

## THE BIG IDEAS

### Just Be Happy

And jump with joy.

### Mistakes

Commit as many as possible.

### Without Commitment

We can never grow.

### Responsibilities

And little deities.

### Be Bold & Strong

And you can achieve anything.

### Finding Peace

The simple and practical way.

### The Altar of God

Think: the whole world.

### Got Big Plans?

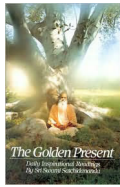
Sow the seed right now.

### Life Is a Big Factory

And we're the raw materials.

*"Life \*should\* have challenges. Without challenges it would be a bore. It is only in challenging situations that you really learn. Never give up hope. If the mind is strong, anything can be achieved."*

~ Sri Swami Satchidananda



# The Golden Present

Daily Inspirational Readings

BY SRI SWAMI SATCHIDANANDA · INTEGRAL YOGA PUBLICATIONS © 1987 ·  
416 PAGES

“What you sow you reap. Don’t worry about the future and don’t worry about the past. A great thinker once said the past and the future are not even visible. But what is visible? The golden present. Think of the golden present, sow what is necessary, what is right. Sow good thoughts, sow good deeds, and I am sure you will reap good fruits. There is no question about it. What you do comes back to you. What you sow, you reap. So do the right thing in the present, and don’t worry about the future. The people who worry about the future miss the present as well.”

~ Sri Swami Satchidananda from *The Golden Present*

[The Golden Present](#) by [Sri Swami Satchidananda](#).

Alexandra got this book after her yoga teacher kept reading amazing passages from it. It’s AWESOME.

Sri Swami Satchidananda was one of the world’s greatest yoga masters and teachers. This book is organized as a daily inspirational guidebook and it’s packed with 365 wisdom gems. I highly recommend it if you’re feelin’ it! (Amazon it [here](#).)

For now, let’s get our spiritual wisdom on with some of my favorite Big Ideas.

## JUST BE HAPPY & JUMP WITH JOY

“Life must be a challenge. Only then is it exciting. In an obstacle race, you are forced to surmount all the obstacles: to jump over the hurdles, go through the barrels, crawl under the rugs, climb over walls.

What would happen if, to avoid all that, you went around all the obstacles and asked for the winner’s cup? Would they give it to you? No. They would say, “You must go back and face all the obstacles.”

... Make your life as exciting as possible, but always think of it as fun. The adversities as well as the harmony should be enjoyable. Don’t become sober and morose and have a castor oil face in the name of spirituality. Just be happy. Jump with joy. Even if you make a mistake, say, “Hey, I did this? Great! What a wonderful lesson I learned!” If you really want to, you can make everything fun.”

The book is laid out as a series of daily inspirational readings one can enjoy throughout the year. That quote above is from the January 1 passage. My hunch is that’s because it’s super important. :)

Two big things here. 1) Life is supposed to be fun and, 2) It’s an obstacle course and those challenges are part of what makes life so fun--if we let them!

The guidance to just be happy and jump with joy reminds me of [Michael Singer](#)’s brilliant wisdom from his great book, [The Untethered Soul](#) (see Notes), where tells us: “If you decide that

*"Wherever you are, whatever you do, have discipline in your life."*

~ Sri Swami Satchidananda

*you're going to be happy from now on for the rest of your life, you will not only be happy, you will be enlightened. Unconditional happiness is the highest technique there is. You don't have to learn Sanskrit or read any scriptures. You don't have to renounce the world. You just have to really mean it when you say that you choose to be happy. And you have to mean it regardless of what happens. This is truly a spiritual path, and it is as direct and sure a path to Awakening as could possibly exist."*

Think about that: "Unconditional happiness is the highest technique there is."

Unconditional happiness.

That's the kind of happiness where you're just happy and jump with joy--making even the seemingly super difficult times enjoyable.

And, as we jump with joy and practice unconditional happiness, let's remember [Joseph Campbell](#)'s wisdom: "Nothing is exciting if you know what the outcome is going to be."

## COMMIT AS MANY MISTAKES AS POSSIBLE

"If you make mistakes it doesn't matter. Make mistakes and learn. The best teachers are your own mistakes. You learn even faster by your mistakes. Once I was at a conference with the great modern scientist Buckminster Fuller. He stood up and said, "Friends, forget about all the 'Do this. Don't do that' business. Commit as many mistakes as possible, as soon as possible. You'll become great."

It's true. Every failure is a stepping stone. Remember, though, that you can't use the same stone for each step. Every step should be on a new stone. That means you shouldn't keep on making the same mistakes. Learn well from each one. The problem with many people is that they commit the same mistake over and over. Even so, they will eventually learn from their mistake and move on. Experience is the best teacher."

The great positive psychology teacher [Tal Ben-Shahar](#) stresses again and again the importance of learning to fail. One of his favorite thoughts is that we either "Learn to fail or fail to learn."

(If you haven't checked out the Notes on [Happier](#) and [The Pursuit of Perfect](#) yet, what are you waiting for? :)

In [The Pursuit of Perfect](#) he tells us: "One of the wishes that I always have for my students is that they should fail more often (although they are understandably not thrilled to hear me tell them so). If they fail frequently, it means that they try frequently, that they put themselves on the line and challenge themselves. It is only from the experience of challenging ourselves that we learn and grow, and we often develop and mature much more from our failures than from our successes. Moreover, when we put ourselves on the line, when we fall down and get up again, we become stronger and more resilient."

So, get out there and make more mistakes. Fail more. Grow more.

## WITHOUT COMMITMENT WE CAN NEVER GROW

"Without commitment in life we can never grow. Commitment is a way of training the mind and making it obey you. You become the master of your mind. Who wants to break the commitment? Your mind. The mind pops up, "Oh, I don't want to do it," and you give up. Then wherever you go, whatever you do, the mind will have that same tendency. Think before you leap. Once you leap, that's it. Stick to it, whatever it is. Your dynamic will should be applied. "Yes, I decided to do it. I am going to do it. I will never back out." The dynamic decision itself will help you achieve success in that."

Commitment.

*"The entire universe is a university. Everything and everybody is a professor to us. We constantly learn from everybody and everything. We learn even more through pain than through pleasure. Whether we want it to or not, the world will give us the experiences we need and make us grow."*

~ Sri Swami Satchidananda

*"You are the master of your destiny. You can do it, you can undo it, and you can do it differently. Don't ever, ever blame your environment on somebody else."*

~ Sri Swami Satchidananda

It's huge.

To be \*very\* clear, a commitment isn't something we make lightly and then, if we're not feeling it, we just change our minds. We want to pick our commitments carefully and, once we decide and take the leap, that's it. Period. We do what we said we'd do. No matter how inconvenient it might be.

It might sound like an ominous thing but it's actually quite liberating. As [Jack Canfield](#) tells us, 99% commitment is actually really hard. 100% commitment is MUCH easier because we don't need to waste so much energy constantly negotiating with ourselves and letting ourselves down when we don't follow through on something we said we'd do.

The trick is to ONLY make a commitment when you're ABSOLUTELY committed to rockin' it. Quit saying "Yes" to stuff you're not totally committed to.

[Joel Fuhrman](#) has a great way to describe this in his great book, [Eat to Live](#) (see Notes). He tells us: "Do not say you will give it a try. Do not try; instead, make a commitment to do it right.

*When you get married, does the religious figure or justice of the peace ask, "Do you swear to give this person a try?" When people tell me they will give it a try, I say don't bother, you have already decided to fail. It takes more than a try to quit addictions it takes a commitment. A commitment is a promise that you stick with, no matter what.*

*Without that commitment, you are doomed to fail. Give yourself the chance to really succeed this time. If you commit to just six weeks on this program, you will change your life forever and turning back becomes much more difficult. Make a clear choice between success and failure."*

Here's to commitment!

## RESPONSIBILITIES & LITTLE DEITIES

"Almost all the devotees of God felt the pain of not doing enough to reach Him. That pain is a helpful thing. It reminds you of where you are. If you don't feel bad about it, if you just say, "Okay, Swamiji said to take it easy, if I don't meditate it doesn't matter," then you will not grow. When you are not doing the right thing, you should really feel the pain. That will help you change.

At the same time, you should know your situation in life. If you are a wife and the mother of three children, you have certain family responsibilities also. If for that reason you cannot follow all the disciplines, getting up at a certain time and meditating for an hour and doing everything, you should not feel bad; but if you are not practicing due to your laziness, then you should feel hurt. If your responsibilities don't allow you to do everything you are excused for that, because you still have your first and foremost responsibility as a wife and a mother. You have to take care of the children. That is also part of yoga. So you should ask yourself, "Am I not following everything due to my laziness, or due to my other responsibilities?" Then make the other responsibilities part of your practice also. For example, if you are all alone as an individual you may clean your altar and shrine room and decorate everything and sit and meditate. But as a mother every morning you have two, three deities to decorate. Pull them out of bed, wash them, give them a nice bath, dress them well, feed them. That is the offering you are giving to God. They are living gods in your home until you see them off to school. If you ignore them and go and sit and close your eyes and meditate, then God says, "What is this? You offer a piece of fruit on the altar, but I am here in your home in the form of your child and you ignore me."

Wow. Beautiful.

Two things here:

*"Do your daily work, deal with everyone, move with everybody. Be in the ocean, but learn to surf well."*

~ Sri Swami Satchidananda

*"If you really want to develop more faith and devotion, then think about the great benefits and gifts you have been constantly receiving. The more you think of them, the more you feel grateful, the more you feel devoted, the more you feel love."*

~ Sri Swami Satchidananda

1) It's important to be, as Seneca would say "harsh with ourselves at times." If we're being lazy, we need to be firm with ourselves and kick our butts back in line.

2) Having said that, we've gotta remember that, as Aurobindo tells us, "all life is yoga." If you've got little deities running around the house and that hour+ of meditation just isn't gonna happen, make serving them your practice! Last thing we need is God telling us: "What is this? You offer a piece of fruit on the altar, but I am here in your home in the form of your child and you ignore me."

Here's to dealing with any potential laziness as we see our families and our lives as our ultimate practice!

## BE BOLD AND STRONG

"Commitment is very important in life. Those who want to lead a spiritual life are here to change all these things and to rebuild a better world. Remember that. You have a great task, and it's not impossible. If you really put your heart and soul into that, you can do it. Begin with your own life. Let nothing shake you. You have to be really bold and strong to achieve anything in life. Be that bold. When you know that something is right, don't hesitate to follow it. Certainly there may be obstacles, tests; but don't give up. Even if you should fall down or make a mistake, get up and say, "No! The next time I'll be strong." Keep on going, like great mountain climbers, until you reach the top. If you really want to do it, you will be given the needed strength. You will have all the support. If you want it, you've got it; but your want has to be that strong."

Back to commitment.

As we know by now, it's uber-important.

It's impossible to read about commitment and mountain climbers in the same passage and not pull out one of the greatest quotes on commitment from one of the greatest mountain climbers, W.H. Murray who tells us: "This may sound too simple, but is great in consequence. Until one is committed, there is hesitancy, the chance to draw back, always ineffectiveness. Concerning all acts of initiative (and creation), there is one elementary truth the ignorance of which kills countless ideas and splendid plans: that the moment one definitely commits oneself, then providence moves too. A whole stream of events issues from the decision, raising in one's favor all manner of unforeseen incidents, meetings and material assistance, which no man could have dreamt would have come his way. I learned a deep respect for one of Goethe's couplets:

*Whatever you can do or dream you can, begin it.*

*Boldness has genius, power and magic in it!"*

Speaking of Murray and commitment, I just learned more about Murray on Wikipedia.

Apparently he was a prisoner of war in World War II and, in the midst of near starvation, he wrote his first book on the only paper he had available: toilet paper. And, when the manuscript was found and destroyed by the Gestapo, to the disbelief of his fellow prisoners he immediately started writing it again. (Wow.)

How's YOUR commitment?

Remember: "Let nothing shake you. You have to be really bold and strong to achieve anything in life."

## THE SIMPLE AND PRACTICAL WAY TO FIND PEACE

"Any time anyone complains of worry, anxiety, depression, fear, hatred, jealousy--whatever it is--let him sit back and analyze the cause. If he is really sincere, he will find out that he wanted something for himself. Selfish desire causes all the problems. Do things for the sake of others, not for yourself. That is the simple and practical way to find peace."

*"The best way to drive away the darkness is to bring light into the room."*

~ Sri Swami Satchidananda

*"Suppose I asked you to carry a big rock. You might say, 'Ohh, it's too much, I can't carry it. But suppose I gave you a big bundle of gold coins heavier than that rock? Somehow you will find the strength to drag it. That shows that burdens are simply rocks of the mind."*

~ Sri Swami Satchidananda

Feeling worry, fear, anxiety, depression, hatred, jealousy?

Check in and see if you might be focusing just a tad too much on what YOU are going to get out of a situation. Then, if you're feelin' it, shift your attention to how you can serve others and see if your tension dissipates.

I know it works wonders in my life. Try it out!

## THE WHOLE WORLD IS THE ALTAR OF GOD

"The whole world is the altar of God... If we can only change our vision and the thought, whatever we do becomes spiritual practice. So, let our lives be a constant, constant service to God at the huge altar here. The whole world is an altar. Everything is God's manifestation. Whatever you do to somebody, you are doing to God. Not only to people--to animals, to plants, to everything."

Back to the fact that all life is yoga.

In the words of Swamiji: The whole world is the altar of God.

Genpo Roshi tells us the same thing: *"We're at the point in our evolution that we all have to become conscious. This is a time of revolution. There's no holding back. So I'm about tearing down the monastery walls and seeing the whole world as the monastery, as the practice, as the spiritual temple. What we're all working on is this very being, this very life. This is the temple, it has no walls."*

As we talk about ALL. THE. TIME., it's not about going to church for an hour a week or going to your yoga class or sitting on your meditation cushion and then being a doof.

Every single moment gives us an opportunity to serve God.

So, let's.

## SOW THE SEED RIGHT NOW

"Question: Would you please speak about what you foresee in the future for the next ten or twenty years?"

Sri Gurudev: I don't worry about the future. If you take care of the present, the future will be taken care of. What you sow now, you will reap. Don't just imagine, "After ten years I'll be having all kinds of fruits and flowers in my garden, and when they grow I will go and pick them and give them to everybody." Don't sit there and visualize it, and enjoy thinking that way and waste your time. Instead, take your time and go and dig a hole and put in at least one seed. Sow the seed right now. In the golden present."

Are you dreaming about the future?

OK. It's time to go plant the seeds NOW.

What's your seed that needs to be planted? Now a good time to go rock it?

## THE WORLD IS LIKE A BIG FACTORY

"The world is full of ups and downs, positive and negative. It's like a big factory. Human beings come in as raw material, and they are in the process of becoming perfect. Look at a Detroit car factory. At one end you see the beautiful finished cars, ready to be shipped out, but what do you see at the other end? All crude raw materials. Metal sheets, nuts and bolts, that go through processing. A lot of cutting, chipping, rubbing, scrubbing, chiseling, filing, grinding, welding, pressing. Slowly, it takes shape. People are like that also. That's what you call evolution or growth. Through that we gain experience, we learn. Even a sinner is there to show you what is

not to be done. He's an example for you. By seeing him, you realize, "Oh, I shouldn't do that."

I just love that image of us coming in as raw materials and, through the factory that is the world, us becoming who we're destined to be.

The [Buddha](#) tells us: "Little by little a person becomes evil, as a water pot is filled by drops of water... Little by little a person becomes good, as a water pot is filled by drops of water."

And: "As irrigators lead water where they want, as archers make their arrows straight, as carpenters carve wood, the wise shape their minds."

While in [The Book of Understanding](#) (see Notes), [Osho](#) echoes Swamiji's wisdom as he says: "Man is not born perfect. He is born incomplete, he is born as a process. He is born on the way, as a pilgrim. That is his agony and his ecstasy, too; agony because he cannot rest, he has to go ahead, he has always to go ahead. He has to seek and search and explore. He has to become, because his being arises only through becoming. Becoming is his being. He can only be if he is on the move.

*Evolution is intrinsic to man's nature, evolution is his very soul. And those who take themselves for granted remain unfulfilled. Those who think they are born complete remain unevolved. Then the seed remains the seed. It never becomes a tree and never knows the joys of spring and the sunshine and the rain, and the ecstasy of bursting into millions of flowers.*

*That explosion is the fulfilment, that explosion is what existence is all about—exploding into millions of flowers. When the potential becomes the actual, only then is man fulfilled."*

Here's to embracing the cutting, chipping, rubbing, scrubbing, chiseling, filing, grinding, welding and pressing inherent to the factory of life!! :)

B

**Brian Johnson,**  
Chief Philosopher

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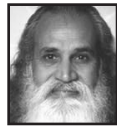
[The Dhammapada](#)

[The Book of Understanding](#)

[Conquest of Mind](#)

## About the Author of "The Golden Present"

SRI SWAMI SATCHIDANANDA



His Holiness Sri Swami Satchidananda is one of the most revered Yoga Masters of our time. A much-loved teacher, well known for his combination of practical wisdom and spiritual insight, he gave his life to the service of humanity, demonstrating by his own example the means of finding abiding peace. His message of peace, both individual and universal, has been heard worldwide. Each year, he received hundreds of invitations to speak at conferences, colleges, medical groups, and houses of worship around the globe. (from Amazon)

## About the Author of This Note

BRIAN JOHNSON



Brian Johnson loves helping people optimize their lives as he studies, embodies and teaches the fundamentals of optimal living—integrating ancient wisdom + modern science + common sense + virtue + mastery + fun. Learn more and optimize your life at [brianjohnson.me](http://brianjohnson.me).