

## Opening Our Hearts and Minds to the Guru

Sister Bhakti

2018 Convocation Thursday August 9-7:30 p.m.

(DISCLAIMER: These notes are our best attempt to capture the essence of what was said at this class. There is always a degree of human error involved when taking notes and we have transcribed them to the best of our ability.)

Sister Bhakti welcomed the Convocation devotees first in English and then in Spanish, as did most of the monastics who spoke at Convocation.

We may speak different languages, but in our daily life, we all speak the language of the heart. Master said that YSS/SRF devotees are like shiny jewels scattered across the earth. That is how Master sees you!

There is so much joy at Convocation. This room feels like a temple. Why? Because Master is here. You would not be here if Master and his teachings had not deeply touched your mind and heart. We still need to open our minds and hearts every day to Master, anew.

When I first read "The Autobiography of a Yogi," there were many questions I had always pondered over. When I read Master's book, the answers came one after another, and I was deeply moved. He talked about God, and I thought, "That's what I want, that kind of relationship with God. There are always those aspects of his teaching – the silent and devotional aspect of them, that bring our sadhana to life. We have a living link with Master and his blessings.

This motivates us to cultivate a more personal relationship with Master, to open both our minds and hearts. We can relate to him. He went through many of the struggles that we all have had. He comes to tell us that we can do that too.

Rajarsi Janakananda summarized our relationship with the guru: "Master came to give us God, and all we have to do is receive Him. I'm not referring to the passive receiving where we sit back and get inspired. If we did that, it would save him a lot of time and trouble. Learning by doing is the best way to learn. When we apply the techniques and the rules of spiritual living, they become a part of our character. We transform our consciousness to be part of God's process. Remember, He doesn't do anything for us that is not in our best interest.

Mrinalini Mat recalled that Rajarsi said the following after Master's passing" " I have been with Master today. There is a great celebration going on in the astral. Master is very aware that we are missing him. He told me, "I could appear to them now in form, but if I did so, they would be content to stay where they are. They need to come where I am."

One of the principles of spiritual learning is that he will guide us until we reach the ultimate goal. He even takes some of our karma. From the guru's side, all of the doors are open. We just need to give our willing cooperation to open the door on our side and see.

What about our consciousness amidst this fast and changing world? One thing we can do is talk to the guru throughout the day. Or we can talk to him and ask him to help us overcome some habit, to just to say thank you.

Where I work, we start the day with prayer. It helps me to stay more focused and calm. Daya Mata said, "To me, the meaning of discipleship is to live in the thought of the guru's presence. Keep our mind here. She would then point to the Christ center.

It can be especially challenging in today's world to keep the mind anchored on God and guru. There are so many things competing for our attention: demanding jobs, family responsibilities, and so forth. It is difficult to give enough time and care to those things and to still find time for meditation.

So much information is coming to us from other sources. We have the means to find out what everyone else is doing and everything that is going on in the world. Many people look at their phones every five minutes, and if they don't they feel that they're missing something. I don't think any of you are doing that. (Laughter)

Think about how it would be if you focused with that same urgency on Master, saying that frequently, "I love you Master." Every minute is a link between God and guru, and if you do that, you'll find what you have really been missing: peace to your soul.

We just don't want these electronics to ruin our lives. If you want to keep connected to God, open up to the ways to do it. Use the little gaps of time to bring the mind back to God. Keep little pictures with you and around the house to remind you of guru.

What is your first thought when you get up in the morning? Is it, "Oh, I have so much work to do. How am I going to get it all done?" Or you can think of Master.

Meera Ma, who was known for her cheerful ways, began her day by saying, "All right, Master, what are we going to do today." The important thing is putting him first before opening up to problems. If we do this, then we will have more creativity for problem solving. Turn to God for help.

There was a devotee who was very dedicated to Master and was considering leaving her job. She was facing many difficult situations at her job. She was in charge of a team of people who weren't very cooperative. One was extremely suspicious of her and treated every kindness from her as having an ulterior motive.

She made up her mind to daily seek Master's help. She took Master with her to work every day, and every day she asked him to help her. She also stayed calm and visualized herself surrounded by harmony. She would ask him, "How should I manage this situation? How should I handle these personalities?"

She noticed that a woman who complained a lot was actually a very good worker, so she started to encourage her. The woman began even to like Master's affirmations. Four years later, this devotee

received an award for how she dealt with people on the job. She told me, "All the credit belongs to guru." She felt that she was able to change because she sought his help and applied his principles.

The ego is usually defensive. We get upset. But when we align our thoughts with him, we change our thinking. Let's try taking the thought of guru into our daily life situations. Doing this throughout the day helps to keep the mind and heart from feeling restlessness during meditation. You can feel that peace that you cultivated during the day.

The most destructive force that we all have to fight is the unwillingness to meditate. We need to make sure that we don't make excuses for not meditating. Ma used to tell us, when we told her our work was making it hard to find time for meditation, "If I can do it with the responsibilities that I have, then you can do it too."

Master used to say, "Never give up your meditation for unimportant things. Make the time. We really need to want to do it. Make it a priority, a necessity in life." If there are periods when you can't do the full routine, don't take an all or nothing approach. Do the best you can with the time you have. Whatever the length of the meditation, it makes all the difference if we fill our meditations with Master's presence. Think if you were able to meditate with Master every morning. Think about this the next time you meditate. He is there! Just fill your heart with love for him and think strongly of the guru before meditation. God's presence, through the guru, will flow through you.

There are two things I want to emphasize.

1. Don't carry your work or problems into your meditations. Meera Ma used to say, "Leave your worries and troubles outside of the chapel. Then you will know the truth about Master's practice. It is amazing how tenaciously we can hold onto our problems. If we hold onto God instead of problems, you will feel your problems lightened."
2. We are putting limitations on what we will accept from God and guru. To know God, don't expect anything. Just launch yourself into his blissful presence within. If you don't receive what you expected, they might be giving you an opportunity for unconditional love."

Sister Gyanamata used to say, "I do not ask for marvels, but for realization. As I crawl along, I'm sure that the changes are coming over my whole being." She always looked forward to meditation. She never gave in to discouragement, even though her body was in great pain.

Look forward to your meditations when you go to bed. Look forward to your morning meditations and think tomorrow is another opportunity to meditate and be with Master. Talk to Master inwardly to cultivate a loving relationship.

“Sometimes we say, “I wish he would talk to me too.” He talks to you through his writings, through the SRF teachings. He told us, ““When I am gone the teachings will be the guru....Through the teachings you will be in tune with me and the great gurus who sent me.”

Before long, we will have more of his inspirational writings. When the new Lessons come out, you will have an additional chance to put into practice these gems of wisdom. His light is present in every word he’s uttered. He helps us to be receptive to the Lessons. Master is willing and eager to give to you.

If you have a question, find and read his teachings, and you will find the answer you need. These writings can be a source of personal guidance from master. When dealing with maya, Master’s teachings will come to our aid if we make them part of us.

Mrinalini Mata writes of a wintertime experience when she was feeling sad as she was walking in front of the retreat. She had the thought, “Master said you must always be happy.”

She countered with, “I don’t see any reason to be happy.”

The she heard, “Nothing can make you happy if you choose to be unhappy and nothing can make you unhappy if you choose to be happy.”

The she thought, “But everything is conspiring to make me unhappy.

“If you have given up hope of ever being happy, cheer up. Never lose hope.”

She argued, But I don’t see any reason why I have to be happy.”

The thought came back, “The greatest sin against spirit is not to be happy.”

She explained that no matter what argument I had, Master’s teachings came to mind. I felt I had a verbal tussle with Master. And he always wins. Then, I felt as though my heart was going to burst with joy, because I thought Master, in his own words, had guided me. “

This story reminds us that if we read Master’s teachings for a half an hour or even five to ten minutes a day, we will grow in attunement with God. Many of us in the ashram open Master’s books at random for guidance. Once, I opened one of Master’s books that way.

I opened the book to the story “Two Frogs in Trouble”. You know, Master has a wonderful sense of humor.

“There were two frogs living in a pond near a farm, It was spring and the grass was green with colorful flowers decorating it, There were swans swimming in the pond, butterflies flying around and fishes swimming and playing. It was a beautiful day and the big frog was very happy to sit and do nothing all day. The small frog jumped from behind the big frog "Get up! Let’s go and play in the pond" called to his friend.

The small frog jumped into the water with joy, the big frog followed. They swam in the pond happily, they crossed the pond into the barnyard having fun and playing on their way, leaping with joy. In their

joy they were carelessly jumping around. It was the milking time at the barn and the frogs accidentally jumped into a bucket half filled with milk.

Insides of the bucket were slippery and it was hard to hold on to, they tried very hard but there was no way for them to get out. They were forced to stay inside and swim. They kept swimming for some time, it was tiring them. The frogs shouted "Help! Help!" , unfortunately there was no help coming their way.

The big frog groaned "What is the use of swimming, we will die here anyway, I'm already tired, and I can't swim anymore". "Don't give up my friend, let's keep trying, or else we will die" encouraged his little friend. They swam for some more time after that. The big frog finally said "I can't swim anymore, It is of no use, we will die anyway, I'm going to quit". The big frog stopped and it gradually sunk into the bottom.

The little frog said to itself, "I'll keep trying as long as I can, or else I will also die". So he kept swimming for couple more hours. His legs were moving very slowly, hardly managing to stay on top. The little frog thought of giving up and ending his life, which seemed to be the only option he had.

He remembered what happened to his big friend and kept trying with all his might. "I will keep trying until I die. As long as I keep trying there is hope" thought the little frog. He swam with all his strength, he was getting weak, and splashes in the milk were the only sound he could hear. As he kept trying the milk was getting thicker and thicker with foam, making it difficult for him to swim.

The little frog kept swimming even when the milk got thicker making it difficult for him to swim. Milk got so thick that it was getting difficult even to take his legs out of the thick lump. When he was very close to last of his strengths he found a solid lump forming below him in the milk. As soon as the butter was solid enough to stand on it he jumped with all his strength and leaped outside the bucket.

His joy was immeasurable, He was filled with so much joy, and from then on he decided he would keep trying no matter how difficult the situation is.

Moral of the story: Banat. Banat. Ban jaaye (doing... doing... done) Saint is a sinner who never gave up. One should never give up his spiritual efforts no matter how much difficult it is to try. Keep trying, Keep trying" (Note: I missed some of this in my notes. This is a version of the story from the website AumAmen.com.)

Master's message to me was to stop worrying; to just keep paddling, and you'll be all right.

Master has assured us of his help just as much now as when he was in form. He told us, "When I am gone, I will be just as concerned for your spiritual welfare as I am now. I shall always be watching over each one of you, and whenever a true devotee thinks of me in the silent depths of his soul, he will know that I am near."

Daya Mata reminded us, "There is no barrier between you and the guru expect what you put up in your own mind."

But we do have mental barriers, don't we. It's easy to open the mind to guruji when everything has gone well, but what happens when things aren't going well. The guru's will does not always coincide with our will. But we know that the guru is the speaking voice of silent God. We have a choice to resist or to surrender to God. Our soul says, "Surrender."

But the ego says, "No".

There is a beautiful exchange in the "Autobiography of a Yogi" when Master first comes to his guru. "Sri Yukteswar asks him, "Will you give me the same unconditional love?" Then he ordered him to do the one thing he didn't want to do, to return home.

Master laments, "My young heart was not yet malleable to the transforming fingers of my guru".

Ego is too short-sighted to see what is for our highest good. The guru does see. The question is, "Who do we follow?"

Mrinalini Mat advised us to ask ourselves, "Am I standing here with the door open only a crack, or do I throw wide open the door of my heart and say 'Come in!' Let their light fill us. Jesus said, 'Those who fulfill my wishes are not only pleasing me but also the Father in me.' "

One devotee has said, "I exercise a lot, so I don't do the energization exercises. I like Hong Sau. Om is harder. What should I do?"

Remember that the techniques are so scientific, and that they are also interrelated. We need to be open to what the guru wants us to learn. The guru's goal is our highest liberation, so he keeps pushing us forward. He doesn't always care about our comfort level.

When I was a Bramacharini, I was asked to lead the exercises, to play the harmonium, and to lead meditation at a retreat. Then, Sunday morning came and the sister was sick. I had to do it. I still remember the topic: "Proof of the Existence of God. I did confront Master with some questions. Why was he putting me in this position? And he was very kind and understanding. Well, I survived the experience and I guess they did too.

Later, I had to take some papers to Ma, and she laughed and said, "Well, Master just wanted to bring you out of your shell. Whether shyness or any other limitation we think we have, Master doesn't want us to crawl out at our own pace. He makes it faster. This helps us to grow and get rid of some of the ants in our consciousness. Remember, the trust between the guru and the disciple needs to be mutual. The disciple bares his soul to the guru, and the guru bares his heart to the disciple.

Master said, "I only ask that you never try to deceive me. Always be very sincere with me." He expects that we will be honest with him. We need to let him see us just as we are because then he can help us more. He will show us where to change.

Daya Mata stated, "All of the human beings that I've known in this world, there was only one to whom I could bear my soul without reservation. We knew he understood every weakness. We had all of these

frustrations and desires in our hearts, even the ignoble ones. His love and friendship were unconditional. “

Another way to break down barriers is to replace negative thinking with positive thinking. Learn to overcome moods: anger, anxiety, resentment, and negative thoughts about ourselves and our circumstances. This is especially important during these uncertain times when we hear so much about the problems in the world. It is important that we don't get pulled down into a delusive state of mind.

There are problems. Often we haven't listened to the guru's law. We all have to make a commitment to bring in the light for our meditations and prayers for a positive outcome with our families and our communities. Also, united efforts, like here when we meditate together and chant together are very powerful. Our positive thoughts encourage others.

There is a story about Meera Mata. Master had knocked on the door to her room. She had been weary the prior night, and she had left some books on the floor.

Master said to her, “I'm so sorry that you weren't ready for me. “ He explained that this was not just about the room. How many times has master knocked on the door and you have not been ready or in tune with him.

We often hear about negative thoughts that devotees may have. “I'm unworthy and can't face Master because I've made a mistake. This is one of the most powerful tools of maya.

One dear soul wrote a letter that enumerated all of her faults and added that she wasn't doing all of the things that Master said in his teachings. This is not the way God and guru see you. We urged her to change her perspective. We told her, “If you are really as bad as you say, you would not be so concerned about it.”

We are all on the spiritual path. We are bound to discover things that we don't like about ourselves, but remember that you are a child of God. If you had not been ready for this path, you would not have been drawn to him. You have Master's promise. Just think, the guru has drawn me to him. Please don't shut him out by calling yourself unworthy. He sees you soul.

If you saw a priceless gem covered in mud, would you throw it out or just wash the mud off. You would just wash it off. We spend too much time worrying about the mud. Gur is concerned that we keep on going. Remember Sri Yukteswar's words to Master, “I will be your friend from now to Eternity no matter whether you are on the lowest mental plane or the highest mental plane of wisdom. I will be your friend even if you should err, for then you will need my friendship more than at any other time.

Mrinalini Mata said that once when Master was scolding her she looked into his eyes and all that she saw was love and compassion.

Master assured us, “Even when I am gone and invisible to your eyes, I am always with you. “ The guru's relationship with us is founded in a love and care for us that lasts throughout eternity. The power of his love is greater than all of our flaws.

Get to know him through meditation and in every situation even in those that we would not have chosen. So we need to keep our minds open to him and remove all negative thinking so that he can bring out our true nature, that of a unique and cherished child of God.

When Sister Sahaja Mata read Master's letters to Rajarsi Janakananda, while he faced a serious illness, he reacted as if he was hearing them for the first time, saying, "I did not know that he loved me so much".

When we can't truly see what Master has done for us in this and in other incarnations, we'll say, "I didn't know Master loved me so much. So let us follow him through this and to any other incarnations we might experience.