

Greenfield Retreat – Sister Usha- Satsanga  
Answers to Frequently Asked Questions  
September 6, 2017

Sister Usha gave a brilliant and very practical satsanga at this past weekend's amazing Greenfield retreat. The last two retreats have been so beautifully transformative. Apologies for never being able to capture the inflections and beautiful spirit of the monastics who teach us so beautifully. I know I miss adjectives and sometimes whole sentences, depending on how fast the words come. So tremendously inspiring. We are so blessed with this path and the dear ones who do all they can to help us in our journeys to self- realization.

1) Questions: The study of our Guru's teachings is daunting. They have such far reaching effects on so many areas of our lives. Can you give us some examples of how to study? There's just so much. Where do I start? I read a lot, but I don't always absorb the teachings. They just seem to wash over me.

Sister said that when she first entered the ashram, the only books available to the monastics were Autobiography of a Yogi, Whispers from Eternity, Songs of the Soul, The Science of Religion, and Scientific Healing Affirmations. We had one cassette: "Songs of My Heart". Now we have tomes, as Mrinalini Mata loved to say. More will be coming with the new lessons and a new volume of Master's lectures.

Ask Master to guide you to whatever book of passage you need the most. The nuns use the open method. If you have a problem or a question: pray on it, open any lesson or book, and see where your finger lies. The passage will apply, or if it doesn't immediately have some bearing, you will find out soon how it does. Everyone is different, so how we approach our reading and studies will be different. We have the lecture series, which includes The Divine Romance, Man's Eternal Quest, and Journal to Self-Realization. You can attend the SRF services at a temple or center and hear the service readings. When you read these, or the Lessons, feel that he has created these just for you, that you are sitting at his feet absorbing these truths.

If you are more artistic in nature and like poetry, we have Wine of the Mystics, Whispers from Eternity, and Songs of the Soul. If you need affirmations, we have Scientific Healing Affirmations, In the Sanctuary of the Soul: A Guide to Effective Prayer, and Metaphysical Meditations. Our scriptures are The Second Coming of Christ and God Talks with Arjuna. These require deeper study. You can use the index to study one subject or

read it cover to cover. You may only read a paragraph a day. It may take years to finish, and then you can start again.

Other inspiration and answers may be found in the SRF Magazine, Where There is Light, and The Spiritual Diary. Daya Mata always kept a copy of the diary right by her chair and reflected on it often during the day.

If you want to read something a little lighter, we have Mejdā, written by his brother Sananda Gosh, which includes many stories of Yogananda growing up, and there's even on comic book on Master's life. Sister Parvati recommended that we read the diary notations in the back of the book God Alone. Imagine reading someone's diary! Reflect on her wisdom, and become immersed in her state of consciousness. Mejdā also includes discourses in the back of the book from Master's talks recorded by his brother Sananda, which reflect a uniquely Indian perspective.

Our studies not only involve reading, but also listening to the many recordings that SRF has published. This is a good time to listen to the lectures by Brother Chidananda. It is a good way to get to know our new president. There are three of them.

Introduce yourself. You don't need to feel overcome by the amount there is to study. Master said that one thought can redeem us. Master always emphasized putting his teachings into practice. He told us, it's not what you read, but what you do with what you read.

He also told us, if you practice one millionth of what I tell you with these Thursday night services, you will be redeemed.

So how do we gain more? In the fall of the SRF 2016 SRF magazine, there is an article on The Science of Spiritual Study and the Art of Introspection. Brother Anandamoy has a little pamphlet: Converting what you Read into Realization. To benefit fully from God's warmth, these demands that we take it to heart. Mentally picture it. Visualize it, till the fiery image emerges free from limitation.

Fully understanding the scriptures may take one or two lives. When the meaning becomes one with you, meditate on it. In meditation, the direct knowledge of everything is received. If you don't have time to study on a regular basis, take just one truth to focus on. For each of us, there is some piece of scripture that inspires us. Try every day to live that truth so that your study becomes self-realized.

Next to meditation, spiritual study is one of the most effective tools to use to remain in tune with our Guru. Sometimes we feel we were born decades too late, that we missed out on his training. Brother Anandamoy reminded us that in his teachings, in reading the Lessons, we find the same guidance that the early disciples received from Master.

Beginning in the Spring of 2017, the SRF Magazine began publishing a four part series, Analysis and Introspection: How to Live Skills. The first issue includes the skills that Master set forth which are necessary to master the art of balanced living. The skills that he wanted his students to master stretch out over four issues. The editor suggests that you prioritize each item. The first list, from the Spring issue, includes things. Rate the list with one for those skills that require the most urgent attention and need additional effort and concern. Skills marked 2 are those where you are making progress but need to perfect. # indicates skills that now are habits in your basic spiritual life that you have mastered. Sister Usha revealed that she only had two skills marked 3.

By doing this, you will have a personalized plan to work on your true goals and aspirations.

The first section is on our physical skills. He calls it our God given purpose and rule of the human body temple. An example is "Mental engineering": the art of keeping our mental life free from the bacteria of fear, boredom, idleness, etc.; Developing the will power for putting forth a plan; the art of injecting the tonic of cheerfulness.

Social skills in the second section include the need to possess versus the need to share. Having a noble bearing; showing genuine interest in others; protecting inner peace from the robbers of unfair circumstances; Being happy and making others happy.

Another example of help with reflection includes reading God Talks with Arjuna as a key to spiritualize our life. Master explains that as consciousness descends the cerebral spinal centers, it touches wisdom in the medulla, calmness in the cervical, divine love in the dorsal. We don't have to be victimized in life. Concentrate on the cervical for wisdom, focusing on the cervical can bring calmness.\*

Get Master's sayings in your consciousness. They will come back to you when you need them most. Mrinalini Mata tells a story of how this happened to her. (Paraphrased) She said that was spending a weekend at a mountain retreat. She said, I felt so sorry for myself and so sad. I felt that no one loved me, that all had forsaken me. Master had gone. I didn't want anyone

to see me in this state. It was snowing outside. Master told us we must be happy.

But I didn't see any reason to be happy. Then, in my head, I heard Master say, "Nothing can make you unhappy if you choose to be happy, and nothing can make you happy if you choose to be unhappy." I responded, but nothing can make me happy and I don't see any reason that I have to be happy. In my head again, I heard Master say, "The greatest sin against spirit is to be unhappy." No matter what I said, he had something to say to bring me out of it. Finally, it made me laugh out loud. I felt that my heart would burst with joy. Master is the raft that takes the devotee across the sea of delusion to God.

Participate in the study groups, e.g. the study of the Gita at Greenfield, or select a friend and start an informal group. Read a lesson from the anthologies or the scriptures. Each of you can select a favorite quote, write it down and share it.

Question 2: The current state of unrest in the world occupies the mind of many devotees. Many monastics, too, Sister Usha added. How do I deal with it?

Mrinalini Mata said there is so much suffering resulting in agitation of the mind. When asked what message Master said to take then, when one is in this state, what came to mind was one of the most beautiful thoughts that Master left with us: "May Thy Love Shine Forever on the Sanctuary of My Devotion, and May I Be Able to Awaken Thy Love in All Hearts." So many times Master said that this is the one prayer I love the most, the most caring with no motive for personal gain. It expresses the sole purpose for my being in the world. How do we get rid of the darkness? We can't do it with a machine gun or by hitting it with a stick. We need to bring in the light.

Living by this universal light can help us bring light to the world. You bring this prayer to fruition when you authentically offer that prayer with loved ones all over the world, because total fulfillment and freedom from suffering can be found only in God's love.

Sister Usha said that she also gathered responses from senior monastics who were conducting a retreat in Brazil, Sister Priya, Brahmachari Martin, \*(and Sister Usha). They all indicated that life is difficult with lots of struggle, inward and outward.

3. Question: After all the years as a Kriyaban, I thought it would be easier to meditate when I got older. What advice do you have for us aging devotees?

The person, who asked, didn't say why it's hard. They may require individual counseling. Don't hesitate to call Mother Center for counseling if you are stuck and need help. The monastics are here for that. We may be doing something that is hurting our meditation. The third person's view can help us to see that.

Some devotees find that as they get older, there is a greater accumulation of spiritual power. All of us have cycles- periods of growth where we seem to go backward or have stagnation. This can happen at any age. Can we do anything about it?

Take some time to introspect to see what needs to change in your attitude, action, or thought. The body may not be as pliable. You may be moving forward, but may need additional supports, like a back brace. If you are involved in physical therapy, do what your physical therapist recommends.

Master told us that our personal relationship with God is more important than all of the techniques of yoga. If you have that, you are making progress. Master said, "I love him, and he loves me. Nothing else matters".

One of the older monastics said, longtime Kriyabans are like the marines of Kurukshetra. They go in, and they get the job done.

Think of yourself as being stronger. You may walk with a walker, but you are no less spiritual. Think of the body the way Sri Yukteswar did, when he said to throw the dog a bone. Ask for Master's help to go deep.

Review the techniques from the lessons, Hong Sau, Om, Kriya regularly. The lessons point out all of the possible benefits. Sometimes as we age, it is more difficult to concentrate. Straighten up and strengthen your mental focus. Hold all the mental love and gratitude in your heart.

Master said the spirit in us is ever youthful, full of vitality. Age means little in our search for God. The inner spirit hears your cries for freedom and self-realization.

Question 3: I was struggling with my computer. It wasn't working. I got into a mood and couldn't get out of it. What do you recommend to get out of a mood?

The fact that we are aware of a mood is a big step. Most people are so used to experiencing anger and confusion that they don't notice moods, so they don't want to get rid of them. Moods are unresolved emotions churning inside of them that they bring to meditation.

One way to deal with moods is to see what comes up in meditation. If it does come up, it's an opportunity to face and release these feelings. It helps to write it down. Both questions and answers. Ask: What happened? What are my questions and feelings about it? How do I want to deal with this and similar situations in the future? With practice and a lot of self-awareness, you'll find it easier to practice self-control and evenness of mind.

Take a moment to calm yourself with slow breathing. Tense and relax. Do some Hong Sau. Read "Overcoming Moods" in Man's Eternal Quest. Brother Anandamoy recommended doing something physical, if possible. Understand that these are just moods. They don't last. We are not the body and its moods. We are the ever existing soul.

Before starting each day, tell God that everything is for him. For the good things that happen, say thanks. For the bad things that happen, ask him, help me to make something good out of this. How can it help me grow?

Think of God as the nearest of the near, the dearest of the dear. This is a most potent remedy. Use it and you'll find you don't step into moods as much. Realize the good or bad you've been given, and give it all to God. Use it to feel God's presence and the gurus' presence, always. Now it seems to be going away.

The monastics (visiting Brazil) also commented on this question.

The gurus have not abandoned you. This is the next stage on the path. Here you are learning real love which is giving rather than receiving. Master has not abandoned you. He is holding you tighter than ever.

The devotee learns to absorb God in more subtle ways, learning unconditional love and to love God more than His gifts.

St. John of the Cross said that you are being led to a more spiritual relationship with God. Abide with peace. Look at him as if opening your eyes to look at loved ones.

Another senior monastic said, "Join the club". They are testing your wings like a fledgling bird. God and guru play hide and seek. Feel his love enveloping you. Than can change your perception. Surrender. Whatever you

will, Gurudeva. Feel that he is giving you this. Break through the temporary inertia, the dark night of the soul that happens to all.

Now that you know the existence of the gurus, perhaps you want to see if you love them more than their gifts. The gurus have not abandoned you. It is impossible for them to do so. See if your soul will look for them, and discover them hiding in your soul. Go on, and develop a child-like faith and trust in God and the gurus. They will reciprocate with their love for you and one day they will capture you and you will be ever one with them.

Question 4: How does one overcome the need for sleep with meditations early in the morning and late at night?

You can overcome the need for sleep. It catches up with you. Some are morning larks and some are night owls. Take advantage of which one you are. Check your posture. Keep your eyes uplifted. Tense and relax. Don't allow the habit of "sleepitation". Cut out time wasters like tv and the Internet so that you can be efficient with your time. Naps are very helpful, especially in the afternoon or evening. We honest with yourself about what the issue is.

There is an SRF leaflet about alertness in meditation. Read that. Don't underestimate the presence of devotion. If you know you are in the presence of the great gurus, when you are meditating with someone you deeply revere, that should keep you pretty alert.

Use affirmations. We made a collection of affirmations. Lesson 16: I am ever awake thinking of Thee. Lesson 19: I am ever awake. Lesson 74. My body temple is filled with light. It permeates every particle of my being. I am living in that light. I thank Thee my Father, for keeping me always awake and ready.