

Brother Ritananda
Cultivating Divine Will
Lake Shrine Temple
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In Sunday School the young boys class were asked to write a letter to God. One little boy wrote: "Dear God, Hi, out there! I have only one request: more rights for 9 year olds. I'm sick and tired of being told to wait until I'm 10." He was sick of the limitation. We're sick of the limitations that this body and that this world of duality opposes upon us. If we truly believe that we are made in the image of God as all true scriptures of the world tell us, then we will want to make the effort to meditate. There is no quicker, greater, more powerful technique available to mankind to realize who we truly are...not just 9 year olds; not 10 year olds; not this body...we are the soul made in the image of God. God is infinite, omnipotent, omnipresent. We share those same qualities and through meditation we can realize that. We have to ween ourselves away from the identification of the body and its limitations.

Guruji in Lesson 9 on meditation says: "Meditation consists of freeing the human consciousness entirely from its identification with the physical body, money possessions, name, family, country, the world, and the human race and its habits." He goes on to say: "Meditation, therefore, consists in releasing consciousness from the delusion of duality and truly resting the mind by keeping it identified with one's own real nature: unity with Spirit." That is why the foundation of these teachings is meditation. It is not just a philosophy that Guruji brought. It is a science that we can apply; not just a theory that we discuss but a science that we apply that leads to realization...that leads to personal experience of what he is talking about...that we are the soul made in the image of God...ever existing, ever conscious, ever new joy.

The topic this morning is *Creating Divine Will*. Our guru and founder, Paramahansa Yogananda, said that with regards to our spiritual progress we're either going forward or backward. We can't stand still. The determining factor as to whether we're moving forward or backward is will power and initiative. Guruji used the analogy of a river with regard to life. He said that most people -- the material man who hasn't woken up to the deeper purpose of life, the deeper meaning, the presence of God -- are all wrapped up in worldly entanglements and floats ideally downstream in the current of delusion, away from God because it's the path of least resistance. It takes no effort to be swept downstream away from God. To be swim upstream toward God, toward our true home, takes great strength, great will and initiative.

Guruji says that there are two forces in creation. When God first wanted to share this bliss with others he first created thought -- the causal realm. Then to manifest in form first astral light, then astral energy and then the grosser form -- the material existence. God projected or propelled creation out of Himself. There are two forces...repulsion and attraction -- the call of Divine Love calling us all back to our home in God. There are two forces but only one stream and in that current God has created *maya*, Satan, delusion. The sole purpose of this force is to keep us in delusion, to keep us enmeshed in materiality and this world heading downstream away from God.

It's not like we can get out of this current if we want to swim upstream and just walk over to another stream and float ideally upstream back to God. There is only one current and to flow upstream back to God we have to use our will and initiative. What will help make us be victorious in that is will power! That is, transmuting our limited human will into dynamic divine will power.

Most people are floating downstream because it takes no effort. We see that again and again and again. In a classified ad in a newspaper in Sonora, California. It read: "A stationary bike for sale. Life style change. Fat guy wants money for a new sofa." That's motivation!

We have this force working on us that keeps us in repulsion mode moving away from God. Many souls are in that repulsion mode because they don't know the purpose of life, the deeper truths. Maybe some, like ourselves at sometime, did know the deeper truths but were not motivated enough to make the effort to swim upstream. We may know the truth but aren't swimming upstream because the pain hasn't become great enough to force us to make the change. When the pain becomes great enough we will be motivated, exert our will and make that effort to swim upstream to our home in God. To be victorious in that struggle requires dynamic divine will power.

Guruji said: "There is nothing more powerful than will. Everything in the universe is the product of will." By the right use of our will we can transcend creation, this strong identification with the human body, the mind, the limitations of the world and realize once again our oneness with God. We have to cultivate that will.

What is will power? It is one of those things that is hard to define with a simple, concise definition.

There was a conductor who was trying to get his symphony to play very softly, very gently and they weren't quite getting it. So he was struggling to express what he wanted with words so he took out of his pocket a silk, finely woven, light as a feather handkerchief and threw it up in the air. It floated down just like a feather slowly back to the ground and said that is how he wanted them to play.

It's the same with will power. How do you define it? Guruji said in Lesson 2: "Will power is the dynamo that feeds all our powers. It initiates and keeps in continuous operation all our physical, mental and spiritual actions." It keeps all of our actions in motion but it still does not really answer the question: What is will power?

It is probably best described by Guruji's definition in Lesson 2: He wrote: "A wish implies a helpless desire of the mind. A desire is a stronger wish; it is often followed by fitful efforts to manifest itself into action. An intention or a determination, is a definite, strong desire expressed very forcefully once or twice through action for the accomplishment of a certain purpose. Such a determination, however strong, is often discouraged after one or perhaps several unsuccessful efforts. But a volition, divine will, consists of a series of continuous, undiscourageable, unceasing determinations and acts revolving around a desire, until it becomes dynamic enough to produce the much-craved result. 'Will and act until victory' is the slogan of all volitive activity.

No matter how impossible of accomplishment his goal may seem, the man of volition never stops repeating conscious acts of determination to achieve it, as long as he lives.”

This “continuous, undiscourageable, unceasing determinations and acts revolving around a noble desire...” That’s will power. A little boy, about twelve years old, was looking for a summer job and saw advertised in the store window of a market a position for a box boy. He went in and the owner said: “Aren’t you the same boy who was here last week?” The boy said: “Yes, sir.” The owner replied: “I thought so. Didn’t I tell you at the time that I wanted an older boy?” The boy responded, “Yes. That’s why I’m back. I’m older now.” Undiscourageable acts! That is what it takes!

We know that it takes undiscourageable, unceasing acts, yet everything in yoga happens and is accomplished in a natural way. It is the same with will power. It is this great force and yet when we exercise it or manifest it, it can result in tension, stress and nervousness. We need to keep in mind these words of Guruji: “Using will does not necessitate physical or mental strength. Exertion of conscious will means a cool, calm, determined, increasingly steady and smooth-flowing effort of the attention and the whole being toward attaining a definite goal.”

These are things to remember in the battle din of activity. A lofty noble goal is in tune with *dharma* or the cosmic order, *Rta*. Will power is an undeterrable mindset that cannot be defeated, that will never give up, even though a person may not accomplish what he set out to accomplish in this life but he will die trying. That’s divine will -- not giving up under any circumstances.

Julius Caesar crossed the English Channel in nine days to what is now England from Gaul, now France. After he marched his troops up the White Cliff’s of Dover and they had wound their way to the top of the white chalk cliffs, he brought them to the edge and what they saw when they looked down were red tongues of fire consuming every ship that they’d crossed the channel in. Their last link to the continent was gone. Their only means of retreat was gone. The only thing they could do was to advance and conquer and that’s exactly what they did. That’s will power -- advance and conquer; don’t retreat. We may fall from time to time but don’t retreat, persevere until the end. President Lincoln once said: “I may walk slow but I don’t walk backwards.” Again, conquer, don’t retreat and never give up.

As Guruji said: “Will and act until victory is the slogan of all volitive activity. I will use my dynamic power of volition to fight for the truth until success comes. If death intervenes, I shall take up my activity with renewed determination in another incarnation until I have fulfilled my good purpose.” That’s dynamic will.

We are so focused on our identification with the body with all it’s limitations and get caught up in our roles for decades or for a life time. Lord Krishna says in the *Gita* that if we’re struggling with bad habits and if we take that struggle until the end of life, we are free of that bad habit in future incarnations. We don’t have to be victorious but if we use that dynamic will power, if we fight the good fight, until the end of life, we’re free of that habit. It’s the same thing for any of our noble desires, thoughts and purposes. If we keep making the effort until the end of life it will manifest, maybe not in this life but in the next.

Daya Mata speaking to the monastics once said: “I died many times and it hasn’t killed me yet!” So that’s a definition of will power. Gurujī explains that will power works this way: a strong will creates its own dynamic force and creates a way for fulfillment of its purpose. It sets into motion vibrations that create for the soul. Everything in creation is vibration. It’s all based on the *Aum* vibration and if we apply this will again and again with determination and act around a noble desire it creates a vibration for the desired results even if it didn’t previously exist. That’s how inventions come into being.

Thomas Edison had hundreds of inventions. He was a man of volition and dynamic will power. He created the battery but only after thousands of experiments did he finally produce a usable battery. Afterwards a journalist asked him if after, literally, failing thousands of times, he wasn’t tempted to give up at some point. Edison said: “Failure! I never failed. I learnt 5,000 ways not to invent a battery but I never failed.” That’s dynamic will power!

Again, the determining factor in manifesting dynamic will is perseverance. Determination and the act of will bring out the results desired. That’s the key. We have to introspect to be sure our goals and desires are noble and in tune with *dharmā*, the universal truth; that it is in tune with *Rta*, the cosmic order. Will when used for unwholesome purposes weakens itself due to lack of support from the Truth. It is out of tune with the universal order. We want to keep our acts and determinations revolving around noble thoughts and desires so they will eventually be transformed, transmuted, into line with our lofty desires and thoughts. We can thus see the benefit, the need and how to develop divine will power.

Sometimes we may feel we just don’t have the strength to develop that will power but we can start by taking baby steps. One way Gurujī recommends to cultivate will power is to do a project that you thought you could never accomplish. He said to start small but to do it! There was a slogan about ninety years ago that is still apropos: “Just do it!” Find something you thought you could not do, like learning a new language, a new computer program, starting a new business or whatever it is, start small and then build on those successes and we will develop will power through that process.

There are other ways to develop will power than to take on new projects. Those of us who are on this spiritual path can develop divine will power merely by following this *sadhana*, a spiritual routine, given to us by an omnipresent Guru. If you analyze it, you will find that everything our Guru left us is geared to awakening this will power within us and attuning it to God’s will.

Brother went on to say that two weeks ago he spoke in depth about the Energization Exercises. How they exercise the body, purify the blood stream, strengthen the muscles but more than that, how they recharge every cell of the body with cosmic energy that helps us attain conscious control over the life force. It awakens within us the realization of our subtle spiritual nature, the soul. They harmonize the life force within the body. They work because we’re using visualization, tension and relaxation but, most importantly, will power. We’re in this motion of energy and we’re willing energy into the body through the medulla. By the process of exercising our will, we are strengthening it.

Guruji said: “Will can be utilized to develop the body and the will itself is developed in the process by the very exercising of it.” Unlike everything else in this world has that limited shelf-life -- we buy a new car and it depreciates as soon as we drive it off the lot; our bodies deteriorate even if we give it the best food, exercise, etc. Everything break down over time except spiritual qualities.

There were two old fellows who were being treated in physiotherapy and one asked the other who was in for the rehabilitation of a knee: “It that an old war injury?” The other fellow said: “Yes, I got old and it wore out.” That’s the way it works. Unlike spiritual qualities, which are divine qualities of God that never deteriorate, they grow. If we exercise them they strengthen and we never lose that. The divine qualities of the soul never deteriorate but strengthen as we use them.

Guruji went to say: “The Energization Exercises, the SRF technique of recharging the body by will, is distinctive in that it teaches one how to concentrate his attention upon the inner end, the direct giver of strength and vitality to all the tissues in the body. The faithful student will find that the practice the technique invariably and consciously develop his will power, along with his bodily strength.” The strengthening of the will is built right into the practice of the Energization Exercises as long as we practice them with concentration. If we’re daydreaming we will not benefit too much but if we practice to the best of our ability with concentration, we will progress and our will is strengthened.

Brother reiterated that the foundation of these teachings is meditation. The practice of meditation itself strengthens our will. It attunes our consciousness with God’s consciousness and it attunes our will with God’s divine will. That’s why, in the highest sense, there are no “bad” meditations. We’ve all had meditations where the body is restless, the mind is restless and agitated. We just can’t sit still and we’re so tempted to cut those meditations short but by persevering -- maybe chanting more, maybe practicing more devotion or praying more -- but by sitting there using our will to fight through that restlessness, we’re strengthening our will in the process because we’re exercising it.

Again, in the big picture there are no “bad” meditations and in the big picture our “bad” meditations should be as long as our “good” meditations because there is so much more happening. We all go through periods of dryness so don’t be discouraged -- periods where we lack devotion -- until we attain *samadhi*, oneness with God, we will all go through these things. It’s okay. Just keep making the effort -- the undiscourageable determination to act -- on the acts of meditations on that lofty, noble goal of Self-realization until the end of life.

Guruji said: “The use of will power developed by practice of SRF methods opens up limitless possibilities all around. That will power, as we develop it, will benefit us in every aspect of our life.” The key to meditation and all the SRF techniques lies in their practice. Nobody can meditate for us; nobody can love God for us. We have to cultivate that love, that desire for God.

There was a very wealthy Bostonian by the name of Charles Sumner, who was the head of a powerful committee in Washington, DC, who’d made an appointment to meet with President Lincoln. The meeting was to take place in Lincoln’s bedroom. When Mr. Sumner was led into

the room he expressed absolute astonishment to see President Lincoln shining his own shoes. President Lincoln replied: “Mr. Sumner, whose shoes did you expect me to find shining.”

Spiritually speaking, we have to shine our own shoes. Nobody can meditate for us; nobody can give us the desire for God. We have to cultivate that ourselves; we have to make our own effort. We may not always be motivated or feel the inspiration or the great devotion to meditate and that’s when we pray to God and Guru to help us. We can chant or we use affirmations but just do it, take action. To get inspiration to meditate, we must meditate. That’s the important thing.

In his book, *Feeling Good - The NewMood Therapy*, Dr. David Burns wrote: “Motivation does not come first; action does. You have to prime the pump. If you wait until you are in the mood, you may wait forever. When you don’t feel like doing something, you tend to put it off. It is often after we become involved in a task that it becomes highly motivating.” We’ve all experienced putting off a project, just resisting, and then finding it wasn’t that bad once we made the effort. If we find we’re having difficulty meditating, we just have to exert our will and do it. Even if we don’t go as deep as we’d might like, we’re benefiting in many other ways. One of the ways we benefit is that we’re strengthening our will power. We’re transmuting it from human will to divine will.

Sometimes we may feel we need a helping hand and Guruji explains that once we get on this spiritual path, the our line of Gurus are helping us. In Chapter 43 of the *Autobiography of a Yogi* in which Swami Sri Yukteswarji describes the astral world, he talks about souls that are helping us, not necessarily realized souls, but also from souls not even in the astral whose lives are mostly service. We are getting help from so many different sources.

Once a devotee asked Guruji: “Guruji, bless me.” Guruji replied: “I’m blessing you all the time. The only thing that is missing is your blessing.” We are getting help but we need to help ourselves. Guruji is blessings us so much that it may be better not to ask...we should ask but he was making a point that the help is always there and that’s why it is said that sometimes the best place to find help is at the end of your own arm. God helps those who help themselves. When we exert our will and make the effort it opens the channel for God and Guru to help us. If we don’t make the effort, we close that channel. It’s our choice. It’s a misuse of our free will.

Service is another way to develop will power. Guruji said: “Life should be chiefly service.” No matter what we’re doing, that should be our motivation, not just at the Temple but on our jobs, too. If we dedicate the fruits of our actions to God and Guru, it’s not only liberating, but helps us develop will power. As Guruji said: “Will derives it’s greatest strength from an honest purpose, a lofty motive and a noble solicitude for doing good to the world at large.”

Anytime we truly serve, setting aside selfish desires by serving God in others, that’s when will derives it’s greatest strength. Prayer is a big part of our *sadhana*. Guruji said: “Right prayer when it is persistent is willing.” By the very act of exercising it we are strengthening and developing it and are acting in the presence of God. We have the meditation techniques but we don’t spend most of our time in inactivity. We have to fulfill our family responsibilities, vocational responsibilities and all that stuff. That is what is so beautiful about these teaching. There is no aspect of our lives that needs to be separated from our *sadhana*. Practicing the

presence is how we can spiritualize each activity. One hundred percent of our concentration is needed on all our duties, whatever they are. Throughout the day we have to keep cultivating the habit of bringing the mind back to God.

That process takes great will power because as Brother previously explained there is this conscious cosmic force, *maya*, which keeps us enmeshed in delusion so that we're being bombarded by sensations, desires, temptations, moods, emotions, such as anger, greed, jealousy, resentment at all times. We need a strong will not to react to this stuff and to bring the mind back to God. It takes tremendous will power and in that process we are attuning with God's will and strengthening our will. We are transmuting it right then and there into dynamic divine will.

Guruji said that the evolution of our wills may be hastened by right thinking and right activity. When we analyze it, our spiritual *sadhana* is the essence of right thinking and right activity. He defines the SRF balanced path as devotional meditation and right activity. Persevering in our spiritual *sadhana* will help us realize the goal of cultivating that dynamic divine will power.

Everything we need to strengthen our will power, to attune it to God's will, is right there in our *sadhana*. Master has said that will power governs evolution. Every time we pursue a worthwhile endeavor, a noble goal, a noble desire, practice of the Energization Exercises, meditate, pray, serve others, practice the presence, we are strengthening our will. Our *sadhana* is geared toward strengthening our will power, which in turns gives us greater and greater control over our evolution.

Master once said: "Learn to turn the wheel of life and not be run over by it." That appeals to all of us. As we develop our will, in a way as simple as following our spiritual *sadhana*, we are gaining greater and greater control over our evolution. We are cultivating greater and greater control to "turn the wheel of life instead of being run over by it." Then we can "stand unshaken amidst the crash of breaking worlds." We cannot control everything outside of us but we can control how we react and process those things. We can learn "stand unshaken amidst the crash of breaking worlds" by developing our will power, by attuning it to God's divine will power.

It is stated in the scriptures that seventy-five percent of the material, worldly man's life is destiny. That his fate is scripted; that it is dictated by previous karma. That is not "turning the wheel of life that is being run over by it."

Brother reiterated that once we realize these deeper truths and make that conscious commitment to make that a noble desire, to evolve our ambitions and acts around and with our will power, we can take an eraser to that script so that one hundred percent of our life is under our control. Not necessary the control over our outer circumstances but how we react to them. Then we can "stand unshaken amidst the crash of breaking worlds."

To cultivate dynamic will power and to attune to God's will we need nothing more than perseverance and that's why Guruji said: "Continuous will is divine will." One of the most important things we should remember is that he said perseverance is the whole magic to spiritual success. It is very simple and very difficult.

There was an egotistical scholar, a pundit, who was a skeptic. A guru came to his town. The pundit didn't believe in God and he wanted to prove that this guru was a fake. He went to the ashram to meet with the guru and said: "If you're a true guru, then grant me a revelation." The guru said: "I can do that. I'll tell you what. I want you to return to the ashram tomorrow at the same time. Between now and then I want you to outside and raise your arms to the sky and God will grant you a revelation." The next day the pundit came back and says: "I did what you said. I went outside, I raised my arms to the sky and it was raining so water ran down my sleeves and down my neck. I felt like a complete fool." The guru said: "For the first day that is quite a revelation."

We need to live life consciously. When the chapter of this life is over and in the astral, we will review this life. When we look back, we realize that we have received this tremendous blessing. If we haven't made the effort to use our will to taken advantage of this golden spiritual opportunity, we too will feel like complete fools. In the astral world that brings much pain

During the early days of WWII when England stood alone against Germany, President Roosevelt wrote a letter to Winston Churchill and in it he included Longfellow's poem written in his own hand. Churchill took that letter to the House of Commons and asked for permission to read it. He read:

"Sail on, Oh Ship of State!
Sail on, Oh Union strong and great.
Humanity with all its fears
With all the hope of future years
Is hanging breathless on thy fate."

When he had finished reading it, Churchill looked up and asked: "What is the answer I should give to this great American leader?" The response sent by Churchill was: "Give us the tools and we will finish the job." It took more than that to defeat Germany but we've been given all the tools we need in our battle against spiritual ignorance, in our battle of our war against *maya*. We've been given all the tools we need to be victorious by simply practicing what we've been given. JUST DO IT and we will be successful! We're working with a science; it works like mathematics; it can't fail.

Brother closed with the following words of Guruji from *Man's Eternal Quest*: "I know that great men can be made or developed from seemingly nothing. There is a way to become great. It does not require this extraordinary power of vision. By wisdom, by right training, by right practice of the Self-Realization teachings, you can develop that power of will and bring it in to full play. The ones who made the struggle long ago, are the ones who now see the fruition of their activities. You must discover the power you have. You must strive to overcome inherent possibilities."