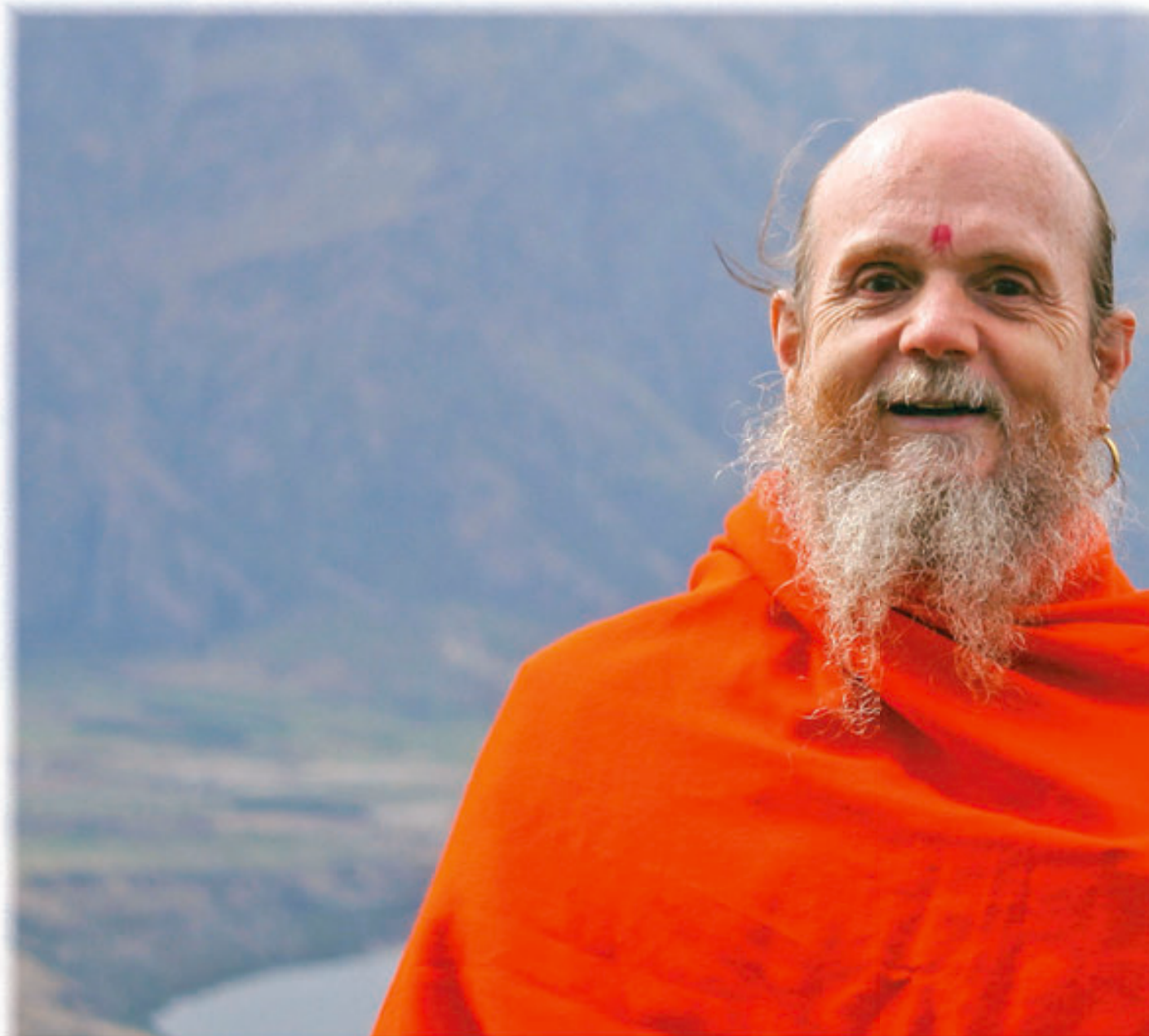




A Character Building Workbook



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A Character Building Workbook

By Satguru Bodhinatha Veylanswami
Kauai Aadheenam, Hawaii



Preface

As a tool to help children and adults build, transform and improve their character, we have developed a list of sixty-four character qualities and present them in this workbook. Each two-page spread is divided into six sections. The first section presents a definition of the quality under discussion. The second section shares a relevant quotation from the teachings of Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami. The third is a table providing three real-world examples of how that virtue can be incorporated into our life, and showing its opposite. The fourth is an assignment meant to put that quality into practice. Additionally, a link is provided to a story or other resource that illustrates the quality. Finally, a space is provided to have the reader share experiences encountered in nurturing that character quality in his or her life. There are three suggestions for how to use this material. For teenagers, we suggest focusing on one virtue for a week or two. After completing the assignment on that page, write down in the space provided your thoughts about the benefits of possessing that quality. Then move on to the next. To complete the workbook in half the time, two qualities can be tackled together.



For adults, we suggest identifying the character qualities that would most improve your life and relationships. Then take one at a time and work on it for two weeks or more.

For families with pre-teen children old enough to understand the concepts, the booklet can be used in a simpler way by choosing one character quality at a time, posting it in big type somewhere in the home and discussing it now and then for a few weeks. This enables parents to speak spontaneously to their children about positive habits and attitudes at select times when they are most open to their parents' wisdom—separate from any immediate responses to less-than-perfect behavior.

Bodhinathaveylanswami

Satguru Bodhinatha Veylanswami
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Introduction

Spiritual life is not different from the rest of life, it is just the best of life. Imagine a woman hears that Ramakrishna saw God as clearly as we see an apple in our hand, or a man hears of great yogis who realize the Truth of the universe in a life-transforming avalanche of light, culminating in a sense of the oneness of it all. Hoping for similar experiences, the man or woman might decide to meditate for days under a tree or in a cave. Or they might fast for days, go on arduous pilgrimages and practice mystic mantras for hours on end. Would they succeed by these efforts? Experience says, probably not.

Ordinary life offers a key for their journey. Imagine someone who goes to a piano concert and hears the world's greatest artist. The music is mesmerizing, the pianist's skill is flawless, soaring, perfect, and our listener decides, "This is my path. This is what I want to do." He sits at the piano, attempting to equal the master's work, but great music does not resound. No matter how many hours are spent, no matter how sincere the effort, he cannot achieve what he heard at the concert.

Why? He does not realize the work required to reach that level of expertise. To be successful, it is vital to start at the beginning of the path, not in the middle or at the end. If the fundamentals are skipped, our efforts will not yield sustainable spiritual progress. In



the case of the pianist, the fundamentals are music theory, neural and muscular training, development of memorization, cultivating an interpretive ear and practice, practice, practice. It is no different in spiritual life. The great ones did not sit in a cave and in short time attain enlightenment. They worked on themselves for years, decades, lifetimes. They did sadhana, they changed their habits, their desires, their reactions, their very character. If we wish to achieve what they achieved, we must do the same. We must work for it.

The fundamentals, the foundation upon which our spiritual growth rests, is our character. What exactly is character? Character is the sum total of mental and moral qualities distinctive to an individual. On the spiritual path, the first phase of effort is to build, improve and transform our character. My guru, Sivaya Subramuniyaswami, observed:

“It is true that bliss comes from meditation, and it is true that higher consciousness is the heritage of all mankind. However, the ten restraints [yamas] and their corresponding practices [niyamas] are necessary to maintain bliss consciousness, as well as all of the good feelings toward oneself and others attainable in any incarnation. These restraints and practices build character. Character is the foundation for spiritual unfoldment. The fact is, the

higher we go, the lower we can fall. The top chakras spin fast; the lowest one available to us spins even faster. The platform of character must be built within our lifestyle to maintain the total contentment needed to persevere on the path. These great rishis saw the frailty of human nature and gave these guidelines, or disciplines, to make it strong. They said, 'Strive! Let's strive to not hurt others, to be truthful and honor all the rest of the virtues they outlined.'

Swami Chinmayananda, founder of Chinmaya Mission, directly related spiritual growth to character transformation: "If we organize our life in such a way so as to discover the great potential within us, and if we order our behavior so as to nurture and nourish that potential, our life will be well spent. Our success lies in the amount of transformation we can bring about in our character and behavior."

My guru explained, "To build character, to act in accordance with the yamas, a person has to realize that, having acted instinctively, he experienced consequences that he does not want to experience again; so, now he realizes that he should follow these restraints and not go through those consequences again. This is the foundation; without this foundation there is no spiritual growth, no fruit. Trying to realize the highest realizations before laying this foundation would be like taking a lime tree that was cut off from its roots and putting it into a bucket and expecting it to bear fruit. Of course it will not."

Each of us has many character qualities. A character quality is a habit, a usual pattern or way of thinking, speaking or acting. Most people have a mixture of positive character qualities, such as being enthusiastic, punctual, dependable, kindly or sincere, and negative qualities, such as being sarcastic, lazy, tardy or deceptive.

We have all heard the common excuse for negative character qualities: "That's the way I am. What can I do about it? I'm simply a lazy person." Hinduism teaches that the character we are born with in this life is the result of the sum total of our actions in previous lives. Some individuals are clearly pious from birth, others are of a mixed nature and still others are self-centered and devious. However, Hinduism also teaches that we can change the character qualities we are born with through self-reflection and self-effort, by observing and controlling how we think and act in the present, particularly by the repetition of positive thoughts and actions. The more often we express and reflect on the character quality we desire to cultivate, the stronger it will become.

Accepting the idea that we can change a negative character quality, such as laziness, is a necessary first step. Once that perspective is held, the following four-step approach to developing the opposing positive character quality is helpful:

1. Understand the positive quality
2. Cognize its expressions
3. Realize its benefits
4. Practice its expressions

In utilizing this process, we can keep in mind the following principle from Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras*: "For the repelling of unwholesome thoughts, their opposites should be cultivated. Unwholesome thoughts, such as harming someone and so forth—whether done,

caused to be done, or approved, whether arising from greed, anger or infatuation, whether mild, moderate or extreme—never cease to ripen into ignorance and suffering. This is why one must cultivate their opposites.”

Let’s see how this four-step process can be utilized to replace laziness with industriousness.

First: Understand the positive quality. Make sure you have a clear understanding of the character quality you wish to cultivate. A good way to approach this is to define it in your own words. Let us define industriousness as “hard-working, willing to work long hours to finish a project.” Its opposite, laziness, is “a disinclination to work hard, preferring to remain idle.” Then meditate on the positive quality.

Second: Cognize its expressions. Make a list of thoughts, words, attitudes and behaviors that are representative of people who possess the positive quality. Then make a parallel list for the opposite trait.

Industriousness	Laziness
Do the task now	Postpone the task
Work late to finish	Stop as early as possible
Maximize productivity	Do the minimum

Third: Realize its benefits. List the benefits of having the quality. This can include insights into the problems caused when its opposite is followed.

Industriousness

1. Greater ability to serve family and community
2. Opportunities for career advancement
3. Appreciation from associates
4. Enhanced self-esteem
5. Avoid criticism

Scripture can provide insights. The *Tirukural* offers valuable thoughts on industriousness, saying, “Good fortune of its own accord ferrets out and finds the man of unflagging energy.” Of laziness it warns: “Procrastination, forgetfulness, sloth and sleep—these four shape the ship bearing those destined for ruin.”

Fourth: Practice its expressions. Begin to regularly practice the actions that will develop the habit pattern of the positive character quality. Observe closely as you begin to experience the benefits that result. Set realistic goals. Be careful not to set the goal too high lest you fall short, become discouraged and give up the effort. For the quality of industriousness, focus on increasing your productivity for the day by five percent. This can be accomplished by working faster, working longer or a combination of both.

Slowly, character will evolve and the many traits that define you will be transformed, bringing a deeper spirituality and a more secure material existence to your daily life. Remember: Consistency is the key to the conquest of karma.



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1. Abstemious

Abstemiousness means being moderate in eating and drinking. I strengthen it by exercising willpower when I am tempted to eat too much. Eating a vegetarian diet has a moderating impact not only on the body, but on the environment as well. The opposite is gluttony.

Comparing the actions of one who is abstemious to one who is gluttonous		
Situation	Abstemiousness	Gluttony
At a party with a large assortment of desserts, you...	partake of just a few.	indulge by eating some of each and later don't feel well.
When invited to enjoy a fresh burger at a neighbor's barbeque, you...	work out a veggie option with your host.	devour the meat, knowing it's not the best thing for your health
In snacking while watching television, you...	refrain from eating the snacks after a half hour.	keep eating the snacks all evening and soon find you are gaining weight.



Read here—bit.ly/abstemious1—about Sanjiv, who gets so tired of being kidded for his vegetarianism that he holds a public debate with his main meat-eater critic. Sanjiv victoriously presents a host of convincing arguments—ethical, health and environmental.

Gurudeva observed: “Overeating repels one from spiritual sadhana, because the body becomes slothful and lazy, having to digest so much food and run it through its system....A vegetarian diet creates the right chemistry for spiritual life. Other diets create a different chemistry, which affects your endocrine glands and your entire system all day long. A vegetarian diet helps your system all day long. Food is chemistry, and chemistry affects consciousness; and if our goal is higher consciousness, we have to provide the chemistry that evokes it.”

.....
ASSIGNMENT: For the next two weeks, when tempted to eat or drink too much, restrain that desire by using your willpower, eating and drinking a reasonable amount.

Date you began this assignment: _____

MY THOUGHTS ON THE BENEFITS OF ABSTEMIOUSNESS: _____



2. Accepting

Acceptance is an openness to outcomes that are not what we would prefer. I cultivate it by being aware of others' preferences and being realistic as to possible outcomes. The opposite is nonacceptance.

Comparing the actions of one who is accepting to one who is nonaccepting		
Situation	Acceptance	Nonacceptance
In a family discussion on where to go for dinner, you...	willing work past your own preference to find the group's choice.	insist that yours is the best restaurant no matter what others say.
In applying to university and being rejected by your first two choices, you...	quickly adjust and commit to doing well at your third choice.	sulk for years, resenting the university's obviously flawed decision.
When your family relocates from California to Texas, you...	see fresh opportunities and start making new friends in the Lone Star State.	stubbornly cling to the past, constantly calling your old friends back in California.



Read here—bit.ly/accepting2—the story about a young girl, Amrita, who must learn to face a painful loss when Bindi, her beloved puppy, passes away suddenly. Her mother offers a special tool to help let go of things.

Gurudeva explained: “One of the great spiritual powers that people can have is to accept things as they are. That forestalls impatience and intolerance. Acceptance is developed in a person by understanding the law of karma and in seeing God Siva and His work everywhere, accepting the perfection of the timing of the creation, preservation and absorption of the entire universe.”

“Holding the family together can be summed up in one word: love. Love is understanding. Love is acceptance. Love is making somebody feel good about his experience, whether the experience is a good one or not. Love is giving the assurance that there is no need to keep secrets, no matter what has happened. Love is wanting to be with members of the family.”

.....

ASSIGNMENT: For the next two weeks, when experiencing situations that do not work out as you had hoped, find ways to let go of your expectations and accept the actual outcome.

Date you began this assignment _____

MY THOUGHTS ON THE BENEFITS OF ACCEPTANCE: _____



3. Affectionate

Affection refers to relations among family members and friends where there is a strong bond of closeness and understanding. I cultivate affection by expressing love and spending quality time together. The opposite is distance.

Comparing the actions of one who is affectionate to one who is distant		
Situation	Affection	Distance
When you are not engaged in studies and required chores, you...	spend time with your mother in the kitchen helping with meals and discussing current events.	tend to isolate yourself in your room playing video games.
Hearing that his parents are divorcing, your friend is going through an emotional time. You...	draw near him, as someone he can lean on and speak with about what he is going through.	keep apart until the divorce is over, not wanting to get involved in the sad situation.
On family home evening, you...	look forward to gathering with loved ones and bring topics for discussion.	show by your body language that you would rather be somewhere else.



Read here—bit.ly/affectionate3—the story of Raj, who grows up in a nurturing family where Mom stays at home and Dad hugs him each day. At college, talking with students from broken homes, he comes to treasure his parents' love and affection.

Gurudeva explained: "To be affectionately detached—that is a power. That is a wisdom. That is a love greater than any emotional love, a love born of understanding, a love that merges you into the river of life and allows actinic force to flow within you so that you realize God."

"India's culture spread all through Asia, and because of it one rarely sees any affection shown in public—kissing, hugging, hand-holding, touching or feeling."

.....
ASSIGNMENT: These two weeks, focus on drawing near others more than usual and study the effect your closeness has on your relationships and state of mind.

Date you began this assignment _____

MY THOUGHTS ON THE BENEFITS OF BEING AFFECTIONATE: _____



4. Appreciative

Appreciation is the state of respect, even awe, inspired by beauty, excellence or skill perceived in one's surroundings. I cultivate appreciation by admiring and valuing all that I encounter. The opposite is unawareness.

Comparing the actions of one who is appreciative to one who is unaware		
Situation	Appreciation	Unawareness
While driving through a park filled with exotic plants, you...	immediately take notice and are struck by their wondrousness.	take no interest and see nothing out of the ordinary.
Walking outside on a night with a clear, star-filled sky, you...	appreciate the constellations and reflect on the vastness of the universe.	focus on texting your friend, oblivious to the stellar display above you.
When reading an 18th-century masterpiece for a book report, you...	revel in the author's brilliant portrayal of the era's people and events.	rush through the book, not noticing the exceptional writing.



Read here—bit.ly/appreciative4—how Sahana and her brother Palani learn to appreciate the importance of a strong, close-knit family after their father’s business begins to fail.

Gurudeva explained: “Appreciation is a beautiful, soulful quality available to everyone in every circumstance—being thankful for life’s little treasures, grateful for the opportunity to begin the day where you are, appreciating the perfect place your karma and God’s grace have brought you to. Appreciation is life-giving.”

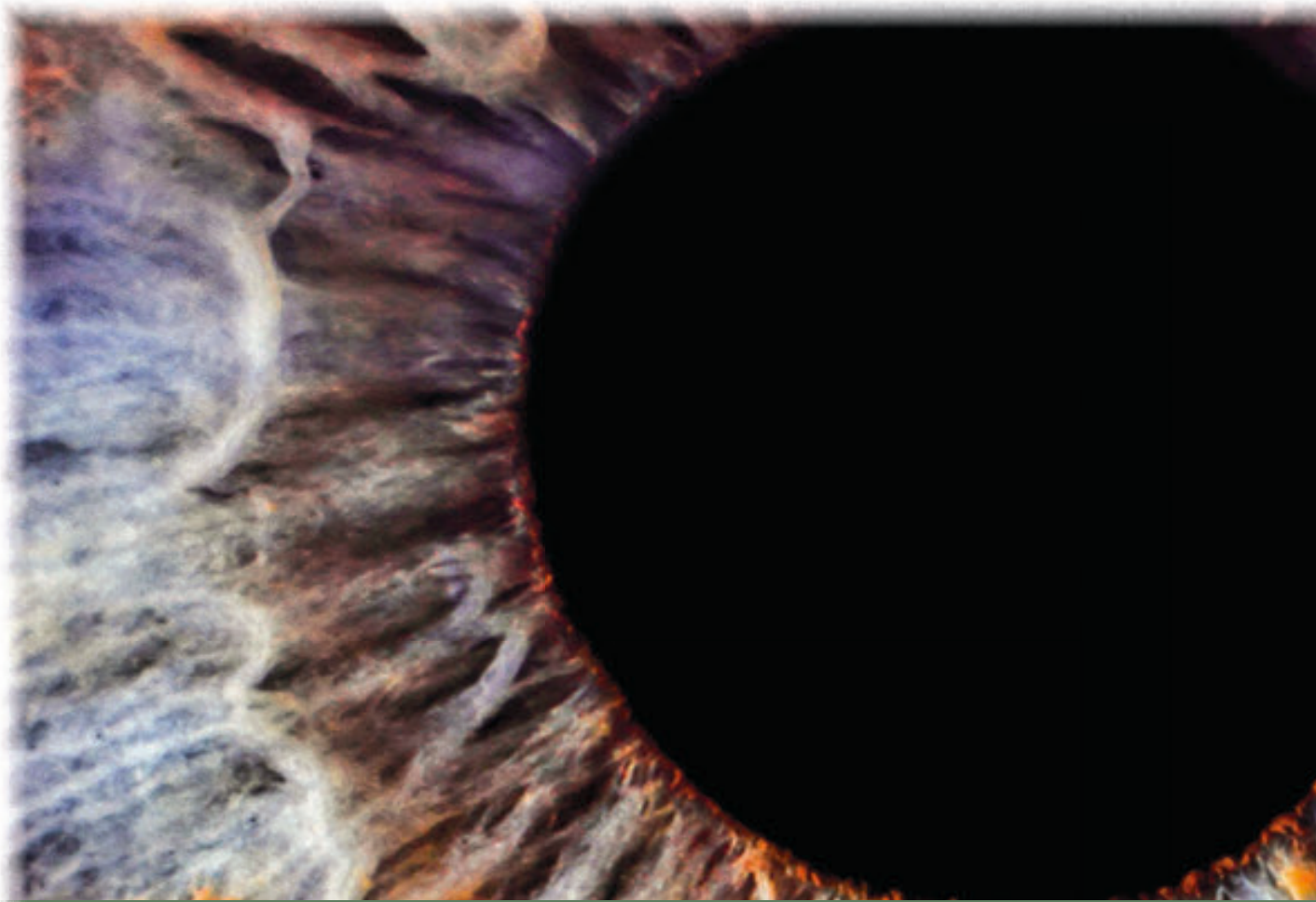
“Loving appreciation is a life-changing force just waiting to be used. Express appreciation to community leaders, business associates, spiritual mentors, family members and friends as often as you can. Loving appreciation is a magic formula that works both ways. When we commend another, we are automatically uplifted.”



ASSIGNMENT: When outside the home in the two weeks ahead, be observant of the details of your surroundings. When you encounter something exceptional, focus on it and appreciate its uniqueness.

Date you began this assignment _____

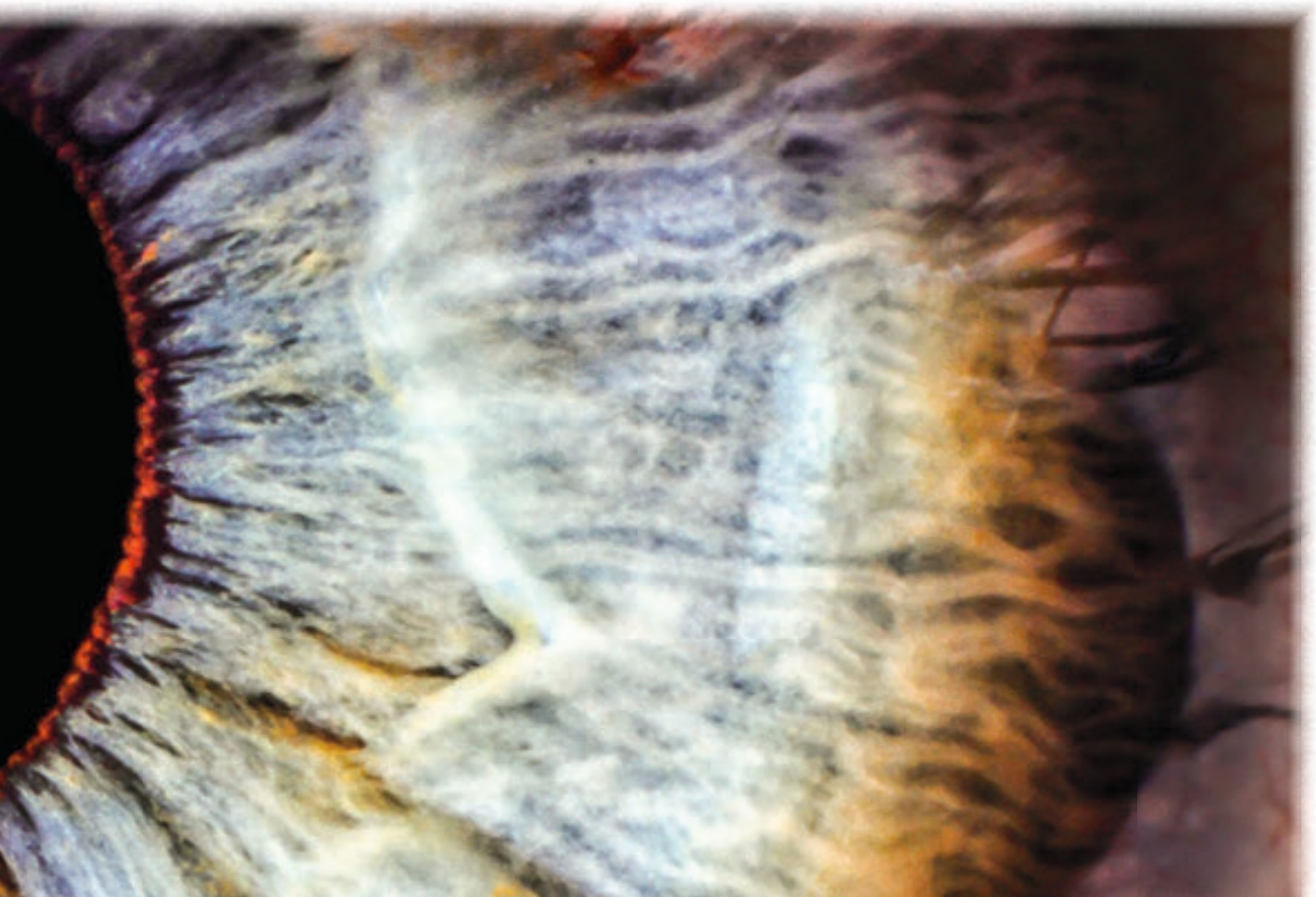
MY THOUGHTS ON THE BENEFITS OF APPRECIATION: _____



5. Attentive

Attentiveness means being alert and observant. I cultivate it by giving my undivided concentration to what is going on around me. Its opposite is distractedness.

Comparing the behavior of one who is attentive to one who is distracted		
Situation	Attentiveness	Distractedness
In a conversation, you...	look at the other person and listen closely.	tend to look away and become distracted by surroundings.
During a class, you...	sit still and stay focused.	constantly fidget and have trouble focusing.
When attending a group meeting, you...	participate, turning off your mobile phone to prevent interruptions.	are constantly engaged in texting.



Read here—bit.ly/attentive5—about four keys to good conversation: presence, question, story and attentiveness, defined as genuine interest in others and willingness to engage with them, or “respectful curiosity.”

Gurudeva explained: “You have heard me say many times, ‘Observation is the first awakening of the soul.’ If your observation is intense and accurate, your mind is not bothered and you are not regretting things that have happened to you in the past. [...] The awakened soul is a joyous soul with a positive mind. The practice of observation will bring you closer and closer to this state.”

“You have to always be the master, and be attentive to your goals in life.”

“The very direction of mankind is right there in the early years, to be turned toward a great potential through love and attentiveness or allowed to decay through neglect.”

.....
ASSIGNMENT: In your conversations with others during these two weeks, strive to look at the person and refrain from fidgeting and texting.

Date you began this assignment _____

MY THOUGHTS ON THE BENEFITS OF ATTENTIVENESS: _____



6. Available

Availability means always being willing to help others. I practice it when I put others' needs for my time ahead of my own. Its opposite is unavailability.

Comparing the behavior of one who is available to one who is unavailable		
Situation	Availability	Unavailability
When unexpectedly asked for help, you...	stop what you are doing and gladly pitch in.	decline to help and keep doing your regular work.
Learning that a situation requires your skills, you...	speak up, gladly volunteering to help.	say nothing, not wanting to take on any more duties.
In a group project, you...	are interested in how others are doing, ready to help if needed.	are only concerned with your own assigned tasks.



Read here—bit.ly/available6—how a large group of mice, readily available, respond immediately to a request for help from a herd of elephants and free them from a perilous situation.

Gurudeva explained: “The outgoing force of the soul in action brings freedom to the lower states of mind. The instinctive person is ordinarily so preoccupied with his own self, so wrapped up in his own shell, that he cannot give a thought to the welfare of another.”

“Friends should help one another, uplift one another, stand by one another...”

“A home is a place of companionship with people in it who love each other, who are harmonious and closer inside with one another than they are outside with associates in the workplace or with classmates at school. A home is a place that’s so magnetic that it’s difficult to leave. In a home there is love, kindness, sharing and appreciation, and the inhabitants help one another. It’s a place of selflessness and togetherness, where everybody has time for everybody else.”

.....

ASSIGNMENT: For two weeks, when you find yourself balking at a request for help, work to change your attitude by appreciating the opportunity to be of service. If you can’t help fully, do what you can.

Date you began this assignment _____

MY THOUGHTS ON THE BENEFITS OF AVAILABILITY: _____



7. Calm

Calmness means remaining serene, composed and undisturbed. It is cultivated by quieting my emotions when I am challenged or upset. Its opposite is agitation.

Comparing the behavior of one who is calm to one who is agitated		
Situation	Calmness	Agitation
Learning that a major storm is coming, you...	methodically make the appropriate preparations.	become emotional and are unable to address the urgent needs.
After a disagreement with a friend, you...	control your speech and calm down quickly.	speak angry words and remain upset for a few days.
When given a challenging task, you...	remain centered and make a sound plan to accomplish it.	worry about failure, become agitated and lose the mental clarity needed to figure it out.



Read here—bit.ly/calm-7—how Ranjit reacts to a bout of anger which injures his hand. Turning to his guru for help, he learns several techniques that help him overcome his persistent emotional problem.

Gurudeva explained: “If you are not peaceful, you are still reacting to past habit patterns. If you don’t feel peaceful, pretend that you do. Feel peace. Feel everybody feeling that same calmness right now.”

“The mind becomes calm through your understanding of experience and how experience has become created.”

“The clouding of the mirror of the mind—that reflective pond of awareness which when calm sees clearly—or the ripples of disturbance on the mind’s surface distort seeing and confuse understanding.” “If your emotions are upset and you’re suffering, there’s an area within you that’s calm, peaceful, dynamic, vibrant, watching. That’s the body of the soul.”



ASSIGNMENT: When you find yourself becoming upset with others during these two weeks, deliberately breathe deeply for a few minutes to calm emotions and relax the mind.

Date you began this assignment _____

MY THOUGHTS ON THE BENEFITS OF CALMNESS: _____



8. Cautious

Cautiousness means being careful and wary. I cultivate cautiousness by approaching activities thoughtfully, avoiding mistakes and danger by taking into account what could go wrong. Its opposite is recklessness.

Comparing the behavior of one who is cautious to one who is reckless		
Situation	Cautiousness	Recklessness
Showing off for friends, you...	take into account the potential dangers involved in the stunt.	give no thought to possible dangers.
Driving on a treacherous road, you...	watch the signs carefully and slow down where indicated.	Pay no attention to the signs and drive at a reckless speed
When a friend starts smoking cigarettes, you...	educate yourself about the health consequences and persuade him to stop while he still can.	ignore all the medical warnings and start smoking also.



Read here—bit.ly/cautious8—how a sesame seed trade in India that seems too good to be true, and is almost accepted, is upset by a third party who expresses logical caution and fortunately foils the suspicious transaction.

Gurudeva explained: “Today’s world is not all that bad. But children must be taught how to live in it—what to be wary of, whom to trust, whom to befriend and marry, how to proceed in business, social life, education, career upscaling, religious life and on into the raising of their own family.”

“Maybe at some time a whole bag of good apples will make a bad apple good, but so far it hasn’t occurred. Until such a time, we have to be wary of a natural law of nature and live among others of virtuous character and conduct, others who share spiritual insights and seeking.”

.....
ASSIGNMENT: During these two weeks, assess the risks in each environment in which you find yourself and decide which need to be taken into account.

Date you began this assignment _____

MY THOUGHTS ON THE BENEFITS OF CAUTIOUSNESS: _____



9. Chaste

Chastity means refraining from sex until marriage. I practice it by dressing modestly and avoiding physical intimacy, impure thoughts and sexually oriented media and situations. Its opposite is sexuality.

Comparing the behavior of one who is chaste to one who is sexual		
Situation	Chastity	Sexuality
When dressing for your long-awaited prom night, you...	are tempted to be alluring, but finally decide to dress conservatively.	love the idea of being looked at by the boys and dress provocatively.
Your relationships with your friends at school...	are strictly platonic, since you are determined to remain focused on your studies.	include sexual activity with one or more.
When encountering sexually explicit websites or ads, you...	quickly move on, carefully avoiding engagement with the sensual world.	linger awhile, see what's out there and indulge your curiosity.



Read here—bit.ly/chaste9—the story of Vadivel, who takes a vow of celibacy, the brahmacharya vrata, at age 12, and faces the challenge of controlling his sexual instincts when, at age 16, he falls in love with Amelia.

Gurudeva explained: “A healthy, unrepressed attitude should be kept regarding sexual matters. Boys and girls must be taught to value and protect their chastity as a sacred treasure, and to save the special gift of intimacy for their spouse. They should be taught the importance of loyalty in marriage and to avoid even the thought of adultery.”

“Stability for human society is based on morality, and morality is based on harnessing and controlling sexuality. The principles of brahmacharya should be learned well before puberty, so that the sexual feelings the young person then begins to experience are free of mental fantasies and emotional involvement.”

.....

ASSIGNMENT: During these two weeks, when you encounter publications, websites or advertisements that are sexually explicit, be especially diligent to quickly move on.

Date you began this assignment _____

MY THOUGHTS ON THE BENEFITS OF CHASTITY: _____



10. Clean

Cleanliness means being free of dirt or filth. I observe it by good housekeeping and by bathing and washing my clothes frequently. The opposite is dirtiness.

Comparing the actions of one who is clean to one who is dirty		
Situation	Cleanliness	Dirtyness
In caring for your wardrobe, you...	wear clothes no more than a few times and then wash them well.	wear them until you can't stand it or someone close to you begins to complain.
As far as body maintenance, you...	bathe at least twice each day and regularly wash your hair and care for your nails.	bathe when really needed, which is definitely not each day.
When it comes to the rooms you live and work in, you...	thoroughly clean them weekly and keep things tidy in-between.	clean up when you think visitors or your boss will show up.



Read here—bit.ly/clean-10—about the importance of associating with pure, virtuous people in the story of Ranjit who befriends a mischievous boy and gets into serious trouble at school.

Gurudeva explained: “A clean personal environment, wearing clean clothes, bathing often, keeping the room spotless where you meditate, breathing clean air, letting fresh air pass through your house, is all very important in the fulfillment of purity.”

“While [purity and impurity] refer to physical cleanliness, their more important meanings extend to social, ceremonial, mental, emotional, psychic and spiritual cleanliness or contamination. Freedom from all forms of contamination is a key to Hindu spirituality, and is one of the yamas. Physical purity requires a clean and well-ordered environment, yogic purging of the internal organs and frequent cleansing with water.”



ASSIGNMENT: For the first of these two weeks, focus on wearing clean clothing. During the second week, focus on keeping your living and work spaces clean and tidy.

Date you began this assignment _____

MY THOUGHTS ON THE BENEFITS OF CLEANLINESS: _____



11. Compassionate

Compassion means being aware of and sympathetic toward others, their needs and troubles. It is cultivated when I feel deep empathy for others. Its opposite is uncaringness.

Comparing the behavior of one who is compassionate to one who is uncaring		
Situation	Compassion	Uncaringness
Listening to another's problem, you...	are genuinely concerned, and ponder ways to help.	make it clear you are not interested in listening, nor in helping.
Visiting a home for the elderly, you...	are aware of their loneliness and try to cheer them up.	don't perceive their loneliness and are unmoved.
After a major earthquake, you...	brainstorm ways to meet the victims' needs.	blame the affected residents for living near a seismic fault.



Watch here—bit.ly/compassion11—a TED Talk by Rabbi Tabick, who lauds the virtue of compassion but acknowledges the challenges to its execution, explaining how a balance of compassion and justice allows us to do good deeds and keep our sanity.

Gurudeva explained: “Compassion is defined as conquering callous, cruel and insensitive feelings toward all beings. A compassionate person would tell a plant verbally if he was going to pick from it, intuiting that the plant has feelings of its own. A compassionate person would seek to keep pests away rather than killing them.”

“Compassion comes from the heart, comes spontaneously. It is a total flow of spiritual, material, intellectual giving, coming unbidden to the receiver.”



ASSIGNMENT: These two weeks, seek out someone in need and find practical ways to reduce his or her suffering.

Date you began this assignment _____

MY THOUGHTS ON THE BENEFITS OF COMPASSION: _____



12. Consistent

Consistency means maintaining one's level of performance. I develop it by completing all tasks to the best of my ability and never neglecting my spiritual practices. The opposite is erraticism.

Comparing the behavior of one who is consistent to one who is erratic		
Situation	Consistency	Erraticism
In feeding the family pets, you...	perform the duty daily without fail.	sometimes forget and hope someone else will fill in.
When faced with homework, you...	complete all reading and assignments day after day.	skip some days, suffering bad test results and low grades.
In working with moods and emotions, you...	keep yourself cheerful at all times, no matter what happens.	are cheerful one day and moody the next.



Read here—bit.ly/consistent12—the story of young Ananta, who gains a passion for playing the vina, practices diligently and becomes so skilled that his teacher features him in a solo performance at the class recital.

Gurudeva explained: “Basic principles for a good foundation in our lives can be established through consistency. The consistency in approach to what we are doing—a good habit pattern in living our life, as we approach our inner life, the understanding of our inner life, the study of it and the experience of it—has to be on a day-to-day basis.”

“It is only through consistency that you can avoid many of the boulders that lie in your way on the classical yoga path to enlightenment. Practice the art of being constant, and you will unfold your destiny, discover what you were born to do and learn how to accomplish it in this life.... Consistency is the key to the conquest of karma. If you go to extremes or are sporadic in your sadhana, you can easily slide backwards.”

.....

ASSIGNMENT: Watch the patterns in your life during these two weeks, identifying habits that are inconsistent. Pick one and work to make your approach to it more disciplined.

Date you began this assignment _____

MY THOUGHTS ON THE BENEFITS OF CONSISTENCY: _____



13. Content

Contentment means being satisfied with the circumstances of one's life, relationships and possessions. I practice it by not wanting more or wishing my life was different. Its opposite is dissatisfaction.

Comparing the behavior of one who is content to one who is dissatisfied		
Situation	Contentment	Dissatisfaction
Associating with a loved one, you...	enjoy the way they relate to you, and are glad they are part of your life.	perpetually complain that they are not affectionate enough.
Reflecting on the life of wealthier people, you...	reaffirm that spiritual progress is more important than wealth.	feel unfulfilled and frustrated.
When record snow falls in your town, you...	revel in the wintery beauty and help children build a snowman.	moan and groan each day until spring arrives.



Read here—bit.ly/content-13—how an urban American boy named Yogesh travels to India, where he discovers the simple joys of rural life—milking a cow, playing with friends and climbing trees—and realizes he doesn't need expensive gadgets to be content.

Gurudeva explained: “The sadhana is to seek joy and serenity in life, remaining content with what one has, knows, is doing and those with whom he associates. Bear your karma cheerfully. Live within your situation contentedly.”

“Maintaining joy and serenity in life means being content with your surroundings, be they meager or lavish. Be content with your money, be it a small amount or a large amount. Be content with your health. Bear up under ailments and be thankful that they are not worse than they are. Protect your health if it is good. It is a valuable treasure. Be content with your friends. Basically, contentment, santosha, is freedom from desire gained by redirecting the forces of desire and making a beautiful life within what one already has in life.”

.....

ASSIGNMENT: For these two weeks, watch for an experience that makes you feel discontented, and work to find a way to be satisfied with how it turned out.

Date you began this assignment _____

MY THOUGHTS ON THE BENEFITS OF CONTENTMENT: _____



14. Courageous

Courage means having the strength to bravely face life’s experiences. I develop this virtue when I cope fearlessly with dangerous, difficult or painful situations. Its opposite is cowardice.

Comparing the behavior of one who is courageous to one who is cowardly		
Situation	Courage	Cowardice
When a friend is being bullied on the playing field, you...	stand up to the bullies and make them back down.	walk away, too afraid to say anything.
On a forest hike when you and friends become lost, you...	take the lead, using the GPS on your phone to guide the group to safety.	panic and wait for others to find the way back to safety.
When a stranger falls in a swift river, you...	immediately dive in, knowing your strength as a swimmer.	stand by helplessly, even though you can swim well.



Read here—bit.ly/courageous14—how Lochan bravely copes with the shocking suicide of his friend Joey, facing the sense of self-blame for being mean to him and overcoming his grief with the help of a simple breathing technique taught to him by his guru.

Gurudeva explained: “Courageous and fearless people who are just and honest prevail over all karmas—benevolent, terrible and confused. This virtue is much like the monk’s vow of humility, part of which is enduring hardship with equanimity, ease of mind, which means not panicking.”

“To all Hindus, who today are found in every country on the Earth, I say: ‘Courage! Courage! Courage!’ Have the courage to know beyond a doubt that Hinduism is the greatest religion in the world.”

“The study of yoga is reserved for the few who have the courage to seek the depths of their being, for the few who can overcome their experiences and their desires in deep meditation.”

.....
ASSIGNMENT: During these two weeks, identify something that makes you fearful and consciously use your innate courage to overcome it.

Date you began this assignment _____

MY THOUGHTS ON THE BENEFITS OF COURAGE: _____



15. Courteous

Courtesy means being refined, cultured and well-mannered. I practice it by being polite, respectful and considerate of the needs and feelings of others. The opposite is rudeness.

Comparing the behavior of one who is courteous to one who is rude		
Situation	Courtesy	Rudeness
Upon receiving an unexpected gift, you...	express your gratitude with a sincere "thank you."	belittle the gift and giver by your silent acceptance.
Riding on a bus, noticing that an elderly person is standing, you...	immediately rise to your feet and offer your seat.	keep your seat, happy that you don't have to stand.
When passing through a room of elders, you...	show respect through your body language.	charge through the room without acknowledging those present.



Read here—bit.ly/courtesy15—the story of an assistant doorkeeper at the capitol in Washington DC who finds himself launched into a successful career through a simple act of courtesy, going out of his way to help a stranger.

Gurudeva explained: “Thus, each strives to be considerate and kindly in thought, word and deed, to unfold the beautiful, giving qualities of the soul, to utter only that which is true, kind, helpful and necessary.”

“The wise parent teaches the culture and etiquette of the household and the community at large, ever endeavoring to bring forth the inner knowledge within the child as to the wise use of his willpower...”

“...we have etiquette books to teach people to be considerate of other people’s feelings...”



ASSIGNMENT: For two weeks watch for and take every opportunity to show refinements of culture and respect in your attitude and interactions with others.

Date you began this assignment _____

MY THOUGHTS ON THE BENEFITS OF COURTESY: _____



16. Creative

Creativity means being imaginative and inventive. I strengthen it when I approach tasks with full energy, originality, artistry and intuition. The opposite is unoriginality.

Comparing the actions of one who is creative to one who is unoriginal		
Situation	Creativity	Unoriginality
When given a difficult assignment, you...	seek for innovative solutions, thinking out of the box.	use a past solution, thinking that is the easy way out.
In your daily life, you...	strive to explore new patterns and find better ways of doing things.	find comfort in your routines and avoid anything different.
After studying others' ideas, you...	build on the basic concepts to develop a fresh approach.	complacently adopt one of the ideas without alteration.



Read here—bit.ly/creative16—how, with a creative trick involving the full moon, an ingenious rabbit saves his family and friends, and their ancestral lake home, from an elephant herd’s incursions that threaten to destroy them.

Gurudeva explained: “We must remember that to restrain and moderate desire allows the energy which is restrained and moderated to enliven higher chakras, giving rise to creativity and intuition that will actually better mankind, one’s own household and the surrounding community.”

“A devotee who can command his mind to be instantly creative, and be consistently successful, has acquired a conscious control of the use of the subsuperconscious state of mind.”



ASSIGNMENT: For two weeks, at night just before sleep, write down a task you are working on, describing it accurately and completely. Go to sleep with the expectation that a creative new approach will come to you from your intuition soon after you awake in the morning.

Date you began this assignment _____

MY THOUGHTS ON THE BENEFITS OF CREATIVITY: _____



17. Curious

Curiosity is an active interest in finding new aspects of the people, things and situations that one encounters. I cultivate this virtue by using the power of observation and asking questions, to make new discoveries even in what seems familiar. The opposite is indifference.

Comparing the actions of one who is curious to one who is indifferent		
Situation	Curious	Indifferent
When a major solar eclipse happens right above your town, you...	run inside to explore the astrophysics of this rare phenomenon.	wait until the sun reappears and head for the mall.
On a field trip at a museum display, when the curator describes the history of the region, you...	ask questions, wanting to know more about the area and the people who lived here before.	are bored, ask no questions and distract yourself by texting your friends.
When a group of immigrants from Bhutan moves next door, you...	are eager to know more, and visit their home with lots of questions.	find them uninteresting and never even stop to welcome them.



Listen here—bit.ly/curious17—to young Richard Turere, from Kenya, tell how he invented solar-powered “lion lights” to protect his family’s cattle from lion attacks, after observing the long-standing problem closely and devising a solution.

Gurudeva explained: “We all know human nature, because we are people living on this planet. We are fickle; we are changeable. We are always curious to try new things. Change is a wonderful part of life, within certain bounds. We do not want to be too restrictive, yet we do want to be strict.”

“This knowledge he [the realized master] then imparted, as needed, to the students who came to him curious or eager to solve the philosophical and metaphysical puzzles of life.”



ASSIGNMENT: During these two weeks, watch for unique happenings in your life and take the time to learn more about them. Pursue at least two new observations each week.

Date you began this assignment _____

MY THOUGHTS ON THE BENEFITS OF CURIOSITY: _____



18. Decisive

Decisiveness means acting with certainty and firmness. I practice it by carefully considering a matter, praying for Ganesha's guidance, making a decision and following through with determination. The opposite is indecisiveness.

Comparing the actions of one who is decisive to one who is indecisive		
Situation	Decisiveness	Indecisiveness
In making a major decision about your family, you...	actively implement a plan based on judgment, logic, sound research and the advice of others.	can't conclude which approach to take and so put the matter off into the future.
In facing peer pressure to change a decision you have made, you...	consider the input but, after thoughtful assessment, hold your ground.	give in simply to mollify those who stand against you.
When a friend crashes the car you are both riding in, you...	immediately take charge, call for help and see if first-aid is needed.	freeze, thinking you should help, but worry what might happen if you make a mistake.



Read here—bit.ly/decisive18—the story of how Vasuki, whose father is laid off, ardently prays to Lord Ganesha for help, decisively persisting in her promises until Dad is accepted at a new place of employment.

Gurudeva explained: “Changeableness means indecision, not being decisive, changing one’s mind after making a deliberate, positive decision. Changing one’s mind can be a positive thing, but making a firm, well-considered decision and not following it through would gain one the reputation of not being dependable, even of being weak-minded.”

“To be indecisive and changeable is not how we should be on the path to enlightenment, nor to be successful in any other pursuit. Nonperseverance and fear must be overcome, and much effort is required to accomplish this.”

.....

ASSIGNMENT: During these two weeks, be observant of your decision-making. If you find yourself doubting and hesitating to make a decision, carefully review the options again and seek guidance from the wise; and once the matter is clear, make your choice.

Date you began this assignment _____

MY THOUGHTS ON THE BENEFITS OF DECISIVENESS: _____



19. Diligent

Diligence means performing tasks thoroughly and with careful, earnest, steady effort. I strengthen diligence when I do my best in vigorously completing any work or instruction. The opposite is halfheartedness.

Comparing the actions of one who is diligent to one who is halfhearted		
Situation	Diligence	Halfheartedness
When given instructions for a new project at school, you...	take on the task with interest, energy and keen intent on completion.	think how you can do the minimum without exerting yourself too much.
Inspired by a new hobby of puzzle solving, you...	vigorously move forward, meeting each challenge and overcoming it.	start out with enthusiasm, which soon wanes as you encounter difficulties.
When distractions arise, you...	tune them out and stay focused on the task at hand.	welcome them as an interesting diversion from your work.

“I never could have done what I have done without the habits of punctuality, order and diligence, without the determination to concentrate myself on one subject at a time.”

Charles Dickens

Read here—bit.ly/diligent19—the story of Ravi, whose parents help him improve his musical talents by sharing basic life skills focused on building willpower. He applies these to his drumming and evolves into a brilliant musician.

Gurudeva explained: “Hard work, diligence and perseverance in religious practices will be found as the spiritual foundation in the lives of all the world’s great saints.”

“Meditation is essentially work, good hard work, and you should be willing to work and expend energy so that you can meditate.”

“One must look at spiritual unfoldment in the same way one approaches the study of a fine art. If you were studying the vina with a very accomplished teacher, he would not appreciate it at all if you went to three or four other teachers at the same time for study behind his back. He demands that you come and go from your lesson and practice diligently in between.”



ASSIGNMENT: In the next two weeks, find three opportunities to respond to a task with a level of energy higher than you normally exert. Observe your mood as you complete the tasks with earnestness and steady effort.

Date you began this assignment _____

MY THOUGHTS ON THE BENEFITS OF DILIGENCE: _____



20. Discerning

Discernment is acuteness of perception, judgment and understanding. I cultivate this virtue by drawing on all my mental and intuitive faculties when pondering a subject, and by meditating. Its opposite is ignorance.

Comparing the actions of one who is discerning to one who is ignorant		
Situation	Discernment	Ignorance
In pondering your daily transportation needs, you...	consider bikes versus cars and spend time inspecting the different brands, their costs and advantages.	Seeing no need for research, impulsively buy the car you and your friend have been coveting for years.
After switching to a vegetarian diet, you...	are aware that your sense of wonder of your environment has increased.	notice only that you feel hungry more often.
A few hours after speaking harsh words to a friend, you...	perceive tension in your solar plexus and apologize to the person.	feel some regret, but assume the whole thing will just blow over.



Read here—bit.ly/discerning20—an essay on three ways you can improve your personal judgment: recognizing your default biases, accepting your mistakes, and learning from experience.

Gurudeva explained: “Lord Murugan was created by God Siva’s sakti and given a vel of spiritual discernment, a lance of divine intelligence. Pray to Lord Murugan to unravel the great mysteries of the universe. Pray to Lord Murugan to make you a spiritual person.”

“To sustain saucha [purity], it is important to surround oneself with good, devonic company, to have the discrimination to know one type of person from another. Too many foolish, sensitive souls, thinking their spirituality could lift a soul from the world of darkness, have walked in where even the Mahadevas do not tread and the devas fear to tread, only to find themselves caught in that very world, through the deceit and conniving of the cleverly cunning. Lets not be foolish. Lets discriminate between higher consciousness and lower consciousness.”

.....

ASSIGNMENT: For the next two weeks, when making decisions, be sure to explore and understand the ramifications of your various options.

Date you began this assignment _____

MY THOUGHTS ON THE BENEFITS OF DISCERNMENT: _____



21. Discreet

Discretion means being tactful and prudent in one's conduct and speech. I express it by honoring others' privacy and handling delicate situations with prudence and diplomacy. The opposite is indiscretion.

Comparing the actions of one who is discreet to one who is indiscreet		
Situation	Discretion	Indiscretion
When discussing a friend's delicate, personal matters, you...	do so in private to ensure no one will overhear.	speak with others present, not considering the consequences.
Knowing that a certain matter is to be kept confidential, you...	do not share it with anyone.	might be tempted to share it with others through social media.
Knowing about a friend's drug abuse, you...	restrain the urge to include it in your autobiography and blog.	add it to a chapter on the subject of drugs, thinking it may help someone.



Read here—bit.ly/discreet21—a Wikiquote article on discretion that provides many literary quotations revealing the many nuances of the word, including “the ability to make wise choices” and “the wisdom to avoid speaking of private matters.”

Gurudeva explained: “[Confidentiality is] keeping confidences, or information told in trust, secret; not divulging private or secret matters.”

“[You] cultivate confidence by not prying or seeking to know information, by keeping records, notes and other material entrusted to you securely protected, by not reading material or listening to conversations known to be private.”

.....
ASSIGNMENT: During these two weeks, in sharing sensitive situations, be extra careful to choose your words thoughtfully and to respect confidences entrusted to you.

Date you began this assignment _____

MY THOUGHTS ON THE BENEFITS OF DISCRETION: _____



22. Enduring

Endurance is the power to continue on despite pain, stress or fatigue. I cultivate endurance by always striving, pushing myself beyond my accustomed mental and physical limits. The opposite is weakness.

Comparing the actions of one who is enduring to one who is weak		
Situation	Endurance	Weakness
When faced with climbing a hill to a temple on pilgrimage, you...	pace yourself and work through the urge to return to the bottom when your legs start to ache.	find the spasms in your muscles too uncomfortable and turn around, and never reaching the top.
While learning a difficult Sanskrit sloka, you...	maintain the study schedule you have set for yourself, despite brain fatigue.	become discouraged when the brain tires, and take a break for a few days.
If required to work late into the night, you...	draw on the energy in your spine and remain alert and focused.	succumb to sleepiness and retire without finishing the work.



Read here—bit.ly/enduring22—the story of Parvati, a teenager who questions the existence of Ganesha when faced with ridicule from an atheistic peer but enduringly maintains the thread of faith, ultimately receiving a mystical signal that He is real indeed.

Gurudeva explained: “What is meant by ‘moving the forces of the world’? That means fulfilling realistic goals that you set for yourself. That means performing your job as an employer or as an employee in the most excellent way possible. That means stretching your mind and emotions and endurance to the limit and therefore getting stronger and stronger day by day.”

.....
ASSIGNMENT: In the next two weeks, when a challenging mental or physical activity depletes your normal reserves, draw on the energy within the spine to recharge you to carry on.

Date you began this assignment _____

MY THOUGHTS ON THE BENEFITS OF ENDURANCE: _____



23. Flexible

Flexibility means adjusting readily to change. I express flexibility when I respond to new ideas and directions with openness instead of resistance. The opposite is rigidity.

Comparing the actions of one who is flexible to one who is rigid		
Situation	Flexibility	Rigidity
When bad weather is predicted and tomorrow's task must be done today, you...	readily adjust, bypassing objections and getting straight to the unexpected tasks.	mumble complaints about how this is going to ruin your plans and try to figure ways around the need.
For years the family has gone to one vacation spot and when they all ask for variety this year, you...	respond in a positive spirit that supports their call for new experiences.	stand firm that what has worked in the past will work again and opt for the tried and true.
When your ayurvedic doctor tells you to change your diet, you...	make the changes immediately in order to achieve better health.	Struggle with the power of your eating habits and implement only the easiest of her suggestions.



Listen here—bit.ly/flexible23—as Bruce Feiler introduces family practices that encourage flexibility, bottom-up idea flow, constant feedback and accountability. One surprising feature of the system: children choose their own punishments.

Gurudeva explained: “Be like the river water. Water flows freely anywhere, easily finding its way around rocks and trees. Be pliable in your life, moving in rhythm with life. Let go of everything that blocks the river of life’s energy.”

“The seeker on the path has to be soft, pliable, easy to get along with, as well as firm-minded.”

“They [candidates for monastic life] are examined for the qualities of true sannyasa, tested often as to their flexibility, their ability to instantly renounce attachment to position and job security without residual resentments, the fluidness to release awareness and move transparently from one area to the next as needs arise.”

.....

ASSIGNMENT: During these two weeks, when there is a need to rethink how to accomplish a task, be sufficiently detached from the original plan that you do not get upset by potential changes.

Date you began this assignment _____

MY THOUGHTS ON THE BENEFITS OF FLEXIBILITY: _____



24. Forgiving

Forgiveness means pardoning injuries or offenses. I practice forgiveness when I pardon, accept or overlook the offences, mistakes or faults of others. The opposite is mercilessness.

Comparing the actions of one who is forgiving to one who is merciless		
Situation	Forgiveness	Mercilessness
When a coworker insults you in front of your staff, you...	remember her dog just died and allow her this outburst.	hold a grudge and wait for the first opportunity to put her down.
When a neighbor runs over your spring garden plantings, you...	accept her apology and even share some of your roses for her garden.	insist that she take responsibility by paying for the damages.
When a business partner embezzles a large sum of money, you...	realize you are the ultimate cause, as you believe in the law of karma.	take him to court, demanding the harshest punishment possible.



Read here—bit.ly/forgiving24—of how Ramya is emotionally crushed when her girlfriends reject her from their long-time clique. She learns to use journaling to get over her hurt feelings and find it in her heart to understand and forgive them.

Gurudeva explained: “If others harm you in thought, word or deed, do not resent it. Rather, let it awaken compassion, kindness and forgiveness. Use it as a mirror to view your own frailties; then work diligently to bring your own thoughts, words and deeds into line with Hindu Dharma.”

“Forgiving others is good for your health.”

“We must begin the healing by first forgiving ourselves, by claiming our spiritual heritage, gaining a new image of ourselves as a beautiful, shining soul of radiant light. Then we can look at the world through the eyes of Hindu dharma.”



ASSIGNMENT: These two weeks, watch for times that someone offends you and make it your first response to inwardly thank the person for being the instrument of your own karma, helping you face a force that you set in motion in the past.

Date you began this assignment _____

MY THOUGHTS ON THE BENEFITS OF FORGIVENESS: _____



25. Frugal

Frugality means conserving resources, respecting their value. I cultivate frugality by repairing, reusing and recycling goods and not being wasteful. The opposite is wastefulness.

Comparing the actions of one who is frugal to one who is wasteful		
Situation	Frugality	Wastefulness
When an item of clothing is worn out or no longer needed, your...	first thought is, "Can this be recycled or used by someone else?"	default behavior is to simply throw it in the trash.
In watering the lawn, you...	conserve water by turning the sprinklers off after a judicious amount of time.	let the sprinklers run indefinitely, unconcerned with the wisdom of conserving nature's gifts.
When a tool or kitchen implement breaks, your...	first thought is to find a way to repair it.	first thought is to discard it and buy a new one.



Read here—bit.ly/frugal25—about young Muthu and Senthil, whose father patiently teaches them the benefits of disciplined spending, tithing and maintaining a budget to control expenses.

Gurudeva explained: “All Siva’s devotees are frugal and resourceful, avoiding waste and conserving nature’s precious resources. They wisely store a three-to-twelve-month supply of food according to the family’s means.”

“The tenth yama is *mitāhāra*, moderate appetite. Similarly, *mitavyayin* is little or moderate spending, being economical or frugal, and *mitasayan* is sleeping little. Gorging oneself has always been a form of decadence in every culture and is considered unacceptable behavior.”

In describing the ideal beliefs of environmentalists, Gurudeva wrote: “I believe mankind must rediscover the value of frugality, avoid waste, implement sustainable systems of nonpolluting farming, manufacturing and energy production to enable future generations to meet their needs. Simplicity of life fosters inner freedom and outer sustainability.”

.....

ASSIGNMENT: During these two weeks, find three instances when something breaks or wears out and consciously do your best to repair, reuse or recycle it rather than throwing it away.

Date you began this assignment _____

MY THOUGHTS ON THE BENEFITS OF FRUGALITY: _____



26. Generous

Generosity is the willingness to give and be charitable. I express generosity when I give freely to others of my money, possessions, time and energy. The opposite is stinginess.

Comparing the actions of one who is generous to one who is stingy		
Situation	Generosity	Stinginess
Seeing needy beggars sitting at a temple entrance, you...	give 20 dollars, knowing it is more than they will receive all day.	give one dollar and consider your duty done.
In response to a clothing drive in the community, you...	give up a favorite sweater and collect old clothing from other family members.	donate an old shirt you never liked.
When asked to help repaint a nearby temple, you...	say "Yes!" and make yourself available each weekend.	say that you are just too busy.



Listen here—bit.ly/generous26—to Michael Norton share his research on how money can indeed buy happiness—when you don’t spend it on yourself. He shares surprising data on the many ways that pro-social spending can benefit you and others.

Gurudeva explained: “Generous, selfless giving is among dharma’s central fulfillments. Hospitality, charity and support of God’s work on Earth arise from the belief that the underlying purpose of life is spiritual, not material.”

“You have generosity; you give and you give and you give and you give. And according to the great law of karma, you can’t give anything away but that it will come back to you.”

“The best way to keep the actinic force flowing through the physical body is practicing the art of giving, doing little things for others that you have not been asked to do. This keeps you creative, and being creative is actinic, superconscious and religious. Giving, doing without thought of return, affectionate detachment, creates an odic vacuum which your actinic, spiritual forces flow into and fill.”



ASSIGNMENT: During these two weeks, identify two or three instances of being unexpectedly asked to help or give. Observe your initial reactions, overcome any resistance, and participate fully.

Date you began this assignment _____

MY THOUGHTS ON THE BENEFITS OF GENEROSITY: _____



27. Gentle

Gentleness means being kindly, tender and mild-tempered. I practice it by speaking and behaving in a pleasant, soothing, even-tempered manner. The opposite is harshness.

Comparing the actions of one who is gentle to one who is harsh		
Situation	Gentleness	Harshness
In response to a friend's annoying behavior, you...	may become irritated but remain calm and do not react.	become irritated and deliver a mean rebuke.
In correcting a misbehaving younger sibling, you...	speak calmly and kindly, without getting upset.	tend to be rough on her and speak harshly.
In training your dog to sit and stay, you...	make corrections softly and persistently to good effect.	severely pull his leash and issue strident commands.



Read here—bit.ly/gentle27—the story of Jordan, a child who learns the importance of being gentle after he is habitually rough with his stuffed animal, one day tears it open and feels badly about it.

Gurudeva explained: “Just a little bit of kindness is so easy to express. Just a little bit of kindness heals the mind. And in this day and age, when so many are frustrated, troubled and need a little bit of help, appreciation and encouragement, your kindness can help.”

“Very simply, ahimsa is abstaining from causing harm or injury. It is gentleness and noninjury, whether physical, mental or emotional. It is good to know that nonviolence speaks only to the most extreme forms of forceful wrongdoing, while ahimsa goes much deeper to prohibit even the subtle abuse and the simple hurt.”



ASSIGNMENT: During these two weeks, focus on each incident when you are tempted to speak harsh or strident words. Find a gentle and kind way to respond.

Date you began this assignment _____

MY THOUGHTS ON THE BENEFITS OF GENTLENESS: _____



28. Grateful

Gratitude means being thankful for all I have. It is expressed toward others by showing my appreciation. Its opposite is thanklessness.

Comparing the actions of one who is grateful to one who is thankless		
Situation	Gratitude	Thanklessness
Having received a gift from a distant friend, you...	send a thank-you note and express gratitude in person at the first opportunity.	neglect to send a thank-you note.
In your silent prayers to God, you...	frequently express gratitude for all that you have been given, then ask guidance.	think only of how God can further help you, not pondering the many gifts already received.
For the loving guidance of your parents, you...	make it a point to periodically express heartfelt thanks.	take the guidance for granted, thinking, "That's what parents are supposed to do."



Read here—bit.ly/grateful28—the story of Sahana, who learns to appreciate her family and express gratitude after struggling with selfish feelings after her father’s business fails. She must assume more responsibility at home without receiving a word of thanks.

Gurudeva explained: “Gratitude and appreciation are the key virtues for a better life. They are the spell that is cast to dissolve hatred, hurt and sadness, the medicine which heals subjective states of mind, restoring self-respect, confidence and security.”

“The person of perfect understanding accepts all happenings in life as purposeful and good. We must be grateful to others for playing back to us our previous actions so that we can see our mistakes and experience the same feelings we must have caused in others. It is in this way that we are purified and trained not to commit the same adharmic acts again.”

.....
ASSIGNMENT: During these two weeks, enhance your level of gratitude by watching for expected or unexpected gifts or help and expressing heartfelt thanks, and also be grateful to the Divine for life itself.

Date you began this assignment _____

MY THOUGHTS ON THE BENEFITS OF GRATITUDE: _____



29. Honest

Honesty means being law-abiding and virtuous. I strengthen it by being honorable and avoiding cheating, lawlessness, manipulation and deceit. The opposite is dishonesty.

Comparing the actions of one who is honest to one who is dishonest		
Situation	Honesty	Dishonesty
Finding a wallet in the street containing money and credit cards, you...	seek out the owner and return the wallet with all its valuables.	keep the money and turn the wallet in to the nearest lost and found.
When a friend offers to hack the school computer and raise your grade, you...	ask him not to do that because honesty is important to you.	accept the offer and ask him to show you how to do it yourself.
When a store clerk makes a mistake in your favor at the checkout counter, you...	point out the mistake and gladly pay the full amount.	keep quiet about her error and consider it a fortunate event.



Read here—bit.ly/honest29—how Ganesh cheats to get into the honors math class and struggles to keep up by copying his sister’s work. He finally confesses to his teacher and faces his father in shame. Once reformed, he earns rightful entry into the coveted class.

Gurudeva explained: “Arjava [honesty] is straightness with neighbors, family and with your government. You pay your taxes. You observe the laws. You don’t fudge, bribe, cheat, steal or participate in fraud and other forms of manipulation.”

“The most important rule of honesty is to be honest to oneself, to be able to face up to our problems and admit that we have been the creator of them.”

“Siva’s devotees are forbidden to accept bribes; nor do they offer bribes to others, no matter how seemingly necessary, expedient or culturally accepted this practice may be. Jai, they fight for the mercy of honesty!”

.....
ASSIGNMENT: During these two weeks, don’t allow yourself to break (or bend) a law just because others are doing so; for example, littering.

Date you began this assignment _____

MY THOUGHTS ON THE BENEFITS OF HONESTY: _____



30. Hospitable

Hospitality means being friendly and considerate toward guests, cheerfully meeting their needs and sharing conversation, food and shelter. I practice it when I treat visitors with welcoming affection and generosity. The opposite is inhospitality.

Comparing the actions of one who is hospitable to one who is inhospitable		
Situation	Hospitality	Inhospitality
If guests are in the home near mealtime, you...	repeatedly encourage them to stay for the meal.	bring the conversation to a halt and hope they leave before dinner.
When new neighbors move in next door, you...	go to their home with a gift and welcome them to the community.	keep your distance, hoping they don't cause your family any grief.
When relatives visit your town on business, you...	call to insist they overnight in your home, not in a local hotel.	keep silent, preferring not to have the extra bother in your life.



Read here—bit.ly/hospitable30—how Valli and Seyon become disturbed when Aunt Hema and her entire family arrive for an overnight visit. By cognizing the Tirukural’s wisdom on hospitality, they learn to take joy in treating their unexpected guests as God.

Gurudeva explained: “Hospitality flows from Siva’s followers like sweet music from a vina. Guests are treated as Gods. Friends, relatives, acquaintances, even strangers, are humbled by the overwhelming, ever-willing attention received.”

“Hospitality is a vital part of fulfilling dana. When guests come, they must be given hospitality, at least a mat to sit on and a glass of water to drink. These are obligatory gifts. You must never leave your guest standing, and you must never leave your guest thirsty.”

.....
ASSIGNMENT: During these two weeks, watch for opportunities to be hospitable. Overcoming any reluctance to give your guests a warm welcome, give freely of food, shelter and conversation.

Date you began this assignment _____

MY THOUGHTS ON THE BENEFITS OF HOSPITALITY: _____



31. Humble

Humility means being free of ego and pridefulness. I express humility when I give credit to my parents, teachers and the Deities for any achievements or recognition. The opposite is pride.

Comparing the actions of one who is humble to one who is proud		
Situation	Humility	Pride
Winning an award and asked to give a speech, you...	give credit for your accomplishment to your wonderful teachers.	proudly accept the accolades, feeling you are finally being recognized.
Complimented for your skill in math, you...	defer the praise, saying, "Oh, I am just a beginner in this vast area."	readily admit you are the best mathematician in school.
When meeting new people, you...	naturally assume an attitude of modesty, respect and equality.	make quick judgments and hold an attitude of superiority.



Read here—bit.ly/humility31—a story of humility with an odd twist. When a king astonishes his ministers by removing his crown and bowing to a sage (a breach of protocol), they learn that part of his greatness is his humility.

Gurudeva explained: “Humility is mildness, modesty, reverence and unpretentiousness. We cultivate humility by taking the experiences of life in understanding and not in reaction, and by seeing God everywhere. We cultivate humility through showing patience with circumstances and forbearance with people.”

“Humility is intelligence; arrogance is ignorance. To accept one’s karma and the responsibility for one’s actions is strength. To blame another is weakness and foolishness. Let’s begin by not advertising our ignorance.”

.....

ASSIGNMENT: During these two weeks, meditate on the various humble ways you can respond to being praised. At each opportunity that arises, defer to a teacher, parent or Deity any compliments you are given.

Date you began this assignment _____

MY THOUGHTS ON THE BENEFITS OF HUMILITY: _____

~~No one's in charge~~

~~Anyone got a plan?~~

~~That's impossible~~

32. Having Initiative

Initiative is the ability to think and act without being urged or instructed. I cultivate initiative by looking for and responding to needs without being asked. The opposite is passivity.

Comparing the actions of one who has initiative to one who is passive		
Situation	Initiative	Passivity
On a school camping trip you observe no one is making the fire, and...	set out to find wood to start the evening's campfire.	figure someone more motivated than you will do the needful.
Perceiving that a procedure could be improved, you...	tactfully develop an acceptable change and suggest it to the team leader.	say nothing, figuring that if your help is needed, someone will come and ask for it.
When a door in your house doesn't close properly, you...	call up a YouTube video showing how to fix it, then shop for the parts.	use the other door, which is not that far away.

~~It's too late~~

~~Not enough of us~~

Let's do this!

Read and see video here—bit.ly/initiative32—about real-life teen entrepreneurs, including Amber Mozo, who runs a freelance photography business; Anya Pogharian, who invented a low-cost dialysis machine; and Ann Makosinski, a Google Science Fair Finalist.

Gurudeva explained: “[Try] to have a positive plan incorporating meditation daily as a lifestyle within that goal. Through this positive initiative and daily effort in meditation, awareness is centered within. We learn how to disentangle and unexternalize awareness. As soon as strong initiative is taken to change our nature toward refinement, a new inner process begins to take place.”

“...children are mentally carried along by television stories through positive and negative states of mind. They become uncreative, passive, inactive, never learning to use their own minds.”

.....
ASSIGNMENT: During these two weeks, find at least three opportunities to take the initiative to improve or help matters when you otherwise might have remained passive.

Date you began this assignment _____

MY THOUGHTS ON THE BENEFITS OF INITIATIVE: _____

INTEC

33. Having Integrity

Integrity means steadfast adherence to a strict moral or ethical code under all circumstances. I cultivate integrity by doing the right thing even if no one is watching. The opposite is corruptibility.

Comparing the actions of one who has integrity to one who is corruptible		
Situation	Integrity	Corruptibility
If you are supposed to be home by 10pm but your parents are away, you...	come home on time because it is the rule and you value your parents' trust.	listen to your best friend's appeals and stay out until midnight.
When friends make plans to shoplift a few trinkets at the mall, you...	urge them to reconsider and decline to join their errant outing.	join your friends in the stealing, hoping no one will get caught.
Offered money to share your answers to an important test, you...	are not tempted by the offer and refuse to cheat.	accept the offer and engage in the dishonest scheme.



Read here—bit.ly/integrity33—how Guhan and Meenakshi, while attending an elaborate Hindu wedding, learn from their mother the meaning of the various steps that tie together bride and groom in a lifetime commitment of mutual support and fidelity.

Gurudeva explained: “I have faith in human integrity, in that unfailing ‘still small voice of the soul’ which each who listens for can hear. We are essentially pure souls temporarily living in a physical body.”

“When we are unjust and mean, hateful and holding resentments year after year and no one but ourselves knows of our intrigue and corruption, we suffer. As the soul evolves, it eventually feels the great burden of faults and misdeeds and wishes to atone.”

.....

ASSIGNMENT: During the next two weeks, meditate two times on specific instances during the past year when you have not acted with rectitude, seeking to pinpoint the seed thought that allowed you to compromise your values.

Date you began this assignment _____

MY THOUGHTS ON THE BENEFITS OF INTEGRITY: _____



34. Joyful

Joyfulness means being positive and happy. I develop this virtue when I maintain a jubilant, cheerful attitude in all situations, even the most challenging. The opposite is sadness.

Comparing the actions of one who is joyful to one who is sad		
Situation	Joyfulness	Sadness
When your grandparents say they are taking you on an outing to the forest, you...	dance with delight at the prospect of spending time among the trees.	fall into a negative mood, knowing grandpa is going to tell all his stories again.
Falling from your bike and scraping your knee, you...	strangely find yourself rejoicing that your leg is not broken.	curse the tire for failing and get depressed about it all.
When fixing a motorbike turns out to be more difficult than planned, you...	Joyfully pursue the task as an opportunity to develop willpower.	become discouraged by your limited mechanical abilities.



Read here—bit.ly/joyful34—the story of a super rich businessman who spends little on himself while enthusiastically giving away all the wealth he can, finding that his greatest joy is to bring joy to others.

Gurudeva explained: “This joy we seek is the joy of fullness, lacking nothing. Life is meant to be lived joyously. There is in much of the world the belief that life is a burden, a feeling of penitence, that it is good to suffer, good for the soul. In fact, spiritual life is not that way at all.”

“Look into your mirror. Your reflection is your subconscious mind objectified. Find out what is holding you back. Face yourself and find out what is keeping you from expressing the great things which are within you here and now.”

“Learn to work for work’s sake, joyfully, for all work is good.”



ASSIGNMENT: These next two weeks, look for ways to express joy, to yourself and when with others.

Date you began this assignment _____

MY THOUGHTS ON THE BENEFITS OF JOYFULNESS: _____



35. Loyal

Loyalty is having firm and constant devotion to one's family, friends, religion and country. I express loyalty when I am faithful in all my relationships. The opposite is disloyalty.

Comparing the actions of one who is loyal to one who is disloyal		
Situation	Loyalty	Disloyalty
When a shy friend is being criticized by his peers, you...	speak out in his defense and work to bolster his confidence.	remain silent and pretend he is not your friend to gain points with the bullies.
When schoolmates make spurious statements about Hinduism, you...	remind them that you are a Hindu and counter with a more enlightened explanation.	forswear your tradition and family history, secretly wishing that you were not a Hindu.
When your company hits a hard patch and suffers losses, you...	stay the course, offering to take a cut in salary temporarily.	quickly bail in order to find a company that is not suffering hard times.



Watch a video here—bit.ly/loyal35—about the astonishing bond between Conner and Cayden Long. Cayden suffers from cerebral palsy, but his brother Connor stands by him every day to make sure he lives a fulfilling life.

Gurudeva explained: “Devotion is love of God, Gods and guru, and dedication to family and friends. We cultivate devotion through being loyal and trustworthy.”

“Follow your chosen path with all your heart. Give it your full devotion, energy and loyalty in fulfilling its goals. True seekers on the path hoping for genuine attainment do not wander from path to path, school to school, preceptor to preceptor, because it is known that indecision inhibits all spiritual growth.”

“In fulfilling his purusha dharma, the husband gives his prana, love and loyalty to his family, and he benefits the community through his service.

.....

ASSIGNMENT: These two weeks, work with your friends to strengthen their sense of your commitment to them.

Date you began this assignment _____

MY THOUGHTS ON THE BENEFITS OF LOYALTY: _____



36. Non-Hurtful

Non-hurtfulness is to not harm others through actions, words or thoughts. I observe it through living nonviolently, including internalizing anger or frustration. The opposite is hurtfulness.

Comparing the actions of one who is non-hurtful to one who is hurtful		
Situation	Non-Hurtfulness	Hurtfulness
When confronted by a school bully eager to pick a fight, you...	make it clear you will not fight him and manage to defuse his aggressiveness through reason or humor.	readily engage in fisticuffs, showing him you can be just as aggressive.
When your infant sister cries continuously for an hour, you...	check for causes of discomfort, then patiently calm her down by holding her and singing a lullaby.	are disturbed by the lengthy crying and lightly spank her bottom, then tell her to be quiet.
Seeing a group of friends teasing a classmate for being overweight, you...	refrain from joining in the teasing, understanding the emotional pain it is causing her.	join in on the teasing with no thought of how anguished she must feel.



Read here—bit.ly/non-hurtful36—the story of Janaki, who discusses ahimsa with her mom one evening. That night their cat kills a rat, provoking a family discussion about killing animals to eat them. Ultimately, they decide to return to their vegetarian roots.

Gurudeva explained: “Even tolerance is insufficient to describe the compassion and reverence the Hindu holds for the intrinsic sacredness within all things. Therefore, the actions of all Hindus are rendered benign, or ahimsa. One would not want to hurt something which one revered.”

“Not harming others by thought, word or deed is a cardinal law of Hinduism and cannot be avoided, discarded, ignored or replaced by the more subtle concept of compassion. Ahimsa, among the yamas and niyamas, could be considered the only explicit commandment Hinduism gives.”

“Ahimsa, ‘noninjury,’ not harming others by thought, word or deed.”

“It is a matter of realizing what life is really all about and how harming others violates our own inner being. When an injurious act is committed, it makes a mark deep within the mind of the violator.”

.....

ASSIGNMENT: For two weeks, when you are in a situation that disturbs you, restrain yourself from speaking hurtful words in response.

Date you began this assignment _____

MY THOUGHTS ON THE BENEFITS OF NON-HURTFULNESS: _____



37. Non-Stealing

Non-stealing means not taking the property of others without right or permission. I observe it by avoiding theft and not allowing myself to covet the things others have. The opposite is stealing.

Comparing the actions of one who steals to one who does not steal		
Situation	Non-Stealing	Stealing
When your mother gives you \$20 to get groceries on the way home, you...	carefully keep track and return the change to her.	intentionally forget the accounting and pocket the unspent money.
A friend leaves her homework on your kitchen table, so you...	call her right away so she can come to pick it up for tomorrow's class.	see an opportunity to get easy answers and copy her work before making the call.
When your older brother receives an award at school, you...	celebrate with him, and add congratulations of your own by way of a note on his desk.	covet his award, telling yourself you are equally deserving.



Read here—bit.ly/nonstealing37—the story of Ananya, who succumbs to temptation and steals money from her teacher’s purse at school. This leads to hard lessons in the value of being trusted by the community and earning that trust back through public penance.

Gurudeva explained: “The third yama is asteya, neither stealing, nor coveting nor entering into debt.... Coveting is desiring things that are not your own. Coveting leads to jealousy, and it leads to stealing. The first impulse toward stealing is coveting, wanting. If you can control the impulse to covet, then you will not steal. Coveting is mental stealing.”

“Of course, stealing must never ever happen. Even a penny, a peso, a rupee, a lira or a yen should not be misappropriated or stolen. Defaulting on debts is also a form of stealing.”

.....
ASSIGNMENT: These next two weeks, if you find yourself desiring what others have that you don’t, reflect that it is such desiring that leads to theft.

Date you began this assignment _____

MY THOUGHTS ON THE BENEFITS OF NON-STEALING: _____



38. Obedient

Obedience means quickly, cheerfully and accurately carrying out instructions. I cultivate it by controlling any tendency to resist directions or do things differently than asked. The opposite is resistance.

Comparing the actions of one who is obedient to one who is resistant		
Situation	Obedience	Resistance
When your father gives instructions for a minor task, you...	are happy to fulfill it exactly as he explained.	feel a need to discuss your own ideas on how to approach it.
When your dance teacher gives you a long series of exercises, you...	accept each one, execute it well and report back to her.	find the work tedious and use your dance time for self-expression.
When the school rules change and students are asked to dress uniformly, you...	acquiesce to the change, even though you would prefer different fashion choices.	ignore the dress code and rebelliously continue to wear your preferred clothing.



Read here—bit.ly/obedient38—the story of Guru Nanak and his two proud and uncooperative sons who learn a lesson in true obedience from the guru’s once wealthy disciple.

Gurudeva explained: “...discipline and obedience. Nothing was ever accomplished on this Earth without these two qualities. Be self-disciplined, cultivate self-control. Obey your gurus. Obey your mothers. Obey your fathers. Obey your elders. Obey your Saivite teachers.”

“Obey your guru, obey your guru... Siva’s devotees obey their satguru, carrying out his directions, expressed or implied, with intelligent cooperation, without delay.”

“Scriptures say a guru must be carefully chosen, and when one is found, to follow him with all your heart, to obey and fulfill his every instruction better than he would have expected you to, and most importantly, even better than you would have expected of yourself.”

.....

ASSIGNMENT: For two weeks, watch for those moments when you are given a project or instruction and work to fulfill it without undue resistance or questioning.

Date you began this assignment _____

MY THOUGHTS ON THE BENEFITS OF OBEDIENCE: _____



39. Open-Minded

Open-mindedness refers to a willingness to consider different ideas or opinions. It is cultivated by being detached from one's own point of view and accepting ideas from all others. The opposite is closed-mindedness.

Comparing the actions of one who is open-minded to one who is closed-minded		
Situation	Open-mindedness	Close-mindedness
When a promising new word processing program is released, you...	research its features to see if it is a better choice than the one you currently use.	stay with your old standby, without looking into it.
When your father suggests a brand new vacation place, you...	respond positively and look into it to learn about the area and its attractions.	object, saying you want to stick with the familiar places.
At a group discussion when a young person introduces a metaphysical idea that opposes your beliefs, you...	find the idea difficult to embrace but explore it in conversation, hoping for better understanding.	dismiss both the person and the idea, taking refuge in your rock-solid beliefs.



Read here—bit.ly/open-minded39—Geeta Menon’s testimony of why open-mindedness is the characteristic that led to her progress and success, being open to “the unexpected opportunities that are inevitable in life.”

Gurudeva explained: “All religions are not the same. To pretend that their differences are insignificant or nonexistent will not resolve those differences. Understanding, which brings mutual appreciation, is the only permanent resolution, and that comes through an open-minded and courageous study of the unique strengths and weaknesses inherent in each.”

“Open-mindedness: the Hindu’s tolerant freedom of thought, inquiry and belief.”

“Prejudice is one of the negative emotions contained in the habit mind. We may not think of prejudice as being a habit, but it is. Many adults retain very strong habitual prejudices. They do not care for people who do not belong to their particular race, caste or social class.”

.....
ASSIGNMENT: For these next two weeks, when encountering opinions different from your own, be open to them and see if they are worthwhile alternatives or additions to your own ideas.

Date you began this assignment _____

MY THOUGHTS ON THE BENEFITS OF OPEN-MINDEDNESS: _____



40. Optimistic

Optimism is an inclination to see the positive aspects of events and have a sense that a successful outcome will be achieved. I cultivate optimism by trusting in Siva's perfect universe and using positive visualizations and affirmations. The opposite is pessimism.

Comparing the actions of one who is optimistic to one who is pessimistic		
Situation	Optimism	Pessimism
When you and a group of friends get lost on a remote trail, you...	trust in everyone's abilities and know the right way will be discovered.	worry that you will b-e lost and have to sleep in the forest.
Learning you are being laid off from your job, you...	think silently, "This could lead to an even greater career in the years ahead."	get discouraged and fear you will be out of work without a salary for months.
When your team's first science lab attempt fails, you...	remain positive and creatively pursue alternate avenues.	become morose, reliving the many other failures of your life.



Read here—bit.ly/optimistic40—as Sri Chinmoy tells the story of disciples joining their Master in a forest, where they ask him about optimism, enthusiasm and perseverance as opposed to detachment and failure.

Gurudeva explained: “A positive mental attitude should be held during all the ups and downs that are predicted to happen. Be as the traveler in a 747 jet, flying high over the cities, rather than a pedestrian wandering the streets below.”

“Put a smile on the faces of other people. Gain your happiness and your positive states of mind by making other people happy. Negative people are always worried about themselves. Positive people are concerned with the happiness of others.”

“A doctor might not tell his patient that he will die in three days when he sees the vital signs weakening. Instead, he may encourage positive thinking, give hope, knowing that life is eternal and that to invoke fear might create depression and hopelessness in the mind of the ill person.”

.....

ASSIGNMENT: For these two weeks, when a challenge presents itself, keep positive about succeeding and look for ways to move forward.

Date you began this assignment _____

MY THOUGHTS ON THE BENEFITS OF OPTIMISM: _____



41. Orderly

Orderliness means keeping my environment and projects uncluttered and systematized. I cultivate it by frequently taking time to tidy and organize my work space and living areas. The opposite is messiness.

Comparing the actions of one who is orderly to one who is messy		
Situation	Orderliness	Messiness
My work and personal areas are...	always uncluttered and sensibly organized.	habitually in a state of confused disarray.
Taking DVDs from the family library, you...	have a good habit of returning them when finished.	throw them in a drawer, telling yourself, "I'll put them away later."
In working to help the family organize a wedding dinner, you...	work out a systematic way to keep track of the many food and decoration details.	do the first thing that comes to mind and are soon overwhelmed by confusion.



Read here—bit.ly/orderly41—a rich interactive presentation on self-discipline—emphasizing orderliness, self-knowledge, conscious awareness, commitment, courage, internal coaching—and seven principles to develop it.

Gurudeva explained: “Be considerate of others always and live inconspicuously, almost transparently, by not ruffling your surroundings, by keeping the home neat and clean, by passing through a room or place and leaving it in a nicer condition than before you arrived.”

“Cleaning the house is an act of purifying one’s immediate environment. Each piece of furniture, as well as the doorways and the walls, catches and holds the emanations of the human aura of each individual in the home, as well as each of its visitors. This residue must be wiped away through dusting and cleaning. This regular attentiveness keeps each room sparkling clean and actinic.”

.....

ASSIGNMENT: For these two weeks, find a closet in your home that needs arranging and a space at school that is in shambles and make them neat.

Date you began this assignment _____

MY THOUGHTS ON THE BENEFITS OF ORDERLINESS: _____



42. Patient

Patience means remaining composed when faced with delays, time constraints or other challenges that hinder expectations. I cultivate it by planning in advance and controlling the tendency to become frustrated or upset. The opposite is frustration.

Comparing the actions of one who is patient to one who is anxious and frustrated		
Situation	Patience	Frustration
The plane flight is delayed by two hours, so you...	remain calm, find a quiet corner where you can plug in your computer and fill the time productively.	spend the time alternately complaining to the staff and grumbling to everyone nearby.
In working with the elderly in a senior retirement home, you...	accept that tasks will take them longer than a younger person.	mentally complain that they take so long to do things.
In listening to a fellow employee's long-winded explanation, you...	have sufficient self-control to not interrupt.	can't help but interrupt so you can get on with life.



Read here—bit.ly/patient42—the story of Chandran and his puppy Bhairava, as they learn new tricks: sit, stay, shake hands and more. In the end Chandran reflects, “I have not only trained my dog, but learned the value of patience as well.”

Gurudeva explained: “Impatience is a sign of desirousness to fulfill unfulfilled desires, having no time for any interruptions or delays from anything that seems irrelevant to what one really wants to accomplish.... Patience is having the power of acceptance, accepting people, accepting events as they are happening.”

“*Kshama*, ‘patience,’ restrain intolerance with people and impatience with circumstances.”

.....

ASSIGNMENT: These next two weeks, if you find yourself facing an unexpected delay, don’t complain or become anxious. Rather, remain centered and find a creative way to use your time productively.

Date you began this assignment _____

MY THOUGHTS ON THE BENEFITS OF PATIENCE: _____



43. Persuasive

Persuasiveness is the ability to effectively communicate the merits of one's ideas. I cultivate it by presenting my ideas diplomatically, to the right people, in the right way and at the right time. The opposite is unpersuasiveness.

Comparing the actions of one who is persuasive to one who is unpersuasive		
Situation	Persuasiveness	Unpersuasiveness
When writing to a college seeking entrance, you...	carefully craft the application, speaking to the issues you know are important to faculty of that college.	compose a letter that will be generic enough to send to every school you think you might apply to.
In your valedictorian speech, you...	powerfully direct the graduating class toward their future.	tell a few jokes and call it good.
As to when to present new ideas, you...	carefully choose a time that works well for all involved.	remain clueless about the time constraints and moods of your audience.



Read here—bit.ly/persuasive43—the story of a rich and miserly man who overhears a conversation between a cow and a pig that changes his habit of hoarding his wealth and convinces him to share it with others while he is alive.

Gurudeva explained: “I say that if you have really made the religious teachings a part of your life, you will naturally be able to convince your family and friends of those wonderful truths. [...] If you can’t convince your family of the teachings, that shows that they are just intellectual thoughts that in practice don’t mean anything to you.”

“Those who say ‘Well, nobody understands me. I feel all alone on the path’ are going through a period in which they have memorized everything but understand very little and therefore cannot explain or convince their fellow man of these great truths due to the fact that their subconscious basement is still full.”

.....

ASSIGNMENT: These two weeks, whenever you need to convince another of your plan, be sure you start by understanding his ideas and objections.

Date you began this assignment _____


MY THOUGHTS ON THE BENEFITS OF PERSUASIVENESS: _____



44. Philomathic

Philomathy is a fancy word that describes a love of acquiring new knowledge. I cultivate it by being a constant student of life, exploring areas (including new vocabulary) in which I have strong interests and developing new interests. The opposite is stagnation.

Comparing the actions of one who is philomathic to one who is stagnant		
Situation	Philomathy	Stagnation
During spare time on weekends and school breaks, you...	study more about your favorite interests, such as ancient history or computer programming.	just relax, play video games and socialize with friends.
When a friend starts using big words like <i>philomathy</i> in conversation, you...	find you want to increase your own vocabulary and embark on a serious daily study.	dismiss her language as pedantic—though you have yet to learn that word.
Reading how Sanskrit is related to many of today's languages, you...	are inspired to learn the basics of the Sanskrit script and grammar.	conclude that Sanskrit is a dead language and think no more about it.



“It is not that you read a book, pass an examination, and finish with education. The whole of life, from the moment you are born to the moment you die, is a process of learning.”

J. Krishnamurti

Read here—bit.ly/philomathic44—about history’s “smartest kids in the world,” fifty brilliant students who model a love for learning. They are young inventors, mathematicians, artists, performers, scholars and entrepreneurs.

Gurudeva explained: “The dedicated student who has applied himself seriously leaves college not with a “know-it-all” feeling but with an awareness of the limits of the intellect, and profound respect for the vast amount of knowledge that he has yet to discover or unfold.”

“Learn to concentrate the mind so that you can study not from books, but from observation, which is the first awakening of the soul. Learn to study by practice. Learn to study by application.”

.....
ASSIGNMENT: Spend time these next two weeks advancing your knowledge in areas of strong interest.

Date you began this assignment _____

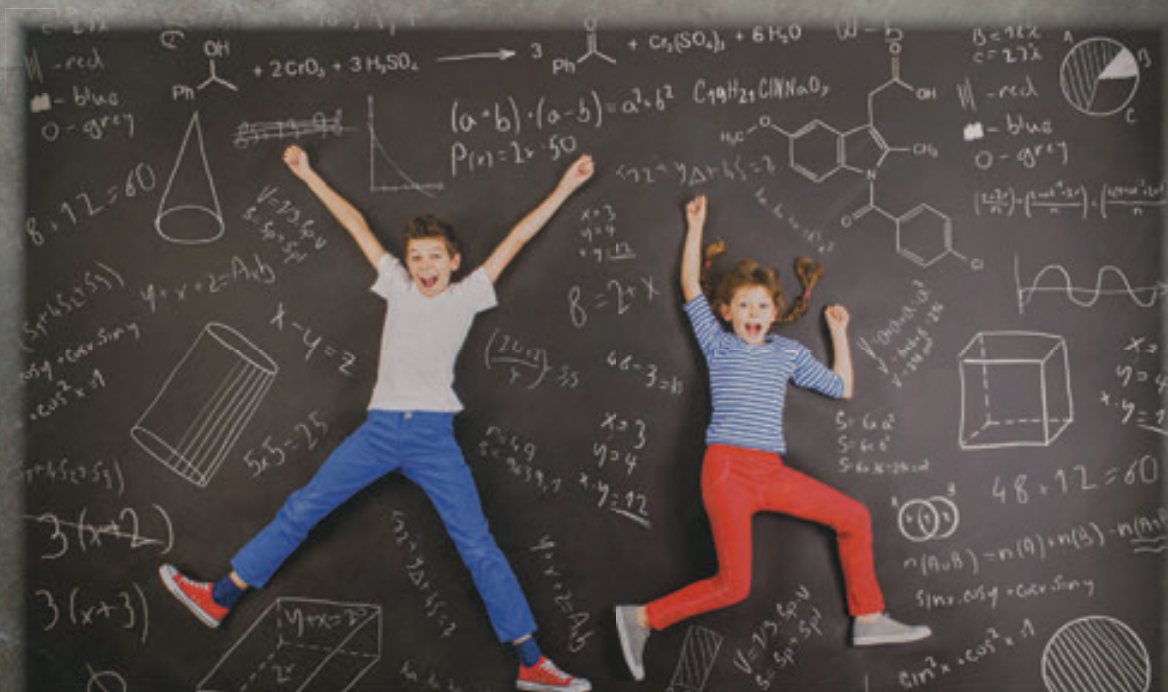
MY THOUGHTS ON THE BENEFITS OF PHILOMATHY: _____



45. Playful

Playfulness is having fun and sharing humor with family and friends. I cultivate it by being spontaneous, carefree and crazy now and then. The opposite is sternness.

Comparing the actions of one who is playful to one who is stern		
Situation	Playfulness	Sternness
On an evening the family is home and free, you...	secretly arrange for a popular comedy to be watched.	go to your room, not eager to interact with everyone tonight.
You're with friends in the mountains and it begins to snow, so you...	drag everyone into the white powder and teach them to make snow angels.	complain about the cold and beg everyone to adjourn to the hotel for hot chocolate.
Studying together with a group of students, you...	surprise them by ordering pizza to arrive during a break, then insist they sing old songs together.	give no thought to anything but preparing for the test ahead, hour after hour, with no breaks.



Read here—bit.ly/playful45—the story of two families, one driven by unrelenting work and the other able to balance achievement with happiness in life. Their struggles and accomplishments prove life is best when it includes time for having fun.

Gurudeva explained: “The world is a glorious place, not to be feared. It is a gracious gift from Siva Himself, a playground for His children in which to interrelate young souls with the old—the young experiencing their karma while the old hold firmly to their dharma.”

“And if you feel that everything happening to you is a play of universal love and you are able to maintain that consciousness of universal love in yourself, then you are beyond the happenings of the world. Lifted in consciousness, you can see through and enjoy all the states of consciousness.”

.....
ASSIGNMENT: During these two weeks, look for a new activity that would be fun or humorous for family or friends to enjoy.

Date you began this assignment _____

MY THOUGHTS ON THE BENEFITS OF PLAYFULNESS: _____



46. Punctual

Punctuality means being prompt and keeping to schedules. I strengthen it by arriving on time, completing my duties without delay and not lagging behind or procrastinating. The opposite is tardiness.

Comparing the actions of one who is punctual to one who is tardy		
Situation	Punctuality	Tardiness
When your uncle makes an appointment to show you his new art collection, you...	arrive on time, wanting to honor the fact that he has made himself available to you.	reach his home ten minutes late, showing no consciousness that this is disrespectful.
Asked by your supervisor to meet a work-related deadline, you...	plan for the normal unexpected delays and finish two days early to assure you will meet expectations.	wait until late in the week, and then a sudden family emergency makes you miss the deadline.
Friends meet weekly to play basketball and you...	arrive early to show them that you value this teamwork.	intentionally arrive five minutes late, so you won't have to wait for others.



Read here—bit.ly/punctual46—a great article about the messages you send by being on time or being late. Being on time shows responsibility, professionalism and respect for others, while being late declares the opposite.

Gurudeva explained: “Once the satguru is asked for penance, the penance must be performed exactly according to his instruction. It should be done with full energy and without delay. Deliberate delay or refusal to perform the penance shows the devotee has rejected the assistance of the satguru.”

“To resolve a conflict between husband and wife, lest it affect the lives of the children by being postponed into forgetfulness, it must be done before sleep. There is no other way.”

.....
ASSIGNMENT: During these two weeks, make a practice of showing up for appointments and events a few minutes early to be sure you aren’t late.

Date you began this assignment _____

MY THOUGHTS ON THE BENEFITS OF PUNCTUALITY: _____



47. Reliable

Reliability means being trustworthy and responsive, consistently performing as expected. I develop it when I respond to others' needs and directions and fulfill what I have agreed to do. The opposite is unreliability.

Comparing the actions of one who is reliable to one who is unreliable		
Situation	Reliability	Unreliability
When mom asks you to please make your bed each morning, you...	respond by developing a regular habit of leaving the room neat.	do it for three days, then stop, figuring she will probably forget.
When your rock-climbing partner slips and falls, you...	immediately come to her aid with no thought for yourself.	panic and fearfully step away from the cliff, hoping she can fend for herself.
The team at work sets difficult goals for each member and you...	proactively rearrange your life and find the extra hours to meet your new goals.	figure they will ask you a few more times if they really need your contribution.



Read here—bit.ly/reliable47—how an interracial marriage begins with deep love and then descends into conflict, affecting the couple’s children. Husband and wife, determined to stay together, learn the arts of getting along.

Gurudeva explained: “It is necessary for spiritual unfoldment on the path to enlightenment to live among others, be loyal, faithful, not promiscuous, to settle down and establish a cooperative routine of community life. Living among others—even having roommates who think, believe and have adopted the same spiritual, religious disciplines—grants the burden of good conduct, prompt resolution of problems and an abundance of sharing, giving and caring during the trials and happinesses that naturally arise in living with others.”



ASSIGNMENT: Especially during these two weeks, when you promise to do something, be sure to do it.

Date you began this assignment _____

MY THOUGHTS ON THE BENEFITS OF RELIABILITY: _____

48. Remorseful

Remorse is mental distress arising from regret for a past misdeed. I strengthen it by always apologizing when I misbehave or hurt others, even inadvertently, with my words or actions. The opposite is impenitence.

Comparing the actions of one who is remorseful to one who is impenitent		
Situation	Remorse	Impenitence
You get caught stealing lipstick from a local store, and...	realizing your choice was wrong, regret the act deeply.	don't see the big deal, but are sorry you got caught.
After arguing with your little brother and calling him lame, you...	realize your words hurt him, apologize and play his favorite game with him.	have no sense of wrongdoing, rather feeling he deserved what he got.
You go to a party against the family's wishes and without their knowledge, and you...	feel rotten the next day, confess to Mom and Dad and tell them you are sorry.	keep the little transgression to yourself, hoping no one finds out or squeals.



Read here—bit.ly/remorse48—how two friends, Nilakantha and Rohit, steal a bike one day, a theft that has profound consequences. When their crime is discovered, one shows deep remorse and the other is only sorry they were caught.

Gurudeva explained: “Hri, the first of the ten niyamas, or practices, is remorse: being modest and showing shame for misdeeds, seeking the guru’s grace to be released from sorrows through the understanding that he gives, based on the ancient sampradaya, doctrinal lineage, he preaches.”

“Often people think that showing shame and modesty and remorse for misdeeds is simply hanging your head. Well, really, anyone can do this, but it’s not genuine if the head is not pulled down by the tightening of the strings of the heart, if shame is not felt so deeply that one cannot look another in the eye. When the hanging of the head is genuine, everyone will know it and seek to lift you up out of the predicament.”

.....

ASSIGNMENT: During these two weeks, if memories of a past misdeed pop up and make you feel remorseful, figure out a way to apologize and make amends for the action.

Date you began this assignment _____

MY THOUGHTS ON THE BENEFITS OF REMORSE: _____



49. Respectful

Respect is admiration and due regard for others. I observe it through humility in discussions or activities, by following the lead of those who are senior to me or more accomplished. The opposite is disrespect.

Comparing the actions of one who is respectful to one who is disrespectful		
Situation	Respect	Disrespect
Invited to an interfaith meeting, you...	make it a point to honor all of the religious leaders present.	consider the others as inferior and treat them dismissively.
In communicating with a boss, supervisor or teacher, you...	observe cultural protocols and use appropriate language to show respect.	treat everyone as an equal regardless of seniority.
When a swami visits the family home, you...	greet him with "namaste," bowing to touch his feet in respect.	feel you are just as enlightened as the next person and refuse to touch his feet.



Read here—bit.ly/respectful49—how two brothers, Janaka and the younger Rakesh, struggle in their relationship, but with father’s advice about jealousy rediscover acceptance and respect for one another.

Gurudeva explained: “Love is respecting the elders. Love is also respecting yourself, because unless you have self-respect, unless you respect yourself, which means having a good self image, you will find it difficult to respect others. And unless you love and respect others, you will definitely have a hard time living in harmony with the world around you.”

“Very large families may live in close contact with each other, and because they are so well adjusted and have such inner respect for each other, there is no contention, no feeling of being crowded. This inner respect for the moods and feelings of another is only possible because the soul qualities are awakened at an early age in the children.”



ASSIGNMENT: During these two weeks, watch your attitudes toward others and be sure, when interacting with those who are higher or more senior, you are showing proper respect in your actions and speech.

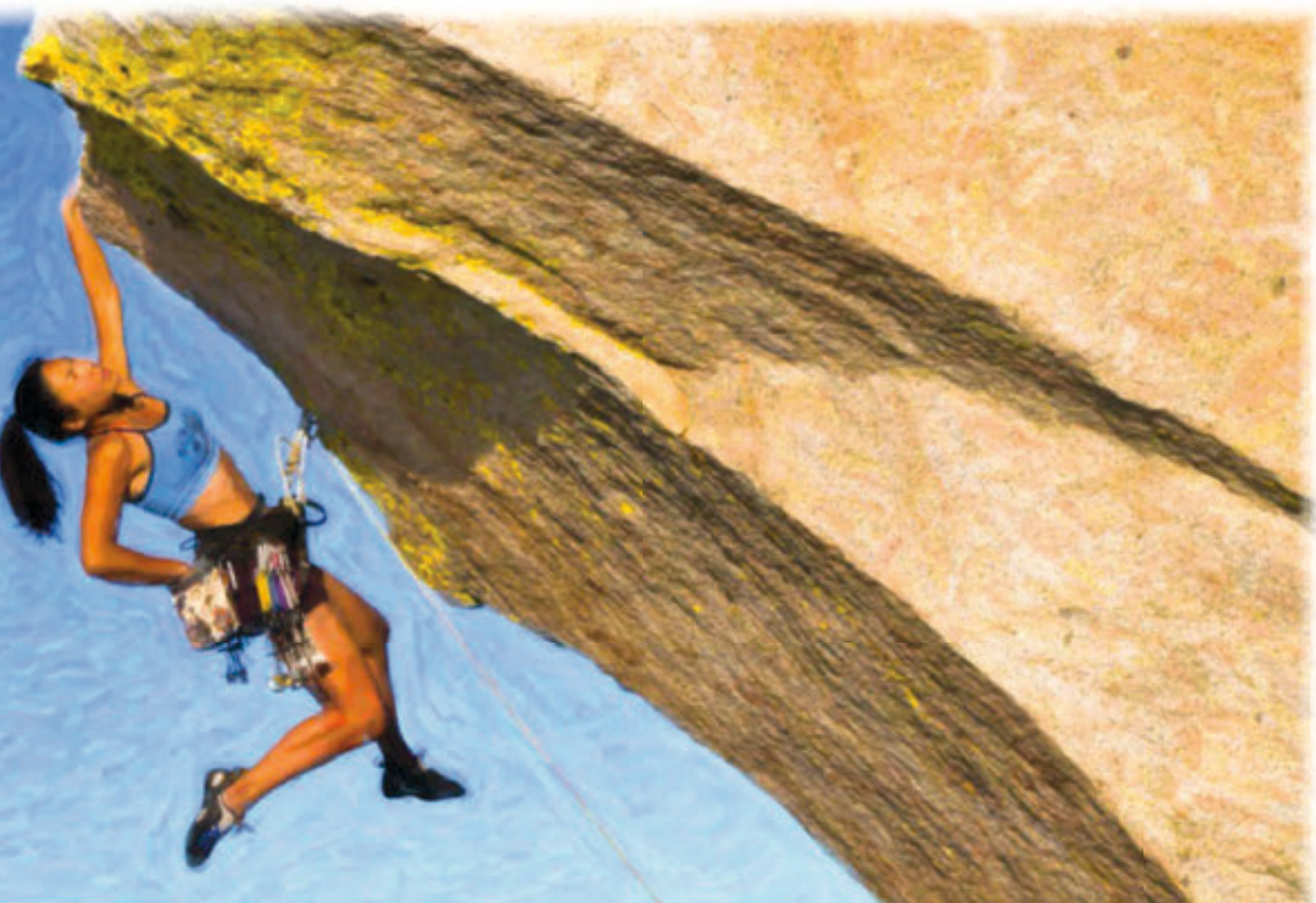
Date you began this assignment _____

MY THOUGHTS ON THE BENEFITS OF RESPECT: _____

50. Self-Confident

Self-confidence means trusting in one's abilities and skills. I practice it by remembering my past successes when embarking on a new project. The opposite is self-doubt.

Comparing the actions of one who is self-confident to one who is self-doubting		
Situation	Self-Confidence	Self-Doubt
You get an unexpected offer to start a promising new business, and...	remembering past successes, bravely accept the challenge.	are assailed by self-doubt and tell the principals you have enough happening in your life.
When the guru gives you a new spiritual assignment that seems impossible, you...	rely on your conviction that we are each a divine being and set out to succeed.	fear you are not as strong as he seems to think and decide to ignore his instructions.
One day you wake up with a great idea that will change your life forever, so you...	use affirmations to enhance your confidence and set out on the new journey into the future.	conclude this is just another wild idea for which you have neither the knowledge or the skills, and do nothing.



Read here—bit.ly/self-confident50—how young Anand acquires self-confidence through mastering woodworking and other skills with the help of his father, empowering him to face the most difficult challenges as he goes through life.

Gurudeva explained: “All you can do in living your life every day is to make today just a little bit better than yesterday was. You will then have confidence in yourself, so that tomorrow will be all right, too, and you won’t fear the tomorrows.”

“In order to be confident within yourself, have no fear. In order to have no fear, say to yourself, “I am all right, right now.” This will quickly bring you into the here-and-now consciousness.”

“Someone who meditates has confidence in all departments of life. You can build that confidence. If you sit down to meditate, meditate! Don’t get sidetracked on anything else, no matter how attractive it may be.”

.....

ASSIGNMENT: During these two weeks, if when starting a new project, you don’t feel confident, use the affirmation “I can, I will, I am able to accomplish what I plan.”

Date you began this assignment _____

MY THOUGHTS ON THE BENEFITS OF SELF-CONFIDENCE: _____



51. Self-Controlled

Self-control means harnessing desires, emotions and actions. I strengthen it by exercising willpower when I am tempted to play or eat too much or stay up too late. The opposite is self-indulgence.

Comparing the actions of one who is self-controlled to one who is self-indulgent		
Situation	Self-Controlled	Self-Indulgent
When your emotions get overly strong one day, you...	use spiritual tools to harness them.	go to the freezer to see if that gallon of Mint Chocolate Surprise is still there.
When friends invite you to a senior party where there will be drinking, you...	decline the invitation, explaining that you've seen too much of what alcohol can do.	send caution to the wind, and join them for a night of questionable fun.
When you realize that your health would benefit from losing ten pounds, you...	tell your sister you have promised to eat less, then keep your self-imposed pledge.	promise you will do better, but after two days someone next to you orders grilled cheese and the rest is history.



Read here—bit.ly/self-control51—about Chandran and Chamundi, siblings who take up the practice of chanting Aum 108 times each day. From Chamundi’s good example, and the effect on her state of mind, they learn the calm and self-control this discipline has to offer.

Gurudeva explained: “If you can see ahead that you will not react, proceed. Dictate to yourself, face yourself, face your mistakes and don’t make them again. Breaking spiritual laws creates reactions in the subconscious, and man loses spiritual power.”

“You can’t work at correcting something. You either do it or you don’t do it. You don’t work at not falling off a cliff, a big precipice that drops off a hundred feet. You just don’t step forward; that’s what you don’t do!”

.....
ASSIGNMENT: During these two weeks, focus on the moments your instinctive mind tends to take over then consciously use your willpower to not be indulgent.

Date you began this assignment _____

MY THOUGHTS ON THE BENEFITS OF SELF-CONTROL: _____



52. Self-Disciplined

Self-discipline means having the willpower to create and sustain strong and positive habits, overcoming lethargy and pushing yourself beyond known limits to new heights of accomplishment. The opposite is unruliness.

Comparing the actions of one who is self-disciplined to one who is unruly		
Situation	Self-Discipline	Unruliness
When you discover a love of music, you...	ask your parents for an instrument and practice daily without fail.	want to play but want to do many other things too, so drop it.
You and a friend decide to improve your vocabulary, so you...	get the best app you can find and start memorizing new words.	go at it haphazardly, learning a few words but not as many as she learned.
When your running coach tells the team to increase the drills, you...	do what he suggests, adding your own exercises to strengthen your body.	find the drills too tiring and soon fall back on bad training habits.



Read here—bit.ly/self-discipline52—a story of two friends who experience great self-discipline in a cave in Malaysia. Arvind watches as his friend Raj goes through a month of difficult hardships, then at a temple receives Lord Murugan’s grace.

Gurudeva explained: “The path of Saiva Siddhanta, as you all know, is a very simple path. It’s the path of love, a path of devotion, which makes you want to be self-disciplined, because to maintain a feeling of love all the time, you have to be self-disciplined. You don’t discipline yourself to attain the feeling of love. You attain the feeling of love and then you want to discipline yourself because you love the discipline, because it brings more love.”

“The regular practice of hatha yoga is self-discipline, which is a basic aid in character building. A good character and strong willpower are essential to advance oneself spiritually.”



ASSIGNMENT: During these two weeks, avoid impulsive speech by reflecting on what you are going to say before saying it.

Date you began this assignment _____

MY THOUGHTS ON THE BENEFITS OF SELF-DISCIPLINE: _____



53. Selfless

Selflessness is the perspective of regularly focusing on benefiting others rather than benefiting oneself. I cultivate it by never acting with only my interests in mind. The opposite is selfishness.

Comparing the actions of one who is selfless to one who is selfish		
Situation	Selflessness	Selfishness
On a committee where you have developed the solution, you...	deflect credit for the solution to the entire committee.	make sure all know it was you who came up with the winning idea.
When your parents need a babysitter for your younger sister so they can go out to dinner together, you...	see the need, and volunteer for the task before they even ask.	announce that you have other plans for the evening and suggest they hire a babysitter.
On a cleanup team at school, you...	stay beyond the deadline to make sure the task is fully completed.	walk away at stopping time, leaving the burden of finishing it to others.



Read here—bit.ly/selfless53—Sri Chinmoy’s story of how a beggar makes a humble gift of all he owns to the cause of India’s Independence, impressing the young volunteers with his profound act of selflessness.

Gurudeva explained: “As soon as he begins to turn inward, he begins to nourish his spiritual body. It starts to grow within the emotional body. It grows like a child, fed by all of his good deeds. All of his selflessness and selfless actions toward others feed that body. All of his working with himself, conquering instinctive emotions within himself, is food for that body, as it draws from the central source of energy. All of his selfishness and greed and giving power to the instinctive elements starve this spiritual body.”

.....

ASSIGNMENT: For the next two weeks, when working with others in a team project, do a little more than your fair share.

Date you began this assignment _____

MY THOUGHTS ON THE BENEFITS OF SELFLESSNESS: _____



54. Sensitive

Sensitivity is a delicate appreciation of others' ideas, attitudes, feelings and natures. I practice it by listening carefully, watching facial expressions and understanding subtle signs. The opposite is insensitivity.

Comparing the actions of one who is sensitive to one who is insensitive		
Situation	Sensitivity	Insensitivity
As a long-time friend confides her marriage difficulties, you...	listen carefully to understand her experience in full.	change the subject, feeling you have enough problems and don't need hers.
At a meditation retreat everyone is asked to share insights. As each one speaks, you...	watch facial expressions and body language as well as the words being spoken.	tune out, figuring this is a time to think about what you are going to say, not to listen to them.
When your best friend asks for personal insight into an issue, you...	listen with your heart, holding back any judgment.	jump in and question her actions and motives, unaware of her fragility.



Read here—bit.ly/sensitive54—about two sisters who find themselves fighting constantly. Everything changes when they realize how much their squabbling is upsetting Mom. They begin cooperating and being sensitive to one another’s needs and natures.

Gurudeva explained: “As we progress along the path, we become more and more and more sensitive. This sensitivity is a wonderful thing. It’s like graduating from being an old battery-set radio of the 1920s and ’30s to a sophisticated, solid-state television. This sensitivity that you will begin to recognize is so refined and yet so strong.”

“Being detached does not mean running away from life or being insensitive. It makes us extremely sensitive. When we have the ability to let go, we are warmer, more friendly, more wholesome, more human and closer to our family and friends.”

.....
ASSIGNMENT: During these two weeks, in any important discussion, be sure you are aware of and sensitive to the attitudes and emotions of those around you.

Date you began this assignment _____

MY THOUGHTS ON THE BENEFITS OF SENSITIVITY: _____



55. Sharing

Sharing means giving to others a portion of what one has or receives. I cultivate it by not keeping everything for myself, but including others in the enjoyment of my gifts and possessions. The opposite is hoarding.

Comparing the actions of one who is sharing to one who hoards		
Situation	Sharing	Hoarding
When you receive a small bequest from a grandfather who passed away, you...	give a portion to God before spending any.	keep it all and purchase new things you have wanted for a long time.
When mother hands you a plate of fresh cookies she made, you...	go around the house, giving a few to everyone so all can enjoy the treat.	take the sweets to your room, where you can munch on them all day when you get hungry.
When a long-time friend visits and admires your collection of roses, you...	get a small shovel from the garden shed and dig up the one she admired the most.	tell yourself the roses were so hard to acquire it would be a shame to start giving them away.



Read here—bit.ly/sharing55—about an American Indian mother and son who, during a journey, share everything they have with a total stranger who has fallen on bad times, asking him to return the favor, following their tradition, by sharing with someone else in the future.

Gurudeva explained: “Charity is selfless concern and caring for our fellow man. It is generous giving without thought of reward, always sharing and never hoarding. We cultivate charity through giving to the hungry, the sick, the homeless, the elderly and the unfortunate.”

“What is help anyway, but man sharing with man? Who is the helper and who is the one who is helped?”

.....
ASSIGNMENT: For the next two weeks, focus on opportunities to practice the art of sharing. Give to others whenever you get the chance, trusting you will always have enough.

Date you began this assignment _____

MY THOUGHTS ON THE BENEFITS OF SHARING: _____



56. Sincere

Sincerity means being without deceit, pretense or hypocrisy. I practice it by being genuine and honest and refraining from making statements I don't really believe in. The opposite is insincerity.

Comparing the actions of one who is sincere to one who is insincere		
Situation	Sincerity	Insincerity
Your best friend just won a minor-league writing award, so you...	congratulate her appropriately for her achievement.	exaggerate the accomplishment, pretending the prize is more important than it really is.
Your sister notes that her boss is being too pushy, and you...	tell her this is a trait you yourself are working on.	criticise him, knowing inside you have the same issues to overcome.
At a community town hall, everyone is asked to give a Christian prayer aloud, and you...	keep silent as the group prays to Jesus.	join the chorus, all the while feeling like a fool for giving in to peer pressure.



Read here—bit.ly/sincere56—the story of how a man, once poor, becomes wealthy and shows the sincerity of a distant promise made to a friend by giving Rs.17,000 to the deceased man’s young son.

Gurudeva explained: “It takes great sincerity in life to control the mind. And the power to be sincere is based on honesty. Honesty, arjava, gives a great boon to you. It gives you stability. It makes you strong. It makes every atom in your being vibrate with an inner power. It gives you perspective; it gives you the eye to justice. But you must first be honest with yourself.”

“The word *insincere* describes the person who doesn’t fulfill what he knows he should fulfill, but pretends that he does. We call him insincere. That insincerity doesn’t hurt anybody but himself, because you can’t send out anything out into the world but that it comes back.”



ASSIGNMENT: During these two weeks, regularly reflect on your words and actions in the light of sincerity.

Date you began this assignment _____

MY THOUGHTS ON THE BENEFITS OF SINCERITY: _____



57. Spiritual

Spirituality relates to the spirit or soul of people and includes beliefs about the meaning of life that shape conduct and provide comfort. It is cultivated by scriptural study and personal practice and disciplines. The opposite is materialism.

Comparing the actions of one who is spiritual to one who is materialistic		
Situation	Spirituality	Materialism
When the rare thing called free time presents itself, you...	often explore spiritual activities and studies.	are drawn almost exclusively to external interests.
When a much-loved grandparent passes on, you...	experience sorrow, but soon overcome it, knowing your grandparent's soul is happy in the inner world.	fall into a deep sadness and despair without spiritual beliefs or tools to console you.
When the family holds a picnic at the beach, you...	spend precious moments witnessing nature's wonders and blending into the vastness of the ocean.	enjoy the sun, the sand and the surf, not pondering anything more.



Read here—bit.ly/spiritual57—the fictional telling of a real-life event, the day Lord Ganesha drank milk in temples all over the world, a miracle that strengthened the faith of millions of devotees.

Gurudeva explained: “Spirituality. The pursuit of direct spiritual or religious experience. Spiritual discipline aimed at union or communion with Ultimate Reality or God through deep meditation or trance-like contemplation.”

“The soul, in its intelligence, searches for its Self, slowly ascending the path that leads to enlightenment and liberation. It is an arduous, delightful journey through the cycles of birth, death and rebirth culminating in Self Realization, the direct and personal spiritual experience of God, of the Self, of Truth. This alone among all things in the cosmos can bring freedom from the bondages of ignorance and desire. This is the highest realization.”

.....

ASSIGNMENT: For the next two weeks, take time in four sessions to read from a book or web resource that increases knowledge of your spiritual nature.

Date you began this assignment _____

MY THOUGHTS ON THE BENEFITS OF SPIRITUALITY: _____



58. Steadfast

Steadfastness is firm continuance in a course of action. I practice it by being strongly committed to a sound and dharmic plan, not giving up when I meet obstacles, but using willpower to overcome them. The opposite is the tendency to give up.

Comparing the actions of one who is steadfast to one who tends to give up		
Situation	Steadfastness	Tendency to Give Up
Having received treatment and advice for back pain, you...	follow the doctor's advice day after day, even though it is painful.	start strong, but on the third day abandon the regimen.
Having failed the driver's license test twice, you...	arrange for a personal mentor and later pass the test without error.	figure you gave it your best shot and buy a bike.
Two historic storms hit your town just months apart, demolishing your home, and you...	remind yourself why you chose this neighborhood and rebuild a second time.	change your mind about this neighborhood, and move to a town with fewer opportunities.



Watch here—bit.ly/steadfast58—as Rachel Sussman gives new meaning to the concept of steadfastness and longevity with a mind-expanding TED Talks presentation of living organisms around the globe that are 2,000 or more years old.

Gurudeva explained: “The sixth yama is dhriti, steadfastness. To be steadfast, you have to use your willpower. Willpower is developed easily in a person who has an adequate memory and good reasoning faculties. To be steadfast as we go through life, we must have a purpose, a plan, persistence and push. Then nothing is impossible within the circumference of our prarabdha karmas.”

“Siva’s devotees approach each enterprise with deliberate thoughtfulness, and act only after careful consideration. They succeed in every undertaking by having a clear purpose, a wise plan, persistence and push.”

.....

ASSIGNMENT: During these next two weeks, watch to see if you start something and then abandon it when you hit an obstacle. When that happens, find a way to overcome the obstacle and continue on.

Date you began this assignment _____

MY THOUGHTS ON THE BENEFITS OF STEADFASTNESS: _____

WIN WIN
SOLUTION

59. Tactful

Tactfulness means being diplomatic and skillful in dealing with people and situations. I strengthen it by being considerate of others' feelings and responding to disagreements judiciously, seeking solutions that offend no one. The opposite is tactlessness.

Comparing the actions of one who is tactful to one who is tactless		
Situation	Tactfulness	Tactlessness
Your younger siblings quarrel and cannot settle their dispute, so you...	sit down with them next day and show each how the other is looking at the issue.	take the side of the oldest one, disregarding how the other will be offended by your approach.
When a team member makes a stupid comment at the morning meeting, you...	subtly change the topic and draw the attention of the group to a positive subject.	make a nasty remark to let her know how dumb she is and move on.
Your boss criticizes you in front of your peers, so you...	tell him you will do better, even though you did nothing wrong.	decide to get even, and start badmouthing him in the staff break room.



Read here—bit.ly/tactful59—the story of Amala who learns the art of negotiation from her mother early in life, a skill she later uses to convince Christians in her school that their “friendship evangelism” is not really an ethical strategy.

Gurudeva explained: “Diplomacy, a kind of love—one not wanting to hurt one’s fellow man, suppression of the emotions of hate and anger—brings about a kind of harmony. These are products of the intellect which when developed into a strong intellectual sheath is able to control the baser emotions through controlled memory, controlled reason and controlled willpower, the three faculties of our ability to govern forces of nature.”

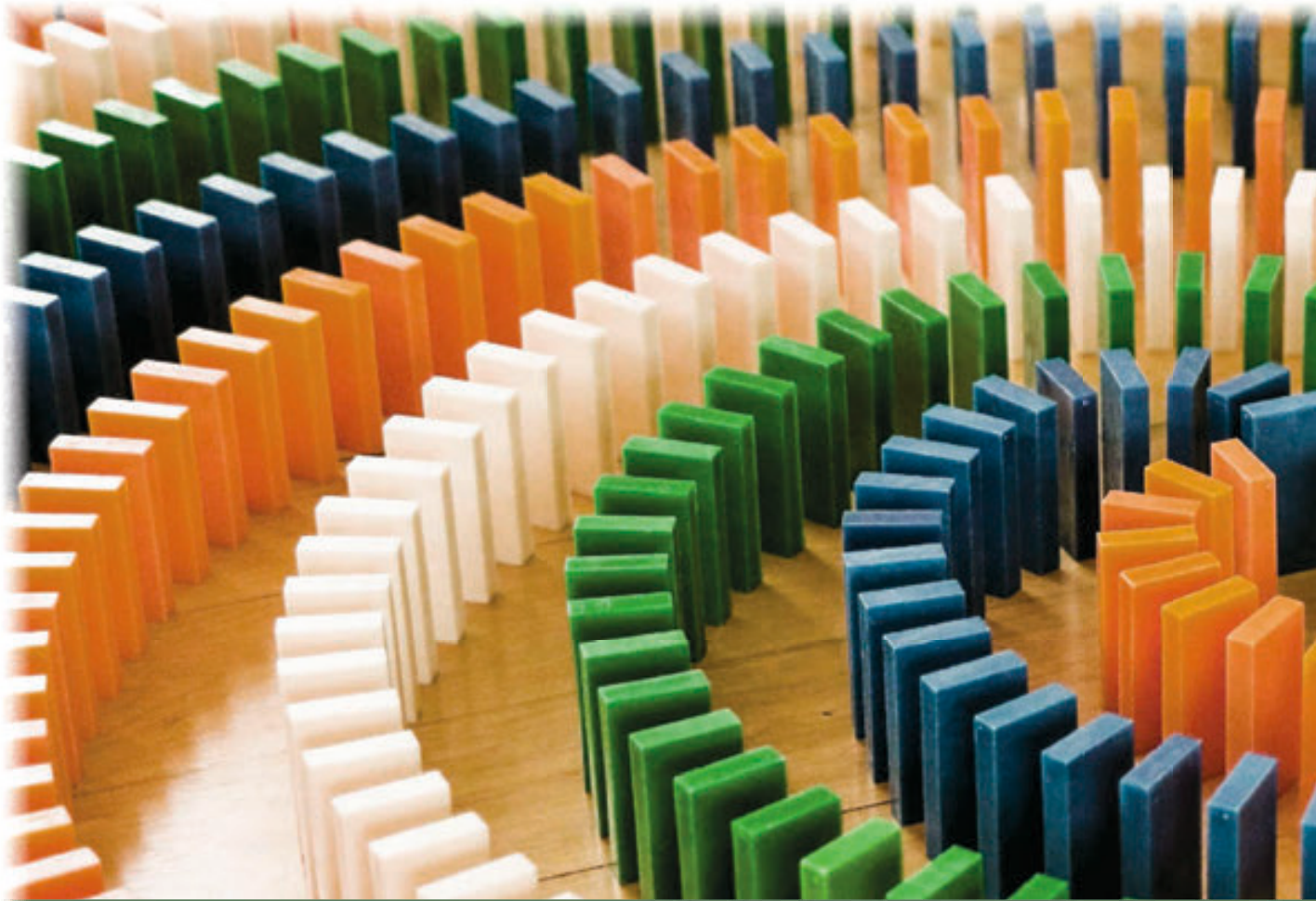
“...be tactful in what you say, and say it always with a smile...”



ASSIGNMENT: For two weeks, whenever you encounter a situation where a group has a diversity of opinions on what to do, don’t take sides. Instead, encourage the discussion to explore ways of encompassing everyone’s ideas.

Date you began this assignment _____

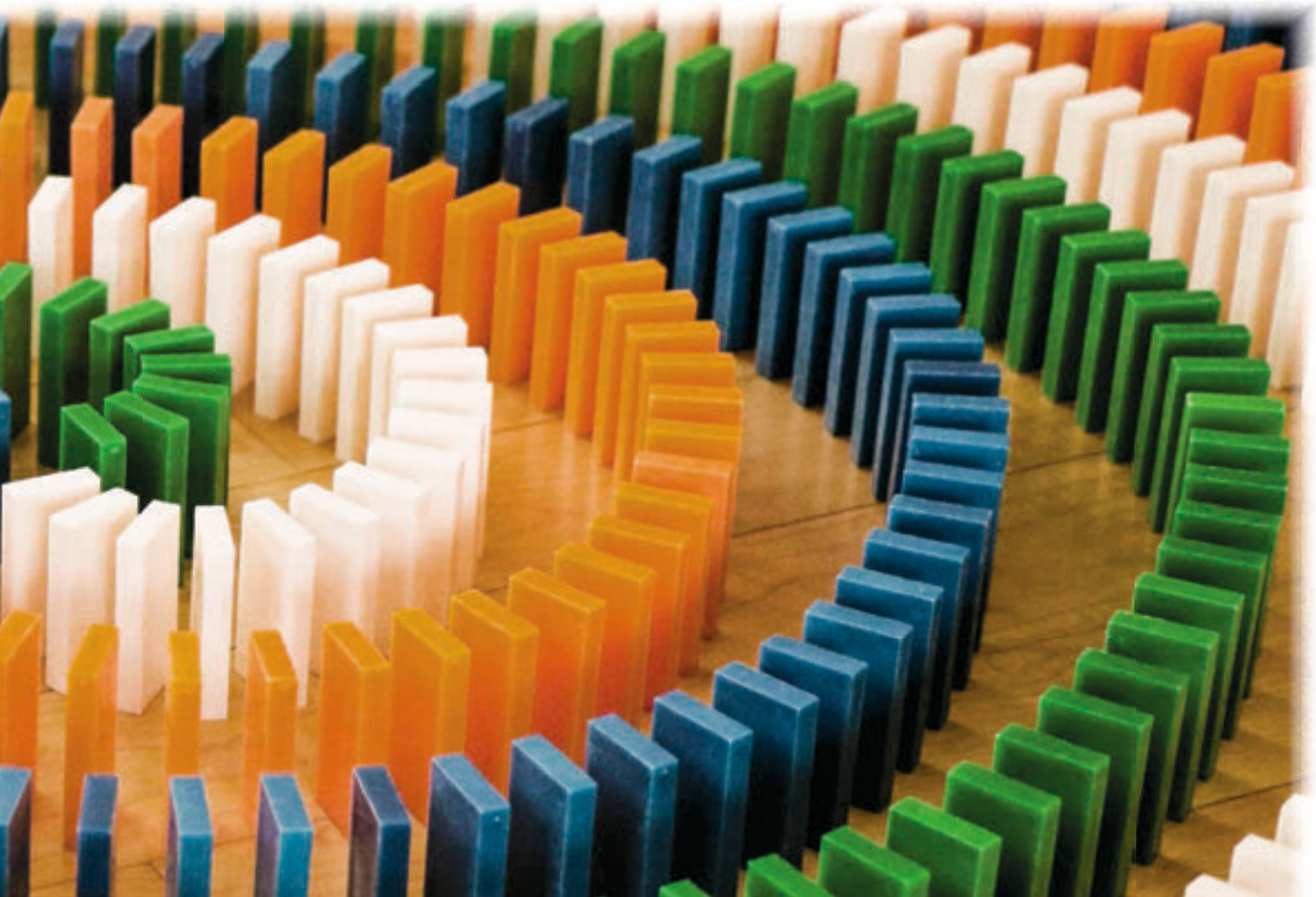
MY THOUGHTS ON THE BENEFITS OF TACTFULNESS: _____



60. Thorough

Thoroughness is the quality of taking pains to do things carefully and completely. I cultivate it by properly completing every detail of a task before I consider it finished. The opposite is cursoriness.

Comparing the actions of one who is thorough to one who is cursory		
Situation	Thoroughness	Cursoriness
Faced with your first article assignment for a magazine, you...	spend extra hours researching everything others have said on the subject.	sit down and in two hours produce an incomplete piece that is factually flawed.
Mom asks you to wash the dinner dishes, so you...	clean them, and instead of letting dishes dry by the sink, towel dry them and put them in the cupboard.	wash the dishes as she asked, but leave them wet and do not clean the sink afterwards.
The family assigns you the duty to plan a picnic, and you...	Google the perfect spot, make a menu, shop for ingredients and then purchase a special basket just for style.	put bread and cheese in a cardboard box and tell everyone to meet in the car.



Read here—bit.ly/thorough60—an exhaustive article by Devatanu Banerjee urging us to be thorough, emphasizing attention to detail, diligence, determination and keeping the overview to reach the final goal of completeness.

Gurudeva explained: “Finish that which you begin. Finish it well, beyond your expectations, no matter how long it takes. If you are going to do something, do it well, no matter if it is a simple task or a complicated one. If you’re going to read a book and intend to finish the book, then read the book, finish the book, and understand what it had to offer you, for that was the purpose for reading it.”

“A tremendous will is needed on the path of Self Realization, of drawing the forces of energy together, of drawing awareness away from that which it is aware of constantly, of finishing each job that we begin in the material world, and doing it well. Make everything that you do satisfy the inner scrutiny of your inner being. Do a little more than you think that you are able to do.”

.....

ASSIGNMENT: During these two weeks, after you have seemingly finished a task, reflect if there is anything you have left undone, and then do it, completing the work in every detail.

Date you began this assignment _____

MY THOUGHTS ON THE BENEFITS OF THOROUGHNESS: _____



61. Thrifty

Thriftiness means using money carefully and not wastefully. I practice it by not purchasing things I don't really need or that are beyond my budget. The opposite is extravagance.

Comparing the actions of one who is thrifty to one who is extravagant		
Situation	Thriftiness	Extravagance
When shopping at the market for the weekly family foods, you...	take your time to find the best prices and even bring coupons which give you greater savings.	are not much of a shopper, taking the first thing off the shelf without even looking at the price.
Knowing the kids should eat well at school each day, you...	make them a wholesome and balanced bag lunch each day.	give them \$5 each, which is costly but so much easier.
When the kids ask for more games to keep them entertained, you...	look online for free downloads instead of spending a lot for these optional needs.	buy whatever their little hearts desire, figuring "What's money for, anyway?"



Read here—bit.ly/thrifty61—a bit about the early life of Mahatma Gandhi in South Africa, who exemplified thriftiness by washing and ironing his own clothing and, though poor, maintained a rich sense of humor.

Gurudeva explained: “Siva’s devotees keep a monthly budget and regulate expenses according to their revenues. They never abuse credit or indulge in extravagant buying, for they know that spending in excess of income invites misery.”

.....
ASSIGNMENT: For two weeks, when you purchase items, take a little extra time to look for the best value.

Date you began this assignment _____

MY THOUGHTS ON THE BENEFITS OF THRIFTINESS: _____



62. Tolerant

Tolerance is being accepting of individuals of all natures, ethnicities, ideologies and religions. I follow it by honoring and striving to see the Divine in everyone. The opposite is prejudice.

Comparing the actions of one who is tolerant to one who is prejudiced		
Situation	Tolerance	Prejudice
In thinking of people of ethnicities or religions other than your own, you...	carefully avoid thinking in stereotypes, finding value in all cultures and faiths.	always think in stereotypes, looking upon them as outsiders, as strange, incomprehensible and less worthy.
When a friend confides she hates those in the LGBT community, you...	encourage her to see the Divine within everyone and appreciate those who are different.	agree that other lifestyles are both odd and morally unacceptable.
When a philosophical discussion at a party turns into an argument, you...	remain a voice of acceptance, finding strategies to embrace everyone's ideas.	argue vehemently against those who think differently, trying to make everyone accept your views.



Read here—bit.ly/tolerant62—the story of a Tamil boy and a black girl who announce their engagement and then face the reactions of their respective families, ranging from loving acceptance to bold bigotry.

Gurudeva explained: “Hindus [...] believe in the existence of God everywhere, as an all-pervasive, self-effulgent energy and consciousness. This basic belief creates the attitude of sublime tolerance and acceptance toward others. Even *tolerance* is insufficient to describe the compassion and reverence the Hindu holds for the intrinsic sacredness within all things.”

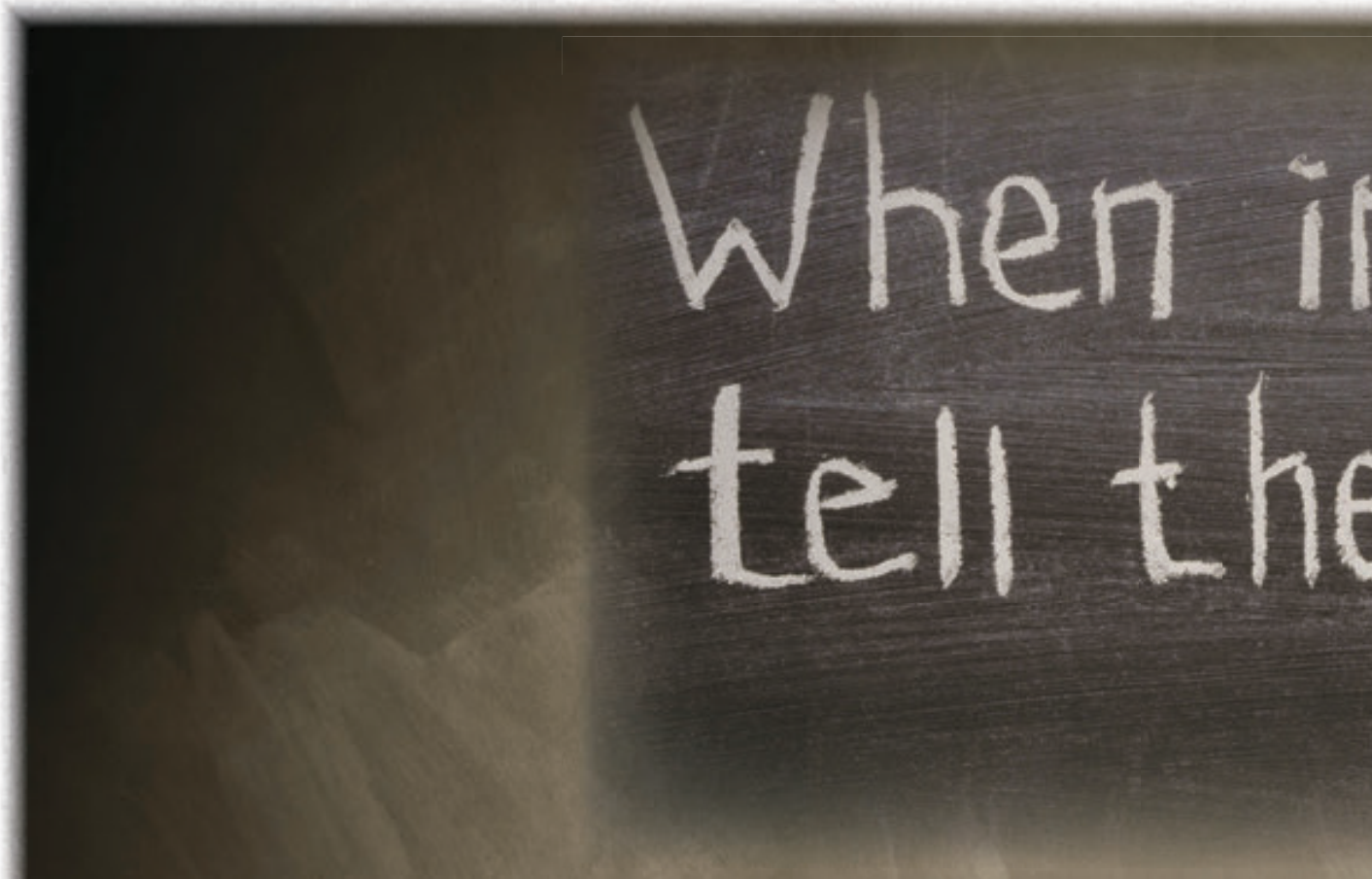
“The enlightened person living on the planet suffers the great acceptance of things as they are. No longer, through his ignorance, does he feel a need to be manipulative. Sufferance means acceptance, tolerance and a complete joyousness at seeing the Perfect ever interrelating in trillions of perfect ways.”

.....

ASSIGNMENT: For these two weeks, watch for the occurrence of stereotypes in conversations among family and friends, for instance when someone suggests that people of a particular country are lazy. Humbly share the perspective of tolerance and the wisdom of avoiding such generalizations.

Date you began this assignment _____

MY THOUGHTS ON THE BENEFITS OF TOLERANCE: _____

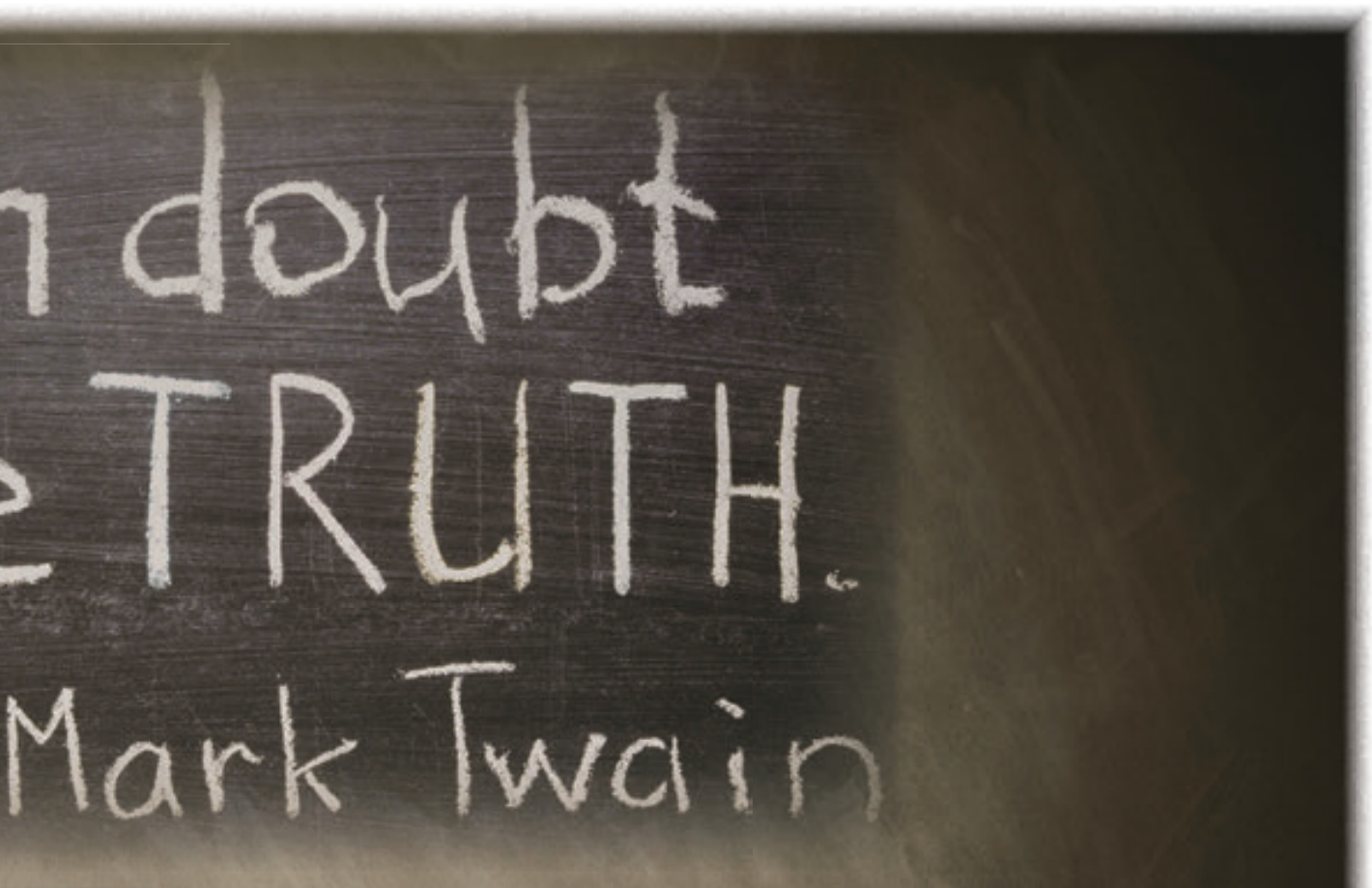


When in
tell the

63. Truthful

Truthfulness means being factually accurate and forthright. I cultivate it by not lying or practicing deception, nor misrepresenting or withholding facts. The opposite is untruthfulness.

Comparing the actions of one who is truthful to one who is untruthful		
Situation	Truthfulness	Untruthfulness
Having witnessed a crime being committed at your company, and called to testify in court, you...	tell the whole truth without hesitation, even though it may jeopardize your job.	tell just enough of what you saw to satisfy the prosecutor, trying to avoid saying anything that might get you fired.
Having received an average grade on a test in school, you...	confide in Mom and Dad that you didn't do as well as you had hoped.	give the impression that you received a high grade, knowing that they will never see the actual test results.
When a friend asks you to keep something secret that really should be known, you...	explain openly that you cannot in good conscience keep the matter secret.	promise you will keep it a secret, knowing you will have to later disclose the matter to others.



Read here—bit.ly/truthful63—the story of Anand, who makes a bad choice in befriending Jothi, a boy with a penchant for lying. Anand is himself caught up in deceit when they both hide the truth about an incident of mischief at school.

Gurudeva explained: “*Satya* is a restraint, and as one of the ten restraints it ranks in importance as number two. When we restrain our tendencies to deceive, to lie and break promises, our external life is uncomplicated, as is our subconscious mind. Honesty is the foundation of truth. It is ecologically, psychologically purifying.”

“Only by rejecting the apparent opposites, likes and dislikes, hates and loves, can true truthfulness, which is a quality of the soul, burst forth again and be there in full force as it is within an innocent child.”

.....
ASSIGNMENT: During these two weeks, watch for the tendency to exaggerate, being careful to be accurate when describing your experiences or accomplishments to others.

Date you began this assignment _____

MY THOUGHTS ON THE BENEFITS OF TRUTHFULNESS: _____



64. Wise

Wisdom is holding a enlightened perspective. This is cultivated through living well, reading, reflecting deeply, talking to the wise and accessing intuition. The opposite is foolishness.

Comparing the actions of one who is wise to one who is foolish		
Situation	Wisdom	Foolishness
Confronted with conflicting views on global warming, you...	read the opinions of experts, examine both sides and come to a solid conclusion of your own.	accept the official opinion of your political party without confirming the science.
Faced with job hunting the day after college, you...	talk to five successful people in your field to learn from their experience firsthand.	go to a psychic who uses Tarot cards to determine the direction of your new career.
Told by a doctor that you have a mortal disease, you...	spend days meditating on your life and how you will face death in the months ahead.	call your best friends over for an all-night party, enjoying the oblivion of it all.



Read here—bit.ly/wise64—a story about Usha, who has a vision of Lord Ganesha as a toddler but loses her faith as a teenager, and how Mom’s wise request for guidance from Lord Ganesha protects her daughter from potential harm.

Gurudeva explained: “The spiritual intellect described herein is none other than wisdom, or a “wise dome,” if you will. Wisdom is the timely application of knowledge, not merely the opinions of others, but knowledge gained through deep observation.”

“...wisdom is the cumulative knowledge of the existing divine laws of reincarnation, karma, dharma and the all-pervasiveness and sacredness of things, blended together within the psyche, the very soul, of the Hindu.”

“Wisdom, which is the timely application of knowledge, guides truthfulness for the adult. To attain wisdom, the adult must be conversant with the soul nature.”

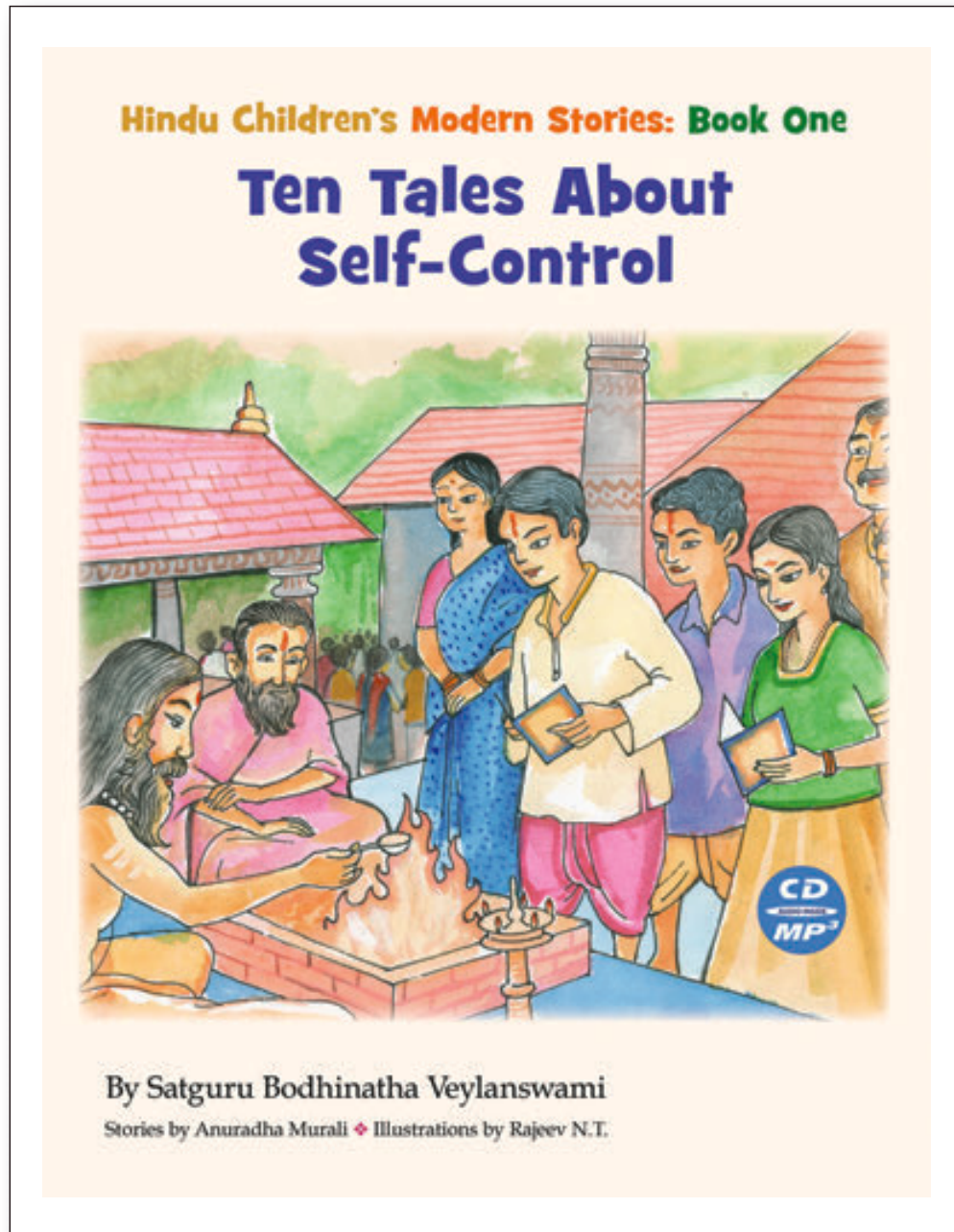


ASSIGNMENT: During these two weeks, take extra effort to find the depth of experiences around you, thinking more deeply than usual about matters and responding to others with your most balanced and relevant thoughts.

Date you began this assignment _____

MY THOUGHTS ON THE BENEFITS OF WISDOM: _____

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Hindu Children's Modern Stories: Book Two

Ten Tales About Religious Life



By Satguru Bodhinatha Veylanswami

Stories by Anuradha Murali ♦ Illustrations by Rajeev N.T.

“As a mother, I face the challenge of teaching my children—currently 9 and 11—the basic Hindu values for living according to dharma. Definitely these 20 short stories captured their attention and made a lasting impression on their minds.”

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“The children were so captivated with not only a story with beautiful illustrations on an iPad, but also with the voice that read to them along the way. They found these books easy to understand and the stories real.”

Padmaja Patel, Texas

MODERN STORIES FOR HINDU YOUTH: BOOK ONE

Growing Up Hindu



The teen years bring great opportunities and challenges. Facing all this is easier when the young have tools to apply to their experiences, and well-established personal values and character traits. In this book you will find ten stories illustrating the importance and power of knowing how to control emotions, correct mistakes, settle conflicts between peers and live without prejudice. These are more than entertaining stories. Many are true and all provide needed strategies for applying Hindu ethical principles and religious insights to the practical problems of everyday life.

\$20⁰⁰

The Youth Collection
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Growing Up Hindu

Himalayan Academy



By Satguru Bodhinatha Veylanswami

Stories by Anuradha Murali
Illustrations by Rajeev N.T.

From Satguru Bodhinatha Veylanswami's Introduction

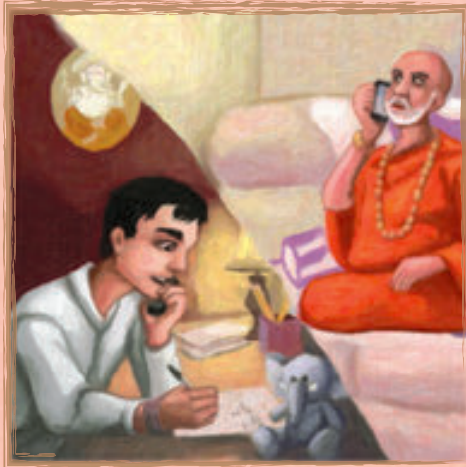
Parents often come to me for advice on raising their children as good Hindus. In response, I developed a list of ten key character qualities to develop in a child, basic qualities needed by anyone who wants to be happy, religious and successful when they reach adulthood. These ten stories illustrate how these qualities might be learned when growing up. They are set in modern US, India, Malaysia and Canada and intended for youth 14 and up—the time when we start to take responsibility for our own actions and when these important qualities should manifest.

Each story illustrates one concept, generally as instilled by the parents when their child is young and then as demonstrated in the youth when faced with a challenging situation. For example, the first quality, positive self-concept, is illustrated through the story of a young boy who successfully deals with a bully at school.

Unfortunately, too many parents of all religions believe that disciplining their children simply means to correct and punish them when they make a mistake. However, a more important aspect of discipline is to develop character. I hope that this small set of stories will provide Hindu and non-Hindu parents alike a means of instilling these all-important key character qualities in their children.

MODERN STORIES FOR HINDU YOUTH: BOOK TWO

Life Skills For Hindu Teens



Hinduism is first and foremost a practical religion, offering workable methods to solve real-life problems. Ten such tools as taught by Satguru Bodhinatha Veylanswami are presented in this book. Some are ancient, including breath control and temple worship, and others modern, such as Ganga Sadhana to relieve emotional distress and affirmations to change the subconscious mind. The ten stories in this book show how these tools are used to address difficult situations faced by modern-day teenagers. Through personal effort and religious devotion, youth can face life's trials and troubles, aligning with Hindu dharma.

\$25.00

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2

Life Skills for Hindu Teens

Himalayan Academy



By Satguru Bodhinatha Veylanswami

Growing Up Hindu & Life Skills for Hindu Teens, Emphasizing Key Qualities for Your Maturing Youth to Enjoy and Absorb

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