

Self Realization Convocation 2018 August 5-11

Spiritual Courage: Living with Spiritual Principles in the World

Brother Jayananda –

YSS/SRF Convocation 2018-Sunday Night

(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.)

This is a very profound subject. But before we begin I have some bad news for you. We have no letter to read from the President of YSS/Self Realization Fellowship. Brother Chidananda decided that he would much rather welcome you all in person.

Brother Chidananda

I want to welcome you all. What a special joy to be able to come and officially inaugurate this 2018 Convocation. Joy! Love! And Welcome to you all! I greet you in the name of God, our Father, Mother, Friend, Beloved, and our great gurus and param-gurus. My prayer is that their love will flow out to you permeating your heart. My prayer is that their blessings, their love, will be with you for all of this week. I pray that all of you will be helped by that Divine Communion. I look forward to being with you at the end of the week for our satsanga. In the meantime, my love, my joy, and may the gurus bless all of you!

Brother Jayananda

Our subject tonight is “Spiritual Courage: Living with Spiritual Principles in the World”. When I realized that I had to follow Brother Chidananda, I realized I needed a good dosage of spiritual courage. Spiritual courage means living our spiritual ideals. I think this is why Convocation means so much to all of us. We have people who have been coming for thirty, forty, twenty years. When can live our spiritual ideals and do the things that our guru asked of us, we find a sense of well-being.

I was talking to an usher who is volunteering here. He told me that the days and week are so busy that sometimes you rush up to the room and you only have time to change clothes, and then you are duty. And then he said, “But you know, it’s always the best week of the year.

Guruji often talked about the material world. He gives us a hint of it in “The Autobiography of a Yogi. Sri Yukteswar regretted the education system and the way it was going. He said that an education system that does not offer a spiritualized education is offering avidya.

The purpose of life is to seek God. When we come on the path, that gradually becomes more real in our life, to experience that God is the center of our life. Master lets us know that everything in life is not

perfect. It will be difficult and not enjoyable at times. But what we are getting is what we need. We think maybe if we had better surroundings and so forth, then we could practice. This is not true.

Master says in “God Talks with Arjuna: The Bhagavad Gita” that those duties that come to man in his life are those meant for his own welfare. If we don’t feel we’re up to it, we go to another environment. These teachings were given to us in this age. This is what we all signed up for.

If we look at Lahiri Mahasaya, we may ask, how is it that was he a householder and also a great yogi. He was exemplifying what it is to live in the material world and still be a great yogi. In “Autobiography of a Yogi”, Master writes that Master Lahiri lived on a modest salary and carried on a spiritual life.

(Note: Expanded excerpt:)“Day after day the sublime guru initiated one or two devotees into Kriya Yoga. In addition to these spiritual duties and to the responsibilities of his business and family life, the great master took an enthusiastic interest in education. He organized many study groups and played an active part in the growth of a large high school in the Bengalitola section of Banaras. At weekly meetings, which came to be called his “Gita Assembly,” the guru expounded the scriptures to many eager truth seekers.

By these manifold activities, Lahiri Mahasaya sought to answer the common challenge: “After performing one’s business and social duties, where is the time for devotional meditation?” The harmoniously balanced life of the great householder-guru became the inspiration of thousands of men and women. Earning only a modest salary, thrifty, unostentatious, accessible to all, the master carried on naturally and happily in the path of disciplined worldly life.

Though ensconced in the seat of the Supreme One, Lahiri Mahasaya showed reverence to all men, irrespective of their differing merits. When his devotees saluted him, he bowed in turn to them. With a childlike humility, the master often touched the feet of others, but seldom allowed them to pay him similar honor, even though such obeisance toward the guru is an ancient Oriental custom.”
 (“Autobiography of a Yogi”)

Nonetheless, we may ask why these teachings were given in this way. The idea was to balance both east and west; the best qualities found in India need to be combined with the best of the technology of the west.

I have told some of you the stories of my trip to India with Brother Bhaktananda. In Rishikesh, we saw a living throng. So many people living in that city. We couldn’t believe the number of sadhus who were clad as monks, walking the streets. They were everywhere. Here I was dressed as a monk. (Although Master said we shouldn’t compare ourselves to other.)

As I was there, I was so grateful for Master’s teachings. What we have been given is so incredible. I realized that they, the teachings, were looking what I was looking for. They were very, very sincere. We are so very, very blessed with these teachings and techniques. This is a balanced path of east and west. Master teaches us to live in the world but not be of the world. Our guru was an exemplar of that. He was relentless in bringing these teachings to all thirsty souls around the world.

What is this self-control? In the battle of Kurushetra , Vrishakethu (son of Karna) represents yama and niyama. He represents the power in the devotee that he to see the right. Pantanjali explains that niyama is moral courage and the ability to do the right thing. It is not easy. As we go through life we try to overcome our bad habits. We find the power to overcome. As we develop, this becomes more and more apparent.

For years, I worked as a secretary for Ma. Many people expect me to talk about major things that I witnessed while working for her. I didn't see those. I didn't see her levitating down the hallway. I did see the little things. One time she had something that she wanted to have framed. The picture had slipped out of the frame, and she asked me to fix it. As I was reframing it, I saw on the back of the picture that she had written, "Keep your mind on God today." She had this as a reminder to herself. She practiced these things consistently, and in this she became a very great soul.

Brother Turiyananda, who passed away in 1990, was legendary among the monks. He was bigger than life. His stories were incredible. He had a way of telling stories that would simply fascinate people. On the opening day of Convocation, when it was held at the Biltmore Hotel, there was a vantage point where you could look down on the room where everyone gathered. We would always see the same big crowd of people around Brother Turiyananda.

Brother Turiyananda once said to Ma, " I think I am losing my memory. Do you have something that would help. He thought maybe she would give him a rap on the head or a mantra. Instead, Ma told him, "Oh I have that same problem sometimes. I get a little piece of paper and write on it and put it on the floor by my bed. Then, when I get up in the morning, I say, 'What is that piece of paper doing there? And then I remember what it is .'"

Once while I was working for her, Ma saw me looking at a piece of paper written in her handwriting. "Our work must be and expression of our love for God. Let's do something beautiful today for God. " This is inspirational, but Ma wanted a constant reminder of it.

Brother Premamoy trained many of the monks. One of the things he told us was to put little notes around, such as attaching notes to the mirror to remind you to practice the presence.

Practice these little things. Find ways to practice the presence. Brother Bhaktananda did this often as did Daya Ma and others. This is a constant reminder of the Divine. All of us speak the same language when it comes to the Divine. What our guru gave use it! Many times when we go on retreats, we hear devotees say, "Oh, if only I'd made more effort in the beginning!"

Brother Bhaktananda often gave the same message in all of his CD's. He lived it, and it has a tremendous power because of that. Every once in a while, he slipped in something really profound . He said, "Practice the presence once in a while, but you have to "kneel into it". It's what your mind is saying. It's easy to do if you practice.

All of us can always go a little deeper. We can always do more in our practice. We should come out of Convocation feeling that we can do even more in our lives.

Brother Premamoy said to us in 1980, "The love for God does not come automatically. It is developed as we all develop these qualities. When we talk about our meditation and reflect on it, it makes the practice more real, more intense. We have to keep striving for that. But it's worth it when we start feeling the presence of the Divine. Then we realize we have an inner presence to rely on.

Brother Bhaktananda was very matter of fact. There was nothing phenomenal about him. His simplicity and total sincerity were very winning.

The time comes when everything else in life becomes a distraction. You lose interest in the things that aren't worth the time. It doesn't mean that we neglect our responsibilities. We saw this with Daya Ma. She was outwardly extremely busy but could inwardly exude a joy that you could tangibly see in her presence. This week, as we go through the week, try to tangibly feel the presence of the Divine.

Sr. Sahaja Mata, one of the direct disciples of Master, worked in the editorial department. She was tireless in her work. The monks would always see her light on late and night and early in the morning. She was always a cheerful delight. She would often type up a note on a small piece of paper and give it to one of the monastics. It was always profound.

The monks had a main office in the main building. Her office was at the far end. There was a phone in the middle of the hallway. She would go out to call you could hear her voice calling the ashram operator. Once, when she was facing a serious health challenge, we heard her say about her doctor's visit, "Well I'm off to see the wizard." She was always so cheery no matter what she was facing.

Anytime someone asked Ma to help respond to questions, including those from the growing number of devotees from other countries, there would be some new inspiration she would share. On one occasion, a devotee protested that the guru was no longer alive.

"Tell them that they have a living guru by their side, and that the minute they read the "Autobiography of a Yogi", they will find it to be so. If they will it to be so, it will be so," she said.

Daya Ma said, "He's as close as your thoughts allow Him to be. You need to realize the real connection between your soul and the divine. "We are looking for that feeling of love and compassion. But it is up to us and our willingness to feel that presence. It's our receptivity.

Master said, "If you develop that calm intensity or meditate with concentration, you will find that a time comes that no matter what you are doing you feel peaceful inside. After meditation, you look up and time passes, and nothing matters but God. Success in self-realization depends on whole-souled effort. The true devotee knows the value of constant and regular meditation, by which his life becomes an uninterrupted prayer. Yoga should not be practiced mechanically or from an oppressive sense of duty, but with joy and perpetual zeal, thus causing each day's meditation to yield a deeper bliss than that of the previous day."

We have to have the patience to persevere, because this rarely happens in an instant. It is a process.

Brother Anandamoy once told the monks that he had recently read a story about children having visions. There was a boy who had visions who would walk to school with the other kids. They would go to the school all day. He went to the church for the day, and today he is in ecstasy. Brother Jayananda commented, "I wish I could do that".

Brother Anandamoy gave him a look, and he responded, "Well Brother, I was looking for a short cut."

Brother Anandamoy said adamantly, 'What do you mean? You have the greatest short cut ever with Paramahansa Yogananda'

Master told a story about two most ignorant students who were constantly insulted by the teacher. One decided that he just couldn't take it and left. The other one just took it. Everyone was surprised at the end of the year when he passed all of the classes.

We need to say, "Okay, I'm going through a difficulty now, but I won't give up." We need to develop this ability to just keep on and persevere no matter what.

Brother Premamoy often would say the spiritual life is like this, drawing a wavy line with lots of peaks and valleys, then this, drawing a wavy line with smoother waves, and then this, as he would draw a straight line. I could always see with him that he was living with that evenness of character. That's what we're striving for, that spiritual courage.

Daya Mata told us, "Courage becomes unflinching when it is united to God and guru. So why wait? When by meditation you secure your key, soon you will realize that a Divine hand is guiding you. In my study, I've always had this posted. 'In life, in death, I sit unharmed upon Thy lap Divine Mother'. May you know that courage made of God's wondrous love."

Master was very much against the serious holy man. Master said that this path will bring the "funeral of all sorrow". Why do people keep coming back to Convocation? There is a joy that keeps us coming back. Keep practicing these little things every day so that you can more effectively live these spiritual ideals. Take these little things during the week. Go to the meditations, and visit the meditation room. If you have just a few minutes, offer spontaneously from your heart your love for God. Concentrate at the Kutastha. Practice the techniques. The techniques are wonderful! Every one of us can learn something new at the classes on the techniques.

So, have a wonderful week!
