

Workshop for Sunday School Teachers

Sister Rajana

SRF/YSS Convocation 2018

(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.)

(Note: This was a different format than the lectures. Sister Rajana provided a practical workshop for Sunday School teachers.) (Scribe's note - I missed the middle of the session in order to attend the Center Representatives Conference.)

In 1999 at Convocation, Daya Mata talked about the need to love and serve with faith and courage. She could see the times ahead. If we're really going to know God and be his instruments, we need to manifest these four qualities: love, service, faith, and courage, and the rest do not be troubled about. That is the message for all of us. This is what life is all about.

When we think of the soul qualities within us, we are not expecting others to be the way we think they should be. We are deepening our compassion. Daya Mata accepted everyone just as they were.

Loving and serving go together. What is love without manifesting it in some way? The more we love, the more we authentically want to reach out to others.

If we look at serving, you love the guru and want to serve him. But be working to serve without attachment to a particular outcome. Maybe we were very enthusiastic about serving guru when we first started. Then something happened. Things changed and we were all wrapped up in things that weren't going according to my plan, which is the best thing.

When we are attached to a particular plan, we miss the guidance of the guru. Always be open to guidance. Tell him, "What now, Master?" Tell yourself, "Let me be calm."

When you give a Sunday school class, make sure to really be prepared for the class. Do something that will really engage them. For instance, teens really like art. There is a CD from Brother Bhumananda where he talks about preventing a nervous breakdown. He advises, "Lock the door. Go across the railroad tracks and help someone else."

What happens when we get creative? Students learn more. For example, when we make fuzz balls together, we tell them, "If you make a fuzz ball, you have to give it to someone else. "

Why should we use art? Art provides a creative outlet for both our young children and our teens. There are many opportunities for fellowship and communication during the process of creating something. Art also relieves stress. Anytime anyone does something creative, they feel good about themselves.

It's also a good idea to create a little library. I always keep copies of "Where There is Light" on hand. Our students also enjoy laminating their paper projects. They last longer and can be put to use as gifts or just to add to their altars at home. They can also attach them to binders or folders for school.

There is a quote from the New Year's Eve letter from Brother Chidananda where he asks about how we want to change ourselves. There are powerful lessons for our teens in that:

"Each year brings to us anew a wonderful opportunity to liberate within us the God-given freedom to be masters of our own destiny. We need not follow automatically the well-worn paths of ingrained, unproductive habits and trends of thinking, nor be diverted from our spiritual ideals by impulses of the senses, ego, and worldly environment. Through the power of discrimination and a will recharged by the invigorating thought of a fresh beginning in this new year, we can reset our focus and blaze new trails that will reveal the hidden potentials of our soul. Know that the past cannot hold you back nor the future intimidate you. You can choose to live consciously in the present and to go forward with trust that infinite resources are at your command." Brother Chidananda -President YSS/SRF

Guruji encouraged us to set our course for the new year by introspecting and meditating to attune our consciousness with God's vast supporting consciousness, and then use His divine gifts of the power of thought and will to take charge of our lives.

Clearing the mind of self-doubt, sadness over past mistakes, and any other form of negative thinking is a vital first step. Having cast out those obstacles, affirm and imprint upon your uncluttered consciousness the positive quality or goal you want to manifest or achieve. Gurudeva has told us, "You can instill any trend in your consciousness right now, provided you inject a strong thought in your mind; then your actions and whole being will obey that thought. By applying with calm, patient perseverance the activating power of the will — finding ways each day to remind yourself of the specific goal you are striving for — you will see that what you have affirmed becomes a reality."

Remember, too, that you are not alone in your efforts. When in the stillness of daily meditation you contact Him who is the Source of all power to accomplish, you will increasingly feel His power pulsing beneath your thoughts, His mighty will reinforcing your will, and His wisdom and love guiding you.

Guruji has told us, "Every minute is a link between you and God. By living in that awareness, you will find a silent river of peace flowing beneath the surface of your consciousness, nourishing your whole being and your noble aspirations. Through your own inner transformation and the unfolding of your soul qualities, you will bring out the good in others and encourage them also to discover and manifest their true divine Self."

Another useful tool is Daya Mata's talk and CD, "Free Yourself from Tension. It is really important to make the teens know and feel that this is their class. They can sign up for something. Engage them in service, e.g. with the kirtan group, playing the harmonium, cleaning, participating in service days, or serving as ushers or greeters.

Another activity is to have them lie down on the ground and do the four part body recharging from the Energization Exercises. This is another way to help them to relieve tension and stress.

Talk with the teens often about any stresses they might be experiencing in their lives. Find something related to that from "Where There is Light". Hand it out and give them strategies for using these prayers and affirmations from Ma's book. These discussions about things that are stressing them out are a time when I encourage team leaders to be quiet and to actively listen.

Also remind them of these points that Daya Ma always emphasized the following points:

- (1) Keep the mind calm through practice of meditation.
- (2) Think one thought at a time.
- (3) Don't interrupt others while they are talking. Let them complete their sentences.
- (4) Read books that require deep concentration.
- (5) Learn to eat slowly, and preferably in silence.
- (6) Exercise regularly.
- (7) Relax. Don't get bogged down in little things.
- (8) Set aside time for seclusion, when you can be alone with God and have time to think."

--Sri Daya Mataji (Finding the Joy Within You)

These are very practical things that they can do. Another thing they can do is to make a spiritual eye, God's eyes. They can use these as Christmas ornaments or just have them on the desk with a picture of the guru or a quote from our guru. They can make little journals with pre-printed pages that include a list of daily acts of kindness.

The late afternoon workshop was an experiential session where participating Sunday School teachers were engaged in some of the activities discussed above. We made laminated pictures using photographs from SRF calendars and sayings by our Guru. Small laminating machines can now be purchased for about \$30.00 online or from teacher supply stores along with laminating materials.

The session ended with a prayer.