

PRAYER

SRI SWAMI CHIDANANDA



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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

Revered Swami Chidananda calls prayer 'man's eternal inner need'. The need for the individual to be in union with the Universal Divine. In this comprehensive commentary, Swamiji reveals how the proper understanding of the dynamics of prayer can help us move toward that union. Swamiji's clear insights cut to the core and give an orientation on the subject that is sure to light the path of seekers of all faiths.

The text for this little volume emerged during the winter of '99. It is Swamiji's response to questions on prayer put to him by a spiritual seeker. An introduction on prayer was given along with the answers. Added to the text is an early morning talk on ancient prayer given by Swamiji on March 16th, 2000 in the Samadhi Hall of Holy Master Swami Sivananda at the Sivananda Ashram, Rishikesh.

OM

SWAMI SIVANANDA ON PRAYER:

"Time of prayer are times of growth, strength, bliss and peace."

"Whole hearted and sincere prayer with complete faith in God will achieve marvels."

"Prayer is a great spiritual force."

"Prayer is direct talking, to God."

"Prayer is the miracle by which God's power flows into human veins."

"Walk and talk with God. This is the best prayer."

"Open freely the chamber` of your heart when you pray."

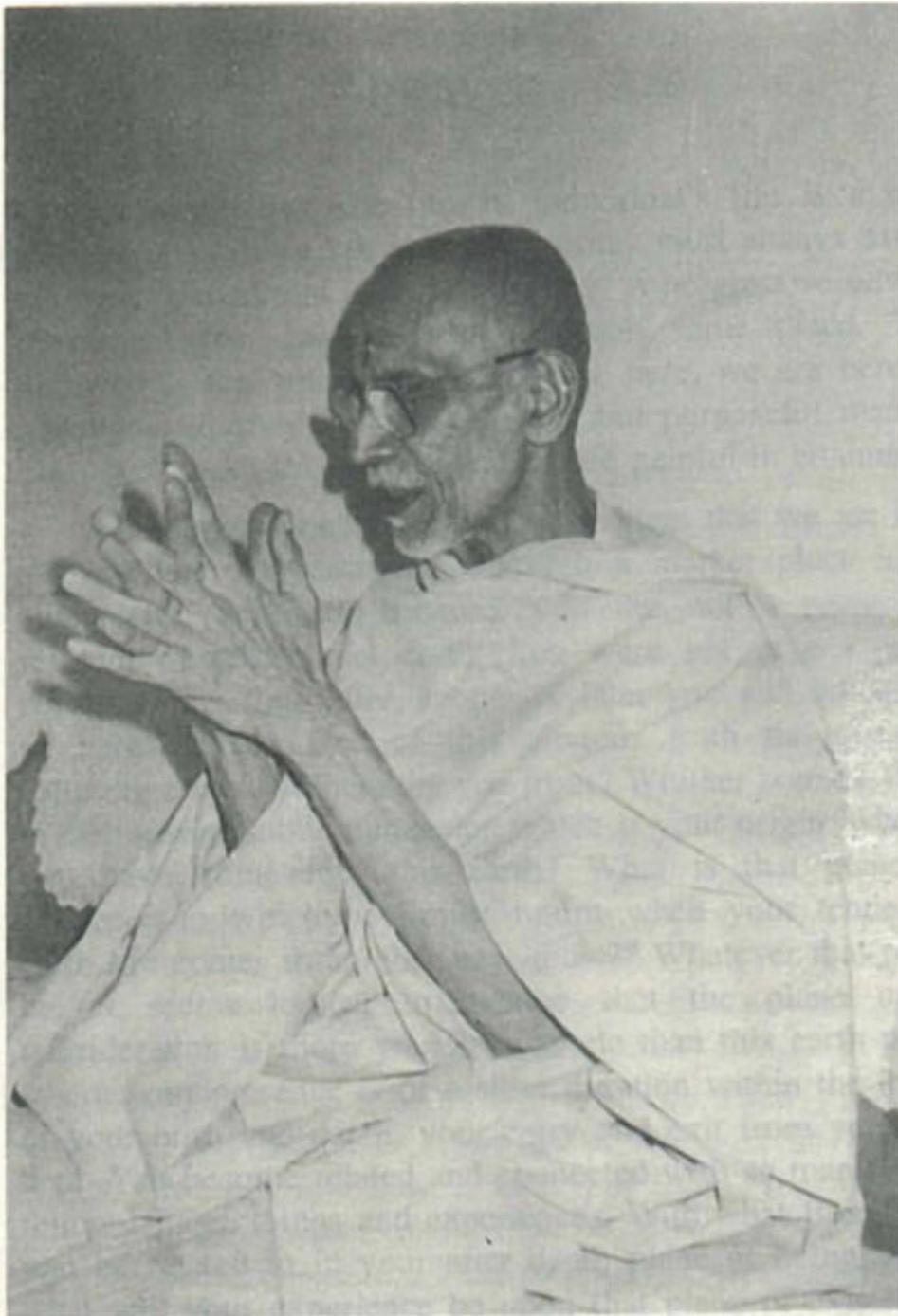
"Prayer is the key of eternal bliss therefore pray sincerely."

SWAMI CHIDANANDA ON PRAYER:

"Take time to pray. It is the greatest power on earth."

SWAMI KRISHNANANDA ON PRAYER:

"The truly spiritual form of prayer asks for nothing from God; it asks for God alone."



SRI SWAMI CHIDANANDAJI MAHARAJ

PRAYER

Consider life. The human individual's life is a brief journey upon this earth plane. A journey must always have a highway, a road that leads somewhere. A progressive onward movement that enables you to reach some place. That highway is this planet earth. You are here, we are here, to make this journey in a meaningful and purposeful manner. You must make this sojourn called life gainful in attainment.

The above fact makes it quite evident that we are here as travellers, as passers-by, through a market place in an alien land. Precisely because, you are not a permanent resident of this planet earth. You were not here a while before. Some time after, sooner or later you will no longer be here. In the face of this obvious truth the question naturally arises. "Where are you from? Whither bound? What is that unseen subtle dimension which is your origin whence you have come into this earth? What is that plane of existence to which you must return when your tenure of earth life comes to an end, as it must?" Whatever that plane be, it seems logical to assume that the plane under consideration is more your true abode than this earth plane where your presence is of a short duration within the limits of your birth and death, your entry and exit from your life here. You become related and connected with so many other fellow-beings, things and experiences. With what Being will you be related to in your after death plane of being. Also, what will your experience be upon that plane of existence? Is there a possibility of knowing something about that plane and obtaining more information about that Being which reigns over that plane? The answer is in the affirmative without doubt. We know a great deal. A very great deal has already been experienced and known about that after state.

It has come about in this way. Long back in a period beyond recorded human history, in this ancient land of India a radiant spiritual past prevailed. It is an unforgettable era and has become an integral part of the collective psyche of the original inhabitants of this land of the Vedas and the Upanishads, of the sages and seers of an awakened spiritual consciousness and of direct God-experience and the realization of the ultimate transcendental Reality. Certain heroic souls of that grand generation seem to have become aware of the totally transitory evanescent nature of this phenomenal appearance which we call our earth-life. All things here were distinctly seen to be unstable, ever changing and subject to decay and dissolution. This clear knowledge had an impact upon the entire outlook and attitude towards this phenomenal flux of which our life forms a part. They concluded that it is not worth wasting life upon this mere appearance that is characterised by ever so many negative factors like restlessness, anxiety, fear, likes and dislikes, enmity, selfishness, human envy, jealousy, deceit and treachery etc. not to mention the other pains and sufferings like hunger and thirst, heat and cold, fulfilment and disappointment, disease and old age and similar endless series of the dual throng that make up this worldly existence.

They made up their mind to seek and find what exists beyond the perceived outer world. They turned their gaze within. They became the pioneering explorers of the unseen and uncharted dimension of their inner being. Turning away from the gross material physical world outside, they look up the study of the spiritual plane of their inner being. This is a decisive moment in human history at a time when none of the present day living religions of our world existed. For, it was a period of hoary antiquity when no prophet or divine messenger had appeared on earth. Moses, Zoroaster, Buddha, had not yet come. What to say of Jesus, Mohammed, Guru Nanak and others who appeared much later! Even the so termed Hinduism as it is seen prevailing and functioning today did not exist. The rudimentary factors that later developed into today's Hinduism were in a state of formation. There prevailed at that time a Vedic way of life made up of numerous rites, rituals and ceremonials etc. fire

ceremonies (sacrifices) of various kind took a dominant place over the other rituals. It was in the context of such a background that the glorious quest after the unchanging permanent and the eternal beyond time, began.

It was the commencement of this quest after the Unseen, that gave rise to the phenomenon of prayer. It was these early seekers of that bygone age who lifted up their hearts in prayer to the Unseen calling upon It to reveal Itself to them. They prayed that It may grant them a vision of Itself, that they may behold It. These earliest prayers of our global human family are to be found in the end-portion or the concluding part of India's ancient Vedic literature. This portion is comprised of brief texts composed in an aphoristic style. They constitute what is generally termed as the Upanishads. These Upanishads are the earliest source of wisdom and knowledge of our present civilization prevailing upon our planet earth today. When I use this term knowledge, it should not be taken to mean ordinary human knowledge that you arrive at and acquire through the rational processes of our finite intellect such as inquiry, analysis, comparison and contrast leading to inference of new indirect knowledge, further investigation, discovery etc. All this is speculative knowledge.

The seers and sages of the Upanishadic era perceived clearly that such an interior process referred to above, in the psychological dimension of our being may be suitable and effective in obtaining knowledge of our external universe and all things present in this gross physical world of which we are a part and in which we live and act. But, such process would serve no purpose when their quest was of the Unseen Essence of Existence. It is the dimension where the mind cannot reach nor languages describe. Because, that was before the manifestation of the mind principle itself and the speech process. Hence, they turned their gaze within. They arrested the habitual forceful outward impulsion of the five senses. They withdrew the mind from the externals and directed it inward within themselves. They calmed the restlessness of the interiorised mind by necessary disciplines and control. They gathered together and centralised the mind. They took it deep down within and plumbed the uttermost depth of human thought. They were suddenly granted the awareness of pure consciousness. The awareness of the Being! They came face to face as it were with the Great Reality, Absolute Being. This was direct experience without any intermediate medium of either senses nor mind nor intellect. This was Transcendental Experience. Divine Experience!

All over the world people are praying, as they walk along the streets, as they kneel or bow in temples, ring bells, leave offerings It seems to be a natural part of humankind If one were raised without ever hearing about prayer at all, or God, or other Dimensions do you think that he would discover by himself some form of prayer? Is prayer .simply integral to our human soul?

Yes, prayer is integral to our human soul. This is so due to its very origin. The Oversoul, the Supreme Godhead being our very Source, support and the Ultimate Reach of our evolutionary existence into which we finally enter and get absorbed into its pristine, splendid, total Divinity. Naturally therefore, the human soul cannot be totally alienated from its primal source and origin. It is like the relationship of the fish and its longing for water, the innate urge of the birds towards wide open sky space. To take an analogy from our super-scientific present, it is like the astronaut orbiting in far distant outer space finding the need to keep contact with NASA in Texas. The poet Longfellow in his poem "Psalm of Life" uses the expression 'heart within and God overhead' to indicate this eternal inner need. Prayer is an expression of this basic constituent of the human soul

Prayer presupposes a deity hearing and responding to it. But can prayer "work" without belief in an external deity? In other words, is prayer something that changes a situation or does it only change the persona attitude?

You are right. Prayer does presuppose a Supreme Deity. But, this Deity need not necessarily be taken to be some great, grand and colossal Super Human Person holding sway over a distant high heavenly region engaged in rewarding us for good deeds and punishing our transgressions. Also, sometimes sending forth his angelic emissaries down to our human world to bring succour to those in dire distress. No doubt, this is the image in the minds of innumerable men and women of our world. In the context of the layman's practice of Judaism and Christianity in their day to day life, this is very much so. There seems to be a slight veering away from this trend with the advent of Islam. Their ALLAH may not be an anthropomorphic grand heavenly person but, He is an Impersonal Person. Through his angel he sent a whole series of very lengthy and very detailed messages to Muhammad, the prophet. The devout Muslims firmly believe in Allah's existence. He prays to Him and the prayers are answered by the benign, all merciful, all compassionate Allah.

The answer may be in the form of either changing the situation or the changing of the attitude of the one who prays. The effect is the same. The devotee becomes immune to the impact of the situation upon him or her. The situation thus becomes nullified. This is as good as not being there at all. The person passes through the experience or the situation in question quite unaffected by it. In connection with this question we have just dealt with I am tempted to refer to a person in a desperate situation who did not believe in the existence of an external deity calling aloud and crying out, 'O God, if there is a God, save my soul, if there is a soul.' They call this the prayer of an atheist.

What is prayer? Why does it "work?" what does it mean to "work" or be successful? What is happening when we pray?

By this time we have come to have some sort of an idea about the genesis, the anatomy and the mechanics of the actual process of prayer. We will now squarely face your question, what is prayer? It is the irresistible urge of the human nature to contact and communicate with the God it believes in and ask its help in any situation and state of affairs where the praying individual either feels totally unable to deal with the situation or feels that its individual human resource alone cannot effectively deal with circumstances facing it and feels the need for the augmenting of human efforts by a Higher Power. Prayer is therefore putting yourself into contact with God through mind, its

emotions, and sentiments. This will make clear why prayer 'works'. By thus inwardly contacting the Divine Being you create a channel that connects you with God. Through this channel, the love, compassion and grace flow down into your life and the situation at that given time. It affects the situation and lessens its agony for the person or may even make the entire set of circumstances actually favorable to the one who prays. Then people refer to this phenomenon and say 'his prayer has worked wonders'. Then again, what he could not succeed in obtaining through all his prolonged efforts has now been blessed with success. Thanks to God?

What is the role of faith or belief?

Faith and belief makes for genuine prayer. They make prayer something which arises from the heart of the person concerned. It is not merely the uttering of certain words by your lips. Lip prayer lacks authenticity. It is prayer only in name and not in fact. Therefore, faith and belief are essential ingredients of genuine prayer.

If God is omniscient, is it important to pray and if so why ?

All the religions of the world today affirm the all-knowing omniscience of God. There is nothing hidden from him. There is nothing that he does not know. In the light of this truth which every devout believer accepts, the place of prayer becomes clear to us in this manner. Omniscience means that God knows everything. However, it does not mean that he is doing something in connection with what He knows. Also, he has millions and billions of human beings to attend to in his creation. He has also billions and trillions of other creatures, great and small, whom He has to look after and provide for in their every want and requirement. The human individual therefore feels it very necessary to attract God's attention and draw it towards himself or herself. Thus, despite God's omniscience the human being prays to attract His special attention towards oneself.

How does one address God? What is the best form of prayer?

Jesus Christ taught his followers to address God as Abba, which is Aramaic, the common man's spoken language (lingua) at that time, meant 'Father'. The Lord's prayer brings it even closer to the individual qualifying it by 'our'. Even while nailed to the cross towards the very end of his physical life, he is said to have addressed God asking God's forgiveness for his tormentors with the words, 'Father, forgive them for they know not what they do'. It is the usual practice all over the world to use the universal term father, no matter in what language you are saying it, to indicate the one who brought you into being. Therefore, one who is the immediate cause of your coming into being, by birth is naturally father. The entire universe has been brought into being by God, therefore, God is the father of entire universe and is addressed as such. The best form of prayer is to glorify God and sing paeans of prayer for his divinity. To pray is to glorify God's grandeur, omniscience, omnipresence, omnipotence, infinite love, compassion and His concern for all His creation including even the tiniest part of it. Also, among the various prayers, the simple prayer of St. Francis of Assisi is well known to millions of people. One saint prayed in the simplicity of the heart, 'O Lord! I am of small intellect and of very small understanding. I am not learned in scriptures. I have no wisdom, I do not know what is good for me and bad for me also. Therefore, O Almighty One, O Father, Mother, Friends, Relatives, I do not ask anything. Grant to me whatever you think is good for me. Save me and protect me from whatever you think is not good for me. You know best.' This is my view. We must do formal prayer, but I must not close this point without mentioning that helping others is also a form of prayer.

There are many ways to pray: prostration, prayer wheels, pilgrimages, kneeling in church, circumambulating-all using the body. Also chanting, verbal prayers and silent or interior prayer. Do some "work" better than others?

In this question you are touching upon the many ways of praying, kneeling, prostration, circumambulation etc. Also many forms of prayer like prayer wheels and pilgrimages. Also interior mental prayer and articulated verbal prayer and chants. Austere monastics prefer the silent, interior prayer. Whether some 'work' better than others is a matter of how you look at it. Take the example of the prayer wheel. The Tibetans live in icy cold place. Sometimes at 18,000 feet above sea level. They have to engage in some sort of physical activity to stimulate the blood circulation. Hence, the rotating of the prayer wheel. Lord Jesus once said pray ceaselessly. The Tibetans also do this by fixing a somewhat bigger sized prayer wheel atop a structure or a post specially set up for this so that it catches the blowing wind and keeps on rotating day and night.

The reason for the practice of pilgrimage is quite obvious. The pious people wish to think of God. Anything that evokes the feelings of devotion for God forms part of their pious religious lives. From bygone times, in different countries certain places are identified with holiness, spirituality. They become pilgrimage centres. The reasons may be varied but there is a definite reason behind each place of the pilgrimage that makes the place sacred and pious. Therefore devotees throng to that place. In India such places abound. Of course, certain self-interested persons may be visiting pilgrimage places hoping that some of their desires should be fulfilled. These are not authentic pilgrims. They are 50-50. Half visitors and half pilgrims.

Kneeling in church arose out of the style of western man's clothing. Wearing tight fitting pants and trousers one cannot easily sit cross-legged on the floor. Also, due to the extreme cold of the temperate zone in many parts of Europe and U.K. etc. they all had to use furnitures like chair, sofas, stools, benches etc. Sitting down on the floor was not physically possible or advisable in the extreme cold. Today a great many changes have taken place in western society. They have perceived the wisdom of the East in all walks of life. Many such people therefore fold a thick blanket, cover it up with a thick towel and sit upon it. They do not discard furniture. But, furniture like chairs have ceased to be the sole and the only way to sitting. As to their relative merit, some work better for certain persons, some others work better for people in different circumstances. It is not the question of superior or inferior. It is not a question of making use of the better method. It depends upon the individual.

Lastly, regarding why the use of the whole body, you may be interested to learn that in certain South Indian religious communities it is obligatory to do prostration with the 'whole body' and also circumambulation. Eight parts of the body are to be in contact with the ground. Just as we use the word 'ashtanga' in connection with Patanjali Maharshi's Yoga aphorism to refer to his eight yoga stages, the same word 'ashtanga' (eight limbs) in reference to this prostration is used with whole body. It is an action symbol a token of the devotee's complete offering of himself/herself at the feet of the Lord. 'I am thine, O Lord'. It is a perfect gesture of complete and fullest spiritual surrender (expressed through the physical body).

Why are the prayers of a Guru more powerful than those of ordinary people. What is happening?

Why are the prayers of Guru more powerful? The answer is obvious. When ordinary people pray, they pray to an unknown being which in their faith, they believe exist in some subtle plane or dimension of existence invisible to their physical gaze. Whereas when the aura (perfected Master)

prays, he does not have to pray to something he believes in. He prays to a being he KNOWS. That It is Reality, which exists eternally, he is imperishable and more real than anything else in this world of things. What is happening when the Guru prays? He is addressing himself to a Being Whom he has actually experienced for himself. He is established in that experience of this tuneless, unchanging imperishable and permanent reality.

Many people believe that if they, lead a godly life, and pray, then, will be rewarded with material possessions, happiness, good for me, good karma, things, and when their lives go awry in unfortunate ways, they believe that they are doing some thing "wrong" or praying "wrong", Can you speak to this?

About Godly life and being rewarded, I am somewhat intrigued at what seems to me to be a careful avoiding of the term punishment, on your part. You have mentioned of a Godly life. But you have not mentioned about ungodly life that people can live and yet be regular church-goers, and also kneeling down at church together with the congregation. You have spoken of good karma but you have not spoken of 'bad karma'

I do not know any wrong prayer. Unless of course it means praying for your enemy's ruin and destruction. We know of such prayers when two nations are at war. This is certainly wrong prayer. Then of course, there is the wrong prayer in which you have gone into your room and closed the room behind you to be alone with God and you kneel down in a devout attitude and start praying. The lips are uttering the words of a pious prayer whereas the mind is far away thinking of so many things other than God. In prayer you are expected to focus your mind upon God and direct all your thoughts and feelings towards him. When this is not being done, there is a case of praying wrong. As for some people believing that when life goes awry in unfortunate ways they are doing something wrong and hence are 'not being rewarded', this is a rather simplistic assumption. According to the law of Karma, the person doing something wrong does not necessarily experience the result of that wrong action in the near future in that very same life and through the same body. More often than not, the person's wrong action or actions become part of a karmic accumulation. It is possible they produce their experience, positive or negative in the next incarnation (birth) of that person.

What of the person who never prays and yet seems blessed. Was prayer unnecessary? Is prayer necessary?

Mentioning a certain example of a person you have posed two questions, namely was prayer unnecessary or is prayer necessary? Now, prayer happens to be an essential component within practice of all the different religions. In some religions it is mandatory and has been made obligatory, in Islam, for example. To attend the synagogue on Saturday is enjoined upon by the followers of Judaism. Attending church every Sunday is felt as a religious duty by all good Christians, be they Roman Catholics or Protestants, of any denomination. However, prayer is not compulsory. At best it should be a spontaneous coming from within. One person leading a prayer, uttering sentence by sentence and all the rest of the persons present following by repeating after him, this is prayer all right but this is not the type of prayer we seem to be discussing about. Prayer is not unnecessary because a person is quite all right and happy without it. It is not a far fetched assumption to say that the person would be four-fold better off if he included prayer as offering. Yes, prayer is necessary. Firstly, because, it links us up with God and secondly, because it has a certain uplifting and transforming effect upon the person who prays. The person's nature becomes ennobled. It improves and enhances the spiritual quality of life.

Why is the prayer of two or more people more powerful and seem to achieve more results than the prayer of the single person?

When two or more persons or a group of persons pray together it has to be more powerful by its nature. The combined faith, devotion and fervour of all the persons present create a certain uplifting wave of religious feeling. Naturally, each individual becomes the recipient of the power of this spiritual wave. The heart becomes quickly elevated. Devotion arises by itself. Also, any distraction or the wandering away of a person's mind in such a setup is instantaneously counteracted by the intensity of the deep earnestness and sincerity of other person or persons present.

Why should we pray? When should we pray? How, or in what form? Whose prayers are best received?

We should pray, because by prayer we are uplifted and benefited. God does not stand to gain anything by our prayers, on the other hand we stand to gain. When should we pray? No one has ever asked the question when should I breathe, when should I inhale and exhale? Upon breathing depends your very life. What breathing is to our physical body, prayer is to our soul. It is its very rite. Therefore we must always pray. Pray as many times as you can. However, a time honoured tradition based upon scientific observation, prevailing in India from ancient times has mentioned four points in time within each cycle of twenty-four hours as being specially suitable for engaging in prayer, meditation etc. they are the two meridians 12 midday and 12 midnight, the twilight period immediately after sunset and fourthly, the period preceding the sunrise at early dawn.

How, or in what form? Any sincere prayer is acceptable to the Lord. He is not particular of the form of the prayer nor does he require it to be done in a certain manner along specific lines. The prayers of a highly learned theologian and the prayer of a poor simple illiterate peasant are both equally acceptable to God with his equal vision towards all his creatures.

Whose prayers are best received? The Srimad Bhagavadgita scripture has a verse which says, four kinds of people direct their prayers to me. A person in grief, a person desiring to obtain something, a person wishing to gain knowledge and one who has already attained enlightenment and has become a jnani i.e. an Enlightened One. Among these four kinds of prayers the last mentioned, i.e. the jnani's prayers are best received.

ANCIENT PRAYERS LIGHT OUR PATH

Worshipful homage to that great eternal all pervading universal Spirit Divine. Worshipful homage to that absolute spirit transcending all names and forms, that is supreme and non-dual. Loving adorations to Holy Master Swami Sivananda Maharaj.

Blessed Divinities, Radiant Atman. In the course of our daily worship, we chant several stotras. People of other religions say other prayers. Quite apart from such prayers and such verses of prayer and glorification of God composed by saints and mystics in all religions, there are certain fundamental, original prayers which are to be found in the scriptures of those religions, and these scriptures are not attributed to any saint or mystic of the past. It is usually believed that God Himself is the direct inspirer of these original scriptures, that form being the source and basis of the different religions. Many of these verses are repeated every day by the devout followers of each religion. But for these ancient verses to mean anything at all to us in our actual day to day living of our life here, they should not be merely recited, but also lived; also become part of our life and actions. Then they become filled with a certain vital meaning for our life. They can even become the means of our spiritual progress and our spiritual success. Ancient prayer for example:-*sarve bhavantu sukinah, sarvesha svastir bhavatu*. Should it be only prayed to the supreme being that all may be happy; that the welfare of all may be assured? Should we merely pray or should we also back up that prayer and follow it by actually living and striving to bring about the happiness and the welfare of all beings? If we understand prayer only as something directed towards God, then it does not have any practical place in our life. If prayer means something to us that we direct towards God and at the same time also apply in our life, then it assumes a totally different identity for us. Prayers then become our guideline. They become a light upon our path. They become to us a point of a different direction in which we are to move if we wish to have our own highest welfare. They come to have a vital relationship with our life. We say:-*sada vasantarn hridayaravinide* He is always dwelling in our heart. Then we should never feel alienated from God because how can He ever leave us? How can He ever be far away? How can we ever be cut off from God if what we said is true -*sada vasantarn hridayaravinide*. If we say Purusha Sukta and Rudri path He is there. Shining. A point of radiant light in the middle of our heart, then we should feel our whole interior flooded with radiance. We cannot experience anything dark or negative within us because He is there. It is as if the very centre of our being; the source of all that is auspicious, blessed, good, beautiful is within us. We conclude all our spiritual gatherings with *purnam-adaah purnam-idam purnat purnam-udachyate purnasya purnamadaya purnam eva'vasisyate* The inexhaustible, the infinite, the perennial, the vast, so it is never depleted. Even if the whole of it is taken away from itself, yet it remains; continues to remain; complete and whole and perfect. It can be understood from various angles: scholastically, philosophically, intellectually, but also it can be understood spiritually. That all full is present here as the very stuff of everything that exists. *Idam purnam*. This also is the all full. That same all full is this all full also. That means the fullness of the divine fact fills and pervades our life here; our presence; our very present environment, surroundings, circumstances, everything! That itself has become this and That alone pervades all of this. In this way *purnam-adaah purnam-idam purnat purnam-udachyate purnasya purnamadaya purnam eva'vasisyate* understood. In this way, its spiritual implication is correctly interpreted. Then we have to deeply think what this interpretation means to us in our life. How it brings this truth very close to us and has to play a part in our successful way of living. These things have to be dwelt upon. May the Supreme Being and beloved and blessed Holy Master bless us and grant us the insight to thus understand, interpret, and apply and live these great mystical truths expressed in many of these ancient scriptural prayers. Om. May God bless you.

SRI SWAMI CHIDANANDA

AN APOSTLE OF PEACE AND EMBODIMENT OF QUINTESSENCE OF INDIA'S SPIRITUAL & CULTURAL HERITAGE

Revered Gurudev Swami Sivanandaji's worthy spiritual successor has been referred to as follows, "If one wants to see boldness of spirit behind a slender appearance, irreverible command of heart behind a benign face, unwavering peace of mind behind dynamism of action, impersonal detachment behind personal love and care-all at once in a single person, one cannot do better than meet Swami Chidananda."

Born on 24th September, 1916, into a wealthy Brahmin family in South India, Swami Chidananda absorbed love for tradition and respect for rituals. At Loyola College, Madras, Swamiji had a brilliant scholastic career. The ideals and teachings of Jesus made a deep impression in his heart, and he was able to synthesize them with all that is best and noble in Hindu Culture. The two profound influences in Swamiji's life were the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna and the example of his Gurudev, Sri Swami Sivananda. He joined Gurudev in 1943 and from then on the Ashram and the lofty ideals of the Divine Life Society became home and field of service for him.

Swami Chidananda was born with an insatiable zeal to serve the sick and the suffering. Even in childhood he built huts for lepers on the lawns of his home and looked after them as though they were deities.

Swami Sivananda said about his spiritual son and beloved disciple:

"Chidananda is a Jivanmukta, a great Saint, an ideal Yogi, a Para-Bhakta and a great sage. Swami Chidananda is all this and much more. He was a great Yogi and Saint in his previous birth. His lectures are the outpouring of his saintly heart, the revelations of intuitive wisdom. And he is a practical Vedantin, his words have tremendous power. He is born to fulfil a great mission."