

TWELVE KEYS TO HAPPINESS AND SUCCESS

H.H. Sri Swami Chidananda

1. DEVELOP A CLEAR CUT AIM

First, you must form a correct conception of how you wish to develop and perfect yourself. You must cultivate a clear-cut idea of what you want to become. This will give you a definite and clear-cut aim in life. Without such an aim, your life cannot move forward powerfully and progressively. You will be pulled in different directions and your mind will be distracted and much energy will be wasted. You can avoid all of these if you have a well-defined aim or a set of a few definite objectives. Then there is no confusion in your way. You know what you wish to attain and in which direction to proceed. Therefore, you also understand what is right and what is wrong, what is desirable and what is undesirable, what is to be accepted and what is to be rejected in moving towards your aim of life. Such definiteness gives you great inner strength. It develops will-power. It makes you a positive personality. There will be no more negative trends in your life.

2. DRAW UP A WISE PROGRAMME

The second important thing is to draw for yourself a wise programme of life to help you to develop along the desired lines and to gradually attain the aim of life. Such a programme will provide a plan of action in meeting with all problems that face the young student, the growing youth, to deal with all situations that arise in your life, to meet and overcome temptations with firm mind and to surmount obstacles with boldness and self-confidence. The power to do this exists within you already in its latent state. It has to be unfolded and activated. A proper understanding of your own mind, its behaviour and habits, and the law that governs the inner activity of the mind become very, very helpful in living this wonderful and interesting period of your life.

3. GUARD YOUR HEALTH

Now we come to the factors upon which depends the proper working out of your programme of life. Health is the key factor. Without health you can do nothing. Without health you can succeed neither in studies, nor in character-building, nor in sports and social activities, nor in home-life. Health is a matter of careful living. It is got not only from things you eat and drink, but it is also obtained from your wise and careful avoiding of such things that are not good for your health. Eat for your health. Eat for your strength and not for your taste. Eat to live and to serve. Do not live to eat. Eat simple food. Go to bed early and get up early. Acquire healthy habits. Do regular exercise daily. Be moderate in eating and drinking. Chew your food thoroughly. Do not overeat. Do not eat without hunger. Avoid things that do not agree with you.

4. CONSERVE YOUR ENERGY

Then you must conserve your energy. Never waste your energy in useless pursuits. Too much talking and gossiping, aimless wandering, habit of worrying, losing your temper frequently—all these drain away your energy. Give up, all habits that are likely to have an adverse effect on health. Smoking and illegal drugs are a curse upon students. Be established in perfect Brahmacharya (purity). Abstain from sexual activity. Preserve health, conserve energy, develop physical and mental strength and thus lay the foundation of a successful life.

5. VALUE CHARACTER

Value character more than anything else on the earth. Be perfectly truthful. Do not, let your speech be vulgar or rude. Speech must be clean, polite, and joy-giving. Cast away egoism, pride and selfishness. These three form the blemish upon human character. They arise out of ignorance and greed. Ignorance makes you proud and egoistic. Greed makes you selfish. They lead to dishonour and unhappiness and failure in life. By leading a simple life and having a cheerful disposition under all circumstances, you can overcome selfishness and egoism. Your life and conduct must be the cause of happiness in other people.

6. ADOPT VIRTUES

Adopt certain virtues and principles and stick to them in all your activities of life. Never leave these principles. Never move away from virtue. These principles will be your true friends and helpers. They will assure your progress and ultimately grant you supreme happiness and success. Periodically make certain simple resolutions to practice those virtues. Maintain a

personal diary wherein you make a careful note of your day-to-day conduct, speech, and behaviour. This will reveal to you how far you are advancing and show you your mistakes and where you must correct yourself. Such a diary will be your friend. It will reveal your weakness and teach you humility.

7. PRAY TO GOD

Pray to God and ask Him for inner strength and guidance. God's Divine Name has immense power. Repeat His Name always and remember him under all situations. Remember God constantly with love in your heart. Have absolute faith in your inseparable relationship with Him. Cultivate constant remembrance of God by seeing His invisible presence in and through all things in this universe around you. God is not some remote reality far away from you. But God is here and now. He is all pervading Reality, the ever present Divine Spirit pervading this entire universe. And also He is your innermost self. He is closer to you than your very breath. Never forget this. Even when you are engaged in your daily activity, begin to feel the presence of God.

8. REFLECT UPON IDEAL PERSONALITIES

Reflect upon the lives of ideal personalities. Draw strength and inspiration from their lives and teachings. Try to mould your life upon their pattern. Always have a great ideal before your mind. Think of it at all times-morning, noon, evening, and night. Develop it into the constant background of your thought. Then your mind will never be idle or vacant. This is important because right thinking is the key to noble living.

9. BE KIND

Out of your life there must flow out ceaseless love, kindness, and compassion. Never hurt anyone. Never hurt even the least one of God's creatures either by thought, word, or action. Even in dreams you should never think of harming or hurting any creature. This sublime principle of non-injury, harmlessness, is given a very great place in the eternal Vedic way of life. Be a centre of help, be a centre of benefit, be a centre of happiness and peace to all. Never injure, never hurt, never harm any living creature.

10. BE ABSOLUTELY TRUTHFUL

You must be rooted in absolute truthfulness. Even at the cost of your life, never utter falsehood. Never be dishonest in any of your dealings with anyone in this world. Be a person of integrity, of verity. Become established in truthfulness in thought, word, and deed. Truth is God. One

who practices truthfulness rigidly will attain God. God is present in this human world as the sublime principle of truthfulness.

11. SERVE OTHERS

The vexing problems of this modern world, its clashes and conflicts, its greed and exploitation, its hatred and hostilities, its mad craze for selfish acquisition will never cease or be relieved until and unless there is a change of outlook in man towards his neighbours and towards his life around him. Man makes life what it is. And life around man is but a reflection of what he is. The only rational and lasting solution to the afflictions that beset the organized society of civilized men is a reinstating of the spirit of selfless giving into its rightful place in your life. The more you give of yourself, the greater will be your conquest over sorrows and sufferings and your ascent into peace and bliss.

12. THINK NOBLY

As you think, so you will become, just as you reap what you sow. In the same way, you will ultimately experience and attain what you constantly think and feel. Your inner thoughts lead to outer action. Repeated actions grow into habits. Such habits become permanent qualities in your very nature. This nature goes to form your character. Your future and your destiny is the direct result of your character. Understand this very well. Carefully bear this in your mind. Think and act with this knowledge. Your inner thoughts are the seeds of your ultimate destiny. Safeguard your thoughts and feelings. Think nobly and virtuously. You will become a noble man or woman. You will attain greatness and make your life fruitful. More than all the books that you read and study, more than all your lessons and examinations, more important than everything in life is the cultivation of virtue. This is the source of ultimate happiness. Become good and great.

SELFLESS SERVICE

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- God's plan for man's evolution is work. Love of God and service of man is the secret of true life. The meaning of true life is service and sacrifice. Life is meant for service, and not for self-seeking Sacrifice! Do your duties well, sincerely. Your privileges will follow unasked.
- Hold your life for the service of others. The more the energy you spend in elevating and serving others, the more the divine energy which will flow to you.
- Serve. You will rule. Serve humanity with divine Bhava. The cancer of individuality will be dissolved.
- Selfless Service Purifies. What is the object in Seva or service? Why do you serve poor people and the suffering humanity at large? Why do you serve the society and the country? By doing service, you purify your heart. Egoism, hatred, jealousy, idea of superiority vanish. Humility, pure love, sympathy, tolerance, and mercy are developed. Sense of separateness is annihilated. Selfishness is eradicated. You get a broad outlook of life. You begin to feel oneness or unity of life. You develop a broad heart with broad, generous views. Eventually, you get Knowledge of the Self. You realise the 'One-in-all' and 'all-in-One'. You feel unbounded joy.
- The first step in the spiritual path is selfless service of humanity. Selfless service is the watchword along the road to salvation. Selfless service of humanity prepares the aspirant for the attainment of cosmic consciousness, or the life of oneness or unity with God. Aspirants should direct their whole attention in the beginning towards removal of selfishness by protracted selfless service.
- Through selfless service and charity, develop the heart and cleanse the lower mind. Purify your heart by selfless and humble service of the poor and the afflicted, and make it a fit abode for God to dwell. Selfless service alone can purify your heart and fill it with divine virtues. Only the pure in heart will have the vision of God.
- Grow in love, purity, and self-sacrifice. Live for others. You will attain the state of blessedness. Selfless service and cosmic love are the Ganga and the Yamuna that irrigate the field of the human heart and enable the rich harvest of peace, joy, prosperity, immortality, and Atma-jnana to be reaped.

- Opportunities for Selfless Service. The world is yourself. Therefore, love all, serve all, be kind to all, embrace all. Behold the Lord in the poor, the down-trodden; the oppressed and lowly ones.
- Become a servant of humanity. This is the secret of attaining God-realisation. Seek out the lowly and the miserable; cheer up and bring a ray of comfort to them by serving them unstintingly. Console the disconsolate. Comfort the distressed. You will be blessed.
- Serve your parents, elders, teachers, and guests with divine Bhava. Wash the clothes of your parents, elders, the sick, and the Mahatmas.
- Feed the hungry, nurse the sick, comfort the afflicted, and lighten the sorrow of the sorrowful. God will bless you. Clothe the naked. Educate the illiterate. Feed the poor. Raise the down-trodden. The world is burning with misery and suffering. Wake up, O man! Serve! Serve with love. Serve untiringly. Attain the peace of the Eternal.
- Have a knowledge of homoeopathy or Dr. Schussler's Twelve Tissue Remedies. Now serve the sick and the needy. And with first-aid knowledge, always give first help in all cases of emergency. Get medicine from the hospital or the dispensary for the helpless and deserving neighbours. Visit a hospital daily, if you can, or weekly, and give your best attention to the non-paying wards. Distribute oranges, if you can. Sit' by the side of the patient and speak a few encouraging words. Smile awhile. Repeat, if you can, the Sahasranama of the Lord or the like. Tell him that you will meet him 'tomorrow'; and meet him.
- Collect some old clothes and distribute them to the needy. Distribute a few pies to the lame, the blind, and to the hungry mouths as you walk along the street. Serve any social institution for one hour daily without any remuneration.
- Meet your friends and the members of your society in a common place once a week or a fortnight for Satsanga and Kirtana. Develop an understanding heart. Help your younger brothers in the spiritual path. Lift them up. Throw light on their path; Do not expect perfection from them. Be kind to them. They are doing their best, as you are yourself doing yours. You will grow by helping them.
- Finally, think for yourself, how best you can utilise your energy, your intellect, your education, your wealth, your strength, or anything you possess, for the betterment of others who are low-placed in life, and for society in general.