

## Teen Class: Using Will Power for Success and Happiness

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(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.)

It is a joy to be with you all. (Sister repeated the welcome in Spanish, as many of the monastics did in their opening remarks.)

Let us begin with a show of hands. How many of you are in your twenties or under? How many of you are attending Convocation for the entire week? (Many of the young devotees raised their hands.) That is just wonderful. The fact that you have stepped away from the daily world of doing day to day to become a more spiritual person says that you are thinking more deeply about the path.

I was speaking with one young man at summer youth camp about how he was doing. He reported that he had a fine social life. I asked him what he had learned in the program. He told me that it helped him to fill in the gaps of his life to draw closer to God and guru.

When I was in my twenties, I had a desire to draw closer to God. I was drawn to Indian philosophy and read as many books as I could. Two themes resonated with me.:

1. Learn how to meditate.
2. When the student is ready, the Master will appear.

I decided I would need to search. I went to India. Then, one day in Fullerton, I saw a little marquee with a picture of a yogi and his family. I was feeling a little leery, because I didn't want to get involved in organized religion. When I went to the lecture, there was a distinguished gentleman there with long hair, wearing a kurta, and dressed in garb as an Indian monk. I thought to myself, "A reverend, he's not." That was in the mid 70's.

He talked about India and a trip he had just been on to the ashrams there. He recommended that newcomers read "Autobiography of a Yogi". Then there was a chant: "Door of My Heart". As I chanted, I felt feelings I had never felt before. I felt as though my heart would burst.

I thought, "This is it. This is the guru I've been looking for". As I was reading the last chapter, my eyes fell on the testimonial by Forest Lawn: "Paramahansa Yogananda: A Yogi in Life and Death".

What struck me then was, "He's gone, and I can't learn from him. I need a living guru." And I was confused, because it all seemed so right. I decided to resume my plans to visit India. I went to the Sunday service. The subject of the service was "The Ever Living Guru". And those words resonated with

me. In that talk, all of my questions were answered, and the promise in all of those yoga books had come true for me. I realized too that the guru had orchestrated this and the whole thing. Then I realized that he was already teaching me.

When we awaken spiritually, it is a very important time. The soul is yearning to find something beyond our existence. God lovingly responds, sends his messenger, and says, "Teach them." And if we offer our reverence and respect, it opens our minds and hearts. We need to ask ourselves this morning, "Am I taking advantage of this golden opportunity being offered to me?" Take advantage of this opportunity, for after all, you created it.

In order to use will power effectively, we need to have a goal and to focus. Ask yourself this question. "What is the purpose of life? One young person whom I talked with answered this question by saying, "How can I be the best version of myself. How can I live up to my highest potential? How can I be the most authentic person I can possibly be?"

Authentic means to be real, genuine, and true to our Divine Self.

We are not ordinary human beings. We are a spark of God. When God created us, he put a hidden treasure inside of us, and that treasure is you! The purpose of life is not just to create a good salary, retire on a good pension, and fade away. Many seek happiness outside, because somewhere along the way, the purpose of life became blurred.

A primary teacher asked her students to write down what they wanted to be when they grew up. One child said, "Happy." The next day, she spoke to him. "I think you misunderstood the assignment."

He replied, "Miss, I think you misunderstood life."

What is purpose? Guruji said, "I was once like you. I walked the earth seeking truth. Everything that I thought would bring me joy brought me misery. You must all discover your own divinity and win the kingdom of God for yourself. "

We cannot do this in some miraculous way, but in a simple way, by doing all of the little things in life with love. It's not how much we do but how much love we put into the giving. It is not how much we give. So do small things with great love. When you do this, that's when you can inspire your environment.

When I was visiting Sicily, a young man stepped forward. The first thing he said was, Sister, today I'm taking kriya yoga initiation. "

There was an older gentleman with him, Paulo, the father of the young man. He told me, "Sister, I'm here to see what my son is doing that has caused him to change so much. So, tonight is my first lesson in yoga, that is, tonight is my first lesson on how I can change." This young man changed because of his spiritual effort, and he influenced his father's life. There is no end to the ripple effect of peace and goodness. We can spread it all around us.

Will power is the ability to control our thoughts and attitudes in order to change our behavior. Will power is supported by core values. Ask yourself, “What are my values?? What principles do I live by that tell me what to do, that tell me right from wrong? These are the principles in life that apply to everyone. They are universal, eternal, and apply at all times. They are never out of date.

Here are a few examples:

- Courage in the face of challenges
- Straightforwardness and not an ounce of deceit in you
- Servicefulness-performing random acts of kindness
- Non injury-not to injure another creature in thought, word, or deed.

There are many more. Our task is to make decisions based on these principles. When we do they can give us an unshakeable foundation. For example, if you are going to a party where everything is intoxicating and illegal, liquor, drugs, vaping, and so on, something inside says to you that it’s wrong,. That’s when you have to listen to your inner voice. Your God and guru are talking to you.

My brother works in the film industry on sound. He was invited to some dinners where they can all eat and drink all that they want. My brother doesn’t drink. The first few times , he ordered a soft drink. His co-workers noticed and asked him about it. They kept pressuring him and teasing him. “What are you going to order tonight, a buttermilk?”

He told them the truth. “Actually, I feel better when I don’t drink. “ At the end of the day, he was still skirting around the issue. He needed to find the courage to speak his truth.

Finally, he said, “Actually, I don’t drink anymore.” When he said this, all of the pressure stopped, because they accepted his answer. One person told him he was considering that as an option.

My brother said, “I was passionate about my job. People didn’t know their limits and acted in ways that interfered with their work because of this pressure to drink. I had prayed to the Masters for a long time, and I didn’t want to leave or to do anything that would jeopardize their blessing. Courage doesn’t have to be demonstrated all at once. When you’re developing courage, it can be like building a muscle. The more we exercise it, the more we build it. To be courageous does not mean that you’re afraid. It means that you do not allow fear to keep you from speaking your truth.

Steve Jobs said, “Don’t let the noise of people’s opinions drown out your own inner voice.”

Sri Yukteswar said, “Look fear in the face, and it will cease to trouble you.”

It’s human nature to want to be liked and to want to fit in. One young girl told me, “That is an over-generalization, because my friends and I are very clear about saying no to activities and other things that we don’t subscribe to.”

When making moral choices, what one person feels is right for them may not be right for you.

What kind of person do you want to be? Guruji said, "Be in the world but not of the world." Be true to yourself. If you are honest and frank with people may not always be that way with you.

Mother Theresa had this poem posted in her room in Calcutta, (a spiritual version of the poem by Kent Keith);

"People are often unreasonable, irrational, and self-centered. Forgive them anyway.

If you are kind, people may accuse you of selfish, ulterior motives. Be kind anyway.

If you are successful, you will win some unfaithful friends and some genuine enemies. Succeed anyway.

If you are honest and sincere people may deceive you. Be honest and sincere anyway.

What you spend years creating, others could destroy overnight. Create anyway.

If you find serenity and happiness, some may be jealous. Be happy anyway.

The good you do today, will often be forgotten. Do good anyway.

Give the best you have, and it will never be enough. Give your best anyway.

In the final analysis, it is between you and God. It was never between you and them anyway."

Hold firm to your values in making moral choices. To walk this path is a high calling. It takes strength and determination. If you are unsure what to do, seek the opinion out of someone you trust, someone who has more life experiences than you do.

One young person asked me, "What if you don't have a mother and father whom you can talk to."

Once, after a Mother's Day talk, I saw a young man in the audience. I got the impression that he had endured some challenges. I was really interested to hear what he would say. He was the sweetest person. He told me, "I know we're supposed to honor our mothers, but I never really had a mother in my life. She's in prison. But Sister, when I found Master, I found Divine Mother. I have everything that I need in Her."

If you have both parents, be grateful. If you are praying to God and guru for guidance and protection, then you're on the right track. God and guru are trying to tell us in so many ways through those who love us and the inner guidance of our souls. We have to go within in the silence. It can be challenging because we see so much pressure and so much stress in the world. It's chaos and stress, and no one wants to accept it. To quiet the noise is the first step in our spiritual life, so our relationship with God can take shape and grow.

The best time for this process is in the early hours of the morning. Promise yourself that you won't pick up your phone or look at social media. Studies show that that adults spend an average of nine hours on

their devices every day. There is nothing wrong with technology, but why spend so much time on aimless pleasure? Why not spend that time in prayer?

Today, 80% of people who are successful in business engage in meditation in some form. But we are so fortunate. We don't have just any meditation. We have the sacred science called kriya yoga. If we apply these tools every day in our meditation, it is the best gift we can give to ourselves. Because when you meditate, everything changes; your whole being!

Train the mind to go within, to intuitively experience who you are, and blissful union with your creator; cleansing the mind of the things that keep us from being close to God. It is like an inner technology that wipes out all of the negative information in your mind. The real you begins to emerge.

In the testimony of a fourteen year old girl from the SRF/YSS Summer Day Camp, she says, "The Hong Sau technique is the best thing I have ever learned. After I practice the technique, it's the ultimate peaceful calm. Emotionally I have much more tolerance, and I am much kinder, much more giving. It is as if my soul peaks. And when I close my eyes and look at the third eye, God's bright light is looking back at me. "

Her transformation expanded her ability to give to others. Where it really counts is in how we treat others. We metamorphose into a highly successful, supremely joyous person. The glory of the Divine shines forth, and you realize there is something tremendous in you, and you had not known it.

We should also pray deeply before and after meditation, spending time with guru and the param- gurus, and sharing what's in your heart and mind. Their job is to help us to break through any obstacles.

How will I know that master is helping me? We can know by the way we help others. One young man told me, "I've already had two breakthroughs this week."

There is no jealousy among the gurus when we pray to one rather than to another, because in our past lives, we've been close to all of them.

There are two ways to tune yourself in to the gurus.

1. Read a passage from "Autobiography of a Yogi" on one of the gurus and reflect on his nature. Tell him, "I want to know your nature, and when they respond, you will know that they are ever living gurus.

In the book Mejdā, the author, his brother, Sananda Lal Ghosh, describes a remarkable encounter with Lahiri Mahasaya.

"According to Ananta's diary, it was on May 3, 1906, that we moved from Bareilly to Chittagong. Here Mejdā used to take me with him to pick fruit from trees in the yards of neighboring homes. One of the homes had some beautiful large swans. Mejdā decided he wanted to make a quill pen, so he plucked a feather from one of the graceful birds. The owner found out and complained to Ananta. Our brother sought to put an end to Mejdā's naughtiness, and decided the best way was to confine him during the

day. So he personally took Mejda and me to the local school and enrolled us. Mejda did very well on his papers; mine just barely passed.

Ananta's way was to restrict our movements with prohibitive orders: "Don't do this! Don't do that! Don't go there! People won't like you if you don't behave!" Our days in Chittagong were filled with endless restrictions. But this only made Mejda more obstinate; in the face of unreasonable curtailment, he became more determined to do what he wanted.

One day, Mejda and I were told: "Don't go toward the harbor. Stay away from the mouth of the river."

I thought: "Mejda will never obey this. This is exactly what he rebels against." Of course, it wasn't long before he took me with him to the mouth of the river.

Ananta had directed all of us children to be home by early evening every day, to wash, and to begin our homework by six o'clock. The harbor at Chittagong was about four kilometers from home. Thus, after returning from school and taking tiffin, we couldn't walk the round-trip distance of eight kilometers and be back at the specified time. So we used to run all the way to the harbor, watch the ships for a short while, then run home. From all this sprinting, Mejda became an excellent athlete. I, too, became a pretty good one; but not nearly so much so as Mejda.

The road to the mouth of the river followed several low hills. Fruit hung in abundance in the trees along our way. One day Mejda said, "Listen, when we return this evening we'll pick some lichis. No one will see us in the twilight."

So said, so done! Mejda was picking some of the luscious, sweet lichis when he heard someone call his name. Startled, Mejda stood stock still. All sense of adventure ended abruptly! Cautiously we moved in the direction from which the voice had come. The twilight was fast fading and we could not see far ahead in the shadows, but we soon discerned a man dressed in white. Seeing that we were somewhat afraid, he beckoned us closer in a friendly manner. If he were the watchman here, how would he have known Mejda's name?

Slowly we advanced toward the gently smiling person. His form seemed lustrous with a wonderful light. I looked around to see where the light was coming from. Suddenly Mejda bowed before the saint and touched his feet. The saint embraced Mejda and kissed him on the head. I also bowed before the saintly figure. With a gesture of blessing, he said to us, "Jaiastu!" ("Victory be with you!"). And then he spoke to Mejda:

"Mukunda, it is God's wish that I come to you today. Remember what I say to you. You have come on earth as God's representative to fulfill His wishes. Your body is His temple, sanctified by prayer and meditation. Do not run after material pleasures or satisfaction. You will show the way that leads to true happiness; and by your spiritual knowledge you will deliver those who are suffering in ignorance. Never forget that you are one with Maha Purusha, attained only by those who are supremely successful in meditation. Your body, mind, and life must never deviate from the thought of God, even for a moment. The blessings of the Infinite Father are upon you. Your faith in Him must be absolute. He will protect you

from all dangers. In this world only He is eternal; all else is transient and unreliable. One day your ideals of Yoga will inspire all mankind. Mukunda, march onward!”

I was fidgeting, for time was passing and darkness was upon us. We had a long way to go to reach home. A scolding by Father and a beating from Ananta were inevitable. The saint perceived my thought and said, “Do not be troubled. Go home freely; no one will notice that you are late.”

We started for home. After walking a short distance, we looked back and saw the saint blessing us with upraised hands. Then he vanished. I turned to Mejda and spoke, but he wasn’t listening. He was walking, head down, in a thoughtful mood. When we reached home, Mejda went directly to his prayer room. I inquired where Father and Ananta were. I learned that Ananta had been invited to a friend’s home, and that Father had not yet returned from an important meeting at the office. What joy! They did not know of our belated return. I ran to the prayer room to tell Mejda.

But Mejda was coming to get me. He took hold of my hand and led me to a photograph that hung on the wall. We stood a moment before it, then he said, “Do you recognize him? Was it not he who spoke to us?”

I was astonished. It was he — that very smile. But he had died long ago. How could he have come to us now? How could we have talked with someone who had been dead all these years? He had blessed us, embraced Mejda and kissed his head. I was choked with awe, unable to speak. I simply looked at Mejda. There was no doubt that Mejda and I had seen and talked with the great Lahiri Mahasaya! the saint whose counsel was sought by householders and sages alike throughout all India; the preceptor to whom people had come in endless streams to receive blessings and spiritual instruction. With Mejda, I had seen the Yogavatar with my own eyes and talked with him. I am thrilled to this day whenever I recall that wondrous experience. It is forever etched in my memory. I am blessed: His endless mercy, his crowning grace, is upon me. My gratitude knows no bounds.”

(Note: this version is the full account from the SRF Website, under “Disciplines Reminisce”. Sister gave an abbreviated version of this story, but my notes were inadequate.)

Because Master’s independent spirit was already active, Lahiri Mahasaya reminded him, “One day, you will inspire all mankind. “ And here we are at the fee of the great joy of the one who is known as the father of yoga in the west. He has dedicated his life to awaken our lives. How can we live our lives successfully with inner happiness? The guidance of the Masters is not gone from the world. May their blessings of faith inspire us all.

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