

Swami Sivananda's

20 Important Spiritual Instructions

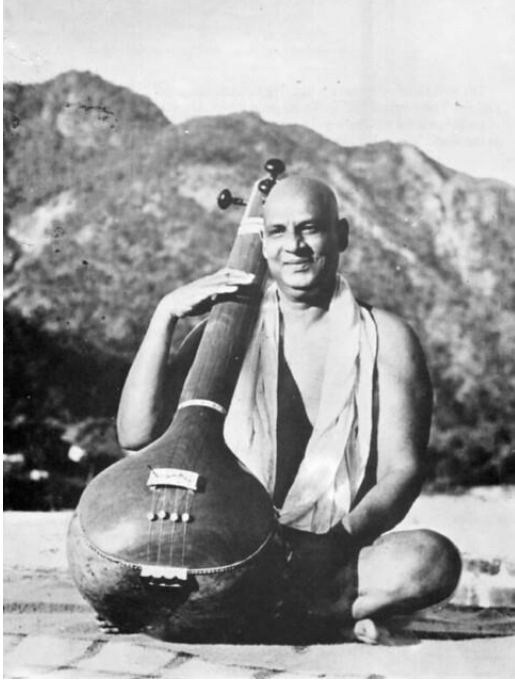
**How to convert instructions into
habits and effect self transformation**



Review with a brief commentary by

KRISHNA PRAKASH

Dedicated to



Swami Sivananda Saraswati

Founder, Divine Life Society, Rishikesh

&

Śrim, my beloved Master

Special Thanks to *Amith Hegde*, the Consulting Editor

*Destiny is your own creation. You have created your destiny
through thought and actions. You can undo the same by right
thinking and action*

*Wrong thinking is the root-cause for human sufferings.
Cultivate right thinking and right acting*

*Work unselfishly in terms of unity with Atma Bhava (feeling
that the one Self dwells in all)*

Swami Sivanananda
(an extract from Practical way to Self-realization)

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Foreword

Society is a collection of people. If each drop of water is clean and pure, so will the entire pot of water be. Likewise, when each and every person in a society lives responsibly, there is bound to be social harmony. The issue in front of us is, what is right and what is not

It took a good 40+ years to even realise that a conscious change is needed in the direction that I am headed in. Though until then, nothing seemed abnormal. Fortunately or not, not all of us come to these crossroads. Even so it is important that most need to embark on the journey of self-knowledge

In most philosophical systems, we are told What to do; in Indian philosophical systems (referred to as *darshana*) the **How to do** is also available. It is very easy to say one should become successful, it is difficult to teach one to achieve it. The Indian tradition delivers this beautifully

Initially it seems certain things are unachievable for two reasons; one, because we encounter these instructions at later stage of our lives instead of the formative years and the other being that, they come to us all at once. It is

essential that these instructions are inculcated in the formative years of a child. At this time these practices are well received and percolates in a manner that it becomes the child's nature

The Reviewer *Sri. Krishna Prakash* has emphasised the importance of a duty-based society than a rights-based one. Imagine the beauty of the entire system, one derives their rights based on the duty performed by the other. When the person deriving the right realises this truth, they automatically become humble and also seek methods to perform duties

It is very fortunate that 1.4Bn people of the planet are born to the land that has documented such ways to lead one's life. One need not reinvent the wheel. Today, these knowledge systems are more accessible and available. The only effort from our side would be to look out for the one who is willing to show us the direction

Kishore Sivagupta
Founder, TripKraft

09th Oct 2021

Introduction to the author, *Swami Sivananda*

Swami Sivananda (1887 – 1963) wrote almost 300 books and produced literature across 5 genres namely poetry, prose, play, non-fiction and visual media

During His life time, He diligently responded to each and every one who wrote to Him. Many a times He sent books along with the reply

A visionary par excellence, He started the *Yoga-Vedanta* Forest Academy at *Rishikesh*, thereby giving the World a template for *Yoga-Vedanta* Teacher Training courses

Swami Sivananda initiated deserving men and women into monastic life. He gave to the World more than a dozen qualified, erudite and compassionate disciples. Each of them blossomed as Masters in their own right

The need to review the spiritual works

India has the special distinction of having two distinct sets of texts i.e. *Shruthi* (revealed, the *Veda*) and *Smrithi* (memory, the works that share the essence of the *Veda* in a way we can understand. These are written by Masters and are delivered, without compromising the essence, for the times we live in)

A Master's work is also akin to *Veda*. Following the footsteps of our tradition these instructions are being reviewed and presented along with a commentary

Purpose of undertaking this review

All these years the *sāra* (essence) of whatever I read used to be shared at workshops, courses, coaching & consulting sessions. This time the purpose with which I re-read this book is to honor the word given to Sam, the convener of our Book Review group

I truly believe in what Earl Nightingale said:

“One hour per day of study in your chosen field is all it takes. One hour per day of study will put you at the top of your field within three years. Within five years you’ll be a national authority. In seven years, you can be one of the best people in the world at what you do.”

Introduction to the review

‘Atomic Habits’ by James Clear can be considered as an application of *Swami Sivananda’s* book

Swami Sivananda’s pre-monastic name was *Kuppuswamy*. He was born in 1887 at *Pattamadai*, South India in the lineage of *Sri Appayya Dikshithar*. A doctor by education, He served at rubber plantations in Malaya. A brilliant student right throughout academics to the extent that, His medical journal was appreciated and referred to by His professors and seniors alike

At *Rishikesh*, in 1924 He was initiated into *sannyasa* by *Swami Vishwananda Saraswati*, and was given the name *Sivananda Saraswati*. In the same year *Swami Vishnudevananda* of *Kailash Ashram* performed the rituals associated with the monastic vows, thereby confirming the initiation. He engaged in intense *Tapas* from 1924 to 1936

Milestones

- (1) Sannyasa in 1924
- (2) Establishment of Divine Life Society in 1936
- (3) Establishment of *Yoga Vedanta* Forest Academy in 1948

The pattern of 12 years can be clearly found in these three important milestones of His life

Here, one can draw parallels from Malcolm Gladwell's 'Outliers' which mentions the 10,000 hours rule i.e. it takes 10,000 hours of intense practice to achieve mastery in the chosen field

Anders Ericsson who is the co-author of the '10,000 hours rule' research, states an irrefutable fact that goes unmentioned in the 'Outliers'. This irrefutable fact is the need of a teacher who helps the one working towards mastery. It is the teacher who can finetune, provide insights and guide the ward, so that they gain mastery

This is exactly what the living traditions of India emphasize on, and this relationship between the teacher and the seeker / disciple is known as *Guru-Sishya/Sishye*. Here the wisdom, intricacies and nuances are passed on from generation to generation along with knowledge

Thus, these spiritual instructions are to be taken as guidance from the living traditions through *Swami Sivananda*

Statutory Warning

To begin, with we need to understand that the tone of a majority of *Swami Sivananda's* books tend to be instructional. For most of us who have come through the modern education system, this format may be unsettling, as we are constrained with humungous theoretical aspects or workings rather than having a balanced combination of theory and practical application of the same

But in the living traditions, the knowledge that issues out of the Master / Teacher is only after they themselves have firmly established in the 'being' of whatever they espouse. It is also mandatory for them to undertake the exposition of at least a few topics or texts to establish their authority on the chosen subject or field

Almost all the Teachers / Masters belonging to the living traditions do not play to the gallery. They write to transmit further what they have learnt, lived, their knowledge, wisdom and also help us enquire deeper into it and further our journey of Self-discovery

Thus, *Swami Sivananda's* works generally start with the statement: "The goal of life is God realization"

The review and commentary

Instruction 1: *Swami Sivananda* exhorts us to wake up daily at 4 am. Today this is the time many of us go to bed! Now we have enough researches extolling the virtues of getting up early, and the effect it has on our mental and physical wellbeing

4 am falls in the auspicious time of *Brahma-muhurtha*. A *Muhurtha* is 48 minutes. Ideally, we one could plan to get up anytime from 3:36 am onward (which is 3 *muhurtha* before Sunrise if we assume Sunrise is at 6am)

Habit 1: Early to bed & early to rise

It is well to be up before daybreak, for such habits contribute to health, wealth, and wisdom

Aristotle

Instruction 2: Practice of *Asana* or physical activity followed by *Pranayama*.

Scientifically the time from 3 to 5am is when the lungs work well. Thus, when we practice *Yoga* (*asana, pranayama...*) or exercise or do cardio before Sunrise we have no choice but would become healthy and stay that way

We can consult an expert, plan a routine and then stick to it. Consistency is the key to sustained health

Habit 2: Practice *Yoga* processes or physical exercise & a breathwork routine for 48 minutes everyday

Yoga is a light, which once lit will never dim. The better your practice, the brighter your flame

B.K.S. Iyengar

Instruction 3: Practice *Japa*. Constant repetition of the name (of a higher source) is *Japa*. Rosary bead and the name of the Lord, these two are associated with all organized religions and spiritual cultures. This practice is a great opportunity to keep the mind in the present moment. This is also one of the few practices where one can reasonably predict what next.

Though we tend to believe we have control, the entire day is filled with glorious uncertainties. So, it is better to have a ‘certain’ practice that stays with us irrespective of the age, stage and situations in our lives

Habit 3: Let us choose a meditation practice that suits our taste and temperament in consultation with an expert. Then ensure we practice at least for 12 minutes each day

The mind keeps well when engaged in work. Yet Japa, meditation and prayer also are especially needed. You must at least sit down once in the morning and again in the evening.

That acts as a rudder to a boat

Ma Sarada of Dakshineshwar

Instruction 4: Dietic discipline. If we really wish to consider ourselves as mature and grownup then it is better to identify what suits us and start liking those food options than to be constantly a slave to our taste buds.

The best way is to consult with an *Ayurved* / Naturopath / Nutritionist / Dietician as that would give right options that suit us better

Habit 4: Drink adequate water as it helps to flush out toxins as well as when one ages it prevents formation of stones. Adopt the diet suggested by a doctor or specialist

Diet is a bank account. Good food choices are good investments

Bethenny Frankel

Instruction 5: Have a separate Meditation room under lock & key. This is a farfetched instruction given the cramped spaces that a majority of us live in. Yet it is important to honor this instruction. *Sri MP Pandit*, an ardent student of *Sri Aurobindo & Mother Mirra Alfassa*, encourages us to meditate at the same place at the same time. He says, “there develops a presence over a period of time which awaits us”

Consistency in practice helps us find a time and place that gradually remain constant. Let this be a gadget free time that is used to deepen the connect with yourself. You never know as it may gradually become your eureka moment!

Habit 5: Whether we are in our home, friend’s place, hotel room or on a vacation, remember to face east or north and sit quietly for 6 to 24 minutes, each day, preferably at the same time

Retire to a quiet place or room where you do not fear interruption, so that your mind may feel secure and at rest. Of course, the ideal condition cannot always be obtained, in which case you should do the best you can

Swami Sivananda

Instruction 6: *Swadhyaya* i.e. self-study

Just go back a few pages and read the words of Earl Nightingale. Be part of book review clubs as we would develop a discipline to study daily, regularly and consistently

Study and share the gist with like minded people. Encourage this habit in everyone. This is also a great way to implement digital detox before going to sleep

Habit 6: Take a vow to read for at least 20 minutes a day

*One hour per day of study in your chosen field is all it takes.
One hour per day of study will put you at the top of your field
within three years. Within five years you'll be a national
authority. In seven years, you can be one of the best people in
the world at what you do*

Earl Nightingale

Instruction 7: Give charity

Swami Sivananda asks us to set aside 6% of our earnings towards charity. It is by giving and sharing what we have we grow within. In some accounts it is mentioned as 10% Kindly follow that suits you but consciously plan to give charity

Today we plan for investment or charity or donations based on various sections of income tax. Let us wriggle out of that mindset and consciously choose to donate for cause after doing thorough research of how and where it is utilized

Habit 7: Donate monthly (periodically) for a cause

*It is every man's obligation to put back into the world at least
the equivalent of what he takes out of it*

Albert Einstein

Instruction 8: Practice *Brahmacharya*

This is generally interpreted as sexual continence but that is meant for those who have taken renunciation vows. The great *Siddha Thirumoolar* in His magnum opus *Thirumandiram* states that householder need to copulate only twice a month as gradually we are asked to utilize this as an opportunity to express love and gratitude towards each other than relegating it to a mechanical action or an obligation

Include time tested practices from the system of Yoga or any other form of holistic exercise in your routine

Habit 8: One tip from tradition is to practice of up to 28 rounds of super brain technique. Keep this as a non-negotiable part of your routine. Girls & women need to stop this practice once they get signs of their monthly cycles

*The body is your temple. Keep it pure and clean for the soul to
reside in*

BKS Iyengar

Instruction 9: Elevate the mind (through prayers)

There are innumerable ways to elevate the mind with information on transitory issues like success, glory, achievement etc., but steadiness would be absent in such an approach because life is filled with uncertainties. The best thing to do is to revisit our roots (culture / religion / family customs); pick up, learn and practice a few activities, develop healthy habits then be on it consistently

You can read holy books, pick up singing in choir or do *bhajan / kirtan /* recital of sacred verses. Shift the focus to the World. Pray in your own way / words - *Loka Samastha Sukhino Bhavanthu* (let the people of the World be happy / comfortable)

Habit(s) 9: Pick one activity from the suggestions listed above or an activity that is not mentioned here! Daily ensure to engage yourselves in it for at least 6 minutes

Prayers begin in the heart. As you listen in the stillness of the night, you will hear the words of God speaking through you. He knows what you need and desire before you do.

Khalil Gibran

Instruction 10: Have *satsang* (congregation of truth)

Till the advent of internet, human race had ample time. Now, work is on 24 X 7, 365 days. Stress and burnout are a norm. Like how we charge phones, we need to charge ourselves by being in the company of seekers and listen to truth. When we do that, meaningful conversations happen. Options are there for virtual *satsang* as well. Explore...

Habit 10: Pick the times of the day, week and month that you would invest in *satsang*.

Tip: Have an accountability partner and stick to the routine. This tip can be used to internalize all the 20 instructions as self-transforming habits

Through the company of the wise or the good, there arises non-attachment; from non-attachment comes freedom from delusion; where there is freedom from delusion, there is abundance in self-knowledge, which leads to freedom while alive

Adi Sankara, Bhaja Govindam

Instruction 11: Fast

Nobel prize in physiology or medicine in 2016 was won by Prof Yoshinori Ohsumi of Japan for his work on autophagy. Those who wish to refer to a scientific or clinical study to undertake or practice any knowledge that is from our tradition may refer to the work done by Prof Yoshinori

Since time immemorial, in India, the 11th day (*ekadasi*) from full and new moons were allocated for fasting. Why? The open sky we see is mathematically 360° and this means that 12° movement for 30 days completes one cycle of rotation for moon around the Earth. On the 11th day the Sun, Moon & Earth form a trine i.e. 120° from each other. The gravitation pull is more and the most affected is the digestive system. Thus, we are asked to eat very less, light or do partial / full fast on this day.

For those who wish to take this to next level could try similar method for the 6th day (*sashti*) from full and new moons as well. Kindly consult an *Ayurveda*, *Siddha* or Naturopath doctor to customize your fasting plan. Each of us can extend our life by practicing partial or complete fasting to lead a healthy life

Traditionally, our ancestors across cultures and continents took food between sun rise to sun set only. This is repackaged as intermittent fasting now

Habit 11: Let us be practical and take a step towards fasting by (1) readjusting our food intake in the proportion 50% solids 25% liquids and leave rest of our intake capacity free. If we stuff ourselves till throat, our digestive system is bound to be weakened. (2) drink lukewarm or room temperature water during meal instead of refrigerated water and that too a maximum of 100 ml only. 30 minutes post meal let us drink our regular quota of water

Then after a month of practicing the above, we can skip dinner on *ekadasi* days. I leave the discretion of when to take the subsequent step towards complete *ekadasi* fasting to you!

Scientists have found that fasting for 12+ to 24+ hours triggers autophagy, and is thought to be one of the reasons that fasting is associated with longevity. There is a large body of research that connects fasting with improved blood sugar control, reduced inflammation, weight loss, and improved brain function

Dan Buettner (of Blue Zones fame)

Instruction 12: *Japa mala* (rosary)

Why *Japa*? Our thoughts incessantly rise up and fall down like waves. Thus, the ancient traditions have suggested the usage of *sound* i.e. *mantra*, *tasbeih* etc., to help us to sail reasonably unscathed on these waves. While every thought is unpredictable, this *sound* remains predictable. This *sound* works like a log and allows us to stay afloat to deal with life

Here comes the role of *Japa mala* as it allows us to be with the sound by helping us to keep track of the count. Is that the only benefit? No. There is a particular method to hold the rosary as well as to exert pressure to move bead as that helps us to strengthen our nervous system. Also, as per physiology the nerve endings of our brain are present at the thumbs. Thus, usage of thumb to move the beads help us to stay aware throughout the practice.

So, Pick-up a *nama mantra* of your choice or meet a teacher from living traditions, take a sound then practice daily

Habit 12: Take a vow to practice sound meditation twice a day with rosary. You will reach out for sure after 21 days of regular practice to thank me for suggesting this habit

Instruction 13: Observe Mouna (silence)

The greatest challenge for us is to still the mind as a 'still mind' helps us to be objective. Being objective helps us to do whatever we need to do whether we like or not

Now, silence is the language of the still mind. This is the most difficult language on Earth to master. So, the living traditions of India give us 3 stages of abstinence - (1) from action, (2) from words and (3) from thoughts

As the first 2 stages are easy to practice, we can start there. Remember that we are neither the solution to everything that happens around nor we need not answer every question

Habit(s) 13: (a) Before every meal we can consciously practice silence for 6 minutes. Preferably eat in silence! (b) Before taking important decisions, practice silence of stage 1 & 2 for 6 minutes. (c) Consciously abstain from action and words for little pockets throughout the day

He who does not understand your silence will probably not understand your words.

Elbert Hubbard

Instruction 14: Discipline of speech

Many a times more than what we say, how we say gets us into trouble

Due to indiscipline of speech, despite the best of the intentions, relationships built over years, whether personal or professional, fail

In similar vein we need to stop making self-destructive statements about ourselves

Maybe we should frequently contemplate on the saying, 'speak only if you can improve silence.'

Habit(s) 14: (a) Unless asked or it is part of our job, we can stop trying to improve others by bombarding with self-help tips, advices or suggestions. (b) Every time we have a conversation, check whether we made the other person feel better or depressed. Keep a daily tab on a & b

Speech is the mirror of the soul; as a man speaks, so is he

Publilius Syrus

Instruction 15: Be content

One way to develop contentment is to understand how unique we are and gradually stop comparing ourselves with others. But many a times contentment masquerades as laziness, so let us be mindful as well

Contentment is the key to peace of mind and ensure to keep the key with yourself so that once in a while you can unlock yourself from jealousy, greed and other normal vices

Habit 15: Practice gratitude and thank for all that you have, consciously, every day when you get up in the morning and while you hit the sack at night

Because one believes in oneself, one doesn't try to convince others. Because one is content with oneself, one doesn't need others' approval. Because one accepts oneself, the whole world accepts him or her

Lao Tzu

Instruction 16: Practice love

Kindly refer to the earlier instruction, as love is invariably a byproduct of acceptance and contentment. A lotus doesn't wait for being praised for blooming well and spreading fragrance. She goes with her life (cycle) irrespective of whether someone is expecting or not. Thus, it is important to deal with expectations to avoid disappointments

The fount of Indian thought, *Advaita Vedanta* clearly tells us that the ONE willed and became many. Every animate and inanimate object is part of the whole, and are just playing their roles in the drama of life. Thus, to cultivate the ability to love, ourselves & others, despite the shortcomings is essential for inner growth. This is easy with flowers, animals or anything in nature but when it comes to humans all of us struggle to practice love. But we can always keep trying with the genuine intention of realizing the ultimate reality i.e. oneness

Habit 16: Consciously tell yourself thrice everyday morning, "everything & every person in the cosmos is just another expression of me. I love all as we are all waves of the same ocean called life"

Instruction 17: Be self-reliant

One of the important aspects of the ancient gurukul model was the emphasis on self-reliance with respect to one's food, clothing and shelter. Kids were taught to cook, spin (kindly refer to the lifestyle promoted by Gandhiji. He is seen with a spinning wheel. *Swarajya* is a macro concept) as well as to create a basic shelter. Now kids (maybe we too) are batch processed to make them job ready and not life ready!

All of us can make a start by participating in our household chores by sharing responsibilities appropriately. Self-reliance & enabling it is the first step to experience (real) freedom. Honestly see if you can mind your business and relieve others to do theirs but with proper understanding of the words, delegation & grooming!

Habit 17: Make a list of DIY and just do it!

Insist on yourself; never imitate. Your own gift you can present every moment with the cumulative force of a whole life's cultivation; but of the adopted talent of another you have only an extemporaneous half possession. That which each can do best, none but his Maker can teach him

Ralph Waldo Emerson (on self reliance)

Instruction 18: Have self-analysis

Though our mother gave us birth, parents & elders at home did their best (or worst), siblings, cousins, friends, spouse, children, friends, enemies, neighbors, society etc., contribute to our life and vice versa, at the end of the day we came alone and we would depart alone

Everyone and every situation we face in life is destiny's way of showing mirror to us. How we face and emerge out of each interaction defines the quality of our inner self and our understanding of life

It is to be treated as an opportunity to further our journey, first to self-discovery (our personality) to Self-discovery (our oneness with everything)

Habit(s) 18: (a) Maintain a spiritual diary (b) unabashedly tell yourself thrice before going to bed, 'I am THAT supreme reality' – i.e. AHAM BRAHMASMI

We are not a human being having spiritual experience. We are a spiritual being having a human experience

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin

Instruction 19: Do your duty

The hallmark of Indian living tradition is its clarion call to live duties-based life than rights based one. Am sure most of the ancient traditions across the globe must have also prescribed the same

The word *Dharma* is unique to India and a deeper understanding of it could be attempted. Each of us play various roles at home and outside. Seeking role clarity in every role is the best way to internalize this instruction

We should remember that our duty becomes the right of the another. Thus, if each of us focus on fulfilling our duties, others get their rights without asking for

Habit 19: In every situation, let us make it a point to pause, acknowledge and thank those who do their duty so that we get our right

*Do your duty and a little more and the future will take care of
itself*

Andrew Carnegie

Instruction 20: Remember God

Swami Poornananda of *Srisailam* once said that the word GOD is an acronym that stands for Government Of Divinity! Each activity and element of the Cosmos has an in-charge. These in-charges are the God-heads or Function-heads we know like Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva, Agni, Varuna etc.,

Each ancient tradition referred to these God-heads or Function-heads in their own way. When we study the lives of indigenous people across globe, we can appreciate this humility of seeing everything on Earth as Divine

Do reach out to those in your vicinity ([List of indigenous peoples - Wikipedia](#)) and have a dialogue with them

The simplest way to understand the concept of GOD is that any action that takes place presupposes the existence of an intelligence behind it. This intelligence is referred to as GOD, Divine, Father in Heaven, Allah, Nature etc., by all ancient traditions

By arguing for or against this concept we get nothing as we cannot fathom the 'limitless' with our 'limited' intellect

As humans we can only appreciate which is in the realm of our perception. So, we need a name accompanied by a form or concept to connect with Divinity

Habit 20: Daily think and thank the following as and when you get up in the morning. Feel free to add to this list

1. I thank the Sun and the Moon for enabling life on Earth
2. I thank my ancestors for handing over a beautiful planet
3. I thank my Parents for giving birth to me as it is through this body, I pursue my aspirations / goals in Life
4. I thank my teachers for the knowledge I received and am receiving
5. I thank every human on Earth as in one way or other we impact their each-others' lives
6. I thank Mother Nature as through the Plant & Animal Kingdoms and Natural Resources our life is made possible
7. I thank the Creator / Creatrix for everything
8. *Loka Samastha Sukhino Bhavanthu*
(Let the entire Earth be happy)
9. *Om Shanti, Shanti, Shanti:*
(Let there be peace at all levels for all)

APPENDIX



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Swami Sivananda's **The 20 Important Spiritual Instructions**

These 20 instructions contain the very essence of all *Yoga Sadhana, Karma, Bhakti, Jnana & Yoga* will all come to one who follows them whole-heartedly. They are the unfailing keys to quick and effective development and culture of the physical, mental, moral and spiritual self of man

1. BRAHMAMUHURTA

Get up at 4 a.m. daily. This is *Brahmamuhurta* which is extremely favorable for *Sadhana*. Do all your morning spiritual *Sadhana* during this period from 4 a.m. to 6:30 or 7 a.m. Such *Sadhana* gives quick and maximum progress

2. ASANA

Sit on *Padmasana* (lotus pose), *Siddhasana* (adept's pose) or *Sukhasana* (any pose you like) for your *Japa* and meditation for half an hour, facing east or north. Increase the period gradually to three hours. Practice *Sirshasana* (headstand) and *Sarvangasana* (shoulderstand) for maintenance of health and *Brahmacharya*. Take light physical exercises as walking, etc., regularly. Do twenty rounds of easy, comfortable

Pranayama (breathing exercises). Do not strain yourself while doing Pranayama

3. JAPA

You can repeat any *Mantra* (sacred syllable), such as pure *Om* or *Om Namō Narayanaya, Sri Ram, Sita Ram, Sri Ram Jaya Ram Jaya Jaya Ram, Om Namah Shivaya, Om Namō Bhagavate Vasudevaya, Om Saravanabhavaya Namah, Hari Om*, or *Gayatri* (a sacred *Vedic Mantra*), according to your taste or inclination, from 108 times to 21,600 times daily. Devotees of Christ may repeat the name Jesus or Hail Mary, Mother of Jesus. Parsis, Sikhs and Muslims may select a name or Mantra from the Zend Avesta, Granth Sahib or Koran respectively

4. DIETETIC DISCIPLINE

Take Sattvic food. 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 once or twice in a year. Eat simple food. Milk and fruits help concentration. Take food as medicine to keep the life going. Eating for enjoyment is a sin. Give up salt and sugar for a week or a fortnight. You must be able to live on rice, dhal

and bread without any pickle. Do not ask for extra salt for dhal, and sugar for tea, coffee and milk. People taking non-vegetarian diet should try their best to gradually give up flesh-eating as completely as possible. They will be immensely benefited

5. MEDITATION

Have a separate meditation room under lock and key. If this is not possible then a corner of the room should be set apart with a small cloth screen or curtain drawn across. Keep the room spotlessly clean

6. SVADHYAYA

Study systematically the *Gita*, *Ramayana*, *Bhagavatam*, *Vishnu-Sahasranama*, *Lalita-Sahasranama*, *Adityahridaya*, *Upanishads*, *Yoga Vasishta*, Bible, Imitation of Christ, Zend Avesta, Quran, the Tripitakas, the Granth Sahib and other religious books from half an hour to one hour daily, and have *Suddha Vichara* (pure thoughts)

7. ELEVATE THE MIND

Get by heart some prayer - *Slokas* (prayer verses), *Stotras* (hymns) and repeat them as soon as you sit in the *Asana* before starting *Japa* or meditation. This will elevate the mind quickly

8. BRAHMACHARYA

Preserve the vital force (*Veerya* (seminal energy)) 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. This instruction is not for bachelors only. Householders also must follow it as far as possible. They must be extremely moderate in their marital connections with their spouse. This is very important

9. CHARITY

Do charity regularly, every month, or even daily according to your means. Never fail in this item. If necessary, forego some personal wants but keep up this charity regularly

10. HAVE SATSANG

Give up bad company, smoking, meat and alcoholic liquors entirely. Have constant *Satsang* (association with holy people). Do not develop any evil habits. Deliberately exert to develop positive virtuous qualities

11. FAST

Fast on *Ekadasi* (11th day of the Hindu lunar fortnight) or live on milk and fruits only. Christians must fast on alternate Sundays, Muslims on alternate Fridays, and Parsis on a suitable day every fortnight.

12. JAPA MALA

Have a *Japa Mala* (rosary) around your neck or in your pocket or underneath your pillow at night. This will remind you of God. Twirl the beads during your leisure. You should repeat the Name at all times, whatever task you may be engaged in

13. OBSERVE MOUNA

Observe *Mouna* (vow of silence) for a couple of hours daily. Do not make gestures and inarticulate noises during the period of silence

14. DISCIPLINE OF SPEECH

Speak the truth at all cost. Speak a little. Speak sweetly. Always utter encouraging words. Never condemn, criticize or discourage. Do not raise your voice and shout at little children or subordinates

15. BE CONTENT

Reduce your wants. If you have four shirts, reduce the number to three or two. Lead a happy, contented life. Avoid unnecessary worry. Be mentally detached. Have plain living and high thinking. Think of those who do not possess even one-tenth of what you have. Share with others.

16. PRACTICE LOVE

Never hurt anybody. *Ahimsa Paramo Dharmah* (Non-injury is the highest virtue). Control anger by love, *Kshama* (forgiveness) and *Daya* (compassion). Serve the sick and the poor with love and affection. This is service of God

17. BE SELF RELIANT

Do not depend upon servants. Self-reliance is the highest of all virtues

18. HAVE SELF-ANALYSIS

Think of the mistakes you have committed during the course of the day, just before retiring to bed (self-analysis). Keep a daily spiritual diary and self- correction register as Benjamin Franklin did. Maintain a daily routine and resolve-form. Do not brood over past mistakes

19. DO YOUR DUTY

Remember that death is awaiting you at every moment. Never fail to fulfil your duties. Have pure conduct (*Sadachara*)

20. REMEMBER GOD

Think of God as soon as you wake up and just before you go to sleep, and at all other times whether engaged in any work or not. Repeat His Name always. Surrender yourself completely to God (*Saranagati*)

This is the essence of all spiritual *Sadhana*. It will lead you to liberation. All these spiritual canons must be rigidly observed. You must not give any leniency to the mind

The Habits List & template for spiritual diary

This can be transferred to an excel sheet. The replace **Did I Practice Today** column with 31 columns to denote each day of the month. Just open the excel sheet at the end of the day and mark whether you practiced that habit.

| S No | Habit | Did I Practice today |
|------|--|----------------------|
| 1 | Early to bed & early to rise | |
| 2 | Practice <i>Yogasana</i> , <i>Pranayama</i> or / and an exercise routine | |
| 3 | Practice <i>Japa</i> | |
| 4 | Dietic discipline | |
| 5 | Practice of Meditation in the same place | |
| 6 | Self-study | |
| 7 | Elevate the mind | |
| 8 | Exercise Sense Control | |
| 9 | Charity | |

| | | |
|----|----------------------|--|
| 10 | Have <i>Satsang</i> | |
| 11 | Fast | |
| 12 | <i>Japa Mala</i> | |
| 13 | Observe <i>Mouna</i> | |
| 14 | Discipline of Speech | |
| 15 | Be Content | |
| 16 | Practice Love | |
| 17 | Be self-reliant | |
| 18 | Have self-analysis | |
| 19 | Do your duty | |
| 20 | Remember God | |

Some of these habits are periodic, like charity. Some are based on your culture / religion. So kindly exercise common sense and substitute equivalent habits. After all we chose self-transformation, so, let us work towards it. Feel free to write to krishna@shrimathyoga.com

Swami Sivananda's

20 Important Spiritual Instructions



Krishna Prakash is the founder of Shrimath Yoga (India), a traditional gurukul model Yoga School. Since 2011, students from 40+ countries have studied Yoga as a system

Shrimath Yoga bagged the rare TRAVELERS' CHOICE 2020 award from TripAdvisor i.e. recognized as one of the top 10% hospitality properties of the World. For winning the CERTIFICATE OF EXCELLENCE for 5 straight years, Shrimath entered TripAdvisor's HALL OF FAME in 2019. It is a matter of pride that Shrimath is the only Yoga School to achieve these recognitions

Shrimath is the first Yoga School in the World to be approved by Yoga Alliance International to offer teacher training in Yoga Nidra

In 2019, Krishna was inducted as a "Life Time Member" at Government of India supported Indian Yoga Association (IYA) conceived by BKS Iyengar, Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, Sri Jaggi Vasudev, Swami Ramdev, Hansaji, Sri Ishwar Basavaraddi and other living Yogis. Shrimath is one of the recognized 50 ASSOCIATE CENTERS by IYA to learn Yoga in India

Krishna continues to learn from the living traditions of Bhagawan Nityananda of Ganeshpuri, Sri Ramakrishna Mutt, Bihar School of Yoga & other Siddha traditions

For more details kindly visit
www.shrimathyoga.com &
www.krishna-prakash.com

Loka Samastha Sukhino Bhavanthu