

Using Our Common Sense

There is nothing more important in living our lives as human beings than making good decisions. Some people throughout their lives seem to continuously make good decisions. Other people's lives are a series of unfortunate decisions.

Our decisions normally come from one of three places in our being. Either we use our imagination, our thinking or we use our emotions, what we feel like doing, or there are some, who after analyzing a situation, seeing how they feel about it, go still, turn off the mind and the emotions and, so to speak, listen to their gut, to the deepest part of themselves—to what they really feel is the right thing to do. In all the confusion they are interested in what makes common sense.

Interestingly enough, that was a phrase that Gurudev Swāmī Śivānandajī used to use about the spiritual life: “Use your common sense.” We can easily become confused and misled in the spiritual life. Spiritual ideas often seem so different. Indeed, from one point of view they are meant to turn us upside down.

We feel that we are the center of the universe and that everything else is an object to us. We base our life on that underlying conviction. The spiritual life tells us that that is simply an illusion, that One alone exists, and that we are an *amsa* or part of that One alone. Not more, not less than anyone or anything else. No wonder we can become confused. And so we can try to work our way out of that confusion, intellectually, emotionally or by using our common sense.

Gurudev understood how misleading the mind can be, because it is based upon subject-object, which is intrinsically misleading. He knew how misleading our emotions can be. One moment we feel this way, the next moment another way. But our common sense is closest to the Divine within. Indeed it might be said to be a reflection of the Divine within. Because to use our common sense we have to ignore the misleading mind and the misleading emotions and just not know. In that not knowing answers come.

Therefore, to lead a successful life, be it secular or spiritual, we have no greater help than our common sense.