

Brother Praffulananda

Satsanga

SRF/YSS Convocation 2018

Thursday am

(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.)

Question 1: What are the attitudes and qualities one should cultivate for swift spiritual progress based on your counseling of SRF devotees?

We have to be willing to change from what we are now into what we are to become. Our guru has given us so many conceptualizations that we can tune into.

In meditation, darkness goes away.

We can say, "Reveal Thyself as Light."

So that's the goal. That's what we want to change into. If we know ourselves as light, we will have no problems ever again. That's how we can solve the imperfections of this world.

Sri Yukteswar said, "The earth is an ocean of affliction. "

Our guru said, "Even so, though it is an ocean of affliction, many love it and do not wish to leave this place from its complacent familiarity. If we can change our consciousness, we can change the world. "

Omar Khayam in the quatrain #73 writes: "

"Ah Love! could thou and I with Fate conspire.

To grasp this sorry Scheme of Things entire,

Would not we shatter it to bits -- and then.

Re-mold it nearer to the Heart's Desire!"

The problem is that we don't like to change our comfort zone. We don't want things that make us change. We like the way we are. We postpone the things we need to confront in our lives. We kick them down the road. Some of these are big life tests.

The ministers are often asked in satsanga and counseling how to deal with this. The ego's slight of mind trick when confronted with problems is to claim, "That is because of him. The problem is this other. It's not me. I'm just the victim. I couldn't do anything about it. "

Master gave us an answer. "Dear Father, whatever conditions confront me, I know that they represent the next step in my unfoldment. I will welcome all tests because I know that within me is the intelligence to understand and the power to overcome."

With all of these issues confronting us, this is when you turn to the guru. If we were just relying on our own senses, we're still susceptible to slight of mind, to ego trips.

Sometimes delusion is so strong that the person says, "I feel that God is guiding me" when this is not the case. Every day read guru's writings and then we can go into meditation and deal with whatever conditions confront us and how to deal with them.

In "The Divine Romance", Master tells us, "Better than a million wishes, go to the Lord and tell Him, 'I can't solve these problems by myself. But I can if I place it in your hands. '"

After meditation you're able to see the answers to your problems and put up the best solution. This is applying the science of meditation in our daily life. Look at whatever is confronting you and then let the possible solutions come as answers in meditation. Don't just let things fester in your mind. This is no way to progress.

One goal of Self Realization is, "To teach that the purpose of life is the evolution, through self-effort, of man's limited mortal consciousness into God Consciousness."

Question 2: We are made in the image of God. How does this apply to financial issues?

We can start by looking at the answer to the previous question. We sit, after meditation, and look at the why of this. If this is an issue for you, is it the need to develop courage? Is there a fear of not having enough to get by? I don't have those answers. First we have to understand the why of it. This really is an issue.

Master's concept of abundance is reflected in this statement: "Abundance, material as well as spiritual, is a structural expression of rita, cosmic law or natural righteousness. There is no parsimony in the Divine, nor in its goddess of phenomena, exuberant Nature."

If we perceive scarcity in our lives, a certain part of the cosmic order is not in place. The worries about scarcity gradually change as you realize that God is in you and everything is all right in the world, As we do this more and more, our consciousness changes.

We need to change our concept of success. The typical concept of success is about having a lot of money. Our guru tells us that real success is the power to create at will whatever you truly need. He recommended high thinking and plain living.

Along with the free literature of SRF, there is a little practical tool, the Horn of Plenty. It is a box with a little slot. Every day you put a coin in the bank and repeat an affirmation.

- Some examples:
 - Teach me to feel that thou art the power behind all wealth, and the value within all things. Finding Thee first, I will find everything else in Thee."
 - "All things that the Father hath are mine."
 - The Lord's Promise: "Prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it."

Devotees who have used the horn of plenty often describe it as a miracle tool kit, because it changes consciousness. One woman who was using it wrote to Mother Center said "I have experienced so many miracles since I started using the horn of plenty. I have received several bonuses and pay raises at my job and an unexpected subsidy for publishing a book. It has changed my fleeting hopes and taken them to an entirely new level."

This practice helps us to put ourselves into harmony with cosmic rules and the law of abundance. It also changes the cells of our brains. Then, when we feel we have made progress with the bank, we can give it away. Don't just empty it out and use it again. By sharing it with others we are affirming to the universe that there is enough to go around in the world.

Question 3: I met my husband before I joined SRF. He is not supportive of my path at all, in fact he constantly criticizes my spiritual path. I know we are supposed to think about the influence of our surroundings and environment. At times, I want to him. We are not close to an SRF Center, but I do meditate with the great guru.

We have drawn to ourselves the environment, both inner and outer, that we live in now. So, remember, "Whatever conditions confront me, I know they represent the next step in my unfoldment."

Every devotee does have environmental issues. We need to identify what it is that we control in our situation. It's not your spouse. It's not your children. It's not even your pet fish. Listen to Brother Anandamoy's CD on "Spiritual Marriage". In marriage, a common difficulty is that many got married before they came onto the spiritual path. Her husband resents the time she spends in meditation. There is always time, even a little bit, for meditation.

One of the most essential elements of our practice is to practice unselfishness. In one illustration of this, a woman said, 'My husband resented that I was trying to meditate. And as a result, I resented him with my whole body. Then, what Master said, hit me like lightning. I realized that because of my attitude toward him I was spending the whole day in resentment. Then I decided to spend the whole day praying for my husband, and he is changing. "

What Daya Ma told us in “Living a God Centered Life”, “When they can seek God together, hand in hand in unconditional love, what wonderful companionship that is.”

If it is not this way, remember that you can conquer by love. It must be unconditional love. It cannot be, “I will love him as long as he responds to me as I wish. “

This is a fabulous way to change our environment. We may or may not change the other person but we are learning to give love unconditionally. Remember that the final test of the spiritual life is to unconditionally love God. As we learn to love one another unconditionally, we are also direction our strength to love God unconditionally. One day God will respond with the ocean of bliss.

Question 4: I am a Kriyaban, but I also feel drawn to one of the other SRF gurus. Am I being disloyal? Does it even matter since they are all our gurus?

Does it even matter? No, because they’re all one in spirit and their consciousness they are not jealous. We are attracted to different gurus because they do have different personalities. People of the west may relate more to Jesus. We can shift our focus from one to the other. If you feel the need for wisdom, pray to Sri Yukteswar; joy-Lahiri Mahasaya.

Paramahansa Yogananda spoke of himself as our guru preceptor. He was the one designated to bring this dispensation the west and the whole world. In our Kriya Pledge, we give our loyalty to the entire line of gurus. This principle is about loyalty to the line of gurus and Self Realization teachings, but it’s fine to be drawn to one more than the others.

Question 5: Sometimes I feel I can never live up to guruji’s expectation, especially when I am busy and don’t have time to do all of the SRF routines. My once treasured sadhana becomes a heavy obligation. How can I get back to my initial feelings?

The guru gives us unconditional love regardless of what we do or don’t do. If you want to know God and be freed from all sorrow and suffering, follow the eight-fold path of yoga. If you want to know yourself as light, meditate deeply. The only one making us do something on the spiritual path is us. It’s time to take responsibility. It is not about whether or not the guru is pleased but about our own regret.

Think about the despondency of Arjuna as relayed in “God Talks with Arjuna”. Remember when he realizes, “I’ve got to fight”.

We have to choose between many of the things we would like to do over our spiritual routine. Realize that your relationship with the path and the guru takes work, just like a marriage takes work.

Brother Anandamoy told us that most marriages fail from neglect. We need to take stock of whatever it may be in our lives that is keeping us from our spiritual path. Take one thing . Scroll back on your social engagements. Have time for entertainment only after you meditate. How can we do something positive when we're overwhelmed by too much. One change can be dramatic. There are times when so much comes along that it seems like there is no way. When things come along, don't just throw out your routine.

You may decide to do just a little bit of it, maybe practice the first three techniques and spend five minutes on each , but make it intense. Just do the best you can, and if we really do the best we can, it is enough.

Question 6: How should I deal with our meditation circle when some do all of the work and the others just come?

If you want that answer, go to the Center Department workshop. (Laughter)

Question 7: I have a terminal illness. I have peace but I'm much more in tune with Master in the last stage of my life. But I have so much physical pain, that it's hard to be in touch with Master.

Do what you can. Death is the final test for every being. For this devotee, the desire for a deeper relationship of the guru is a reflection of unconditional love. It is not so much now about practicing the techniques but about fully expressing the love and devotion in the heart.

At the time of the disciple's death, the guru is present to usher you into the astral world. Seva Devi was a disciple who knew that the time had come for her to leave.

ELLEN B. MERCK [SISTER KARUNA]

"I write this story because I am the only one now living who can testify to its truth. My husband, Bror Merck, an eyewitness, died in 1941.

The incident concerns a disciple of Paramhansa Yogananda, Mrs. Jean Chamberlin, to whom Master gave the name of SEVA DEVI. They met in Salt Lake City in 1931, when Mrs. Chamberlin attended his classes. At that time his students called him "Swamiji," for he had not yet received the title of "Paramahansa" (which his guru Sri Yukteswarji gave to him in India in 1935).

Mrs. Chamberlin's late husband had been a professor of psychology at Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah. She came to Los Angeles in 1932 to help in the SRF work. She was a spiritually advanced disciple, highly regarded by Yoganandaji. When he left this country in 1935 to visit India, he appointed Seva Devi to be the speaker at the Thursday and Sunday SRF meetings in Los Angeles.

Seva Devi died in Los Angeles in November, 1938. My husband and I took care of her in her final illness. She was suffering intensely during her last night on earth, and had lost her power of speech. About four o'clock in the morning I left her to go to my nearby home. When I departed there was no one with her except Bror. He told me, a few hours later, about a beautiful incident that took place after my departure.

Seva Devi, he said, became calm and free from suffering at five o'clock. Suddenly she said:

"Yes, Swamiji; yes Swamiji!" She repeated these words several times in a cheerful way. Thus Bror saw that she had regained her power of speech and that she apparently was replying to something that had been said to her by her guru Yoganandaji, who was invisible to Bror's eyes.

Mr. Merck asked, "Is Swamiji here?"

"Yes," she answered in a happy voice. "Swamiji is here."

My husband wondered if her mind were clear. He said: "Seva, do you know who I am?"

"Yes, Bror," she replied quickly, as though she understood why he had asked the question.

Her youngest son came into the room. My husband, who wanted to assure himself still further concerning her mental clarity, asked: "Do you know who it is that stands by your bed?"

"Oh yes! Lew, my boy," she replied tenderly. In a short while she peacefully left her body.

Master referred to this incident several times in his lectures, stating that he had visited Seva Devi in his astral body during the very hour when she told my husband: "Yes, Swamiji is here."

"I wanted to guide her in the transition to her new home;" the master said.

(Note: This full version of the story is from Yogananda Site- Word Press.)

[Sister Karuna added the below to this story in later years...from SRF mag, Spring 1994]

"Many times when some disciple living far away has been ill or dying, he has drawn my astral body there through his devotion," Paramahansaji said. "Seva Devi was a very devoted student. She became extremely ill, but she never complained about it to anyone. She knew her time had come to leave this earth.

One day when I visited her in Los Angeles she said to me, 'Please don't hold me here.' Later on, I was staying in the Self-Realization Fellowship Hermitage in Encinitas for a time. I had been given a radio and was waking up early in the mornings to listen to broadcasts from India. One morning I suddenly felt intuitively the subtle astral vibration of Seva Devi; she drew my astral body to her through her devotion. My physical body was as dead. I was told later that Seva Devi exclaimed, just before her passing, 'Swamiji is here!' She was aware of being consciously ushered by me into the other world."

JULY, 1956 Self-Realization magazine

Meditate as you are able and don't worry about doing more than you are able to do.

Gyanamata, who experienced over 30 years of physical pain, and who Master referred to as a saint, sat on the edge of her bed to do the energization exercises. If you can't do that, then just feel the gaze focused at the spiritual eye, a repeat over and over, "I love you Master. I love you God. " You have his promise that he will be with you when you need him the most.

Question 8: I am having a very hard time with current events. They make me so distressed. It's very painful for me.

Many of us feel that way. The law of reincarnation ensures that we are drawn to an environment where we work out where we didn't work out previously. The lesson might be that we really need to learn unconditional faith and help and blessings of the gurus. There is nothing to fear because this world is not our home.

If you find the world upsetting right now, remember that it's just doing its job of keeping us caught up in maya. If you keep wrapped up in the movies, you will be caught up in the drama that the movies create.

Think about how many times have you died before and how many millions of life times we have had. We died in all of them. This is a little morbid, but in how many of those lives were you eaten alive?

Ma was at the SRF London Center when she said, "In the end, everything will be all right, and if it's not all right, it's not the end. "

This is still just an intellectual understanding. If all of this is encroaching on our meditation, we can do something really simple. Turn off all of the news feeds. Put all of your computer news sites into the trash bin. The news has to sell to stay in business, and what they sell is upsetting.

This may be selling us cosmic delusion, and we are buying it by allowing ourselves to be upset by it. If it is necessary for your occupation, just turn it down and try to become dispassionate.

In meditation, we turn off the switch. Meditation helps us to disconnect the consciousness from the noise of distractions. When you practice Hong Sau, really practice Hong Sau, because if you are really focused on the breath, that solves that issue. It takes a long time and a lot of effort, but in the end we can control the switch.

"Could thou and I with faith conspire

To grasp this sorry scheme of things entire

Would we not shatter it to bits

And then

Remould it nearer to that heart's desire."

(From the Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam, by Edmund Sullivan)

This is our destiny. To be able to remake it the way we know it might be able to remake it the way we know it ought to be. In the last act, the man beholds the Divine Playwright. God will disclose it, the final act of the cosmic drama long concealed.

We're still in the middle of the novel. It's supposed to be messed up. It's about turning bad movie scripts into beautiful ones. We need to keep ourselves from being hurt by the show.

In the end, we will be able to dissolve the show into its constituent components of light.