

Resolve to Attain Self-realization

New Year's Message by Swami Jyotirmayananda

2025 has slipped by, and you cannot get even a single second of it back; all of it has been irrevocably lost. When you enter into a new year, however, you have the opportunity to review what you accomplished in the previous year, what you want to accomplish in the coming year, what resolutions you want to make, and the kind of art you must develop to keep those resolutions.

Generally, people make grand resolves. For a few days, they are very inspired and have no trouble following them. But suddenly something happens, and they are unable to keep their resolves and then they drop them. They wait for the next year to begin anew. This is a great error.

If you break a resolve, you should develop an internal sense of repentance. Ask yourself why you broke it; then look within and intensify your aspiration. You have probably not realized that Enlightenment is your goal; you have not understood that in the midst of all the transient things of the world, only one thing can give you absolute rest and support: the all-loving God. It is because of this shortcoming that you fail. You remember everything else, but not your duty to God. Therefore, look within yourself and make a fresh resolve. If you fail in a resolve, and following that

failure you repent and make a fresh start, then the failure becomes a stepping stone to success. It is not a failure at all.

There is a parable that illustrates this point. There was once a Mohammedan saint from the Middle East who did various charitable works for his community. One day, he had so much to do that he got very tired. Thinking that he would take just a short nap, he lay down and soon fell asleep. His sleep was so sound that he completely forgot about his *Namaz*, the chief prayer that Mohammedans recite five times daily.

Now, it so happened that Satan entered his room and woke him up, telling him that it was time for his *Namaz*. He was very grateful to be awakened, but a little perplexed nonetheless. He looked at Satan and asked, "Why should you be interested in me? After all, you want people to turn away from God. Why should you be so interested as to tell me that it is time for *Namaz*?"

Satan answered, "I woke you up because once, quite some time ago, you slept through *Namaz*, but later on you repented. During that repentance God became so pleased with you that my heart, still to this day, burns with jealousy—and the same thing was going to happen today. If



you had not recited *Namaz*, you would have repented; and the merit engendered by that repentance would be worth more than a hundred *Namaz*. God would then have rushed to your aid, and I shouldn't have liked that at all. That's why I woke you up."

The moral of the story is that you should move onward with deep sincerity, even though you have failed. If you repent, search your heart, and reestablish your resolution, then that failure is not failure at all. Rather you have made a great stride in overcoming the impediment. A profound resolution cannot be broken by failure. You simply start over again. You do not have to wait for next year.

But what resolutions should a sincere spiritual aspirant make?

Resolve to Attain God-Realization

It is important not to let your mind drift over too many diverse things. A unique feature of being a spiritual aspirant is the ability to come to the point. Direct your mind to the central point, which is the attainment of Self-realization. This ought to be your primary resolve.

Do not develop the idea that such a resolve is so lofty that unless you were to become a saint you could never attain Liberation. The fact is that unless you make this resolve with proper understanding, you will never become a saint.

Attainment of the spiritual goal is a matter of removing ignorance, not of creating

something; it is always there. Suppose a friend tells you about a cave that he has discovered that probably nobody has ever visited before, a cave that has been dark for perhaps millions of years. When he says, "Let's go and explore it," you do not hesitate. You bring your flashlight and enter the cave without thinking that since it has been dark in there for millions of years it will take at least a few hundred years for the darkness to disperse. You know that the moment you turn on your flashlight, the darkness will vanish.

Similarly, you must understand that it is possible for you to dispel ignorance and to attain Liberation by introducing the Light of true Knowledge—and that should be the central resolve of your life at all times.

In addition to this central resolve, there are various resolves that go to make up the different aspects of *sadhana* (spiritual practice). These should be like satellites circling around your central resolve. Let me give you some important points about these resolves that will hasten your spiritual evolution.

Resolve to Meditate and Pray

The foremost point is the resolve to pray and meditate. To this end you must adopt the following resolve: "May I not pass a single day without praying and meditating." It is important that you maintain your resolution for prayer. Two times are highly propitious: before



retiring at night and upon awakening early in the morning. Lift your heart to God however you like. Try to feel and understand that in the midst of this all-changing world, God is the ultimate basis of your rest: the ultimate home. In Him shines the love of thousands of mothers; in Him flows the sweetness of myriad human relationships. When you love God, you'll never miss the world. When the water in a river flows into the ocean, it doesn't miss the river. Try to develop this kind of understanding.

Resolve to Promote Good-Association

The next point is the resolve for *sat-sanga* (good-association). Understand the importance of feeding your mind with spiritual sustenance. People are very much concerned with nutrition and their physical appearance, yet they hardly devote any interest at all to their minds; they never stop to consider how they should nourish their minds. *Satsanga* nourishes the mind, and in addition, helps you to think as saints and sages do. This is why *satsanga* is so important.

Satsanga has various aspects. You can listen to a lecture or a talk at a spiritual meeting, or privately read a portion from a spiritual text like the Gita, the Upanishads, or the Bible. You can also create your own *satsanga* by bringing your friends together and reading some verses from the scriptures or discussing a topic of spiritual interest.

The important thing to remember is that once you have embarked upon a plan for *sat-sanga*, do not deviate from it. Do not allow yourself to wander in the name of spirituality in talks of psychic powers and other seemingly fascinating topics of a pseudo-mystical nature that people love so much. Be careful that you do not waste your time in such vain talks. *Satsanga* should be authentic—not *satsanga* of the dullwits.

Resolve to Work with Commitment and Joy

The next important point is the need for work in your daily life. Should you really desire a life of leisure with nothing to do? Most people do. The time has come when you no longer have to go to the supermarket or the department store to do your shopping. A computerized screen tells you what every aisle of a particular store contains. All you have to do is just push some buttons, and your order is immediately registered with the store. You don't even have to get in your car to go pick up your merchandise; in a short time, a smiling delivery man rings your doorbell and hands you your packages.

Many young people are excited that things today are so much less difficult than they were in the old days. In those days, before cars were invented, if a person wanted to go to swim in a place like Miami Beach he would have to walk or ride a bike. But now you can take a car and rush to the beach, duck into the ocean, and return home quickly. Some people are really proud of this technological



development, and feel really fortunate to belong to this modern world.

However, they don't realize that in this world there are many complications. With all the scientific advancement, one still cannot be sure of things. A car may crash, a plane may come hurtling down through space, a nuclear war may start. With all our so-called advancement, life is most insecure.

Therefore, it is important not to fall for the externalities in life. Quality of life does not lie in being surrounded by technological advancements; it lies in your being able to discover your creativity and utilizing it for the good of others. If you happen to use modern mechanical devices in this process, then that is fine; but it is wrong to subscribe to the notion that since you have all these time-saving devices you do not have to work, that you can just run away from the duties of life and be overcome by inertia. Of course many people have such an idea, and that is why their lives have become miserable.

This concept of progress reminds one of the strange behavior described in a parable of a man who is ready to enter a race with his wonderful expensive horse. In his great excitement, the man mounts the horse so that the horse's head faces the east—away from the finish line, and his head faces the west—towards the finish line. As the race starts, he whips the horse, causing the horse to move with incredible speed. Feeling the exhilaration of that speed, the man is so overjoyed about how fast he is progressing. But that is not

progress. He is going away from where he wants to go. The horse, with all its speed, is taking him away from his goal.

Much in the same way, the progress of the present age, with all its speed and miraculous possibilities, is taking humanity away from the real goal. It is up to the spiritual aspirant to correct this error by not falling for life's externalities. In other words, do not make your life too comfortable. Use those products of modern technology only to make yourself more active, not to make yourself lazy or overly comfortable. Remember, comfort is not your goal. When life gets to be too comfortable, all kinds of sorrow and misery result. The old adage that an empty mind becomes the Devil's workshop is true. And from a practical point of view, if you do not like doing work that requires the muscles of your hands and feet, then your physical health will probably suffer.

Modern devices should be only a means to an end, the end being your spiritual advancement. You should view them as tools that can help you work more efficiently so that you can help yourself and humanity better. You should not become addicted to them. And of greatest importance, enjoying modern technology should not compromise your ability to do work and enjoy doing it.

Resolve to Serve God in Others

The next aspect is *seva bhav* (the spirit of service). It is the spirit of service that makes your life flow out of its egoistic

confines. You must realize that the way to truly advance in life and be successful in the spiritual sense is to contribute to the happiness and harmony of those around you. Try to help others rather than to seek help for yourself, giving as much of yourself as you can in all situations, no matter how small the contribution may be.

Unfortunately, however, most people only want to do something good for their relatives or close friends, not giving a second thought to the needs of those they've never seen before. And even when they want to do something magnanimous for their relatives, their mental attitude is cramped by many illusions. Mind is often dominated by expectations of getting something in return for the meritorious deed.

Many people think that this sort of behavior is love, but it most certainly is not. It is a tremendous illusion that you, as a spiritual aspirant, have to break. You should do good to people out of a love that does not expect anything in return. It shouldn't matter to you whether the person will ever repay your kindness or do anything for you in return. The important thing is that you have the opportunity to serve God in another person. That person could be your wife, your child, your husband, your son, your daughter, your friend, or even a perfect stranger. Moreover, from the point of view of Yoga, every relationship that you get into has a karmic basis, for it is karma that brings souls together. Therefore, you must learn the art of being serviceable to all you encounter in the Divine Plan of your life.

Being truly loving and serviceable to others, however, is not attachment or *raga*. When you expect things from others, you have become subtly attached to them. And when your expectations are deep, your ability to love and serve is limited. The day your expectations are not fulfilled, great bitterness develops in your mind and the same person you had loved and admired becomes a great enemy.

But this situation never happens when you develop spiritual understanding. From the very beginning you have no expectations. You understand that all relations are sustained by Divine Will. In other words, you should not try to secure people, you should only serve them insofar as that is possible. The more you develop this spirit of serving others—*seva bhav*—the greater your inner fulfillment will be. But when you lack that spirit, you are bound to be frustrated; you cannot help but lead yourself towards situations of great shock, sorrow, and frustration. When you practice *seva bhav*, however, there is an unfoldment of higher love and deeper understanding that inevitably fosters more enduring relationships.

Resolve to Promote Fearlessness

The next great quality that you should resolve to acquire is fearlessness. As long as you are attached to

things that change and ultimately perish, and as long as you sustain falsehood in your mind, you will be afraid. Strive to examine things closely and understand that God is the only support behind all, and when you continue developing your relationship with God through prayer, meditation, and *japa* (repetition of mantra), thereby creating powerful *samskaras* (impressions) in your unconscious. As a result, you will ward off situations that could frighten you.

When you have not secured *shubha samskaras* (positive impressions), however, your spiritual bank will go bankrupt, and you will be easily frightened. No matter how many things you may have in the world, not one of them can make you secure. You may be a multi-millionaire with remarkable health and all the things that people dream of—yet you will not be secure. Security cannot come from the world. It can only come through your internal spiritual advancement. And it is through God alone that you can be fearless. Without God there is not a place or a situation in the whole universe where you can be really secure.

As you go about developing fearlessness, ask yourself, “Am I sustaining any relationships out of fear?” In truth, most relationships are sustained by fear; people simply don’t say so because they are afraid. They think that if they overstep the bounds that define the relationship, there will be trouble.

It is also most important to ask yourself, “Am I causing people to be afraid of me?” and to recognize the ways in which you may be causing fear in others. This doesn’t mean that you cannot guide or help

them. You should certainly be firm towards your children and others whom you want to guide. But it’s a different matter when you make people live in fear of you.

The idea that people should bow down to you or humble themselves before you—because if they don’t you are going to harm them—is based on a tremendous ego-complex. It is a diseased development when one tries to maintain one’s greatness by creating an atmosphere of fear. If you keep anyone under fear, you yourself will be in a similar situation some day, because the same karma is being created for you. The goal of a saint is to be fearless and to radiate the gift of fearlessness to everyone, the gift known in Sanskrit as *abhaya-dan*.

Satsanga, fearlessness, *seva bhav*, prayer, meditation—if you follow these central points, which are like satellites revolving around the central goal of Liberation, the question of breaking a resolve will never arise. Once you have a profound interest in the project of God-realization, failure will not daunt you. If you do fail, you will simply start over again with ever-growing inner strength.

*May God
bless you with
a glorious new year!*