSA now, then rectal exam later?

Ladies, let's take charge of our breasts – a manual exam (monthly self-exam) and a mammogram (by age 40 or 30, if you are high risk for breast cancer). Cervical cancer can be stopped, but only if we catch it early enough – have a PAP smear.

Age 50 is a great time for both males and females to have a peek into their colons: it's time to arrest colon cancer.

One good tip – regular exercise decreases the risk of certain cancers, including breast and colon cancer.

#### 10. If you are on medication, take it as prescribed

When you have an illness such as high blood pressure or diabetes, it does not mean you can't enjoy life to the fullest. Your healthcare professional may put you on medication. This is no time to skip the medicines – take them exactly as prescribed, and follow the other nine commandments. If you have problems with the medications, don't rely on the 'curbside consultants', but rather talk to your doctor or pharmacist immediately.

I hope that we will make an effort to apply these principles. Start TODAY, and make small changes as the days go by.

Dr. Kojo Essel  
Moms' Health Club  
[www.healthclubsggh.com](http://www.healthclubsggh.com)

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