

**Self- Realization Fellowship Convocation 2019**

**Collection of Monastic Talks**

**August 4-11, 2019**

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**Sunday 7:30 p.m.**

**Brother Jayananda**

**The Hidden Love and Joy of God**

**August 4, 2019**

**Welcome: Brother Chidananda**

**President SRF/YSS**

Loving Pronams! Beloveds of God and gurus. I wanted to come and welcome you to this 2019 Convocation. I'm not going to give a talk tonight. I just want to share the love and joy that come from the higher realms with those here in this ballroom, those who are downstairs in the Pasadena Room, and those of you all over the world who are watching this via live stream. Welcome!

This is truly a sacred occasion. Every year you come back to recharge your minds, recharge your hearts. This morning, as I was meditating in the shrine of our guru on the third floor of Mother Center, I could feel the joy of all of you as you have been flying in from 48 countries around the world. And whether you came by plane, train, car, or bullock cart, or Internet connectivity, I know you are flying high.

This is the beautiful image Guruji gave me; Your souls all driven by that beacon of Divine Light, and as you're drawn into that light, let your hearts receive it. There is one thing that I wanted to say. Our world today is going through some difficult times; and how hard it is for any sensitive heart, grasping for meaning and security that we know is found in God.

How wonderful that you are here, and remotely, by video, have made the choice to go to this Source. So, I would urge you to use these days well. Be on spiritual retreat. And at the end of the week, you will find you've become a multiplier of that light the world is yearning for. Coming back to that image, in that presence of God and guru, let's begin this Convocation.

Feel in your hearts, in the kutastha center, that living presence of God and gurus. And let our hearts, our receptive consciousness, be a place for that Divine Consciousness, so that it can grow, as we take their presence and feel that they are here, in reality.

Invocation

O Infinite Beloved, Illuminate our hearts;  
Fill us with your light;  
Change our darkness to Thy light;  
Touch us but once;  
That we may be transformed;  
Not only touch us but join us;  
Inundate us in the ocean of your Divine Presence;  
Bless us that we may be receptive;  
That we be changed;  
And, O Divine Beloved;  
May Thy love,  
Shine Forever; On the sanctuary of our devotion;  
And may we be able;  
To awaken Thy love;  
In All hearts.  
Om; Peace; Shanti; Amen

With these words of invocation, the 2019 SRF Convocation now begins.

Feel that we've created this temple by that Infinite One. Guruji loved the concept of a wall-less temple. It is how he conceived of Lake Shrine. And in this case, he has created a wall-less temple with all of those streaming from all around the world. Clearly this is a first for a World Convocation of SRF.

So, enjoy and cherish this: moments with other devotees, the kirtans, the meditations, the lectures, and the pilgrimages. But while doing so, do one thing. Keep bringing the mind back to this wall-less temple, whether you are going to pilgrimages, kirtans, meditations, lectures, or visiting with friends from around the world. You are blessed. Keep the mind at the kutastha and receive that One, and by the end of the week, you will be changed.

I can't begin to how much it means, all the messages and cards you have sent. And I read every one. Thank you all. I will be praying for your glimpses of that Divine Love. So may God and guru bless you all, my divine friends.

Standing ovation as Brother Chidananda blesses all.

Scribe's Note: There is no way to put into words the powerful energy that pours into each of us as our SRF presidents, who so gloriously wear the mantle, of our guru, bless us while they speak. This sublime energy pours through the medulla, the kutastha, and blissfully emerges through the thousand-petaled lotus as we listen to their beautiful words. This has been the case with the Ma's, and now with our anointed President, Brother Chidananda. We are truly blessed to experience this inspiring group darshan at Convocation.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SKXxDjl2W\\_c](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SKXxDjl2W_c)

## **Brother Jayananda The Hidden Love and Joy of God"**

Well, that's a run-less start. A great beginning to the Convocation. This is a great experiment this year, this live-streaming of Convocation. And for all of you participating in live streaming, know that you can truly participate in this Convocation. Our guru said he is as close as our thoughts can be. So how can we draw closer? Maybe meditate a little deeper; read his teachings. This is Master's world-wide family, and it's a great joy for all of us to be here with you.

So, this talk is called, "The Hidden Love and Joy of God": Read the pamphlet description.(Convocation program)

The hidden wonders of God's love and joy surround us and beckon to us in seemingly mundane and yet miraculous ways. They can take the form of a child at play, a sign on the street, a fellow worker's comment — or even plans gone awry! Paramahansa Yogananda said that "yoga is the art of doing everything with the consciousness of God," and as we condition our mind to the realization of His eminence in little ways each day, we find, naturally and effortlessly, that He has become a tangible, loving presence in our life.

This is the purpose of Master's teachings: to bring the presence of our guru more completely into our lives. It's a little superficial, but things do happen to us. We think, God's playing with us. Even at the beginning of the path, these things happen to us that are incredible. Don't forget these things. Use them.

When talking about the teachings of the guru, we need to remember that Master teaches on the divine level.

According to a new global study, the people of the world are angrier, sadder, and more stressed than they were last year.

The study showed that the world is sadder, angrier, and more afraid than ever before. Every year since 2006, Gallup, a Global Analytics and Advice firm, has conducted a well-being analysis across the planet. The study covers how stressed, angry, or unhappy people generally are.

According to the report, in 2018, the analytics team recorded an all-time high for all three emotions. That's the second consecutive year that the global feeling has hit a record level. Although people reported a slight decline in stress, it can hardly count as a victory. The world is just as stressed as it was last year when it was also a record year for misery.

The most recent survey found that approximately four-in-10 individuals reported that they had experienced substantial feelings of worry the day preceding the interview. Another 25 percent of respondents reported feelings of sadness, and 22 percent said they had felt anger.

And you must be thinking, "Well thanks, Brother. That really makes us feel happy."

Master says that what really makes us happy is this path. This really is his teaching.

I saw a cartoon recently on the meaning of life. It shows a man on his death bed, surrounded by his closest friends. The caption reads, "Gee, I really wish I'd bought more stuff".

I read something recently that said it's not the material things that buy happiness but building relationships. I would agree that that, and even Master said that was important. But he said there's more: "Why become endlessly involved in the panorama of events in order to discover that nothing in the world can ever give us the lasting happiness that yoga gives us."

Master had so much wisdom in subjects that we don't understand and if you are able to drill down on Master's thoughts. He said, "If you could feel even a particle of divine love, so great would be your joy—so overpowering—you could not contain it. The satisfaction of love is not in the feeling itself, but in the joy that feeling brings. Love gives joy.

We love love because it gives us such intoxicating happiness. So, love is not the ultimate; the ultimate is bliss. God is Sat-Chit-Ananada, ever-existing, ever-conscious, ever-new Bliss. We, as souls, are individualized Sat-Chit-Ananda. "

The Satchitananda we are looking for is attainable. The soul has its own version that we need to bring out. All divine emotions and self-sacrifice would be meaningless without joy. Joy is the ultimate bliss. It originates in the brain, in the thousand-petaled lotus. Joy comes from God's bliss. The essential and ultimate aspects set the foundation for us to understand it.

"What is joy?", we're thinking.

Joy often manifests without any specific reason. We may be sitting in the silence of meditation and joy bubbles up. In youth, we may feel a sudden burst of happiness come from nowhere. Or, a person receives a thousand dollars. That has only served as a pickaxe for releasing the joy within.

Talking about an experience where we're reminded of the joy is not enough. Why? Gururji has given us two reasons:

- 1) The things we experience in life have a beginning and an end.
- 2) Every joy in life is balanced by grief. It's the duality of the world we live in.

There is a story in "Autobiography of a Yogi" that we can easily miss. There is a touching scene when Master fell at his guru's feet.

Sri Yukteswar tells him, "You should go back to Calcutta. Why exclude relatives from your love of humanity?"

Master writes, "His suggestion dismayed me. My family was predicting my return, though I had been unresponsive to many pleas by letter".

“ ‘Let the young bird fly in the metaphysical skies," Ananta had remarked. "His wings will tire in the heavy atmosphere. We shall yet see him swoop toward home, fold his pinions, and humbly rest in our family nest.’ ”

“This discouraging simile fresh in my mind, I was determined to do no "swooping" in the direction of Calcutta.

"Sir, I am not returning home. But I will follow you anywhere. Please give me your address and your name."

" ‘Swami Sri Yukteswar Giri. My chief hermitage is in Serampore, on Rai Ghat Lane. I am visiting my mother here for only a few days’.

"I wondered at God's intricate play with His devotees. Serampore is but twelve miles from Calcutta yet in those regions I had never caught a glimpse of my guru. We had had to travel for our meeting to the ancient city of Kasi (Benares), hallowed by memories of Lahiri Mahasaya. Here too the feet of Buddha, Shankaracharya, and other Yogi-Christians had blessed the soil."

" ‘You will come to me in four weeks.’ For the first time, Sri Yukteswar's voice was stern.

" ‘Now I have told my eternal affection and have shown my happiness at finding you — that is why you disregard my request. The next time we meet, you will have to reawaken my interest: I won't accept you as a disciple easily. There must be complete surrender by obedience to my strict training.’

"I remained obstinately silent. My guru easily penetrated my difficulty."

" ‘Do you think your relatives will laugh at you?’

"I will not return."

“ ‘You will return in thirty days.’

"Never." Bowing reverently at his feet, I departed without lightening the controversial tension.

As I made my way in the midnight darkness, I wondered why the miraculous meeting had ended on an inharmonious note. The dual scales of Maya, that balance every joy with grief! My young heart was not yet malleable to the transforming fingers of my guru." \*AY

Master said. "Never!" There must have been sparks flying. He was experiencing such joy and then such a sense of sadness.

This is what these experiences give us in this life. When you find a guru, then you don't have to have the ups and downs of these things. We're talking of these expressions of joy and love. These are a much more profound way to feel the joy of yoga.

Rajarsi Janakananda didn't speak much. We only have a few of his tapes. He was somewhat unknown, but he was a great yogi in a previous life.

"In a 1932 letter to ashram residents at Self-Realization Fellowship headquarters in Los Angeles, Paramahansaji wrote: 'Lecture campaign work at Kansas City and meeting some of the most spiritual Yogoda students there has been one of the greatest happiness's of my life.'

Such was Rajarsi's receptivity that in that first meeting, in January 1932, the Guru was able to transmit to him the experience of Samadhi, ecstatic union with God. In a lecture in 1933, Paramahansaji said: "A wealthy Kansas City man, the first day we met, touched Christ Consciousness. His soul was ripe. When he received the Kriya technique he said, 'Life boils within my spine. That is the technique I have been seeking. I have found God.' He meditated six hours with me the first day."\*\*

Rajarsi said, "The love of God is the only Reality. We must realize this love of God--so great, so joyful, I could not even begin to tell you how great it is! People in the world think, 'I do this, I enjoy that.' Yet whatever they are doing and enjoying inevitably comes to an end. But the love and joy of God that I feel is without any end. One can never forget it once he has tasted it; it is



so great he could never want anything else to take its place. What we all really want is the love of God. And you will have it when you attain deeper realization.\*\*

This is what Master brought us, not just inspirational tidbits. He brought us the methods, the science to find God.

At the first Conference of Religious Liberals, in 1920, Master went to the United States aboard the ship, City of Sparta, as India's delegate to an International Congress of Religious Liberals convening in Boston. I always enjoy the photos of these very serious men with Master beaming in the middle.

There is a way that you can take these hidden truths and use them to find this hidden love and joy within. Meditation helps us to find our oneness with God. All devotees can apply the truths of yoga. It is a science. We come to the place where we realize that love and joy are not just by-products of life. Yoga shows us how to bring these qualities from within.

Those of us in the ashram have had such great years of love and joy. Some ask why the monastics are always talking about these personalities of Master's disciples. These were the disciples the Master brought with him to achieve this work. These are the souls who we were privileged to see in this work.

Brother Bhaktananda was not an intellectual giant, but the holiness just emanated from within him. I lived at Hollywood Temple for a few years. I remember many times when Brother Bhaktananda would come out of his room. He would be radiant, and I wondered, "Is this normal?"

He had this holiness around him, His way to find that joy was by practicing the presence of God. For four years, he chanted Om from his heart. Because of his attunement, once he forgot to do this for a couple of days.

He said, "I started to feel like an empty barrel". He decided to make chanting the most important thing.

He would chant, "Om, Divine Mother". As long as he was chanting with devotion, he felt the love of God, even when he was working until midnight. He showed us that he was clearly channeling Master. He had that attunement.

Every now and then he would say something you had never heard before.

He told us, "Sometimes, you just have to kneel into it. Avoid becoming mechanical. Put all of your emotion and love into it. That's how it becomes deep."

Another time he said, regarding the spiritual path, "It's like anything else. Sooner or later, you breakthrough. "

You make an effort on the spiritual path when you lean into it in practice. Like anything else, take delight in it, and after a while, you breakthrough. So it is with yoga. Year after year, we have devotees who come back, and if they look at their lives, they can see that there has been steady progress.

Once, I asked Daya Mata if she had seen the picture book of Padre Pio. One of the pictures showed him standing in front of the camera. His superior had insisted that he take a picture of his stigmata. Looking at the photo, you could really read the expressions on his face, "Lord, I really don't want to do this". You have an awe about the sanctity of this man.

I asked Ma, "How did he become so holy?"

You could tell when a question meant something to her. She would become very still.

She answered, "Well, he practiced the presence. He practiced devotion. He didn't spend a lot of time with others. He was often alone. "

These souls had worked at it in the past, and in these conditions manifested holiness and sanctity.

Brother Lawrence was a 17th-century mystic. He found God-realization by seeing a tree. "In the deep of winter, Herman (his name before he was a monk) looked at a barren tree, stripped of leaves and fruit, waiting silently and patiently for the sure hope of summer abundance. Gazing at the tree, Herman grasped for the first time the extravagance of God's grace and the unfailing sovereignty of divine providence. Like the tree, he himself was seemingly dead, but God had life waiting for him, and the turn of seasons would bring fullness. At that moment, he said, that leafless tree 'first flashed in upon my soul the fact of God,' and a love for God that never after ceased to burn."

But few by seeing a tree have seen the tree's creator. We think that devotion is effortless attained by a few saints. Yet the ordinary person is not shut out from saintly realization. We need kriya and the ability to cry sincerely, "Lord, I yearn to know Thee".

Master brought yoga, Master brought kriya yoga to tell us that we can find love and joy in this crazy world we live in. He tells us, "A yogi feels boundless joy, proof of the ever-present God within him. With these teachings, we will realize every truth I have taught you. When you discover God, you will feel God manifesting within you, and you will experience His love and joy."

This week, I will encourage you to make this a retreat. Keep the Divine with you, and you'll go away a different person this year. The live streaming of Convocation represents a quantum leap of the number of people who can participate in Convocation.

Practicing yoga brings the consciousness of the Infinite. There is a story in "The Autobiography" about Br. Pranabananda, the saint with two bodies. He had been meditating half the night and couldn't find full realization.

"He said, "I will tell you how priceless is the guru's help. I used to meditate with another disciple for eight hours every night. We had to work in the railway office during the day. For eight years I persevered. I had wonderful results, tremendous spiritual perceptions illumined my mind. But a little veil always remained between me and the Infinite. Even with superhuman earnestness, I found the irrevocable union to be denied me.

" One evening I paid a visit to Lahiri Mahasaya, and pleaded to him for his divine intercession. My importunities continued during the entire night.

"“Angelic guru, my spiritual anguish is such that I can no longer bear my life without meeting the great Beloved face to face!”

"Lahiri Mahasaya responded, ‘What can I do? You must meditate more profoundly!’

"I am appealing to Thee, O God my Master! I see Thee materialized before me in a physical body; bless me that I may perceive Thee in Thine infinite form!’

"Lahiri Mahasaya extended his hand in a benign gesture. ‘You may go now and meditate. I have interceded for you with Brahma’.

"Immeasurably uplifted, I returned to my home. In meditation that night, the burning goal of my life was then achieved. Never from that day has the Blissful Creator remained hidden from my eyes behind any screen of delusion."

It's a lesson for us for when we go to our guru. "Reveal Thyself! Help me to feel more of you in my life". We are looking to the guru, holding his hand, and asking him to guide us. Often, this is the missing part of our meditation.

There is a book in the bookstore by Mrinalini Mata, "Visiting the Saints of India with Sri Daya Mata". She concludes with a beautiful tribute to our guru. She asked Daya Mata about the saints whom she had met in this life, and she met many of them. But she was so loyal. She looked to our guru as a unique incarnation and said there was none who could compare.

Mrinalini Mata said, " My trip to India confirmed what I already knew in my heart- what all of us who were around Gurudeva Paramahansa Yogananda and have gone to India will say: You can go all over that land, all over the world, and you can meet those who are considered to be the very greatest among Divine mother's devotees: but you do not have to go one step- because our own Master brought to us the best that India had to offer; and in him you find the very highest of any incarnation that has walked this earth".

"Sometimes devotees say, "Who impressed you most? Or, 'What was this or that one like in comparison with Master?'

"As Master himself said, it is not right it is not even possible to compare saints. With the limited instrument of the human mind, one simply cannot measure the infinity of a saint's being.

"But this I can say from my own experience: It took a Yogananda, It took one of the highest in stature to found one of the very highest stature, with an all-rounded nature and personality such as his, to be able to come to the West, to found for the world a work such as he started, bringing the essence of the highest and purest teachings of India, and have the West accept him.

"It would be very difficult for some of the other divine ones-as great as they were- as perfect as their realization was- to accomplish what Master did. Of course, they had other roles that Divine Mother assigned to them; one cannot compare and should not try to.

"Among the saints in India, some manifest a predominance of bhakti; in others, jnana, or wisdom may predominate; others emphasize karma yoga, the path of right action; and some just roam where they feel drawn, singing the name of God. But seeing these other divine ones, we appreciated all the more how all of those qualities were blended in our own Master.

"Guruji was the perfect incarnation of love. His approach to God was through bhakti, devotion, or prema, divine love. At the same time, he was a perfect karma yogi. From early morning until long after most of the world had gone to rest, he was busily active for God. As for wisdom, there has not been a saint in India today or for generations- and we have had people all over India tell us this- who has explained the depth of the scriptures as Master has. His explanations are so lucid, so simple, and his guidance is so practical. That takes real divine wisdom. India is just crying for what Master has to give

Use this inspiration to build a deeper relationship with God. Use it to ask for help and guidance, and you'll leave this Convocation with a deeper picture of someone guiding you on your path with the best in mind for you. We've seen this many times over the years. People come in and we see them weary from travel and the world, and by the time the week is over, they end up floating in their rooms.

#### Footnotes

\*This is from the story in AY verbatim rather than as told by Brother

\*\* From: "Rajarsi Janakananda – A Great Western Yogi"~ Self-Realization Fellowship

\*\*\*Mrinalini Mata, "Visiting the Saints of India with Sri Daya Mata"

**SRF 2019 Convocation**

**Monday, August 5, 2019: 4:30 p.m.**

**Mastering the Techniques of Meditation Part 1**

**Sr. Iswari**

*Scribes note: In accordance with the SRF/YSS Lessons pledge, the actual techniques described are not included in the notes.*

It's wonderful to be with you all this afternoon. We're going to have Part 1 of "Mastering the Techniques of Meditation". It is a joy and privilege to review Master's sacred, beautiful technique given to the world, the Hong Sau technique. I will go over the basic points.

This year, during Summer Day Camp in Encinitas, the Hong Sau Ceremony for young girls, one of the youngest thanked Sr. Karuna, saying, "I have been waiting all of my life to receive the Hong Sau technique." (Laughter)

When I heard that, I thought, "How beautiful!", and I ask you to apply that enthusiasm to the technique.

Let's look at our guru's important points from Lesson 4 of the new Lessons-"The Hong Sau Technique of Meditation." (Hong Sau: I am He)

For many of you who have come again and again to these technique classes, you come because each year you learn something new of what our guru wants to give us. Paramahansa Yogananda viewed the SRF techniques as the very core of the teachings.

From the beginning, he developed a systematic study of the techniques to prepare students for kriya yoga. At the request of Lahiri Mahasaya, Babaji relaxed some of the strict requirements. Kriya yoga can be given to those who sincerely want the technique and who have completed

and practiced the three pranayama techniques, the Energization Exercises, Hong Sau, and Om which is essential to the effectiveness of kriya yoga.

In the New Lessons, we have all we need to learn the art of meditation. In practicing, we are told that we will reap the highest benefit.

We are so blessed to be here at this time and to have the ability to begin again with the new Lessons. Daya Mata advised us to write good things on the pages of your life that are left. Let's begin with the commitment to meditate deeply and with the zeal we first had on the path.

We are promised in the first step in yoga science that with yoga a sure end result will be the experience of God. Paramahansa Yogananda called Hong Sau the baby kriya. Kriya takes us on an airplane. Hong Sau is a little slower. A nun once told me that Daya Mata said that for the Hong Sau technique alone she would have given her life to Master.

It is known for certain that if it is practiced regularly, it will take us to God. If we practice with all of our hearts, we can have this experience. It's the readiness to receive this high experience when Master deems we're ready for it. It enables those who practice to focus on God and use his powerful vibration.

We use only 25% of the mind. Master said that with Hong Sau, "They will learn the art of meditation and how to balance material success with spiritual success. Hong Sau helps us to expand the powers of the human mind with the superpowers latent in the soul."

Think of it! We come into this world with these latent powers of the soul. When charged with the omnipotent power of spirit, one can achieve all things. All devotees are seeking spiritual knowledge, and devotees like us are seeking union with God.

Master gave us two points on this.



1. Negative concentration frees the mind from objects of distraction.
2. Positive concentration focuses on one thing at a time.

The Lessons on Hong Sau list three kinds of distraction:

1. Distractions that come from the medium of the senses- I call them the pesky senses: taste, touch, seeing, hearing, smelling.
2. Past memories aroused by present thoughts.
3. New thoughts aroused by distracting thoughts.

The possibilities for distraction seem to be endless. We often become waylaid by the invisible bandits of distraction. What do these bandits do? They rob you of your concentration.

Here's a real-life example of how distractions come up. I had an experience while preparing for this class. Here's what happened. One morning, while I was trying to meditate, I realized that I was really thinking about this class. I thought of Daya Mata's examples of past memories of present thoughts. And I'm not making this up. I thought back to Valentine's day at Mother Center when Daya Mata was carrying little hearts in the pocket of her kaftan. I really wanted one of those little hearts.

Strategically, I waited outside of her office. She came out of the office. I was thrilled about what her message would be to me. I took the heart. I still have the little candy here. (Sister holds it up.) I've never seen a heart that has this message before or since. It says, "Keep still."

Every once in a while, I take it out to see if the message has changed. I think the message is always the same. This little envelope reminds me of what she wants for us: Deep stillness in meditation so that the bandits cannot rob us of untold bliss.

In the Lessons, Gurujii has given us instructions on how to practice Hong Sau. All of this is so beautifully presented in the Lessons.

(Sister then described the Hong Sau technique. We agree when we take the pledge before starting the Lessons not to divulge the techniques. These are available to all SRF Lesson students. Please see the link below for the New SRF Lessons)

### Challenges with Hong Sau

Difficulty with the mind wandering. Even Master had to struggle with this. He said, "I used to sit for hours. It took a great deal of time to get acquainted with Him. But as often as the mind tries to trick me, I will trick the mind. I will keep on regardless of what distractions come. But I stayed resolute. The deeper the concentration, the clearer and stronger His assurance. "

You will find in practice slow intervals when the breath ceases to flow. Just enjoy that breathlessness. Enjoy that feeling of peace and calmness.

Another challenge is that the Hong Sau technique can be quite relaxing and cause the mind to go to the subconscious where it may fall asleep. That's why we keep the mind on the kutastha. If you start to feel that the mind is going into the subconscious, you can tense and relax the body.

Some ask if they should meditate right before retiring at night. If you have trouble with sleep, it's okay to have your meditation earlier. Have your meditation at a time when you have more energy.

If you have questions about your meditations now is a good time to go to the counseling areas.

Some people ask if they can practice while lying in bed. This could be dangerous. We encourage people to adjust their schedules and not to practice in the supine position.

There are many challenges that people face. All of them are addressed in the Lessons. If you do have your meditation earlier, it is good to take the thought of God with you into your sleep. Read something from the New Lessons right before you retire.

There is a wonderful story about a satsanga when a monk asked, "Why is the Hong Sau technique so difficult?"

Daya Mata answered, "Where are people's minds during the day?" Imagine carrying a big bag. Throughout the day we fill it with stuff: tension, worries, frustration. Then when we sit to meditate, it's still with us. Our minds are so much better if we keep our minds on God all day. Be watchful of your inner state. As soon as a negative thought comes, give it to God."

Something within us is charging and growing when we practice these techniques with the deepest devotion.

How do we know we're progressing? Look at Lesson 21 pg. 51. Don't let the list overwhelm you.

#### The True Signs of Progress in Meditation

1. An increasing peacefulness in meditation.
2. A conscious inner experience of calmness in meditation metamorphosing into increasing bliss.
3. A deepening of understanding and finding the answers to one's questions through the calm intuitive state of inner perception
4. An increasing mental and physical efficiency in one's daily life.
5. Love for meditation and the desire to hold onto the peace and joy of the meditative state in preference to attraction to anything in this world.
6. An expanding consciousness of loving all with an unconditional love that one feels for his own dearest loved ones.

7. Actual contact with God, and feeling Him as ever new bliss felt in meditation and in his omnipresent manifestations within and beyond all creation.

Meditate every morning and at night. In one of our tapes, it says, "If you only have five minutes, make the five minutes count. Do them with devotion and attention will get the benefits. Really try. Look at your schedules. We can make time for God because he makes time for us.

When Sri Yukteswar gave Master his Sanyassi vows, he told Master to choose his name. "Henceforth you will be called Yogananda of the Giri branch of the swami order".

Master writes, "As I knelt before Sri Yukteswar, and for the first time heard him pronounce my new name, my heart overflowed with gratitude. How lovingly and tirelessly had he labored, that the boy Mukunda be someday transformed into the monk Yogananda! I joyfully sang a few verses from the long Sanskrit chant of lord Shankara."

"No birth, no death, no caste have I;  
Father, mother, have I none:  
I am He, I am He, — blessed Spirit, I am He!  
Mind, nor intellect, nor ego, feeling;  
Sky, nor earth, nor metals am I:  
I am He, I am He, — blessed Spirit, I am He! "

<https://yogananda.org/lessons>

**Self Realization Fellowship 2019 Convocation**

**Monday, August 5, 2019 7:30 p.m.**

**Brother Satyananda**

**Marriage and Family Life: Building a Spiritual Foundation**

Years ago, I was walking in the neighborhood around Mother Center, and I saw an elderly man raking our front line. He was making our property look really nice. I asked him why he was doing that.

He replied, "I like to keep the property clean. Years ago, I met your founder. He was a very pleasant Indian gentleman."

I asked him, "Was anything about him that made an impression on you?"

He responded, "Yes. His eyes."

"What was it about his eyes that made an impression on you?" I asked.

"In his eyes, I could tell that he completely accepted me. I could tell that he saw everything on the inside and still accepted me".

Someone had really known him on the inside and completely accepted him. That's the feeling I have. My feeling about my guru is that my guru knows me on the inside. He knows things about me that I've long forgotten. He accepts me completely; not with pity or shame, but complete acceptance. If we feel pity or shame, it's not the sadguru.

Mrinalini Mata told us that Gururji used to say, "I know those who will come in the future and those who will follow this path steadfastly. I am with them, and they are with me."

Master had a great command of the English language. He could have chosen the word "perfect". Steadfastness must not be perfect but leads to perfection. All disciples wander and then bring themselves back.

Jesus said the same thing. "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed."

The word "continue" is the same as steadfast.

Master also said, "Those who practice know the lessons of this path."

We will talk about the path we walk within the context of Master's thought. It's important to discuss the truth of our environment because this contributes to the peace and harmony we bring to our home. Or we can say, "I am one", as in Master's version, or, "I am one with Him and He is one with me".

If anyone asks what church do you attend, what do you say?

"I follow a path that teaches finding God through communion and prayer." Just leave it there. Then ask them if they've seen the last "Game of Thrones". (Laughter)

It's the daily steps that bring harmony and peaceful energy into our homes. Master told us that our daily habits determine our future.

Maya specializes in distraction. But when the magic of the spiritual path is synchronized in our love for him or aligned with him, then we remain steadfastly walking in the footprints of our guru. The sadhana or spiritual action prescribed by a guru, when performed daily, leads to spiritual liberation.

Some think, "There is so much to do, I can't possibly do it." But you can focus on Master's sadhana, Yogananda's four basic spiritual actions, four pillars of sadhana: meditation, spiritual study, introspection, and service.

The theme tonight is that if we can consciously focus on these core principles, then our whole environment will be purified. We can be a monastic living in an ashram or a householder, but in the mind, our sadhana is the same.

Krishna said, "The person whose mind is always free from attachment, who has subdued the mind and senses, and who is free from desires, attains the supreme perfection of freedom from Karma through renunciation."

Master said to follow the right sadhana with a spiritual attitude. Look at the four pillars as a prescription for daily life, and let's put these into a real-time context with the life we actually live. Absorb these and later you'll find these ideas waiting for you at home; Waiting for you to download in life.

#### 1. Meditation.

The first thing in the morning meditate. If there's one habit that will shape your future, this is it. Master said, "Everything else can wait but your search for God cannot wait."

Don't wait, Meditate. Even before you pick up your phone. I tell Temple devotees, "God only calls when the cell phone's off".

Meditate. The very first thing; before coffee! Really? If you are really serious about God you will start this first thing in the morning.

Have a longer meditation. Ask yourself, "How might I make an effort for a longer meditation at home?" If you really want to change, a longer meditation will do it. Start by doubling your

meditation time. Add more time for devotion and stillness. Then double the time for devotion. Also add time for devotional prayers for your family and loved ones. I promise you that you will feel profound joy and satisfaction.

During my last travel program, I pushed for long meditations in the home. I got a lot of pushback. "Hey, we've got families!"

Remember that you are always scheduling events; conference calls, appointments, playdates. Use your calendar app until there's nothing but blue sky and add devotional time with God. Now that you've calendared it, protect it. Share your plan with others; "I'd like quiet in this part of the house during this time. "

The first time you try it, everything will try to interfere: bungee jumping; killer sale-80% off everything you want. But after a time, the universe will start to support you. The family will start supporting you. Soon, you will have created an altar. It's very important whether those in your family support you or not. You can even create a whole room for meditation.

One girl who was going to college told me, "They're making my room into a chapel!"

One devotee told me she had created a space with matching carpet and curtains. "Brother, it's such a beautiful space, when I close my eyes I just want to meditate."

One family created an altar just for the children. The children were taught how to make an offering with rose petals and how to use the space for communion with God. The father shared with me how his daughter taught her friend how to make an offering. Having a sacred space does so much for raising the vibration.

Fitting sadhana into family life requires mediation and negotiation. Maybe you as parents haven't shared enough with them about what you are doing and why. Once you have shared



with them, then answer their questions. Be direct. " If you love and care for me, please honor my wishes. This is important to me! I expect it. It's as important to me as football."

You'll find that your friends, family, and loved ones will begin to support you.

Master told us that when he started on the path, some members of his family thought he had gone wrong. Eventually, he said, "Some began to sing my songs."

Master communicated. He shared his aspirations, devotion, and love for God.

Ask yourself, "Is someone at home struggling now?"

Help them to relax and release the pain they may be experiencing. Sit with them for a few minutes. They will follow you. They're meditating a little and sharing your peace.

Say, "I'd like to pray for you. What kind of prayer should I offer? "

Some devotees have shared such stories and how after counseling and prayer they (their loved ones) light up. Bring that contemplative, devotional activity into the home, not only for yourself but for the benefit of all. It brings a sweetness to family life and makes relationships purer.

If you make a pilgrimage to Mother Center and go past the tennis court, you will see a pedestal sundial. It's a reminder to bring the sunlight regularly into your yogoda exercises.

## 2. Spiritual Study

Our guru lives on a plane of expanded awareness. He brings a new truth...a new reality. In order to make the guru's truth our own, we need to empower it. We need to adopt the teachings to create our own cosmic world new.

Realize, "This is my world! This is my reality! The truth actually changes our lives. It becomes our own. When one's own voice lacks clarity, our guru's sadhana is there. Devotee, listen eagerly to the guru to understand the soul's devotion. It takes creativity to a higher plane. Some days we have more time than others, but we want to absorb a little spiritual truth every day. A single thought can have profound value.

Brother Anandamoy would advise us to first read once through for an overview. Read the second time to absorb content. Then read it a third time for the parts where Master speaks to you. Then ask yourself how to apply this in real life.

It's becoming really popular to read Master's teachings out loud. One devotee would study Master's work while her husband watched t.v.

She told me, "One night a miracle happened, and he asked to join me. " He was an auditory learner, and he asked her to read to him.

He told me, "Brother, I love this time in my life. It's soothing. It's intimate. I'm absolutely learning a lot from Yogananda".

Reading Master's writings out loud is becoming a thing. You have the guru's words and a loved one's voice. They will listen to you when they might not for anyone else because they trust you.

There are stories for children in the Lessons. One child told me, "Boy! You tell a lot of stories. Why do they always have to have a moral?"

Here's the format that I use. Take a story about Krishna or Jesus. Then use a passage from the Gita or the Bible. Then I add Master's commentary and a little of my own interpretations. Try it

with children. They will love it You can search the web for stories of Krishna. One website has "The Twenty Best Stories of Krishna". You can put together your own library for the children.

When I was a little boy, my mother would get up early and read the Bible. We all knew that she would sit in the sunroom at five a.m. reading the Bible, studying and taking notes. All of us kids would get up and climb in her lap. We had to be quiet. We understood that. She knew. She was there because she was waiting for us. We have opportunities to create sacred space for children.

The flip side of this is that it is a harsh world outside. There is a joke in Europe about a tightly wound businessman who is told, "Take a deep breath before we begin. Now relax...and slowly let go of your phone."

Now we have the SRF apps! Truth and the apps are very close. If we distinguish, we can train ourselves to navigate wisely. When we navigate, there can be opinions or facts. Then they are spun into controversy.

If we want a quality spiritual life with our sadhana at the center of it, we need to set boundaries with this information, consuming it wisely.

There is a true story about a father and son. The son was depressed. He wouldn't talk to his teacher, but he told his Dad, "I will talk to you."

So, he and his 15-year-old sat under a tree. The son talked all about world destruction and staying up all night worrying about that and all of the depressing things he had read on the web about news situations from far away.

His father asked him, "Do you really believe what you hear and see on the media. (Regarding a specific country) I was there last year and it's not half as bad as they show on t.v. "

It was not as bad as he was thinking. It was exaggerated in fact.

He told him. "Don't build your world based on exaggerations. Build it on truth. "

I'm a firm believer in being informed on current events but measure it. E.g. do you like chocolate-covered jalapenos?

When a disciple comes to me in a sorrowful state, I prescribe a media fast. I had an Australian man who told me a three day fast was too much waiting for him. But start consuming less media and more truth and you will start to live in truth

Our guru lived through two world wars and the worst depression in history, and he was still positive. So, we need to teach our kids not to build a world based on information if you can't trust it.

Buddha said, "My teachings are only the notation. Practice is the beautiful music".

Our world needs kriya practices; and when you finish meditating, send it out to others, family members, the world.

We can talk to someone, but talk is not resolving. Practicing sadhana in the home turns the home into a hermitage, a refuge, a safe haven.

### 3. Introspection

If the benefit of spiritual study is spiritual consumption the benefit of introspection is transformation of your life.

My own personal experience with introspection was with a journal , in L.A. speak, my own private therapist. Meditation and introspection go together. Introspection is about interpretation; what we think and feel; the soul's view of the ego drama. I have Master's picture in my journal and the poem, "When I am only a Dream."

"When I am Only a Dream

I come to tell you all of Him,  
And the way to encase Him in your bosom,  
And of the discipline which brings His grace.  
To those of you who have asked me  
To guide you to my Beloved's silently talking mind,  
Or speak to you through a gentle significant glance,  
Or whisper to you through my love,  
Or loudly dissuade you when you stray away from Him.  
But when I shall become only a memory or a mental image,  
Or silently speaking voice,  
When no earthly call will ever reveal  
My whereabouts in unplumbed space  
When no shallow entreaty or stern stentorian command  
Will bring an answer from me,  
I will smile in your mind when you are right,  
And when you are wrong, I will weep through my eyes,  
Dimly peering at you in the dark,  
And weep through your eyes, perchance;  
And I will whisper to you through your conscience,  
And I will reason with you through your reason,  
And I will love through your love.  
When you are able no longer to talk to me,

Read my Whispers of Eternity.  
Eternally through that I will talk to you.  
Unknown I will walk by your side  
And guard you with invisible arms.  
And as soon as you know my Beloved  
And hear His voice in silence,  
You will know me again more tangibly  
Than you knew me in this earth plane.  
And yet when I am only a dream to you  
I will come to remind you that you too are naught  
But a dream of my Heavenly Beloved,  
And when you know you are a dream, as I know now,  
We all will be ever awake in Him." Paramahansa Yogananda

I read this. Then the whisper of my Master may come through.

Introspection is a natural way of life, a healthy full perspective. Stellar performance is a stupid move. I use the notes I have on my phone to capture useful real-life content or a situation with a lesson to learn; an inspiration I want to preserve. Preserve your invites. They're valuable. Use colorful pens. Write and think. I summarize. I love to draw meaningful conclusions.

I was telling the young adults at the lake that journaling was not worth the time unless you introspect and act. Draw conclusions from your spiritual studies and your current life and thoughts.

I want to give a message to the younger generation. You guys are really smart. You, " My parents say this". "My friend says this"; "YouTube says this"

One answer is to use your own mind. You have to be the decider in your own life.

Master's saintly disciple, Gyanamata writes, "As a young adult, I never allowed anyone to force anything upon me, and I sought fearlessly when I saw something I wanted."

She trusted herself to pursue the things she wanted; fearlessly. You have to be the one to decide what is right for you.

A teenage girl and her mom were going through a very painful family split. Her mother was trying to be brave. One night, as she passed by her mother's bedroom, there she was on her knees in front of the altar crying to God.

She said to me, "Brother, I know if something happens like this, I'll know where to go."

Mrs. Cagliano noticed on her visits to her son how pretty his roommate was. Antonio tells her, "I assure you that Maria and I are only roommates."

Maria smiles and nods.

Maria tells Antonio that since his Mom visited, she can't find the silver sugar bowl.

Antonio tells his mom, "I'm not saying that you took it, but the fact remains that ever since your visit, the silver sugar bowl has been missing".

His mother responded, "I'm not saying you're sleeping with Maria; but the fact remains if she were sleeping in her own bed, she would have found the sugar bowl there.

#### 4. Service

There is a Sanskrit word, "saba" which means being selflessly committed to serving others. Serving others is part of the fruit of our spirituality that results in an amazing transformation. The soul message is to do it for God.

The first criteria is understanding the needs of those around you; responding to what represents their most immediate need.

I was at the market and saw an elderly woman looking at a high shelf. I thought I saw it, and reached up and got her the small jar she was looking at.

She said, "Thank you, young man!"

There were two blessings, getting her what she wanted and being referred to as a young man.

With a new baby, parents are always trying to figure out what they really need. With others, we can say, "Tell me what's wrong". But with a baby, we need a little intuition with patience, love, and understanding. A true saba wants to understand the real need.

Ask a teen what they are thinking about and they will tell you, "Oh nothing." Ask them what they are dreaming about and you will get a response. Never critique a dream. Go out with unconditional encouragement speaking directly to the souls. You need the ability to empower them to make a step.

Mentally put yourself in the position of others. Understand that there is no greater joy.

Remember the sundial, pedestal, and benches at Mother Center. In the 1980's, the area was being improved. I was in charge of the project. I engaged a landscaping architect. He came upon contract. One day, I stood with him at the empty site as we faced the city.



He turned around towards the headquarters building and said, "You need something prominent here."

I suggested a fountain.

He replied, "No. Some monument. Something more meaningful to your history...like a sundial".

Later on, I was up in Ma's office. She asked, "How's the landscape design coming along. Tell me what he's recommended."

I told her about the trees and shrubs he had talked about. Then I said, "He wants something prominent in that area, like a sundial."

She grabbed my arm. "Did you say sundial? We have one in storage. We've been waiting for a place to put it. This is perfect!"

This man had intuitively fulfilled the will of Master.

The landscaper asked later, "Did you find a sundial. I thought you might not have found it. "

I told him about our sundial. That man never submitted an invoice.

Pray with joy to serve according to "Thy Divine Will".

"Bring to me the next steps of what I should do."

Do this, and you will know you have been a channel of God. That's how you bring sadhana into your home.

Others may not be seekers themselves. This is how we see what an advanced relationship we have together. Consider the value of study and service...these daily aspirations... and you will find that Master not only is blessing us but those around us.

One of our ministers was getting ready to speak. The congregation was quiet. Before he could say anything, Siri spoke up: "You have arrived at your destination."

**Self Realization Fellowship-All Talks**

**Convocation 2019**

**August 4-11, 2019**

**Sunday Night 7:30 p.m.**

**Brother Jayananda**

**The Hidden Love and Joy of God**

**August 4, 2019**

**Welcome: Brother Chidananda**

**President SRF/YSS**

Brother Chidananda: Loving Pronams! Beloveds of God and gurus. I wanted to come and welcome you to this 2019 Convocation. I'm not going to give a talk tonight. I just want to share the love and joy that come from the higher realms with those here in this ballroom, those who are downstairs in the Pasadena Room, and those of you all over the world who are watching this via live stream. Welcome!

This is truly a sacred occasion. Every year you come back to recharge your minds, recharge your hearts. This morning, as I was meditating in the shrine of our guru on the third floor of Mother Center, I could feel the joy of all of you as you have been flying in from 48 countries around the world. And whether you came by plane, train, car, or bullock cart, or Internet connectivity, I know you are flying high.

This is the beautiful image Guruji gave me; Your souls all driven by that beacon of Divine Light, and as you're drawn into that light, let your hearts receive it. There is one thing that I wanted to say. Our world today is going through some difficult times; and how

hard it is for any sensitive heart, grasping for meaning and security that we know is found in God.

How wonderful that you are here, and remotely, by video, have made the choice to go to this Source. So, I would urge you to use these days well. Be on spiritual retreat. And at the end of the week, you will find you've become a multiplier of that light the world is yearning for. Coming back to that image, in that presence of God and guru, let's begin this Convocation. Feel in your hearts, in the kutastha center, that living presence of God and gurus. And let our hearts, our receptive consciousness, be a place for that Divine Consciousness, so that it can grow, as we take their presence and feel that they are here, in reality.

Invocation

O Infinite Beloved, Illuminate our hearts;  
Fill us with your light;  
Change our darkness to Thy light;  
Touch us but once;  
That we may be transformed;  
Not only touch us but join us;  
Inundate us in the ocean of your Divine Presence;  
Bless us that we may be receptive;  
That we be changed;  
And, O Divine Beloved;  
May Thy love,  
Shine Forever; On the sanctuary of our devotion;  
And may we be able;  
To awaken Thy love;  
In All hearts.  
Om; Peace; Shanti; Amen

With these words of invocation, the 2019 SRF Convocation now begins. Feel that we've created this temple by that Infinite One. Guruji loved the concept of a wall-less temple. It is how he conceived of Lake Shrine. And in this case, he has created a wall-less temple with all of those streaming from all around the world. Clearly this is a first for a World Convocation of SRF.

So, enjoy and cherish this: moments with other devotees, the kirtans, the meditations, the lectures, and the pilgrimages. But while doing so, do one thing. Keep bringing the mind back to this wall-less temple, whether you are going to pilgrimages, kirtans, meditations, lectures, or visiting with friends from around the world. You are blessed. Keep the mind at the kutastha and receive that One, and by the end of the week, you will be changed.

I can't begin to how much it means, all the messages and cards you have sent. And I read every one. Thank you all. I will be praying for your glimpses of that Divine Love. So may God and guru bless you all, my divine friends.

*Standing ovation as Brother Chidananda blesses all.*

*Scribe's Note: There is no way to put into words the powerful energy that pours into each of us as our SRF presidents, who so gloriously wear the mantle, of our guru, bless us while they speak. This sublime energy pours through the medulla, the kutastha, and blissfully emerges through the thousand petaled lotus as we listen to their beautiful words. This has been the case with the Ma's, and now with our anointed President, Brother Chidananda. We are truly blessed to experience this inspiring group darshan at Convocation.*

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SKXxDjI2W\\_c](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SKXxDjI2W_c)

### **Brother Jayananda The Hidden Love and Joy of God"**

Well, that's a run-less start. A great beginning to the Convocation. This is a great experiment this year, this live-streaming of Convocation. And for all of you participating in livestreaming, know that you can truly participate in this Convocation. Our guru said he is as close as our thoughts can be. So how can we draw closer? Maybe meditate a little deeper; read his teachings. This is Master's world-wide family, and it's a great joy to all of us to be here with you.

So, this talk is called, "The Hidden Love and Joy of God": Read the pamphlet description.(Convocation program)

The hidden wonders of God's love and joy surround us and beckon to us in seemingly mundane and yet miraculous ways. They can take the form of a child at play, a sign on the street, a fellow worker's comment — or even plans gone awry! Paramahansa Yogananda said that "yoga is the art of doing everything with the consciousness of God," and as we condition our mind to the realization of His eminence in little ways each day, we find, naturally and effortlessly, that He has become a tangible, loving presence in our life.

This is the purpose of Master's teachings: to bring the presence of our guru more completely into our lives. It's a little superficial, but things do happen to us. We think, God's playing with us. Even at the beginning of the path, these things happen to us that are incredible. Don't forget these things. Use them.

When talking about the teachings of the guru, we need to remember that Master teaches on the divine level.

There is a Gallup study that showed that the world is sadder, angrier, and more afraid than ever before. Every year since 2006, Gallup, a Global Analytics and Advice firm, has conducted a well-being analysis across the planet. The study covers how stressed, angry, or unhappy people generally are.

According to the report, in 2018, the analytics team recorded an all-time high for all three emotions. That's the second consecutive year that the global feeling has hit a record level. Although people reported a slight decline in stress, it can hardly count as a victory. The world is just as stressed as it was last year when it was also a record year for misery.

According to a new global study, the people of the world are angrier, sadder, and more stressed than they were last year.

The most recent survey found that approximately four-in-10 individuals reported that they had experienced substantial feelings of worry the day preceding the interview. Another 25 percent of respondents reported feelings of sadness, and 22 percent said they had felt anger.

And you must be thinking, "Well thanks, Brother. That really makes us feel happy." Master says that what really makes us happy is this path. This really is his teaching.

I saw a cartoon recently on the meaning of life. It shows a man on his death bed, surrounded by his closest friends. The caption reads, "Gee, I really wish I'd bought more stuff".

I read something recently that said it's not the material things that buy happiness but building relationships. I would agree that that, and even Master said that was important. But he said there's more: "Why become endlessly involved in the panorama of events in order to discover that nothing in the world can ever give us the lasting happiness that yoga gives us."

Master had so much wisdom in subjects that we don't understand and if you are able to drill down on Master's thoughts. He said, "If you could feel even a particle of divine love, so great would be your joy—so overpowering—you could not contain it. The satisfaction of love is not in the feeling itself, but in the joy that feeling brings. Love gives joy. We love love because it gives us such intoxicating happiness. So, love is not the ultimate; the ultimate is bliss. God is Sat-Chit-Ananada, ever-existing, ever-conscious, ever-new Bliss. We, as soul, are individualized Sat-Chit-Ananda. "

The Satchitananda we are looking for is attainable. The soul has its own version that we need to bring out. All divine emotions and self-sacrifice would be meaningless without joy. Joy is the ultimate bliss. It originates in the brain, in the thousand petaled lotus. Joy comes from God's bliss. The essential and ultimate aspects set the foundation for us to understand it.

“What is joy?” , we’re thinking. Joy often manifests without any specific reason. We may be sitting in the silence of meditation and joy bubbles up. In youth, we may feel a sudden burst of happiness come from nowhere. Or, a person receives a thousand dollars. That has only served as a pick as for releasing the joy within.

Talking about an experience where we’re reminded of the joy is not enough. Why? Guruji has given us two reasons:

- 1) The things we experience in life have a beginning and an end.
- 2) Every joy I life is balanced by grief. It’ the duality of the world we live in.

There is a story in “Autobiography of a Yogi” that we can easily miss. There is a touching scene When Master fell at his guru’s feet. Sri Yukteswar.

*“You should go back to Calcutta. Why exclude relatives from your love of humanity?”*

*His suggestion dismayed me. My family was predicting my return, though I had been unresponsive to many pleas by letter.*

*“Let the young bird fly in the metaphysical skies,” Ananta had remarked. “His wings will tire in the heavy atmosphere. We shall yet see him swoop toward home, fold his pinions, and humbly rest in our family nest.”*

*This discouraging simile fresh in my mind, I was determined to do no “swooping” in the direction of Calcutta.*

*“Sir, I am not returning home. But I will follow you anywhere. Please give me your address, and your name.”*

*“Swami Sri Yukteswar Giri. My chief hermitage is in Serampore, on Rai Ghat Lane. I am visiting my mother here for only a few days.*

*“I wondered at God’s intricate play with His devotees. Serampore is but twelve miles from Calcutta, yet in those regions .*

*I had never caught a glimpse of my guru. We had had to travel for our meeting to the ancient city of Kasi (Benares), hallowed by memories of Lahiri Mahasaya. Here too the feet of Buddha, Shankaracharya and other Yogi-Christis had blessed the soil.”*

*“You will come to me in four weeks.” For the first time, Sri Yukteswar’s voice was stern.*

*“Now I have told my eternal affection and have shown my happiness at finding you — that is why you disregard my request. The next time we meet, you will have to reawaken my interest: I won’t accept you as a disciple easily. There must be complete surrender by obedience to my strict training.”*

*"I remained obstinately silent. My guru easily penetrated my difficulty."*

*"Do you think your relatives will laugh at you?"*

*"I will not return."*

*"You will return in thirty days."*

*"Never." Bowing reverently at his feet, I departed without lightening the controversial tension.*

*As I made my way in the midnight darkness, I wondered why the miraculous meeting had ended on an inharmonious note. The dual scales of maya, that balance every joy with a grief! My young heart was not yet malleable to the transforming fingers of my guru."AY*

Master said. "Never!" There must have been sparks flying. He was experiencing such joy and then such a sense of sadness.

This is what these experiences give us in this life. When you find a guru, then you don't have to have the ups and downs of these things. We're talking of these expressions of joy and love. These are much more profound way to feel the joy of yoga.

Rajarsi Janakananda didn't speak much. We only have a few of his tapes. He was somewhat unknown, but he was a great yogi in a previous life.

"In a 1932 letter to ashram residents at Self-Realization Fellowship headquarters in Los Angeles, Paramahansaji wrote: 'Lecture campaign work at Kansas City and meeting some of the most spiritual Yogoda students there has been one of the greatest happiness's of my life.'

Such was Rajarsi's receptivity that in that first meeting, in January 1932, the Guru was able to transmit to him the experience of Samadhi, ecstatic union with God. In a lecture in 1933, Paramahansaji said: "A wealthy Kansas City man, the first day we met, touched Christ Consciousness. His soul was ripe. When he received the Kriya technique he said, 'Life boils within my spine. That is the technique I have been seeking. I have found God.' He meditated six hours with me the first day."

From: "Rajarsi Janakananda – A Great Western Yogi"~ Self-Realization Fellowship

Rajarsi said, "The love of God is the only Reality. We must realize this love of God--so great, so joyful, I could not even begin to tell you how great it is! People in the world think, 'I do this, I enjoy that.' Yet whatever they are doing and enjoying inevitably comes to an end. But the love and joy of God that I feel is without any end. One can never

forget it once he has tasted it; it is so great he could never want anything else to take its place. What we all really want is the love of God. And you will have it when you attain deeper realization. From: "Rajarsi Janakananda – A Great Western Yogi"~ Self-Realization Fellowship

This is what Master brought us, not just inspirational tidbits. He brought us the methods, the science to find God.

At the first Conference of Religious Liberals, in 1920, Master went to the United States aboard the ship, City of Sparta, as India's delegate to an International Congress of Religious Liberals convening in Boston. I always enjoy the photos of these very serious men with Master beaming in the middle.

There is a way that you can take these hidden truths and use them to find this hidden love and joy within. Meditation helps us to find our oneness with God. All devotees can apply the truths of yoga. It is a science. We come to the place where we realize that love and joy are not just by-products of life. Yoga shows us how to bring these qualities from within.

Those of us in the ashram have had such great years of love and joy. Some ask why the monastics are always talking about these personalities of Master's disciples. These were the disciples the Master brought with him to achieve this work. These are the souls who we were privileged to see in this work.

Brother Bhaktananda was not an intellectual giant, but the holiness just emanated from within him. I lived at Hollywood Temple for a few years. I remember many times when Brother Bhaktananda would come out of his room. He would be radiant, and I wondered, "Is this normal?"

He had this holiness around him, His way to find that joy was by practicing the presence of God. For four years, he chanted om from his heart. Because of his attunement, once he forgot for a couple of days.

He said, "I started to feel like an empty barrel". He decided to make chanting the most important thing. He would chant, "Om, Divine Mother". As long as he was chanting with devotion, he felt the love of God, even when he was working until midnight. He showed us that he was clearly channeling Master. He had that attunement.

Every now and then he would say something you had never heard before. He told us, "Sometimes, you just have to kneel into it. Avoid becoming mechanical. Put all of your emotion and love into it. That's how it becomes deep."



Another time he said, regarding the spiritual path, "It's like anything else. Sooner or later, you break through. "

You make an effort on the spiritual path when you lean into it in practice. Like anything else, take delight in it, and after a while, you break through. So it is with yoga. Year after year, we have devotees who come back, and if they look at their lives, they can see that there has been steady progress.

Once, I asked Daya Mata if she had seen the picture book of Padre Pio. One of the pictures showed him standing in front of the camera. His superior had insisted that he take a picture of his stigmata. Looking at the photo, you could really read the expressions in his face, "Lord, I really don't want to do this". You have an awe about the sanctity of this man.

I asked Ma, "How did he become so holy?"

You could tell when a question meant something to her. She would become very still.

She answered, "Well, he practiced the presence. He practiced devotion. He didn't spend a lot of time with others. He was often alone. "

These souls had worked at it in the past, and in these conditions manifested holiness and sanctity.

Brother Lawrence was a 17<sup>th</sup> century mystic. He found God realization by seeing a tree.

*"In the deep of winter, Herman (his name before he was a monk) looked at a barren tree, stripped of leaves and fruit, waiting silently and patiently for the sure hope of summer abundance. Gazing at the tree, Herman grasped for the first time the extravagance of God's grace and the unfailing sovereignty of divine providence. Like the tree, he himself was seemingly dead, but God had life waiting for him, and the turn of seasons would bring fullness. At that moment, he said, that leafless tree 'first flashed in upon my soul the fact of God,' and a love for God that never after ceased to burn."*

But few by seeing a tree have seen the tree's creator. We think that devotion is effortless attained by a few saints. Yet the ordinary person is not shut out from saintly realization. We need kriya and the ability to cry sincerely, "Lord, I yearn to know Thee".

Master brought yoga, Master brought kriya yoga to tell us that we can find love and joy in this crazy world we live in. He tells us, "A yogi feels boundless joy, proof of the ever-present God within him. With these teachings, we will realize every truth I have taught you. When you discover God, you will feel God manifesting within you, and you will experience His love and joy."

On this week, I will encourage you to make this a retreat. Keep the Divine with you, and you'll go away a different person this year. The livestreaming of Convocation represents a quantum leap of the number of people who can participate in Convocation.

Practicing yoga brings the consciousness of the Infinite. There is a story in "The Autobiography" about Br. Pranabananda, the saint with two bodies. He had been meditating half the night and couldn't find full realization.

He said, "I will tell you how priceless is the guru's help. I used to meditate with another disciple for eight hours every night. We had to work in the railway office during the day. For eight years I persevered. I had wonderful results, tremendous spiritual perceptions illumined my mind. But a little veil always remained between me and the Infinite. Even with superhuman earnestness, I found the irrevocable union to be denied me.

"One evening I paid a visit to Lahiri Mahasaya, and pleaded to him for his divine intercession. My importunities continued during the entire night.

"Angelic guru, my spiritual anguish is such that I can no longer bear my life without meeting the great Beloved face to face!"

Lahiri Mahasaya responded, "What can I do? You must meditate more profoundly!"

"I am appealing to Thee, O God my Master! I see Thee materialized before me in a physical body; bless me that I may perceive Thee in Thine infinite form!"

Lahiri Mahasaya extended his hand in a benign gesture. "You may go now and meditate. I have interceded for you with Brahma".

"Immeasurably uplifted, I returned to my home. In meditation that night, the burning goal of my life was then achieved. Never from that day has the Blissful Creator remained hidden from my eyes behind any screen of delusion."

It's a lesson for us for when we go to our guru. "Reveal Thyself! Help me to feel more of you in my life. We are looking to the guru, holding his hand, and asking him to guide us. Often, this is the missing part of our meditation.

There is a book in the bookstore by Mrinalini Mata, "Visiting the Saints of India with Sri Daya Mata". She concludes with a beautiful tribute to our guru. She asked Daya Mata about the saints whom she had met in this life, and she met many of them, but she was so loyal. She looked to our guru as a unique incarnation and said there was none who could compare.

Mrinalini Mata said, “ My trip to India confirmed what I already knew in my heart- what all of us who were around Gurudeva Paramahansa Yogananda and have gone to India will say: You can go all over that land, all over the world, and you can meet those who are considered to be the very greatest among Divine mother’s devotees: but you do not have to go one step- because our own Master brought to us the best that India had to offer; and in him you find the very highest of any incarnation that has walked this earth.

“Sometimes devotees say, “Who impressed you most? Or, ‘What was this or that one like in comparison with Master?’

“As Master himself said, it is not right it is not even possible to compare saints. With the limited instrument of the human mind, one simply cannot measure the infinity of a saint’s being.

“But this I can say from my own experience: It took a Yogananda, It took one of the highest in stature to found one of the very highest stature, with an all-rounded nature and personality such as his, to be able to come to the West, to found for the world a work such as he started, bringing the essence of the highest and purest teachings of India, and have the West accept him.

“It would be very difficult for some of the other divine ones-as great as they were- as perfect as their realization was- to accomplish what Master did. Of course, they had other roles that Divine Mother assigned to them; one cannot compare and should not try to.

“Among the saints in India, some manifest a predominance of bhakti; in others, jnana, or wisdom may predominate; others emphasize karma yoga, the path of right action; and some just roam where they feel drawn, singing the name of God. But seeing these other divine ones, we appreciated all the more how all of those qualities were blended in our own Master.

Guruji was the perfect incarnation of love. His approach to God was through bhakti, devotion, or prema, divine love. At the same time, he was a perfect karma yogi. From early morning until long after most of the world had gone to rest, he was busily active for God. As for wisdom, there has not been a saint in India today or for generations- and we have had people all over India tell us this- who has explained the depth of the scriptures as Master has. His explanations are so lucid, so simple, and his guidance is so practical. That takes real divine wisdom. India is just crying for what Master has to give.” Mrinalini Mata, “Visiting the Saints of India with Sri Daya Mata”

Use this inspiration to build a deeper relationship with God. Use it to ask for help and guidance, and you’ll leave this Convocation with a deeper picture of someone guiding

you on your path, with the best in mind for you. We've seen this many times over the years. People come in and we see them weary from travel and the world, and by the time the week is over, they end up floating in their rooms.

**SRF 2019 Convocation**  
**Monday, August 5, 2019 4:30 p.m.**  
**Mastering the Techniques of Meditation Part 1**  
**Sr. Iswari**

Scribes note: In accordance with the SRF Lessons pledge, the actual techniques described are not included in the notes.

It's wonderful to be with you all this afternoon. We're going to have Part 1 of "Mastering the Techniques of Meditation". It is a joy and privilege to review Master's sacred, beautiful technique given to the world, the Hong Sau technique. I will go over the basic points.

This year, during Summer Day Camp in Encinitas, the Hong Sau Ceremony for young girls, one of the youngest thanked Sr. Karuna, saying, "I have been waiting all of my life to receive the Hong Sau technique."

When I heard that, I thought, "How beautiful!" , and I ask you to apply that enthusiasm to the technique.

Let's look at our guru's important points from Lesson 4 of the new Lessons- "The Hong Sau Technique of Meditation." (Hong Sau: I am He) For many of you who have come again and again to these technique classes, you come because each year you learn something new of what our guru wants to give us. Paramahansa Yogananda viewed the SRF techniques as the very core of the teachings.

From the beginning, he developed a systematic study of the techniques to prepare students for kriya yoga. At the request of Lahiri Mahasaya, Babaji relaxed some of the strict requirements . Kriya yoga can be given to those who sincerely want the technique and who have completed and practiced the three pranayama techniques, the Energization Exercises, Hong Sau, and Om which are essential to the effectiveness of kriya yoga.

In the New Lessons, we have all we need to learn the art of meditation. In practicing, we are told that we will reap the highest benefit.

We are so blessed to be here at this time and to have the ability to begin again with the new Lessons. Daya Mata advised us to write good things on the pages of your life that are left. Let's begin with the commitment to meditate deeply and with the zeal we first had on the path.

We are promised in the first step in yoga science that with yoga a sure end result will be the experience of God. Paramahansa Yogananda called Hong Sau the baby kriya. Kriya takes us on an airplane. Hong Sau is a little slower. A nun once told me that Daya Mata said that for the Hong Sau technique alone she would have given her life to Master.

It is known for certain that if it is practice regularly, it will take us to God. If we practice with all of our hearts, we can have this experience. It's the readiness to receive this high experience when Master deems we're ready for it. It enables those who practice to focus on God and use his powerful vibration.

We use only 25% of the mind. Master said that with Hong Sau, "They will learn the art of meditation and how to balance material success with spiritual success. Hong Sau helps us to expand the powers of the human mind with the super powers latent in the soul."

Think of it! We come into this world with these latent powers of the soul. When charged with the omnipotent power of spirit, one can achieve all things. All devotees are seeking spiritual knowledge, and devotees like us are seeking union with God.

Master gave us two points on this.

- 1) Negative concentration frees the mind from objects of distraction.
- 2) Positive concentration focuses on one thing at a time.

The Lessons on Hong Sau list three kinds of distraction:

- 1) Distractions that come from the medium of the senses- I call them the pesky senses: taste, touch, seeing, hearing, smelling.
- 2) Past memories aroused by present thoughts.
- 3) New thoughts aroused by distracting thoughts.

The possibilities for distraction seem to be endless. We often become waylaid by the invisible bandits of distraction. What do these bandits do? They rob you of your concentration.

Here's a real-life example of how distractions come up. I had an experience while preparing for this class. Here's what happened. One morning, while I was trying to meditate, I realized that I was really thinking about this class. I thought of Daya Mata's examples of past memories of present thoughts. And I'm not making this up. I thought back to a Valentine's day at Mother Center when Daya Mata was carrying little hearts in the pocket of her kaftan. I really wanted one of those little hearts.

Strategically, I waited outside of her office. She came out of the office. I was thrilled about what her message would be to me. I took the heart. I still have the little candy here. (Sister holds it up.) I've never seen a heart that has this message before or since. It says, "Keep still."

Every once in a while, I take it out to see if the message has changed. I think the message is always the same. This little envelope reminds me of what she wants for us: Deep stillness in meditation, so that the bandits cannot rob us of untold bliss.

In the Lessons, Guruji has given us instructions on how to practice Hong Sau. All of this is so beautifully presented in the Lessons.

*(Sister then described the Hong Sau technique. We agree when we take the pledge before starting the Lessons not to divulge the techniques. These are available to all SRF Lesson students. Please see the link below for the New SRF Lessons)*

### Challenges with Hong Sau

1. Difficulty with the mind wandering. Even Master had to struggle with this. He said, "I used to sit for hours. It took a great deal of time to get acquainted with Him. But as often as the mind tries to trick me, I will trick the mind. I will keep on regardless of what distractions come. But I stayed resolute. The deeper the concentration, the clearer and stronger His assurance. "
2. You will find in practice slow intervals when the breath ceases to flow. Just enjoy that breathlessness. Enjoy that feeling of peace and calmness.
3. Another challenge is that the Hong Sau technique can be quite relaxing and cause the mind to go to the subconscious where it may fall asleep. That's why we keep the mind on the kutastha. If you start to feel that the mind is going into the subconscious, you can tense and relax the body.

Some ask if they should meditate right before retiring at night. If you have trouble with sleep, it's okay to have your meditation earlier. Have your meditation at a time when you have more energy.

If you have questions about your meditations now is a good time to go to the counseling areas. Some people ask if they can practice while lying in bed. This could be dangerous. We encourage people to adjust their schedules and not to practice in the supine position.

There are many challenges that people face. All of them are addressed in the Lessons. If you do have your meditation earlier, it is good to take the thought of God with you into your sleep. Read something from the New Lessons right before you retire.

There is a wonderful story about a satsanga when a monk asked, "Why is the Hong Sau technique so difficult?"

1. Daya Mata answered, "Where are people's minds during the day?" Imagine carrying a big bag. Throughout the day we fill it with stuff: tension, worries, frustration. Then

when we sit to meditate, it's still with us. Our minds are so much better if we keep our mind on God all day. Be watchful of your inner state. As soon as a negative thought comes, give it to God."

Something within us is charging and growing when we practice these techniques with the deepest devotion.

How do we know we're progressing? Look at Lesson 21 pg. 51. Don't let the list overwhelm you.

### *The True Signs of Progress in Meditation*

1. *An increasing peacefulness in meditation.*
2. *A conscious inner experience of calmness in meditation metamorphosing into increasing bliss.*
3. *A deepening of understanding and finding the answers to one's questions through the calm intuitive state of inner perception*
4. *An increasing mental and physical efficiency in one's daily life.*
5. *Love for meditation and the desire to hold onto the peace and joy of the meditative state in preference to attraction to anything in this world.*
6. *An expanding consciousness of loving all with an unconditional love that one feels for his own dearest loved ones.*
7. *Actual contact with God, and feeling Him as ever new bliss felt in meditation and in his omnipresent manifestations within and beyond all creation.*

Meditate every morning and at night. In one of our tapes it says, "If you only have five minutes, make the five minutes count. Do them with devotion and attention will get the benefits. Really try. Look at your schedules. We can make time for God because he makes time for us.

When Sr Yukteswar gave Master his Sanyassi vows, he told Master to choose his name. "Henceforth you will be called Yogananda of the Giri branch of the swami order.

Master writes, "As I knelt before Sri Yukteswar, and for the first time heard him pronounce my new name, my heart overflowed with gratitude. How lovingly and tirelessly had he labored, that the boy Mukunda be someday transformed into the monk Yogananda! I joyfully sang a few verses from the long Sanskrit chant of lord Shankara."

The devotees then chanted with Sr. Iswara:

No birth, no death, no caste have I;  
Father, mother, have I none:  
I am He, I am He, — blessed Spirit, I am He!  
Mind, nor intellect, nor ego, feeling;  
Sky, nor earth, nor metals am I:  
I am He, I am He, — blessed Spirit, I am He!

<https://yogananda.org/lessons>

## **Self Realization Fellowship 2019 Convocation**

**Monday, August 5, 2019 7:30**

**Brother Satyananda**

### **Marriage and Family Life: Building a Spiritual Foundation**

Years ago, I was walking in the neighborhood around Mother Center, and I saw an elderly man raking our front line. He was making our property look really nice. I asked him why he was doing that.

He replied, "I like to keep the property clean. Years ago, I met your founder. He was. Very pleasant Indian gentleman."

I asked him, "Was anything about him that made an impression on you?"

He responded, "Yes. His eyes."

"What was it about his eyes that made an impression on you?" I asked.

"In his eyes, I could tell that he completely accepted me. I could tell that he saw everything on the inside and still accepted me."

Someone had really known him on the inside and completely accepted him. That's the feeling I have. My feeling about my guru is that my guru knows me on the inside. He knows things about me that I've long forgotten. He accepts me completely; not with pity or shame, but complete acceptance. If we feel pity or shame, it's not the sadguru.

Mrinalini Mata told us that Gururji used to say, "I know those who will come in the future and those who will follow this path steadfastly. I am with them, and they are with me."

Master had a great command of the English language. He could have chosen the word "perfect". Steadfastness must not be perfect but leads to perfection. All disciples wander and then bring themselves back.

Jesus said the same thing. "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed."

The word "continue" is the same as steadfast.

Master also said, "Those who practice know the lessons of this path."



We will talk about the path we walk within the context of Master's thought. It's important to discuss the truth of our environment because this contributes to the peace and harmony we bring to our home. Or we can say, "I am one", as in Master's version, or, "I am one with Him and He is one with me. "

If anyone asks what church do you attend, what do you say?

"I follow a path that teaches finding God through communion and prayer. " Just leave it there. Then ask them if they've seen the last "Game of Thrones". (Laughter)

It's the daily steps that bring harmony and peaceful energy into our homes. Master told us that our daily habits determine our future.

Maya specializes in distraction. But when the magic of the spiritual path is synchronized in our love for him or aligned with him, then we remain steadfastly walking in the footprints of our guru. The sadhana or spiritual action prescribed by a guru, when performed daily, leads to spiritual liberation.

Some think, "there is so much to do, I can't possibly do it. " But you can focus on Master's sadhana, Yogananda's four basic spiritual actions, four pillars of sadhana: meditation, spiritual study introspection, and service.

The theme tonight is that if we can consciously focus on these core principles, then our whole environment will be purified. We can be a monastic living in an ashram or a householder, but in the mind, our sadhana is the same.

Krishna said, "The person whose mind is always free from attachment, who has subdued the mind and senses, and who is free from desires, attains the supreme perfection of freedom from Karma through renunciation."

Master said to follow the right sadhana with a spiritual attitude. Look at the four pillars as a prescription for daily life, and let's put these into a real time context with the life we actually live. Absorb these and later you'll find these ideas waiting for you at home; Waiting for you to download in life.

#### 1. Meditation.

The first thing in the morning meditate. If there's one habit that will shape your future, this is it. Master said, "Everything else can wait but your search for God cannot wait."

Don't wait, Meditate. Even before you pick up your phone. I tell Temple devotees, "God only calls when the cell phone's off."

Meditate. The very first thing; before coffee! Really? If you are really serious about God you will start this first thing in the morning.

Have a longer meditation. Ask yourself, "How might I make an effort for a longer meditation at home?" If you really want to change, a longer meditation will do it. Start by doubling your meditation time. Add more time for devotion and stillness. Then double the time for devotion. Also add time for devotional prayers for your family and loved ones. I promise you that you will feel profound joy and satisfaction.

During my last travel program, I pushed for long meditations in the home. I got a lot of pushback. "Hey, we've got families!"

Remember that you are always scheduling events; conference calls, appointments, play dates. Use your calendar app until there's nothing but blue sky and add devotional time with God. Now that you've calendared it, protect it. Share your plan with others; "I'd like quiet in this part of the house during this time. "

The first time you try it, everything will try to interfere: bungee jumping; killer sale-80% off everything you want. But after a time, the universe will start to support you. The family will start supporting you. Soon, you will have created an altar. It's very important whether those in your family support you or not. You can even create a whole room for meditation.

One girl who was going to college told me, "They're making my room into a chapel!"

One devotee told me she had created a space with matching carpet and curtains. "Brother, it's such a beautiful space, when I close my eyes I just want to meditate."

One family created an altar just for the children. The children were taught how to make an offering with rose petals and how to use the space for communion with God. The father shared with me how his daughter taught her friend how to make an offering. Having a sacred space does so much for raising the vibration.

Fitting sadhana into family life requires mediation and negotiation. Maybe you as parents haven't share enough with them about what you are doing and why. Once you have shared with them, then answer their questions. Be direct. "If you love and care for me, please honor my wishes. This is important to me! I expect it. It's as important to me as football."

You'll find that your friends, family and love ones will begin to support you.

Master told us that when he started on the path, some members of his family thought he had gone wrong. Eventually, he said, "Some began to sing my songs." Master communicated. He shared his aspirations, devotion, and love for God.

Ask yourself , “Is someone at home struggling now?’ Help them to relax and release the pain they may be experiencing. Sit with them for a few minutes. They will follow you. They’re meditating a little and sharing your peace.

Say, “I’d like to pray for you. What kind of prayer should I offer? “

Some devotees have shared such stories and how after counseling and prayer they (their loved ones) light up. Bring that contemplative, devotional activity into the home, not only for yourself, but for the benefit of all. It brings a sweetness to family life and makes relationships more pure.

If you make a pilgrimage to Mother Center and go past the tennis court, you will see a pedestal sundial. It’s a reminder to bring the sunlight regularly into your yogoda exercises.

## 2. Spiritual Study

Our guru lives on a plane of expanded awareness. He brings a new truth...a new reality . In order to make the guru’s truth our own, we need to empower it. We need to adopt the teachings to create our own cosmic world new.

Realize, “This is my world! This is my reality! The truth actually changes our lives. It becomes our own. When one’s own voice lacks clarity, our guru’s sadhana is there. Devotee, listen eagerly to the guru to understand the soul’s devotion. It takes creativity to a higher plane. Some days we have more time than others, but we want to absorb a little spiritual truth every day. A single thought can have profound value.

Brother Anandamoy would advise us to first read once through for an overview. Read the second time to absorb content. Then read it a third time for the parts where Master speaks to you. Then ask yourself how to apply this in real life.

It’s becoming really popular to read Master’s teachings out loud. One devotee would study Master’s work while her husband watched t.v.

She told me ,“One night a miracle happened, and he asked to join me. “ He was an auditory learner and he asked her to read to him.

He told me, “Brother, I love this time in my life. It’s soothing. It’s intimate. I’m absolutely learning a lot from Yogananda. “

Reading Master’s writings out loud is becoming a thing. You have the guru’s words and a loved one’s voice. They will listen to you when they might not for anyone else because they trust you.

There are stories for children in the Lessons. One child told me, "Boy! You tell a lot of stories. Why do they always have to have a moral?"

Here's the format that I use. Take a story about Krishna or Jesus. Then use a passage from the Gita or the Bible. Then I add Master's commentary and a little of my own interpretations. Try it with children. They will love it You can search the web for stories of Krishna. One website has "The Twenty Best Stories of Krishna". You can put together your own library for the children.

When I was a little boy, my mother would get up early and read the Bible. We all knew that she would sit in the sunroom at five a.m. reading the Bible, studying and taking notes. All of us kids would get up and climb in her lap. We had to be quiet. We understood that. She knew. She was there because she was waiting for us. We have opportunities to create sacred space for children.

The flip side of this is that it is a harsh world outside. There is a joke in Europe about a tightly wound businessman who is told, "Take a deep breath before we begin. Now relax...and slowly let go of your phone."

Now we have the SRF apps! Truth and the apps are very close. If we distinguish, we can train ourselves to navigate wisely. When we navigate, there can be opinions or facts. Then they are spun into controversy.

If we want a quality spiritual life with our sadhana at the center of it, we need to set boundaries with this information, consuming it wisely.

There is a true story about a father and son. The son was depressed. He wouldn't talk to his teacher, but he told his Dad, "I will talk to you."

So, he and his 15-year-old sat under a tree. The son talked all about world destruction and staying up all night worrying about that and all of the depressing things he had read on the web about news situations from far away.

His father asked him, "Do you really believe what you hear and see on the media. (Regarding a specific country) I was there last year and it's not half as bad as they show on t.v. "

It was not as bad as he was thinking . It was exaggerated in fact.

He told him. "Don't build your world based on exaggerations. Build it on truth. "

I'm a firm believer in being informed on current events but measure it. E.g. do you like chocolate covered jalapenos?

When a disciple comes to me in a sorrowful state, I prescribe a media fast. I had an Australian man who told me a three day fast was too much waiting for him. But start consuming less media and more truth and you will start to live in truth

Our guru lived through two world wars and the worst depression in history, and he was still positive. So, we need to teach our kids not to build a world based on information if you can't trust it.

Buddha said, "My teachings are only the notation. Practice is the beautiful music".

Our world needs kriya practices; and when you finish meditating, send it out to others, family members, the world.

We can talk to someone, but talk is not resolving. Practicing sadhana in the home turns the home into a hermitage, a refuge, a safe haven.

### 3. Introspection

If the benefit of spiritual study is spiritual consumption the benefit of introspection is transformation of your life.

My own personal experience with introspection was with a journal , in L.A. speak, my own private therapist. Meditation and introspection go together. Introspection is about interpretation; what we think and feel; the soul's view of the ego drama. I have Master's picture in my journal and the poem, "When I am only a Dream."

"When I am Only a Dream

I come to tell you all of Him,  
And the way to encase Him in your bosom,  
And of the discipline which brings His grace.  
To those of you who have asked me  
To guide you to my Beloved's silently talking mind,  
Or speak to you through a gentle significant glance,  
Or whisper to you through my love,  
Or loudly dissuade you when you stray away from Him.  
But when I shall become only a memory or a mental image,  
Or silently speaking voice,  
When no earthly call will ever reveal  
My whereabouts in unplumbed space  
When no shallow entreaty or stern stentorian command  
Will bring an answer from me,  
I will smile in your mind when you are right,  
And when you are wrong, I will weep through my eyes,  
Dimly peering at you in the dark,

And weep through your eyes, perchance;  
And I will whisper to you through your conscience,  
And I will reason with you through your reason,  
And I will love through your love.  
When you are able no longer to talk to me,  
Read my Whispers of Eternity.  
Eternally through that I will talk to you.  
Unknown I will walk by your side  
And guard you with invisible arms.  
And as soon as you know my Beloved  
And hear His voice in silence,  
You will know me again more tangibly  
Than you knew me in this earth plane.  
And yet when I am only a dream to you  
I will come to remind you that you too are naught  
But a dream of my Heavenly Beloved,  
And when you know you are a dream, as I know now,  
We all will be ever awake in Him." Paramahansa Yogananda

I read this. Then the whisper of my Master may come through.

Introspection is a natural way of life, a healthy full perspective. Stellar performance is a stupid move. I use the notes I have on my phone to capture useful real-life content or a situation with a lesson to learn; an inspiration I want to preserve. Preserve your invites. They're valuable. Use colorful pens. Write and think. I summarize. I love to draw meaningful conclusions.

I was telling the young adults at the lake that journaling was not worth the time unless you introspect and act. Draw conclusions from your spiritual studies and your current life and thoughts.

I want to give a message to the younger generation. You guys are really smart. You , " My parents say this". "My friend says this"; "YouTube says this"

One answer is to use your own mind. You have to be the decider in your own life.

Master's saintly disciple, Gyanamata writes, "As a young adult, I never allowed anyone to force anything upon me, and I sought fearlessly when I saw something I wanted."

She trusted herself to pursue the things she wanted; fearlessly. You have to be the one to decide what is right for you.

A teenage girl and her mom were going through a very painful family split. Her mother was trying to be brave. One night, as she passed by her mother's bedroom, there she was on her knees in front of the altar crying to God.

She said to me, "Brother, I know if something happens like this, I'll know where to go."

Mrs. Cagliano notice on her visits to her son how pretty his roommate is. Antonio tells her, "I assure you that Maria and I are only roommates."

Maria smiles and nods.

Maria tells Antonio that since his Mom visited, she can't find the silver sugar bowl.

Antonio tells his mom, "I'm not saying that you took it, but the fact remains that ever since your visit, the silver sugar bowl has been missing".

His mother responded, "I'm not saying you're sleeping with Maria; but the fact remains if she were sleeping in her own bed, she would have found the sugar bowl there.

#### 4. Service

There is as Sanskrit word, "saba" that means being selflessly committed to serving others. Serving others is part of the fruit of our spirituality that results in an amazing transformation. The soul message is to do it for God.

The first criteria is understanding the needs of those around you; responding to what represents their most immediate need.

I was at the market and saw an elderly woman looking at a high shelf. I thought I saw it, and reached up and got her the small jar she was looking at.

She said, "Thank you, young man!"

There were two blessings, getting her what she wanted and being referred to as a young man.

With a new baby, parents are always trying to figure out what they really need. With others, we can say, "Tell me what's wrong". But with a baby we need a little intuition with patience, love, and understanding. A true saba wants to understand the real need.

Ask a teen what they are thinking about and they will tell you, "Oh nothing." Ask them what they are dreaming about and you will get a response. Never critique a dream. Go out with unconditional encouragement speaking directly to the souls. You need the ability to empower them to make a a step.

Mentally put yourself in the position of others. Understand that there is no greater joy.

Remember the sun dial, pedestal and benches at Mother Center. In the 1980's, the area was being improved. I was in charge of the project. I engaged a landscaping architect. He came up on contract. One day, I stood with him at the empty site as we faced the city.

He turned around towards the headquarters building and said, "You need something prominent here."

I suggested a fountain.

He replied, "No. Some monument. Something more meaningful to your history...like a sundial".

Later on, I was up in Ma's office. She asked, "How's the landscape design coming along. Tell me what he's recommended."

I told her about the trees and shrubs he had talked about. Then I said, "He wants something prominent in that area, like a sundial."

She grabbed my arm. "Did you say sundial? We have one in storage. We've been waiting for a place to put it. This is perfect!"

This man had intuitively fulfilled the will of Master.

The landscaper asked later, "Did you find a sundial. I thought you might not have found it. "

I told him about our sundial. That man never submitted an invoice .

Pray with joy to serve according to "Thy Divine Will".

"Bring to me the next steps of what I should do."

Do this, and you will know you have been a channel of God. That's how you bring sadhana into your home.

Others may not be seekers themselves. This is how we see what an advanced relationship we have together. Consider the value of study and service...these daily aspirations... and you will find that Master not only is blessing us but those around us.

One of our ministers was getting ready to speak. The congregation was quiet. Before he could say anything, Siri spoke up: "You have arrived at your destination."



**Self Realization Fellowship 2019 Convocation**  
**Tuesday, August 6, 2019, 10:30 am**  
**Brother Balananda-Satsanga**

*Question 1) SRF talks a great deal about introspection charts. Almost all of my buddies of thirty years did the charts but most never followed through. I talked to a devotee who didn't understand why putting down these marks helped improve one's self.*

Socrates said, "The unexamined life isn't worth living".

Our guru said, "Millions of people never analyze themselves. Mentally they are mechanical products of the factory of their environment, preoccupied with breakfast, lunch, and dinner, working and sleeping, and going here and there to be entertained. They don't know what or why they are seeking, nor why they never realize complete happiness and lasting satisfaction. By evading self-analysis, people go on being robots, conditioned by their environment. True self-analysis is the greatest art of progress."

"So it is with your consciousness. Your thoughts are molding your actions, and your mental conviction from the repetition of those actions is the fire that hardens the thoughts into unyielding habit patterns. Most people are psychological antiques; Converse with them for a little while and you know what they are going to say. they never change, year after year always the same. Take a look in the mirror and see if you are a psychological antique. Most people are.

"One must never give up hope of becoming better. A person is old only when he refuses to make the effort to change. That stagnant state is the only 'old age' I recognize. When a person says again and again, 'I can't change; this is the way I am,' then I have to say, 'All right, stay that way since you have made up your mind to be like that.'

"If you feel that you can't smile, stand before a mirror and with your fingers pull your mouth into a smile. It is that important! Everything you do should be done with peace. That is the best medicine for your body, mind, and soul. It is the most wonderful way to live."

Master tells us that all we have to do is to reclaim our divine heritage. But he also tells us that we will never find lasting happiness if we keep on being dragged down by habits and moods.

We need to look at ourselves in order to see our undesirable habits. This is a massive block, a wall that keeps us from God.

If we don't introspect, we won't be aware of our deficiencies and will drag them from incarnation to incarnation.

There are two parts to introspection:

1. Self-analysis

## 2. Implementation of an action plan.

Most people don't do the second one. The best way to develop an action plan is to do an introspection chart. Make it simple. On the left, it tells us what we monitor and then the number of months or days. Then, what do we monitor: look at those things that keep us away from God.

We monitor our meditation and service and record progress on overcoming a desirable habit that we're trying to overcome. If our columns for morning meditation are always blank, after a while, we know that that is something we need to work on.

With Hong Sau we can remind ourselves that undeterred, we're going back to the loudest sound. If we entertain restless thoughts and/or didn't make an effort, we mark an "x". If we made the effort, we can shade it in with a yellow highlighter.

If you end up with a column or yellow highlights, it's a red-letter day. Then, challenge yourself to have a perfect day...a perfect week. Can you imagine? (Silence in the ballroom)

Brother: "I guess you can't." (Laughter)

Keep on trying until one day, like the gurus, we're constantly winning within ourselves. Without a chart, we're filled with good intentions that we never fulfill. Master called it "the helpless desire of the mind that never comes to fruition".

One of the monks uses a habit tracker. He downloaded the app. He said, "It showed me what I needed to do more of". Then," he said, "I had my first perfect day in a month. You have no idea how exhilarating it was. "

He's now working on a perfect week.

Many famous people have used introspection charts: Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, our guru. It's just a tool to use to reach a goal. Once you reach a goal, you don't need a chart for that anymore.

We don't want inspiration to go in one ear and out the other. This practice helps us to realize our aspirations.

*Question 2: Please talk about why Master contradicts himself in the chants. In one chant he affirms, "I Am the Sky", and in another, he says "Sky, nor earth, nor metals have I". He's affirming he's not the sky. (Laughter) It seems like there's a contradiction.*

Well, in the first, he's affirming his oneness with God. In the second one, he's affirming his oneness with spirit, the un-manifested aspect of God. Our guru talked with a diversity of

people with different backgrounds and personalities. When he spoke, he tuned in with the needs of different individuals. He treated each individual according to their needs.

Mrinalini Mata used to tell us, "Each of us got different treatment according to what we needed. Through attunement, eventually, we would know what Master wanted.

And when you have that attunement, then you won't have to ask these questions. (Laughter)

*Question 3: What can I do? I don't feel a close connection with my spouse. I want to work on the marriage I just don't know-how.*

Well, I'm a monk. I'm not married. There is an excerpt from the SRF marriage vows that is really beautiful.

"I am Thine Thou art mine.  
We are united by spirit first  
We who love each other unconditionally through our love  
Even death will not sever the bond of our unconditional friendship. "

SRF Marriage Vows (These were not read in full)

"I offer myself up to Thee  
Burn up and purify my limitations  
(And offer this stick into the flames)  
Destroy in me the seeds of earthly desire  
Accept my pure aspiration to be one with Thee  
Beloved Lord,  
We dedicate to Thee  
Our lives  
Our service  
And the love we share  
May the communion we find with one another  
Lead us to communion with Thee.  
May the service we render one another  
Perfect in us our service of Thee  
May we behold Thee  
Always enshrined  
In one another's forms  
In every test of life  
May we seek Thy loving hand  
In any disagreement  
May we seek Thy higher guidance  
May our love not be confined to selfish needs  
But give us strength

Ever to expand our hearts  
Until we see all human beings  
All creatures as our own  
Teach us to love all beings  
Equally in Thee

Dear Beloved  
I will be true to you  
As I pray always  
To be true to God  
I will love you  
Without condition  
As I would be loved by you  
And as we are ever loved by God  
I will never compete with you  
I will cooperate  
For our own  
And for all others' highest good  
And I will forgive you always  
And under all circumstances  
I will respect your right  
To see truth as you perceive it  
And to be guided  
As you deeply feel within yourself  
And I will work with you always  
In freedom  
To arrive at a common understanding  
All that we do  
May we do for God's glory  
May we live and grow together  
In His love and joy  
And may the offspring of our union  
Whether human children or creative beings  
Be doorways for the inspiration  
That we feel from Him  
May our love grow ever deeper, purer,  
More expansive  
Until in our perfected love  
We find the perfect love of God."

It's pretty lofty, but it is doable.

How to Restore Your Marriage

If both husband and wife meet and work on the first goal of soul unity, they can make the marriage work.

Master said, "Couples who possess soul unity will be able to make a success of marriage. They are helping one another through the supreme God". With his guidance, do everything you can to save your marriage.

1. Make sure that you're both living a balanced spiritual life. Keep the body's temple pure.
2. Use Master's prayer for spiritual marriage from Lesson 61:
3. "Father, we came together in love; teach us to live together in love or, if it is Thy will, teach us to part in love and understanding."
4. Put yourself on the prayer list. You will have thousands of people, monks and nuns and others praying for you.
5. Listen to Brother Anandamoy's CD – "Spiritual Marriage" together. Read the marriage lessons together, Lessons 58-67. Look at the section in Lesson 61 on "How to Live with a Disturbed Spouse".
6. Practice the peace and harmony affirmation for one another. It's so powerful.
7. "My Lord, fill my spouse with peace and harmony". Do that for a minute. The for 15 seconds, say, "Fill me with peace and harmony." Suddenly, they'll be less disturbed.
8. Focus on the positive aspects of one another. Remember that whatever you focus on will grow.
9. Take a conducted weekend retreat together.
10. Find some recreation you can do together: hiking, swimming, biking.
11. Meditate together
12. Take time to communicate on a deep level is the cement that keeps relationships together.
13. If that doesn't work, arrange for professional marriage counseling. If all efforts, including marriage counseling, don't work, part in love and understanding. Part as friends.
14. Master said, "When love is constantly diverted by new faces it breaks itself on the rocks of attachment."

15. Finally, drinking Divine Love through one, we need to learn to drink it through all.

*Question 4: Is it unspiritual to color my hair, put on makeup, do my nails, and so forth. Is it vanity to so? Should I work to get rid of these habits?*

Once Master saw a nun with a somewhat slovenly appearance- a baggy skirt and no makeup. He said to her, " Why don't you put on some makeup and fix your appearance. You look like a vegetarian." (Laughter)

A slovenly appearance reflects a slovenly mind. A neat appearance reflects a neat mind. Master always looked so neat, but his mind was totally engrossed in Divine Mother.

*Question 5: in his teachings Master seems to teach us that there is no excuse for not looking for God night and day. Is this possible in today's world? How can one establish the habit?*

Sri Daya Mata said, "Throughout the day, we have countless opportunities to take our mind within to talk to God."

The key to practicing the presence is to use an environmental trigger. When I make my bed, I think of Master's words: "I'm a yogi. With you by my side, I can do anything."

Do that all week. Then find a second trigger like the shower. "I thank you, Divine Mother, for the roof over my head and the clothes on my back".

The third week, use brushing your teeth as a trigger. Daya Mata used to tell us that as a young seventeen-year-old until her last days, "When the toothbrush first touches the teeth, I am talking to my Divine Mother."

And in the evening, "You're right here. I love you. You can't hide from me." It's simple.

The more specific the trigger, the better. Not: when I am driving the car. No. When I am putting the key in the ignition. Not- when I am having breakfast, but when I put the kettle on the burner.

Build this practice up gradually. After 25 weeks, we will have 25 triggers making us think of God. Then Divine Mother adds 50% with the grace of God and guru adds his 25% to your 25% effort. Then, thinking of God, constant remembrance of God. Then God has to respond. It's a law.

We need some kind of monitoring system. How are we going to implement it and make it real? Again, use the introspection chart for this.

*Question 6: I tend to be very critical of other devotee friends. I realize that this is a bad habit. How do I overcome this?*

Daya Mata said that as long as the mind is filled with any kind of negation, we cannot find God. The less we indulge in or listen to gossip and criticism, the closer we will be to God. There is a story that Guruji tells, one of my favorites, on how to overcome bad habits.

"I will tell you a true story of the effectiveness of this technique. In India, a man who had a bad temper came to me. He was a specialist in slapping his bosses when he lost his temper, so he also lost one job after another. He would become so uncontrollably irate that he would throw at whoever bothered him anything that was handy.

He asked me for help. I told him, "The next time you get angry, count to one hundred before you act."

He tried it, but came back to me and said, "I get angrier when I do that. While I am counting, I am blind with rage for having to wait so long."

His case looked hopeless.

Then I told him to practice Kriya Yoga, with this further instruction: "After practicing your Kriya, think that the Divine Light is going into your brain, soothing it, calming your nerves, calming your emotions, wiping away all anger. And one day your temper tantrums will be gone."

Not long after that, he came to me again, and this time he said, "I am free from the habit of anger. I am so thankful."

I decided to test him. I arranged for some boys to pick a quarrel with him. I hid myself in the park along the route where he used to pass regularly so that I could observe. The boys tried, again and again, to goad him into a fight, but he wouldn't respond. He kept his calmness."

So, here's an avatar hiding in the bushes, waiting for a devotee with two people watching. The boys tried to goad him, but he wouldn't respond with anger.

At the end of meditation, when you are calm, that's when you visualize a golden light rising through the spine to the brain. See that light erasing that imprint of bad habits like the ocean waves erase footprints in the sand.

Remember Master's affirmations for overcoming bad habits: "I will with my will. My will is my Thy will. Wipe away the criticism habit. Let the criticism habit be erased from my consciousness. One day an invisible hand will snap that and change you, and you will be free."

It could be any bad habit- greed, anger, pride, jealousy, sloth...there are only seven, right? (laughter). Unless we have halos and we're perfect, starting today we can work on getting rid of our bad habits,

*Question 7: I struggle with early morning meditations. What should I do?*

Rajarsi Janakananda, our first SRF president, was involved in all kinds of businesses: railroads, banking, insurance, oil companies...but he didn't give up. He found a way to meditate in the mornings. He would put a note on his office door: "In conference until 10 a.m." That kind of self-discipline is what makes saints.

The primary goal is not to be a doctor, a lawyer, a mother, and so forth. Look at Rajarsi's discipline.

A monk received a call from a kriyaban who was stationed at Fort Dix, New Jersey. He expressed how difficult it was to meditate in the army barracks with other soldiers who didn't understand and interfered with his meditation by throwing water, even firecrackers at him. Then it dawned on him. "What about the library!"

He approached an old sergeant in the library and asked him for a book on astronomy. Then he started practicing.

Soon the old sergeant came into the room and asked him, "What's going on here soldier."

He replied, "Sarge, I take one of these lofty thoughts from this astronomy book and then rotate it around until I become one with it. Then I take another thought and do the same."

"Son, that's beautiful!" the sergeant exclaimed. Then he reserved that cubicle for him.

That soldier almost put a sign on the door reading, "Fort Dix Meditation Group."

Maya is always whispering I, "There isn't time."

*Question 8: I so often hear monastics talking about the importance of stillness in meditation. Why is this so? Should we just focus on peace, love, and expansion?*

There are five parts of meditation: prayer, chanting, practicing the techniques, sitting in the stillness, and peace.

Guruji says that after practicing the techniques, we should spend a long time in the stillness. Keep the mind at the Christ Center. Throw out all thoughts. Practice stillness even if it's only ten to fifteen minutes in the beginning. Suddenly you will become aware of God's peace. Acknowledge His presence. He gives us more of Himself- Bliss. Feel God in every particle of your being.

How do you love God if you don't know him? Tell him how much you love him. Churn the ether with your love and longing for God.



The dictionary defines "churns" as "violent agitation".

In meditation, I said to God, "All right. You want some churning! I visualized myself with a giant ladle thousands of miles high. I was stirring the whole universe with living light. 'Fill me with Thy light!' My whole body got warm, and I was overcome with tears of bliss."

The next day I thought, "Oh, This is going to be good!" My heart was as dry as a tumbleweed in the desert. I visualized Master come and take hold of the ladle, and boy did he get things stirred up. My body is perpendicular to the ladle and feeling the centrifugal force as he stirred. My body got warm and tears flowed. The great bliss that lights the stars is strengthening me.

"Babaji is here!"

But we do have to take those steps. We need to do our part to prime the pump. Guruji will help us. He's really good at his job. We just have to ask.

Our devotion and love touch God. God and Guruji can't wait for us to come home. Listen to Guruji's words from "Man's Eternal Quest".

"Dear ones: Joy lies in constantly thinking of God. The time comes when your mind never wanders away. Is that not wonderful to remain in the castle of his presence? Neither death nor anything else cannot take you away from that?"

May guru walk beside you. Jai guru!

**Self Realization Fellowship Convocation 2019**  
**Tuesday, August 6, 2019 2:30**  
**Mastering the Techniques of Meditation Part II**  
**Brother Saralananda**

*Note: The parts of this lecture that describe the Om technique are omitted in accordance with the SRF Lessons Pledge not to disclose techniques.*

Today we will focus on the technique of meditation. We will learn to merge our consciousness as the holy vibration of God. The Om sound is a blissful manifestation of creation.

Our late president, Daya Mata, once had a life-threatening emergency in the hospital. She was given an anesthetic. She was still very aware of what was going on around her. When the surgeon made the first cut into her body, he said, "Uh oh!" This is a very surgical term. It means the surgeon hopes the patient believes in reincarnation.

If you are laying on the surgical table, "Uh oh", is not the most comforting sound to hear. It just doesn't give us enough information. He had just realized that he had misdiagnosed what was wrong with her.

Through the grace of Divine Mother, she pulled through.

Just after he said, "Uh oh", Ma had an experience with the Om. The entire room became bathed in a golden light. The light in the forehead expanded and seemed to engulf all space.

In describing the experience, Ma said, "What joy I felt as my soul melted into the love of Divine Mother".

In explaining how we can experience the Om, Ma told us that advanced yogis, upon concentration on this cosmic sound, find that God manifests as ever new bliss; cosmic light; the cosmic light force. It can manifest as that sound but also as infinite love and infinite bliss. Today, we will practice our guru's meditations on the bliss of Om.

As we listen to the sound of Om, the love for our dear ones expands. God is infinite, and as children of God, our soul's consciousness is also infinite. We become very identified with the little physical body. Ordinary life energy flows down into the sensory nerves. The nerves report back to the brain and trigger sensations, memories and thoughts. We know the outer world through that, but we don't know God.

The guru has given us the path of kriya yoga to get back to God. Master told us, "If you could completely calm your senses and emotions you would become aware of your true nature of calmness. Take off this mask of restlessness and experience who we are as children of God. "

#### Patanjali 's Eightfold Path of Yoga

1. Yama (moral rules outlining the behaviors from which one should abstain): injury to others, untruthfulness, stealing, incontinence (lack of control of the sexual impulse), and covetousness
2. Niyama (spiritual qualities and conduct to be cultivated): purity of body and mind, contentment in all circumstances, self-discipline, self-study (contemplation), and devotion to God and guru

These teach us the proper conduct required to foster attunement with God and harmony with our neighbor.

3. Asana: right posture
4. Pranayama: control of prana, the subtle life currents in the body -We have the Energization Exercises that recharge the body battery with energy and calm the consciousness, which prepares us for meditation.
5. Pratyahara: interiorization of the consciousness, through withdrawal of the senses from external objects

- 6 .Dharana: focused concentration; holding the mind to one thought or object. We practice Hong Sau to focus the restless mind to help withdraw the energy inside the mind.
7. Dhyana: meditation, absorption in the vast perception of God in one of His infinite aspects: Bliss, Peace, Cosmic Light, Cosmic Sound, Love, Wisdom, etc. : all-pervading throughout the whole universe. With the Om technique, we take the more concentrated mind and begin to concentrate on the more infinite aspect of God.
8. Samadhi: superconscious experience of union of the individualized soul with Cosmic Spirit

So, Master gave an explanation of the expansion of consciousness when we merge into the sacred Om vibration. Master said that what happens as the devotee listens to the pervasive, holy sound of God, he forgets the limits of time and space. He feels his consciousness vibrating everywhere with the ever-expanding Om sound.

The Holy Trinity that the Christian Church refers to as Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, are referred to on this path as Tat, Sat, and Om. Of the three aspects of God, it is the Om vibration that is the easiest for us to concentrate on and experience.

God the Father exists beyond all vibratory creation as blissful cosmic consciousness. In creating this world, he put his blissful consciousness in it through the om vibration and cosmic consciousness present in every aspect of creation. The vibratory creative power produces a sound, the om sound, too subtle for the physical ear to hear. We can only hear it through our intuition.

As it says in the Bible, "Be still and know that I am God." As we begin to concentrate on the Om consciousness, it expands with that wonderful vibration. Eventually, we go further and merge into the vibration-less bliss of God's cosmic consciousness.

Om is the receptacle of God's cosmic consciousness. It lifts the consciousness to communion with the son imminent in Om. Then it is drawn to the cosmic consciousness, God the Father.

Typically, a devotee does not go through all three stages during a single (pause) Convocation. I don't want to limit your Convocation experience, so please feel free to be an exception to that rule.

The devotee goes inside and begins to hear the cosmic vibration of God. That's how all children of God get back to the Father. See how bound up it is to learn to merge our consciousness in that cosmic vibration?

But we have a guru. God has asked him to bring souls back to cosmic consciousness. He knows and understands each problem that we are facing. We have a line of gurus for life-blessing, helping, and inspiring us.

By deep perfected practice of the om technique, you will become one with the Lord. He did not say that someone else would become one with the Lord. He said, "You!" He meant you...each one of his divine chelas. With the review of the Om technique, we will experience a vibration filled with cosmic consciousness and the bliss of God.

Once, a man here in Los Angeles lost his daughter. At the funeral, he was feeling such deep grief and sadness. The next morning, he went for a walk. He felt such sadness and had the terrible feeling that he would never hear her laugh again.

He leaned against a lamp post and prayed that God and guru would come to him. He relayed this experience:

"Just then, the holy spirit that I had in my heart filled me up, and it was the most joyful moment I had ever experienced in my life".

From deepest grief to high joy. That is the power of Om.

One of the sweetest things that we can feel is the presence of our loved ones who have passed on. So, every effort we make to practice the Om technique takes us closer to them.

Instruction Practice of Om Technique (omitted) See SRF Lessons

Because of the consciousness God has given us as his children, we can feel that communion. At first, we only hear the physical sounds.

Master reminded us that life is not all about meditation. He prefers to bring meditation into daily life. Hold onto the calmness and try to come to life from that center of inner calmness.

"I will reason, will, and act, but guide Thou my reason, will, and activity to do the thing that I should do." Strive to hold onto that calmness in the world.

Part of helping others is to more deeply listen to them without the mind running in a thousand different directions while we pretend to listen.

What we do during the day affects our meditation. We can increase our capacity to listen to others if we can become better listeners throughout the day. How do I know? Because during our time together you have let me do all of the talking.

Master said that as soon as two people get together, each one wants to be heard. Learn to sit quietly and enjoy the company of others.

There is a very sweet gift that you can give to Daya Mata during your practice of Om.

"Uh oh,". We're out of time. Maybe we'll talk about that at our next Convocation.

No, it's the gift of our attention. Ma said that by repeatedly focusing on the waning and runaway attention the devotee merges with the cosmic sound. Ma knew that we'd have challenges with this technique. She knew that our attention would run away. Has that ever happened to you?

Sometimes, we think our mind is very fit. It can run away so many times. Lead it back. Repeatedly focus on the waning and runaway attention. Keep bringing it back to God within. A very special gift to Daya Mata is to show her that we don't just want to read, talk about, and think about her. Think how wonderful that is. We want to know her, so that we can more fully love her and experience her love.

The special gift that touches Daya Mata's heart is the mental clarity of Om. Om done automatically won't do it. It takes a mental effort. Not unfeelingly. The audible pronunciation of Om produces a sense of sacredness. The mental utterance of the chant can be done automatically with a sense of sacredness.

Ma said, "Once you have learned the method, you must practice it regularly with earnestness, diligence, and devotion. Then there are no limits to the heights you can attain".

#### *Footnotes*

*\*SRF Marriage Vows (These were not read in full, but full text is provided for background)*

**Self Realization Fellowship 2019 Convocation-Notes**  
**Tuesday-August 6, 2019 7:30 pm**  
**Brother Govindananda**  
**Developing a Moment to Moment Relationship with God**

When I was assigned this class, my first thought was, "This is a wonderful subject!"

Then I thought that someone was going to give me a hard time about this Then it happened. One of the monks said to me, "What makes you the expert?"

I knew it was coming I was ready.

He said, "Are you doing it?"

I said, "Are you not?"

For anyone standing here, we all want this It's why we take up meditation. So, we could feel it during the day too. As busy as we are, is it possible? You want to do it. It's in your nature. You might say, if pushed, "It might take a little time."

When I was in India, a monk wanted to visit the Lakshmi Orion Temple. Brother Anandamoy tells of a very spiritual experience that he had at this temple. The first statue I saw was of Shiva and Parvati. But all of the devotees were prostrating in front of the statue.

I thought to myself, "I can't bow down. I don't feel it."

Do you remember in the "Autobiography" when Master visited the Temple of Kali in Dakshineswar? \*

Master writes, "This was the first of many pilgrimages to Dakshineswar with the holy teacher (Master Mahasaya). From him, I learned the sweetness of God in the aspect of Mother, or Divine Mercy. The childlike saint found little appeal in the Father aspect or Divine Justice. Stern, exacting, mathematical judgment was alien to his gentle nature". He thought that God should be thought of only in the soul.

So, I felt I better get hold of my issues fast. I thought, "Shiva and Parvati are just manifestations of God".

And so, I joined the devotees and prostrated in front of the statue.

I got up totally cleansed. The monk later asked me, "Were you thinking of Master at Dakshineswar?"

Even though this is a story that seems limited to a specific time and place, these are principles we can use any time.

What does it mean to be successful in life? A well-known journalist was going from Los Angeles to D.C.

He could hear an elderly woman behind him saying, "It's not true that your life is meaningless."

Then he heard an elderly man say, "I wish I was dead."

The woman said, "Oh, stop saying that."

When they de-boarded, he was surprised to see that the man was a very famous individual, well known for his service to his country and his patriotism. Others often were telling him how much he had inspired them. But what he had spiritually was limited.

The journalist wrote about this, and said, "You may be asking, 'Who is this man?'"

You should be asking, "Who is his wife who had to put up with his whining."

The journalist started asking this question to others. "What is important to you in life. What makes you happy?"

What would our answer be?

We think money, fame, good health, family. But it came down to this. As people over 75 reported becoming more and more unhappy, what they stated had made them happy was whether they felt personally relevant or irrelevant.

It is not enough what we did decades ago. We want to do it now...as many of you are doing here.

Raise your hand if you have not had a very busy year. Okay. That's no one.

Everyone's had a busy year. There was an article in "Time Magazine" entitled, "As a Student, if you are Busy, You're Not Alone."

Here at SRF/YSS, we have been very busy bringing the New Lessons to you and the world.

You think, "I don't know when I'll get a day off or my cell phone will stop ringing. If that's the case, I better find God in the here and now."

But that I had that thought, that was surprising to me. Somehow my mind was making excuses. Maya makes us think that there'll be another time or place where we'll make spiritual progress.

Karma yoga is that yoga that makes you so busy that you realize you have to find God here and now.

"But", you ask, "How do I find God amidst all of my responsibilities?"

We have the realization that there is no time, only the present. We can't be happy unless we are seeing now the Orion Temple. Even if you are offering something to God; even if in the moment of panic, you are lying on the ground, just a contortion of limbs, it is your intention that matters.

Master quotes Krishna, "The reverent presentation to Me of a leaf, a flower, a fruit, or water, given with pure intention, is a devotional offering acceptable in My sight". \*\*

Or, the most trifling action may be used as a stepping stone in his presence. My thought was that maybe something was missing in translation. Maybe something got left out...like a gift card.

The most important word is that word "offering".

As long as we perform whatever we want to do as an offering, it is an offering that is acceptable to God or guru...or sweetness...or friendship...or as beloved. Fruit, flowers, water, a leaf...

Years ago, before I entered the ashram, I had read about the importance of making an offering of our life.

I thought, "I have this career, this job I chose, because I couldn't make it an offering".

Of course, we need a job, money to pay bills.

Guruji said, "Just do what you are doing anyway, but do it for me."

Suppose you had a job that had no societal value. You can still say, "At least it's better than a leaf."

We've already established that. We just have to choose that it's so.

Daya Mata told us that Master said that before we sit to meditate, we must make the effort to spiritualize our thoughts within the day. Yeah, I think she means all of them. (Laughter)

So, you need to add all of these numbers on this spreadsheet. How do you spiritualize that? How do we spiritualize our thoughts every day and keep on spiritualizing them until we feel it and we really know it?

Let's explore what's involved in these offerings. The way words get used in everyday life can blunt us to their power. The boss asks, "Let me offer a suggestion."

A funeral director offers condolences. We know he's not upset. We would be worried if he was. Condolences don't conjure up happy times.

There's the action and the intention behind the action. What if I offer you ten dollars...or five dollars? And, oh... there's a lot here. What if I throw it at you? What if one is a gift and one is an insect? It makes more powerful the intent behind the action.

When practicing the presence words don't matter. It's really the intention behind the mantra. It's a fleeting thought. So, we give that fleeting thought as an offering. Then we give another fleeting thought, and another, and another. Each one is an offering.

I'm going to be a little dramatic here. It's a lot like nuclear fission. The more control we have over the particles the more powerful the reaction will be. The more control we have over the mantra, the more power it has, and it feeds into the next and the next. It keeps going.



Properly understood, the story of the widow's mite is the most important story in the "Bible".\*\*\* The story of raising Lazarus from the dead is important, but not something we can practice at home.

The story of the widow's mite is powerful. When I first took the Lessons, I couldn't focus on offering. St. Francis tells us, "It is in giving that we receive."

When we try to make every meditation an offering, we don't have to worry, because every meditation is an offering. Don't think every moment, "This is an offering."

What it takes are intention and attention. Tell yourself, "If the mind is wandering, it's not an offering."

Say you've been on the path for a long time and your intention is not what it should be.

I would say for these next two minutes; every breath is going to be an offering. I started for a short time and allowed a certain number of periods in a meditation. Okay. Then in the next meditation, I created a tension. I knew I didn't have endless opportunities to get it right, and I couldn't fix it post-production.

Brother Anandamoy said, "Do it now or in a thousand incarnations!"

There was a Spanish businessman who was doing a tally about the relative attributes of his employees whose whole attitude was "manyana" (tomorrow).

He asked his Irish friend, "Do you have a word in your language that conveys the same?"

The Irishman replied, "We do, but it wouldn't create the same sense of urgency." (Laughter)

The amazing thing for me (in my practice) was that every failure just left me looking forward to the next time when I could start over. It's like the rules in hockey or cricket. There is a short time when the rules change. This includes a power play. \*\*\*\* I don't recommend that you use this in your meditation- but it does reduce the period of garbage times.

But everything under the sun is an offering: When we chant with devotion. Every kriya is an offering.

Devotees offer the incoming breath of apana as a yagna to the prana. Continuous practice of this leads to both the prana and apana become an offering to kumbhaka which is the complete cessation of both breaths. Even lifting our eyes to the Christ Consciousness Center can be an offering.

Try thinking of it this way. The idea that it's a devotional offering and doing it in the present helps to make it an offering.

There are three groups in this hall.

The first says: "This is not that complicated."

Brother Bhaktananda chanted, "Om guru," over and over.

I'm more complicated, and that's not a compliment.

I ask, "What is it that I'm doing or not doing that's holding me back?"

The second group says, "This makes sense."

The third is asking, "How do we learn to do everything."

The same way we learn to do everything. Write it down and record how you're progressing. Keep doing it until you get it. The way we meditate is just a habit, and if we don't like it, we change it.

For the true seeker on the spiritual path, everything is an offering.

One of the monks I know saw all he had been doing as failure. He told Daya Mata, "I'm sorry Ma, but at least I offered it to God."

Ma told him, "That can be just as good as a deep meditation."

There was a meditating saint who had a sign that said: "Life is an offering to the Divine."

The Gita has a word for it: "yagya". I know, it sounds a little contagious but it is an all-encompassing philosophy of life: offering actions as oblations. \*\*\*

The worldliness of an action depends only on why we perform it for ourselves or God. The yogi who works to please God is already free. His every act is yagya.

Krishna said that yagya is built into the universe from the moment that God created us. It was immediate. There is nothing between us and Him. It also liberates us if we are doing it for ourselves.

In Lesson 5 of the New Lessons, page 15 Master says, "When your prayer-offering reaches God, when your message of yearning has been properly conveyed through the microphone of meditation so that it touches the heart of the Infinite, then you will feel His response. His response is plain, never indefinite, though sometimes very subtle.

"Hold your mind radio tuned with soft touches of deepest devotion, of the grandest, most constant love. Then suddenly He may burst upon your consciousness as a wordless song of subtlest harmonious vibrations of the Cosmic Voice, or as the fragrance of a trillion mystic flowers. You may feel Him as a gentle breeze of bliss, wafting softly in your love-filled heart. He may televise His presence as a fire-mist aureole, blazing on the screen of your vision. The delectable flavors of a million nectars may enthrall your palate. Endless thrills, sensations, and perceptions of joy may dance in every body cell, on every wisp of thought, on the altar of your inspiration. "

Chanting helps by increasing the feeling of increased love for the Lord. It is something to practice kirtan at length as we have done here at Convocation with so many of you.

And in the New Lesson 5: pg. 22, he writes: "A phonograph cannot give devotion, but a soul can. While praying or chanting, do not think of the words, but of their meaning, and intensely mentally offer the thought behind them to God, and your prayer will drop straight like a plummet into the depths of the sea of God's consciousness. When you use just words, words, words, they do not reach God. I can say just three times, with ever-increasing devotion, "Father, Father, Father," expelling my breath entirely as I do so, and then in the superconscious breathless state, merge in Him.

One song of love to God, repeated several times, is generally sufficient for one period of meditation. It should be sung with intense devotion and concentration on God, over and over until you get the full devotional meaning out of it. "

We're built this way-for offering. We also have the concepts of renunciation and surrender. An offering is something positive we can do.

It's difficult to understand surrender. An act of offering has a positive aspect-giving something of ourselves. There is sacrifice in surrender.

Master said, "Master your mind so that you may offer it to Him. Once you have the understanding about how to live life, the path is simpler."

I mentioned Brother Bhaktananda. As Brother Jayananda told you, he said, "Sometimes you have to kneel into it" when you practice the presence.

I got wound up more. I'm an intense person. But I didn't have the understanding of doing it as an offering at that time.

Build off yagya. We need to use the power of our imagination.

Brother Paramananda tells of a devotee who was a taxi driver in New York City that illustrates the use of the power of our imagination.

He told Brother, "Let me tell you a secret. Every day, I open the front passenger door and let Master in; and every passenger doesn't know who he's taking with him. At the end of the day, I leave him out. And Brother here's the thing. I never charge him.

Brother asked him, "What happens when someone gets into the front seat?"

He replied, "Then Master has to get in the middle, and I lean on him."

As we do everything as an offering to him, it must be the same in our meditations. We don't have to worry about what God and guru want, because it's good. Master said that the only thing God wants is our love.

Give someone a gift and see how happy they are. It's also a gift to us. We see how happy they are, and we automatically feel; happy.

If you are making a gift for someone, you are not thinking of the offering as a gift but of every moment as a gift.

Rajarsi Janankanana, our first SRF President, said, "When I'm working, He's working."

I hear some of you like homework. I don't. Let's call it hotel work, to dedicate all of our service to God and gurus. We can become more conscious that we're doing it in these ways.

So have a wonderful and blessed Convocation! Jai Guru!

#### Footnotes

\* (AY pg. 88)

\*\**The Bhagavad Gita by Paramahansa Yogananda "The Right Method of Worshipping God"*.

\*\*\* *"The story is often called the story of the widow's mite or the story of the widow's offering. One day, Jesus was sitting with His disciples near the temple treasury watching people depositing money into the offering receptacles. The court of women held thirteen such receptacles, and people could cast their money in as they walked by. Jesus watched as the rich were contributing large sums of money, but then along came a widow with two small coins in her hand. The ESV calls them "two small copper coins, which make a penny" (Mark 12:41). The KJV calls the coins "mites." These were the smallest denomination of coins. The widow put her coins into the box, and Jesus called His disciples to Him and pointed out her action: "Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything—all she had to live on" (Mark 12:43–44; cf. Luke 21:1–4).*

*There are several things that the story of the widow's mite teaches us. First, God sees what man overlooks. The big gifts in the temple were surely noticed by people; that's probably what the disciples were watching. But Jesus saw what no one else did: He saw the humble gift of a poor widow. This was the gift that Jesus thought worthy of comment; this was the gift that the disciples needed to be aware of. The other gifts in the treasury that day made a lot of noise as they jingled into the receptacles, but the widow's mites were heard in heaven."*

*Source : "Got Questions: Your Questions, Bible Answers": "What does Jesus want us to learn from what He said about the widow's mite?"*

*\*\*\*\*Power play-ice hockey- Definition: This occurs when a team has the advantage of more players on the ice than the opposition, as a result of penalties being assessed. During this timed advantage, the full-strength team will attempt to control the puck in the opposition's zone in order to create goal-scoring opportunities. A power play ends when the penalty expires or the penalized team allows a goal.*

*\*\*\*\*\* Yajya (Yajña) यज्ञ. A sacrificial rite or performance of duty. It should be offered with devotion, without any desire for personal gain, and with firm belief in its rightness. Traditional yagnas in Vedic culture were offerings of food, money, or cows for milk. They also were performed according to instructions written in Vedic scriptures.*

**Self-Realization Fellowship 2019 Convocation-Notes  
Wednesday-August 7, 2019 4:30 pm  
Brother Prafullananda  
Satsanga**

So, today we have more answers to your spiritual questions. And you have some really good questions.

*Question 1: An SRF minister once said that visualizing the divine light to any samskara is the most effective way to overcome our samskaras. Could you explain this?*

What is a samskara? Karma manifests in this life from our personality and character, things that are second nature to us. Karma theoretically creates the body we live in, the parents we were born to, and so forth; but we don't see the links to the past, and so it seems like it's genetic.

If we could see the past actions in all of our lives that we've led we would see our personalities and behaviors, the patterns, more clearly. We're all aware that we have a second nature. We're not aware that we could behave in any other way.

Our second nature makes us automatically cheerful, grumpy, angry, etc. We may say, "It's just the way I am". But these behaviors are rooted so much in the past.

Master said, "Men are governed by their habits. They are like slaves. They have no freedom of choice. "

Habits can push souls to negative behaviors. They can cause us to react negatively even when we don't mean to. For example, if we are snappy to our spouse, we just put another deposit into our bad karma account. And this will continue life after life in this self-perpetuating cycle.

It's important to understand these principles if we want to get out of this cycle of birth and death.

In Lesson 10 of the New Lessons, Masters says, "You cannot be really free until you have released yourself from the negative impact of past actions. They also do impact us in this incarnation. Even in meditation, they can, again and again, pull us out of this. You may feel that you are finally making it. Then....where did it go?"

Samskaras are imprints remaining on the consciousness from past habits and desires. Master said that you can completely remove the roots of bad habits through meditation. It's the inner light of increasing meditation that goes eventually into samadhi that eventually gets rid of these samskaras.

In Lesson 10, of the New Lessons, pg. 33, Gururji writes, "You cannot be really free until you have liberated yourself from the effects of past and present actions- until by meditation you have destroyed those seeds of action in the fire of wisdom. Consume all seeds of past karma in the fire of wisdom so that they cannot sprout future effects, and you will become free. As an enkindled flame converts firewood into ashes, so does the fire of wisdom consume to ashes all karma."

Also, remember to practice the Energization Exercises with great concentration. They help to remove bad karma, and then Hong Sau will remove some bad karma.

Master writes (Lesson 10, pg. 34), " To destroy the sprouted seeds of chronic disease and those disease seeds still dormant in the subconscious, one should also practice with deep concentration the Energization Exercises for recharging the body battery (given in Lesson 6) and follow this with a period of meditation that includes that includes the Hong-Sau and Aum Techniques and Kriya Yoga. When practicing these Self-Realization yogic techniques, keep the consciousness of health, energy, and power foremost in mind so there is no thought or acceptance of the idea of physical disease or imperfection. When God's power is felt throughout the body as an incessant inflow of vitality, then this vital ray should be switched to the brain and held there for a long time. This vital power will roast all negative karmic tendencies lodged in the brain from the past."

Meditation scours the samskaras out. That's why meditation is such a tremendous shortcut through the garbage pile of our bad karma.

Also, in New Lesson 10, pg. 34, Master tells us, "During deep meditation, the yogi feels the great power of concentration at the point between his eyebrows and peace throughout his body. Whenever he wants to scour the brain cells in order to rid them of past failure- or sickness-seeds or some other karmic tendency, he should switch that raylike power of peace and concentration to the brain. The peace felt throughout the body, and the power of concentration experienced between the eyebrows must be continuously transferred to and felt in the brain as a tremendous soothing vibratory force destroying past bad karmic seeds. That peace and pranic power saturating the brain cells astrally changes their chemical and psychological hereditary composition. "

*Question 2: I'm rather new to this path. In addition to the difficulty of having a very busy routine and work, I have a spouse who does not respect my meditation. I am faced with constant interruptions and noisy confusion when I try to meditate.*

It's important to handle this with tolerance, understanding, love, and patience for both your spouse and yourself. Study Brother Anandamoy's book, "How to Spiritualize Marriage."

This is a common difficulty for those who have found the path after marriage. The spouse resents the time the other spends in meditation. Some amount of compromise is necessary, but you have to communicate with your spouse.

You may need to adjust your meditation and routine to fit her schedule. She didn't ask you to do this meditation stuff.

Brother Anandamoy said, "There's always time. You can always make time. " It may not be always optimal for preserving your meditation routine, however. The most important thing is to preserve marital harmony.

Practice unselfishness. Let go of the ego. Practice harmony by learning to compromise.

Brother Anandamoy gives an illustration. A woman told him, "When I came onto the spiritual path, my husband did not want to have anything to do with it, and resented that I was trying to meditate. As a result, I resented him with my whole being."

He writes, "After some time, she read something in Master's teachings that, she said, 'hit me like lightning. It opened my eyes and I realized that because of my negative attitude toward him, I was spending my whole day in resentment. I was proud that I was a doer and he was not. But, I realized that with that attitude I was less spiritual than he. Then I changed; instead of spending all of those hours in resentment, I spent them in practicing the presence of God and praying for my husband.'"

"And she said, 'You have no idea!'

"I said, 'I have an idea!'

"My life changed,' she said, "Aand you wouldn't believe it, but my husband is changing.'

"I said,'I believe it.'

"My spiritual life changed too'."

It's not easy changing your schedule, but it is possible, and it's worth it. In time you will realize that guru is working through your spouse to spiritualize you.

One devotee who discovered the spiritual path a year after she got married wrote to Mother Center about it. He felt he was disappointing Master. The response was, "No. Your role in this life is as a householder."

He later told us that after 37 years on the spiritual path and 38 years of marriage, he saw how Master had been able to perfectly discipline him through his wife.

There is one other principle involved. The purpose behind all of our human relationships is for those relationships to help us perfect our love for God. As we learn to love one another unconditionally, we're developing the ability to love unconditionally. Then, even though God is not responding, we learn to love unconditionally and God will respond. The purpose is to learn to love unconditionally.

*Question 3) My wife has worldly habits that pull me down. I have found myself slipping into bad habits. Recently a woman joined our SRF Center who is very disciplined with her sadhana. Is it possible that she is my soul mate? I have differing thoughts about this because my wife is so caring and loyal.*

There is a lot of buzz about soul mates. For this whole subject, Master gives an in-depth understanding in the "The Second Coming of Christ", Discourse 6:2.

True spiritual marriage is a union of the soul with God. So, God is the ultimate soul mate for every one of us, for those who hand in hand seek God together. This is a part of our SRF marriage vows. The purpose of marriage is not to make the other happy but to get them to God.

As fulfillment of the union of soulmates is not physical, the consummation does not necessarily require coming together on the physical plane. A devotee may attract a soul mate on the soul plane or the astral plane of consciousness that will be consummated right within the heart.



You may think "I have to find a soul mate to find God".

Master said seeking God through this way is not a good method for those who are already advanced in wisdom. Master explains that all too frequently, attraction for the wrong reason results in "cellmates."

In Chapter 62 of "The Second Coming", Master talks about this subject in depth. Master writes, "Though we may feel drawn to many, we've had so many relationships in these past lives, and they come back as they reincarnate. Our sacred duty lies in being loyal to one's husband and wife."

This devotee says that his wife is loyal and caring. That is a blessed gift.

It is true that some in some relationships divorce or separation may be necessary, but it should be seen as a last resort; only when things are untenable. The grass always looks greener on the other side of the fence. We need to be wary of our romantic inclinations. What seems an idealized vision may not be the fastest way to progress. Our fastest progress comes when we face our karma and work it out.

*Question 4: I am single and in my late thirties. I have a deep desire for a family and my own child. With climate change and catastrophes abounding in this world, is it responsible to have a child or is it egotistical, unspiritual, and amoral?*

Your concerns are valid, but they only give part of the picture. Instead of watching the news, try reading history. Realize that the world has always been a mess. It has always been a very dangerous place to live.

Of all of the millions who've lived on this planet, how many have gotten out alive? It's not a safe place. Souls have karma to work out, and they have to come back. It's important to know that he (the baby) must consent to come back, and he comes back because he needs it.

Master writes in the New Lessons, Pg. 30, "At the moment of conception, when the sperm of the father and the ovum of the mother unite, there is a flash of light in the astral ether-an invitation to souls seeking to return to earthly life. This light carries a vibratory magnetism. Souls in the astral world who are ready to incarnate on earth, and whose karmic pattern attracts them to the particular parental and environmental karmic pattern inherent in this vibratory signal light, rush to enter the newly conceived life form. Many souls may be similarly attracted to the same flash of light, but the soul with the strongest karmic affinity becomes the successful candidate for rebirth. Thus, though there may be many so-called hereditary similarities between offspring and parents, each is responsible for his own situation, the result of his own past actions."

It's like a billboard in the astral world for those ready to incarnate. They rush to enter the newly conceived life form. Many souls will rush to be the candidate. You see? It's a competition.

Those souls are attracted to the parents that are important to the working out of the child's karma.

Souls who put in the spiritual work before but didn't get liberation, who tried but didn't finish the job, are competing to get back here.

Realize that you are not forcing anyone to come back. This is how we increase the vibratory plane of this world.

This is how we create magnetism and spiritualize the self. The child is implanted in the Mother by God's love for His children. The mother's love is perhaps the highest of all. The attraction of human love is the closest to the perfection of God's love. She forgives the child no matter what he does. God forgives us that way.

Who could have put that love in the mother's heart but God?

*Question 5: I love sports: playing them and watching them, but my wife feels like it's a waste of my time- that I should be meditating instead. Who is right?*

The question is not who is right, but one of balance. Our guru did believe that there's a time for everything. Our recreation needs to be wholesome and simple. In the ashram, the monks have recreation every day: basketball, tennis, soccer, etc.

Yet, our relaxation activities, including sports, have to be balanced with everything we need to do.

What we don't have is the percentage of time that you are spending on sports. You may need to break it down to something that's reasonable. The other factor is how much do you want God? If God is not your goal, if you don't need to feel compelled to meditate, that is important to know.

Your wife can try, but she can't make you meditate. The result is often that at the end of life we find out that we didn't spend our time in the best possible way. But, after all, we have lots of time. (Laughter) You have eternity if you want it, but those who want out of the cycles of birth and death make meditation a priority.

Master said, "Some who want to get out while satisfying little desires must learn to satisfy your superior desire for God. At any moment the Angel Gabriel may call you, and you may be taken away from here".

*Question 5). When I sit down to meditate, I see lots of light. Sometimes, I see something like an eye or a face looking at me.*

Master talks about this in "God Talks with Arjuna, pg. 613: "As the devotee progresses in meditation from restless consciousness to cosmic consciousness, his conscious and subconscious thoughts may materialize in his inner vision, weaving figures of light, like those seen in movies, both real and unreal- materializations of the will and life energy. Beware, young devotee, of these fairies of the world of life energy. Be not satisfied with anything less than Spirit, and the bliss of Spirit. Pay no attention to variations of the inner light, but practice concentration on the light of the spiritual eye. The light of the eye must be used to look for God, the One whose presence is hidden on the throne of light".

During my early years in the ashram, I remember one story of one of the long-time monks. He was starting to see these astral faces in the clouds. He thought that this was kind of nice, and an indication that he was progressing.

He went to his counselor, Daya Ma, and explained the problem. She told him, "Don't worry about that dear. I'm sure it won't bother you anymore".

Master's point is that we need to keep our eyes and the single eye on that ultimate goal. There are all kinds of flowers to lead us away from the straight and narrow spinal higher path.

In New Lesson 12 on the spiritual eye, Master explains that we need to penetrate our consciousness through the golden ring into the blue center of cosmic consciousness and beyond that- into and through the star into cosmic consciousness.

Shrada Mata came into the ashram in the 1930s. Once she gave a talk to the monks and asked, "How many think, 'The Lord is favoring me', but in that, their devotion turns inward, and then they begin to experience long dry periods with no consolations. How necessary it is to attain even-mindedness: not, what the guru is going to give me, but what are we giving the guru."

*Question 6: (This is the flip side of the same spiritual concern). I am extremely restless. When I try to meditate. I have been on the path for years, but my meditations don't seem to improve much. Is there any hope for a devotee like me?*

Not just hope! Master tells us in unequivocal words, "I can show you the spirit without fail if you will follow me and practice what I teach".

Cosmic consciousness is attainable in one lifetime if we make the effort in this endeavor. We need to make the best effort. If we make every meditation deeper than the day before we can do this. But how many of us are able to do that? I don't see any hands.

If we're making the effort, then it's working. You may feel that spiritual experiences and progress go together, but they don't.

Master tells us about the signs of spiritual progress: Seeing the spiritual eye, hearing the Om vibration in and out of meditation, going breathless: These are definite signs of spiritual progress.

If we don't have any experiences, it means we're being pruned: Receiving the initial efforts of meager spiritual results.

Master said, "Work to regain the soul's immortality no matter how many battles he needs to fight. Incarnations of delusion cannot be removed in a few years of efforts in one lifetime."

Some come into the world with very little karma. For many of us though, the samskaras of past lives have to be erased.

If you find yourself wandering into the hands of restless thoughts in meditation, bring the mind back. Don't stop because you have restless thoughts.

Master tells us, "No matter how restless the devotee's mind is, he should constantly try to find a way to deepen his efforts in meditation".

When you go to the university or to high school, you are required to take so many classes to get a diploma. The spiritual path doesn't work that way. Because of our need for instant gratification, we expect instant gratification in meditation. If we are making an effort to control the mind, we are getting there.

Master says, "Yoga is not just a concept. It is a path of spiritual action that transmutes that action into knowing by the effort of the soul. There is no waste of holy effort. The least attempt will be to the devotee's spiritual benefit. The spiritual path results in psychological change-erasing the samskaras and negative karma of your past lives. "

These results are real, blessed, and everlastingly beneficial. The nice thing about being a counselor is that we get to hear first-hand stories.

There was a devotee on the east coast. I saw him every year in Encinitas. It was second nature to him to be a little grumbly. He told me he wasn't getting anything out of meditation.

I said to him. "Charlie, you have other choices."

He replied, "Brother, I don't have any other choices".

One day, he called me out of the blue. He was in a rest home. He said, "Brother, should I change my meditation routine? I had a very deep experience in meditation. "

It was so deep, it moved him to his core. The point is that after all of these years of effort, this came. He passed away not long after this.

That's how it works. He was getting rid of bad karma without really knowing it, and that's when the devotee knows it was all worth it. Once you get to know that meditation is worth it, you're on your way.

**Self-Realization Fellowship 2019 Convocation-Notes**  
**Wednesday-August 7, 2019 4:30 pm**  
**Brother Sevananda**  
**Are We Letting Life Circumstances Control Us?**

I thought we might begin by asking a positive question. Just see what comes up from within. Are you ready?

Are we letting life circumstances control us? Do we know? Does it seem, well probably so? Maybe it's kind of fuzzy within.

Or do we think, "Life is different at times with many challenges, but I feel in control"?

Let's read a quote from our Master. "What also starts to shift responsibility away from outer circumstances, remember, you should blame no one but yourself your troubles. Acknowledge the law of karma. We need to take responsibility for our lives. Remember, if you make up your mind that you're going to control circumstances, then you will control those circumstances".

Let's examine this more closely and find out where we might want to go and the steps to get us there.

The Bhagavadh Gita" starts out with an exhortation in the first verse, first chapter.

"On the holy plain of Kurukshetra (Dharmakshetra Kurukshetra), when my offspring and the sons of Pandu had gathered together, eager for battle, what did they, O Sanjaya?"

When we look at it allegorically, we start to see a parallel in our own lives about karma and changing conditions.

On the first day of this famous war, what happened? The kurus, who were less than desirable, were thinking, "Keep us involved in the show."

Day one involves the slaughter of all of our good tendencies.

King Duryodhana \* was delirious with joy.

Krishna tells Arjuna, "O Arjun, noblest amongst men, that person who is not affected by happiness and distress and remains steady in both, becomes eligible for liberation."

Yudhisthira, Divine Calmness was so impressed. \*\*

Arjuna approached Krishan in distress, exclaiming, "Look at the devastation of the army, Isha. The great kuru, Duriyodhan, is invincible. " \*\*\*

Krishna then says to his devotee, "Why should you worry. I am here".

Sri Krishna, advises Arjuna to constantly keep his mind fixed on Him and at the same time perform his Swadharma (to fight). " The mind is purified when a man performs his own dharma, regarding himself as an instrument of God. Only a pure mind can constantly remember God". \*\*\*\*

Arjuna knows that the greatest factor for success is the guru. Krishna then pointed out to him all of his other good warrior qualities.

On the second day, Arjuna cried out, basically saying, "Enough is enough".

He then had Krishna steer his chariot to where Bhishma, the ego was. There they saw devastation. Who was the real hero? Bhima? \*\*\*\*\*

Arjuna represents self-control. He signifies the vibratory fire in the lumbar center, the reinforcer of good habits and actions. This is the pillar of self-control on which we build the spiritual life.

Satyaki was also on the field of Kurukshetra. Also on the field was Udana, who represents devotion and fights the forces of disbelief.

Just taking these two divine warrior qualities. The spirit rouses self-control and devotion to defeat the ego. The hero is Bhima. The soul-controlled life force, prana, aids the devotee in the right techniques of pranayama.

The mood at the end of the second day is completely reversed. Duryodhana realized that it would not be so easy, and Arjuna worries that Bhishma, the ego, in the end, would not be possible to defeat.

Arjuna, who represents the devotee in us all does win, just as we will be victorious as well because we have within us the same qualities of self-control, devotion, and life force control.

Master's teachings are 100% complete to guide us in developing these qualities. Introspect dispassionately. Just look at the form, what Master called the becoming of introspection, not just to see our weaknesses, but to develop our strengths as well. Everyone should learn to analyze himself dispassionately.

Master advises, "Write down your thoughts and aspirations daily to get them down so you can see them clearly and do something about them."

There is a famous study covered in the fall 2015 edition of SRF magazine about New Year's resolutions. For those who did not write their resolutions down, 4 % completed them. For those who did write them down, 44 % achieved them.

Writing things down engages the left side of the brain. Logic engages every brain cell, and we're therefore more likely to do something about it.

Master says, "Find out what you are, not what you imagine you are. Most people don't change because they don't see their own thoughts."

We're pretty good at seeing our faults, which means we're also pretty adept at spotting others' faults. Bishma doesn't like the warrior of self-discipline.

Master tells us, "Often it makes a difference to tear the searchlight on ourselves. Be honest with yourself even though the world is not honest with you. When you are honest with yourself, you will find the road to inner peace. "

Those words feel good. Intuitively we realize and long for the safe harbor so that no matter what circumstances are thrown at us on the outside, we can handle them.

Are We Letting Life Circumstances Control Us? What exactly are we trying to control? Is it the circumstances or is it controlling our reaction?

A devotee tells an interesting story about having lunch sitting next to the Archbishop of Canterbury. He told him how his very ill wife still rang their own church bell every day and never lost heart. He took care of her every day. That is the true adage of the supernatural heroes.

In regarding one's inner reaction to life and circumstances, our guru tells us, "My Master Sri Yukteswar's training in this was wonderful. No matter what happened, he accepted no excuses for my becoming mentally unruffled. I used to go to the ashram, meditate, sit at his feet, and listen to his wisdom. When the time drew near for me to catch my train, he would be aware of my mental restlessness and would just smile at me and say nothing that gave me leave to depart. At first, I thought he was being very unreasonable, but after a somewhat strained period of his discipline, he explained, 'I am not grudging your preparing timely to go to the train, but I say there is no need for you to be restless.'

"Why allow nervous excitement to ruffle the mind. You should be naturally calm when you are with me, and when the train time comes, calmly get ready to go. He made me miss several trains until I learned to be calmly active as well as actively calm. " AY

An unruffled state doesn't mean we don't feel. It is the ability to remain calm and feel inner support. After introspecting, what might we do next to obtain an unruffled state? It depends on our own unique equation. It shows something equally basic but powerful. Study our guru's teachings every day, especially the New Lessons. This helps us to be victorious in evaluating the divine lesson we need to attain victory.

Once, I realized I wanted to study the teachings in my room. I looked on the shelf and saw the book: "God Alone", by Gyanamata. I thought, "That's great! I don't have to get out something else. I can read something quickly; read something random. "

So, I thought, "I know how to meditate. But do I keep up with the practice of spiritual reading?"

And then I read her words: "Lord, it's not fair. You know all about us, but we don't know anything about you." ( She said that to someone else.) (Laughter)

Our consciousness does not rise into spirit un-aided. This has become a favorite book after that. It's a joyous reminder when we realize that we're not alone. When we are looking for some awe-inspiring vision, we can miss the subtle responses that are there from the very beginning. So, dear, we can bring that part into our meditation.

So, I encourage you to read something every day, including the lessons.

Brother Bhaktananda told us, "Our guru often said, 'Everything you need to know to find God is in the Lessons.'"

Master said, ""Out of a thousand, one seeks Me; and out of a thousand who seek, one fully knows Me."

It's up to you whether you want to be one of the thousand or be that one who knows Him.

Or, allow them to transform you. Whether you have started your quest early or later in life is of little importance. It is not always the first initiates who get to the kingdom and become One with their Father. The last become first, hidden behind space in the darkness of the senses.

It's not a question of age but of attitude. While we're on the subject of aging, think of the language we use to describe milestones. Do you realize the only time in life when we wanted to get old was when we were kids? Think about it. We were so excited about getting older. We thought of our age in fractions, like, "I'm four and a half."

No one ever says, "I'm 36 and a half." And we can't wait to get to our teens. "I'm going to be sixteen. " You could be 13, but you know you are going to be 16.

Some milestones sound like a ceremony. You "become" 21. But you "turn" 30. It sounds discouraging; like a bad meal.



Then, you're "pushing" 40. But all's not lost. You "make it" to 60. Then you built up so much speed that you "hit" 70. And after that milestone, you "get into" your 80's.

And then, every day after that, you get lunch pushed until you "reach" bedtime. You could say, "I was 'just' 97. "

If you make it to 100, you become a little kid again. You can say, "I'm 100 and a half."  
(Laughter)

Brother Anandamoy was beginning a talk and recognizing all who had come to Convocation. Then he said, "It has come to my attention that one of our attendees just turned 90 and has just enrolled in the lessons. This beautiful gentleman stood up. Brother invited that person to stand. Everyone applauded.

What our guru says is, "Let nobody say that you are finished or all washed up. You can change any day, any time you want to."

Master referred to people who never changed as "psychological antiques." They remain stagnant while others are always doing things to improve themselves.

He said, "There was a woman who threw out all of the alcohol in her house after her husband died. This woman was a live wire. She took up dancing. She got involved in service projects. She remained enthusiastic, happy, and healthy. I very much admired her spirit. "

Many people grow as they get older. You don't have to give up points because you turn 75, 80, or 90.

Master said, "Never tell your age or let anyone pity you for your age. There are lots of young people who are psychologically old. You may think you are finished. Your own decree of defeat is the worst of old age. "

How old are we? Are we young? Even when we do close our eyes, there is no age.

After introspection study the guru's teachings. Meditate. Try to make that meditation better every day. Practice the God-given guru techniques of pranayama.

Sometimes we start to identify with our circumstances. The purpose of the techniques is to reduce that identification and to identify with the life force. Even if our hearts are breaking, we can't break. That eternal spark of the infinite is ever blissful consciousness.

Daya Mata said, "I don't care what you send my way. This is my testimony of love."

I must admit that sometimes when she goes a little too far, I don't pray for that so fervently.  
(Laughter)

Daya Mata never let troubling circumstances keep her from her meditation, saying, "Without this sadhana, we'll be at the mercy of the dying conditions of life."

So, let's review these points. We need to shift our attention from identifying with the world around us and this physical form. It takes our consciousness away from who we really are, the eternal soul.

What if our circumstances are not the garden variety but are actually awful? How do we remain strong? There are different circumstances: challenges with the body, disease, the terrible loss of a loved one or having no time...being at a place where we can only offer a few moments of meditation. How do we know if this offering has any value? Our realization gets tested.

There was a beautiful article by one of our members in SRF Magazine a few years ago. It was the story of his wife's battle with cancer, entitled, "Love God No Matter What."

These were the final words of his wife to their 18-month-old daughter. She loved God no matter what. This is what helped her at age 37 when cancer had invaded her body. This mattered although she was in constant pain. These stories become like candles of inspiration.

Her husband wrote: "It was beautiful to see how she constantly resisted self-pity and the thought, 'Why did this happen to me?' She exuded strength for her and everyone around her.

One thinks of Gyanamata's prayer, "Lord, change no circumstance in life. Change me."

Her one goal was to help her to hold onto God rather than bemoaning her fate.

In "God Alone", she shares a letter from Daya Mata. And if you are going through something similar, that these words into your heart and soul:

"Go on gently holding to your beautiful attitude of faith and courage. Your soul is waxing in his life and beauty. Daya Ma and Master are pleased with you and holding you dearly where peace and bliss fill the heart awaiting us in ever new joy."

(Continuing his story about his wife ) The hospital room was permeated with joy after she passed. He was summoned to the nurse's station to take a call.

The call was from Sri Daya Mata, who said, "I was just meditating and felt your dear wife's passing. She is with Master as we speak, and she is in great joy. "

We say, "I didn't know Daya Mata". But she knows us. We're part of this family, of his life. We're his people. (I didn't mean to say that.)

Okay, let's dial down and go back to the beginning of the call from Ma.

She told him, "I want you to know that she had fulfilled God's purpose in her life and is filled with joy. "

Until her last days, Ma was meditating, offering up our love, our courage; What makes it inspiring is not because it is about some soul who lived long ago in a high state of consciousness far, far away. These are Master's saints.

Brother Premamoy was my special counselor. At a certain point, he tenderly grabbed my arm and said, "Well, a saint you ain't."

(Laughter). What's so funny about that?

"But a star you are."

That was much more than I was expecting. It was a good day.

I know that the Arjuna within will be victorious. Master is winning.

Master told us, "There is a way to conquer this world, to conquer nature and life. Genghis Khan, Napoleon, and William the Conqueror did. But the victory of Jesus Christ was permanent.

"Never was the need so great as now! Do not minimize your powers or you will be the real victim. Learn how to use the psychology of the victors.

"Some people say, 'Don't talk about your failures at all, though you fail many times.' The greater you tremble, the greater the chance to show the Lord that you are a spiritual Napoleon. Strive to do what I'm doing, constantly winning within yourself. Learn to conquer every obstacle and attain self-mastery".

Close your eyes and ask yourself the original question again.

Are we letting life circumstances control us?

Do you see the world differently? This is what the gurus are teaching us...to give us sight.

We started with the Mahabharata but at the conclusion of that dialogue, the Lord Krishna ended with the following words to Arjuna, words the Lord is directing to us.

Krishna said, "Be of good cheer".

Jesus often used these same words in talking to his devotees. "In the world, ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." (John 16:33.)

*Footnotes (points of reference for background, not from Brother Sevananda's talk)*

\* *Duryodhana -vainglorious desire*

\*\* *Yudhisthira (vibratory air; the life force)*

\*\* *\*BG 1.29-31: My whole body shudders; my hair is standing on end. My bow, the Gāṇḍīv, is slipping from my hand, and my skin is burning all over. My mind is in quandary and whirling in confusion; I am unable to hold myself steady any longer. O Krishna, killer of the Keshi demon, I only see omens of misfortune. I do not foresee how any good can come from killing my own kinsmen in this battle".*

\*\*\*\**Krishna instructs Arjuna that he should surrender to the Supreme Lord within his heart and thus attain peace in His supreme, eternal abode. The most confidential knowledge is then explained by Krishna: "Become My devotee, always think of Me, act for Me, worship Me, and offer all homage unto Me. Surrender unto Me alone. Do not fear sinful reactions."*

\*\*\*\*\**Along with other Pandava brothers, Bhima was trained in religion, science, administration and military arts by the Kuru preceptors, Kripa and Drona. Specifically, he became a master in using the mace. Bhima's strong point throughout the epic remains his towering strength. He was so wrathful and strong that it was impossible even for Indra to subdue him in a battle. Bhima was also renowned for his giant appetite – at times, half of the total food consumed by the Pandavas was eaten by him.*

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pandava>

<https://yoganandasite.wordpress.com/2018/07/01/lord-krishna-his-lilas-and-teaching-sri-swami-sivananda/>

**Self-Realization Fellowship  
Convocation Notes  
August 7, 2019. 10:30 am  
Brother Bhumananda  
Satsanga**

Greetings and love to all of you. What a wonderful thing this live-streaming is. Now we have many devotees from all over the world participating in this Convocation. Guruji must be really thrilled to see how the work has grown!

Scribe's note: The notes on the first satsanga question on suicide are taken directly from the Yogananda site.

*"Satsanga Questions: I have a friend who sometimes feels that life isn't worth living. How can I explain to him that he needs to keep trying? I have a relative who recently committed suicide. What does Guruji say about people who commit suicide?"*

.I'm going to speak to those that, at times, have a hard time of it. ..even being a devotee sometimes we are not spared. We can have pretty rough periods at times in our lives.

Guruji, of course, emphasizes that suicide is not the right thing to do, and so I want to cover that, and why that is so. And then I want to talk about those who have committed suicide and how we can help them, because from our side, understanding Guru's teachings, we can do much to help those on the other side.

**We Can transform Trouble Into Something Magical\***

So why is suicide wrong? Throughout his teachings, our Guru emphasizes we are here for a divine purpose. We have been placed in this vast school of life which presents us with the essential lessons that we need as the soul makes its journey of upward evolution to ultimately return to its home in God. And responding in the right way to the experiences of life, both the good ones and the very painful ones, we spiritually grow, we are purified, so that we are better able to receive and manifest God's blessings, God's qualities, the divine qualities of the soul. Someone said that the greatest suffering is suffering without meaning, and that's very true. But when you understand the potentialities we have in the Guru's teachings, then we understand the suffering we go through, it is never without meaning. Never.

First, when we go through a rough period, and this can be a physical ailment, or mental stress, or some spiritual test, realize that through that experience much considerable karma is being burned off, lightening your karmic load for the future. And also, and most importantly, by facing the trouble with faith, with courage, with an undaunted positive attitude, with that right spirit, we can transform that trouble into something magical. If we face it with right attitude, it then becomes a stepping stone, a stepping stone that takes us closer to God.

Sri Daya Mata, whom many of us regard as one of the great saints of Self-Realization Fellowship, she said this: "Often the devotee makes the greatest progress on the spiritual path when he is facing tremendous obstacles, when he is forced to exercise to the limit his inner muscles of strength, courage and positive thinking in order to resist the onslaught of negation, evil or unkindness. It is not always when things are going smoothly that we are growing."\*\*

And I give you these words of Daya Mata, of Master, to show, to convince you there is great value in not giving up. Great value.

"I have known some devotees who have had incredibly difficult lives—perhaps some debilitating physical disease, or mental health issues. For some of them, it's hard to meditate. Maybe they can only meditate a few moments.

And yet I tell you, some of these souls are trying so hard to work through their troubles and to please God. And when I look into their eyes, oh! I see such beauty there. Such attunement, such devotion. It bows my head to them. And I get this strong feeling in my heart of how God appreciates them.

There is great value, there is great blessing in not giving up on fighting the good fight. In his wonderful book, "The Second Coming of Christ", our Guru talks about Judas and his betrayal of Jesus, and how afterward, overcome with remorse, Judas took his own life.

And Gururji said Judas would have done much better if he had chosen to live and redeem himself by, from that point on, living a good life. A life of prayer, a life of meditation, a life of helping others.

So that strong message, from God, from the great ones: Don't give up. When things get tough, you have to keep trying. You have to keep trying. Ask for Help. God works through others. "

*End of Yogananda Site Notes*

Sometimes, there is immediate healing. His favorite way, the way that He likes to work, is through our brothers and sisters.

Years ago, I got into trouble asking Master for help. It was getting worse. Finally, I went to my superior. A great peace came over me. It came to me that the lesson was not about will power but surrender, humbly putting the ego aside and humbly asking for help.

We're here to support one another and to help one another. If you are ever having a rough time and it continues, you have to reach out for help. This does not mean that you're a bad devotee. It just means that you're a good devotee going through a tough time.

Suicide doesn't work. People may find the pain of life unbearable and seek to end the pain. The underlying physical body is the seat of it. Under the astral is the causal. After death, we still exist and have feelings.

Ask yourself, "What would guru say?":

Don't give up. Remember that this test is temporary. If you keep trying to get through this you can get over the feelings that kill hope and have you feeling despondent.

Hope comes from the intuitive consciousness of the soul that sometime we will remember this as our forgotten identity.

What if you've lost someone to suicide? Is there any way to help them? We help them with our prayers and love. We're sending them strength and energy. We're mitigating their karma with God's unconditional love for his children.

Visualize the soul in the spiritual eye and send thoughts of goodwill and spiritual friendship. Our whole creation is built around and centered in the one unifying cosmic principle of the love of God and the light of God's love. There's nothing stronger.

When God sees that out of our love we deeply, deeply want to help someone, God's heart is touched. God is not bound by karma.

When you pray, you have to be really bold.: "I know that they made a serious mistake, but I'm praying as your child. Take away some of their karma. Karma is meant to be trampled on. Master said, "No sin is unforgivable."

The Bhagavad Gita says that our soul has been through many journeys and made many mistakes. Some of them were very serious. Who's thinking of that mistake? Where are the mistakes of the past? Mistakes are fleeting. What endures is God's love for you. The moment they start trying to improve, in that instant, they are on their way to God.

*Question 2. I've been a student of the SRF Lessons for years. I have not yet applied for kriya. I don't think that I am kriya-ready. My practice is not that good. I want to wait until it's better, but then I worry that I'll never qualify.*

Kriya means entering into a beautiful relationship with Paramahansa Yogananda. Master told us, "Spiritual aspirants who come to the guru establish a perfect spiritual relationship. This is a perfect relationship between the one who strives to know the guru and the one who knows that the only way to find God is by following the sadhana of a God-ordained guru. "

So, the question is this: How do you feel about Paramahansa Yogananda? Is he the external channel? When you study the lessons, is there a deep feeling that says, "Oh, my guru is speaking to me!" Are you fully ready to embrace the guru's teachings?

The greatest security in all of the cosmos is to be the disciple of a God-ordained guru. God does not immediately give initiation. There is a period of training and discipline required to qualify for kriya. One should meditate in the morning and evening and practice the Hong Sau and Om techniques followed by a period of communion and trying to apply the SRF principles in daily life.

You say that your practice is not good. It is not a small club that you belong to. If you are making a sincere effort to meditate, we very much encourage you to apply for kriya initiation.

What if you don't meet these criteria? Then come and meet with a nun or monk. An SRF counselor will come up with a program for you. I've come up with an approach that starts with baby steps. We don't ask a lot. What would be a good starting point? You might start with 20 minutes of meditation along with a little Hong Sau.

You think "I can do that." You go on to practice like this for a month or two and then come back. We might then ask, "How about 30 minutes along with practicing Hong Sau and Om?"

Before they know it, they're meditating and ready for kriya. But you have to be very regular. If the t.v. says it's going to be the end of the world at 6:00, then you say, "If it's going to be the end of the world at 6:00, I'll meditate at five to get that in. " (laughter)

If you have doubts but feel in your heart that Paramahansa Yogananda is your guru, come and talk to us.

*Question 3: I grew up a Catholic, and I still feel very close to Jesus. I still feel closer to Jesus than to Master. Is this disloyal?*

Is it wrong to feel especially close to Jesus? No! Remember he has a place on the altar...so does Krishna. Our guru loved Jesus. He had many experiences with Him. You'll find your relationship with Jesus will grow deeper and your relationship with Paramahansa Yogananda will grow deeper because between the two of them there is great unity.

Master used to pray to Jesus, "Is this in accord with Your will? "

Jesus came to him and the holy grail came from the mouth of Christ. Jesus told him, "Thou dost drink from the same cup".

In the guru's wisdom, to draw near one is to draw near the other, because in spirit, they are One.

Jesus was a yogi, and Master makes that very clear in "The Second Coming". As you practice, you will find the presence of Jesus in your life will become more vivid.



*Question 4: How do I know what God's will is for my life. Should I be a householder or a monastic? What would be most pleasing to guru? I'm 34 years old.*

I'm biased here. If you're single and don't have obligations in the world, it is something to consider.

With a monk, the inner calling, that is, your life calling is to God alone. It is a life of serving God. If you are convinced that all of your needs in the world will be taken care of, you don't have to be perfect to become a monk. We work hard at overcoming our bad habits and shortcomings. When you come to the ashram, be prepared to center your whole life on Master's teachings and ideals.

Coming to the ashram doesn't mean that you are free of all desire. Desire for God is so strong you are willing to offer all lesser desires to God alone. Some are very quick to realize that this is their path. Some are slower.

In my case, during my meditations, very strong thoughts came. "You are going to be a monk."

I got up and looked in the mirror and said, "You, Sir, are going off the deep end." (Laughter)

The thought was so strong in my consciousness that I had to respond.

Some of the monks and nuns have for a time pursued a career and then decided, "There's always something missing, and that's where I belong (in the ashram)."

If you are single and have some calling to the monastic life, come to see us. The monks and nuns who will counsel you are very caring and compassionate. They will help you to decide what path is right for you.

I cannot say that the monastic path is better than the householder's life or vice versa. We're drawn to the path we need. You may find great joy in choosing God's work. By keeping God with you, first with devotion, steadfastly, with a deep sadhana, these wonderful souls have built for themselves beautiful spiritual lives.

Whatever you choose, you legitimately need to build a relationship with God.

A devotee who was 89 years old came to me. She told me, "My husband and I just celebrated our 59th wedding anniversary and are still in love."

I asked her what their secret was.

She replied, "We always try to make the other one happy".

It can be a wonderful way of spiritual progress.

How will you know what's right? Meditate in calm stillness. Offer yourself to God and ask, "What are my deepest needs and desires?"

If your deepest need is for religion or something you are passionate about like business, art, music, consider that. You can be in the world and follow your heart. Whatever you do, do it for God and it will make it a thousand times better.

The monastic life is a really beautiful path that brings much joy and happiness. Come and talk to us. Watch the beautiful video on the "SRF website, "Give Me Thy Heart". \*\*

But if you have a husband or a wife, don't watch it. You don't want to deal with an irate husband or wife. (Laughter)

*4). I'm taking the New Lessons, but I'm overwhelmed. How do I fulfill my duties in the world and still absorb all that is in the Lessons? Master gives us so much for us to practice.*

Master says that Divine Spokesmen always speak in absolutes as a measure of striving. He sets the bar very high because he sees what you are capable of. Sometimes we could say, "Is he asking too much?"

Guruji said, "Yes. You are the soul with infinite potential. You are all Yoganandas. The only difference between you and a Yogananda is that I made the effort."

All he asks is that you sincerely do your best. Don't try to practice everything all at once or you won't have time to sleep, eat or do anything.

If someone is going to the university, there may be a hundred courses offered, but they are not expected to take all 100. They may take two or three.

Master's teachings are like a university. You'll see everything in your life covered in his teachings. So, all of the core programs in a university are required for a major and you are expected to take them, and then there are electives.

In Lesson 15 of the basic lessons, page 25, Master gives us advice about our spiritual routine. He gives us the basic core program for the devotee.

SRF is a philosophy for living and right thinking. Guruji gives us five principles for balanced living.

Meditation for communing with God in the morning and evening.

Activity with the thought of God during the day, beginning in the morning. Have a quiet moment or two, and say, "This is for you, Lord" in every moment that you can spare. Take a moment to connect with God in your own way. Then you go back to your duties refreshed.

Renunciation of those recreations and pastimes that keep you from being with God, e.g. if you're watching tv six hours a day, cut that back. Sometimes you have to be a little tough on yourself.

Satsanga: Take time to be with others who are on the spiritual path. Join a center or SRF meditation group so that you will be in the company of others who will help you on the spiritual path. If you are far away from a center or temple, use the resources on the SRF website. There is so much there. Guru's spirit can come that way through these little apps.

Enter spiritual attunement with the blessings and help of Gururji. Keep Master by your side and ask Master to help with the little things and the big things.

Master gives us a lot of assignments. He's not an accountant. He doesn't keep a balance sheet. If Master feels that you are sincere, he will move heaven and earth to help you.

Lesson 15, page 25 gives the minimum requirement for our sadhana. If you study the SRF Lessons 15-30 minutes a day, practice the Energization Exercises, and commune with God through the meditation techniques in the morning and night, you will reach your goal.

You cannot attain the goal by reading one or two lessons and then dropping out. The more time and intelligent effort you put into SRF studies, the greater will be your advancement. Many will put in even more effort and make even more spiritual progress.

What if you haven't been up to doing the minimum? Start small with a 20-minute meditation; but you have to do this every day. Put your heart into it. Master accepts you as you now are. His heart is permanent. You have a place there. He's never going to stop prodding you and coaxing you to give you a little push... to have you experience the divine blessings of God. Whatever you do in your spiritual efforts, you have to do it with much love.

The Bhagavad Gita says: "I am impartial to all human beings. To me, none is hateful. None is feared. But those who give me their hearts' love are in me as I am in them."

The law of karma acts impartially. If you put your finger in the fire it will be burned. Not- "This is such a sweet little devotee, I won't burn her."

Love draws God's grave support and Gururji's blessings. If you are struggling with your spiritual routine, call us. We will work with you to put together a customized spiritual routine.

Brother Chidananda advises us, "Remember! Our guru has given us a voluminous teaching. " Master said, " If you practice one-millionth of what I tell you, will reach God. You will get

there."

So, try to have at least a twenty-minute meditation once each day. If you put your heart into it, you will receive many blessings. But we can't guarantee you'll always be happy with twenty minutes. As you experience peace and joy, you will find you want God. As you keep on, you will see how beautiful your life becomes, and you will experience a real spiritual awakening.

Meditation:

Relax the body. Lift the gaze to the point between the eyebrows. This alone is a very effective form of yoga. Feel that you are no longer in the world of matter but in the realm of God. You are not the body but indestructible consciousness whose essence is love, joy, and peace.

Practice this affirmation:

"I possess the creative power of spirit. The Infinite Intelligence will guide me and solve every problem. "

#### **Footnotes**

\*<https://yoganandasite.wordpress.com/2017/05/31/depression-suicide-overcoming-the-tests-of-life-with-gurus-love-bro-pranabananda/> *Depression, Suicide, Overcoming the Tests of Life with Guru's Love ~ Bro. Pranavananda Yogananda Site*

\*\*"A Smooth Life is Not a Victorious Life." — Paramahansaji

\*\*\*[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8T\\_gBpCHHPQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8T_gBpCHHPQ) *Give Me Thy Heart : The Monastic Life of Self Realization Fellowship*

\*\*\*\*<https://yoganandasite.wordpress.com/2018/05/31/a-healing-of-mental-illness-through-the-blessings-of-the-guru-yss-magazine/> *A Healing of Mental Illness Through the Blessings of the Guru*

**Self-Realization Fellowship  
Convocation Notes  
August 8, 2019. 7:30 pm  
Sister Vinita  
The Guru Disciple Relationship**

Our focus tonight is on how to strengthen our relationship with the guru, our eternal guide to help us to realize our oneness with God. Our guru, in SRF Lesson 1, gives us a one-sentence prayer. He also reminds us that when we pray, the words are not said mechanically.

"Jesus Christ, Bhagavan Krishna, Mahavatar Babaji, Lahiri Mahasaya, Swami Sri Yukteswar, and your guru preceptor, Paramahansa Yogananda, and saints of all religions: I bow to you all.: Free my life from all obstacles of delusion, and give me material, mental, and spiritual development".

When you say Heavenly Father, Mother, Friend, Beloved God, think and feel that God loves you through all of these forms of love.

Also, in that Lesson, he tells you to "feel and visualize with closed eyes that the space all around you, the farthest reaches of infinitude, is filled with God. Then visualize Jesus Christ, Bhagavan Krishna, Mahavatar Babaji, Lahiri Mahasaya, Swami Sri Yukteswar, and your guru preceptor, Paramahansa Yogananda" at the kutastha center.

It will help you to be in touch with the Masters. So, by tuning the radio of your spiritual energy to the vibrating power of the Masters, Guruji tells us: "You will make an inner connection through which you will unfailingly receive the blessings and light of the Masters and of your infinite, all-loving Heavenly Father".

Yogananda is attuned with God, so this is important. When students tune in, by the inner blessings and grace, when they tune in, those who are steadfast will automatically be in the presence of the gurus.

A true guru doesn't need a physical body to help his disciples. The greater your attunement, the greater the help you will receive.

Mrinalini Mata told us that even when the guru was physically embodied among us, he taught us not to be physically dependent on his physical body. He dealt with our state of consciousness. It doesn't matter if he is in the physical body, for it is the inner perception of our guru's presence that matters. It is important that we all have attunement until we attain complete oneness with the guru, who is one with God.

Sister Ambalika talks about this in a talk with the monastics.\*

"When I first entered the ashram, I was given a room on the second floor, in the wing underneath his living quarters on the floor above. I would hear disciples or visitors going up to talk to him or share a meal prepared in his little third-floor kitchen. At night I would lie in my bed and cry.

"You invite everyone up there but me,' I would think. 'You never invite me'. This went on for almost a year.

“One night the pillow was wet with my tears, and suddenly into my head came these words: ‘Where are you searching for me? I am right here. Talk to me, prove me. Talk to me, prove me. Talk to me, prove me!’ So, I stopped crying, and I started to ask questions — not out loud but in my mind.

“I was asking questions and getting answers almost before I could finish asking. At first, I thought it must be my own mind answering. After a while, I realized it wasn't my mind. I asked Mukti Mata one day, "Who is it that is answering me? Is it Master or is it God?"

“She said, ‘Does it matter? They are one.’

“Her answer started me crying again — this time with joy. But I wanted to know from Master himself. ‘Tell me that you know I'm talking to you,’ I prayed. ‘Please tell me’. This was my inner plea for some time.

“Then one day—it was before Master went out to the desert for the last time — the nuns gathered so that we could say good-bye to him. As I turned the corner of the building and came into his presence, I saw his big black eyes looking at me. ‘Oh, there you are’, he said. ‘You've been asking me questions.’

“Then I broke into tears again. I'm the best crier there is when it comes to Master, believe me! I went over to him, and he said, ‘What do you want?’

“To my chagrin, I heard coming out of my mouth, ‘I want you to open my spiritual eye, sir.’

“He shook his finger in the way he often did for emphasis, and he said, ‘I'll open that spiritual eye someday.’

When I later told Daya Mata about that, she said, ‘That's a promise!’”\*

Talk to him like a good friend. He knows everything about it anyway. Share everything with him, the good and the bad regarding your behavior. If we talk to him, we will rely on his guidance. We will feel that he is with us in facing various challenges that come our way. Ask for his help in removing the bindings from the soul. Speak to him during the day. In the background of your mind, let there always be a silent cover between you and God, or the one who connects you with God, your guru.

Gyanamata said that Master told her, "The more you tune in with me, the more I will be here in spirit. "

He explained, "I talk to her through the ethers. As soon as you reach a certain stage of development, I can talk to you this way."

In God Talks with Arjuna, Master tells us that there is one way we can attune with God is by asking reverent questions. It is helpful to do this at the end of meditation. Visualize the guru at the Christ center, and ask the questions that you want answers to.

Master says that if the concentration and visualization are deep, the chela will receive the answers.

In Daya Mata's CD, "Anchoring your Life in God", she said that her question was, "What is truth?"\*\*

She tells us that when something doesn't fit the logic of the mind if we ask sincerely our answer from Master will come.

If our feelings are hurt by another person or circumstance we can share everything with Master and call out to him for an answer.

We think we see ourselves, but we only see a part of ourselves. Guruji says that you cannot understand the workings of your mind unless you have great introspection. Go to God with your questions and receive his help and guidance with your introspection.

It's not enough to meditate in the evening and forget about Him all day. Think of God all day.

Daya Mata said that if we would just live by Guruji's poem, "God, God, God", we would achieve God in this life.

I used to use the "Daily Yoga Walk". \*\*\* The first stanza is about waking up. I'm not what we would call a morning person. It was a sweet day when finally, the thoughts of God replaced my early morning gloom. See the last stanza. (If you want a copy, you'll find it on the free literature table.)

Going back to more of the Sister Ambalika story, she really took to heart Master's words. \*\*\*\*

As long as we try to be receptive, we'll receive Master's guidance.

Master said, " Learn to talk to me".

When we keep our inner attunement and ask for his help, we get it. If I need something for my spiritual growth, I don't worry about it. I say, "I give it to you, Sir". Then I see how it will be fixed.

We're not to hold on to anger, rancor, or worry. The purpose that we're here for is to love God. As long as we do that, we'll be all right.

So inwardly talk to the guru. He wants to talk with you, and he will answer. Feel the peace inside of you, and you will know he is among you.

If we talk to the guru, we must also learn to listen. We don't want our conversation with Gururji to be one-sided. We want some sign, like the peace of God. Listening to the guru is an art that will take you to your goal.

Gyanamata used to say, "You know I am always quiet when I am around the Master because I often get the answer mentally in his words".

Master stated, "How many more could I have saved if they were like Sister! Those who slept in ignorance could have been saved if they would only listen."

When asked why St. Lynne had made so much progress, he answered, "He knows how to listen".

We can get fooled thinking too much, weighing the pros and cons of our conscious thoughts. When we realize that our conscious mind has led us astray, we realize the difference between consciousness and intuition.

In the movie, "Awake", Master says, "I do walkie talkie with you. Those who are sincerely seeking God, I try to reach their thoughts".

In "Autobiography of a Yogi", he tells the story of when he wasn't receptive to God's will. He had wanted to visit Kashmir. The first time, Sri Yukteswar did not want to go and the person (Behari) whom he planned to go with made himself scarce.

When Sri Yukteswar asked of his next plans, he said he would visit his uncle and ask to take his uncle's servant with him.

Sri Yukteswar told him, "See your uncle if you want to, but I hardly think you will enjoy the visit".

His uncle called him selfish and angrily refused his request.

Sri Yukteswar suggested that he stay with him and send his other friends ahead to the train.

Master mournfully agreed.

Sri Yukteswar asked that he be served some food, noting that his train would leave soon.

Master writes, "Getting up from my blanket seat, I staggered suddenly with nausea and a ghastly churning sensation in my stomach. The stabbing pain was so intense that I felt I had been abruptly hurled into some violent hell. Groping blindly toward my guru, I collapsed before



him, exhibiting all symptoms of the dreaded Asiatic cholera. Sri Yukteswar and Kanai carried me to the sitting room".

I cried in agony: "Master, I surrender my life to you; for I believed it was indeed fast ebbing from the shores of my body.

"Sri Yukteswar put my head on his lap, stroking my forehead with angelic tenderness.

"You see now what would have happened if you went to the station with your friends', he said. 'I had to look after you in this strange way because you chose to doubt my judgment about taking the trip at this particular time.' "

Two days later, they took the trip to Kashmir. \*\*\*

This story illustrates that in addition to talking with the guru, we strengthen our attunement with him. When we follow him, we gain his protection.

Master says, "The promise of a true guru is that if you tune in with him, you will be free."

Mrinalini Mata said, "From the beginning of our sadhana, we must follow the guru with faith. Master would sometimes tell me, 'I don't have time for your logic. Just do what I say!'

"Some would find that unreasonable, but those who did what he said realized that to follow the guru, to trust in the guru, allows him to nurture the omnipresent power of faith".

Guru can lead because his eyes are open. He knows our highest good. When we follow, we have cultivated faith in God.

When Jesus met Phillip, he said, "Follow me. Follow my precepts. Pray as I taught you to pray, so you can rise from human consciousness to cosmic consciousness".

Daya Mata asked, "How does one become an ideal disciple? It is not just by attending lectures and reading books, but by following the guru's sadhana with persistence in the techniques".

Outer relationships are not as important. Whoever believes in the guru's teachings and practices them: that is important.

Master stated, "When I am gone, the teachings will be the guru".

Even if someone has been with the guru for years, it doesn't matter unless he practices his teachings.

Meditation is important. Rajarsi was a successful businessman. Once he met Master, he never forgot to make time for meditation.

Master reminded us, "The most destructive shaft of Maya's delusion is refusing to meditate."

Daya Mata was amazed at how Rajarsi balanced his business schedule with meditation.

Master said, "You have to arrange your schedule so that you have a period of meditation each day".

When Rajarsi went into his office to meditate, he would leave a note on his secretary's desk. "I am in conference. Please do not disturb."

His staff just accepted that every day until 10:00 a.m., you did not disturb him. This was the foundation of his liberating progress.

The path requires engaging in the right activity, God activity. This includes the following points:

1. Right study: We have a wide array of writings by our guru. The right study is important, We should take at least a little time every day for the study of the teachings.

Brother Bhaktananda said, "We must be in tune with God. Introspect. Have you been in tune? Read the Lessons. "

He said, "One devotee came to me and said, 'I don't feel the presence of God', and I asked him, 'Are you practicing kriya'?"

"He said that he was.

"I asked him, 'Are you reading the lessons?'"

"He said that he was not. I didn't see him for about a month. Then, I saw a changed man. He told me, 'I have the presence again.' "

And now we have the New Lessons! There is something about reading the lessons that opens us up to God.

Some devotees have said, I have the old lessons. I want to keep with those. You must know that the entire monastic community was raised on those lessons. But you were given the New Lessons to capture your heart.

Look at the recent SRF Magazine on the New Lessons. Starting on page 58, read a few of the testimonies from devotees about the new lessons. It's okay to just peek at the testimonies.

You can also go to the Santa Anita room and inquire about enrolling in the New Lessons. \*\*\*\*\*

2. Service to God: To expand our consciousness beyond ego service is important. In serving the guru, we serve God Himself.

A helpful practice in choosing what to do is to choose the highest thought. What would Master do? What would Daya Mata do? What would please God and guru?

3. Devotion: Devotion is when your whole heart is dedicated and loyal. When we give the guru our loyalty, when we give our hearts, he doesn't keep it for himself. He gives it to God. His sole purpose is to bring us to God.

5. Right activity: Think of God throughout the day. Think of God during the most menial and the highest duties. By making that commitment, we strengthen our attunement.

6. Right behavior: Sri Yukteswar told us, Learn to behave!"

Guruji said, "That is the most difficult thing to do".

He tells us, "When I first met my guru, he said, 'Allow me to discipline you'. It did not make a blind man of me. By attuning my will with his, it gave me divine wisdom".

You may have heard something on a recording many times, and suddenly you think, "Oh! That's what Guruji wants me to do!"

In Chapter 16 of God Talks with Arjuna. We are given the 26 qualities of a divine person. These are helpful to use for introspection. Take just one quality at a time and think about how to practice it with others.

The more we strengthen each of these characteristics, the more we're in tune with the guru. God doesn't mind our mistakes.

Some of these qualities include the absence of greed, lack of restlessness, forgiveness, freedom from hate. \*\*\*\*\*

In living these qualities, we will be doing our part to uplift the world and those in the world who can't help but note. Perhaps our living these qualities will awaken in them the desire to improve themselves. We work to please God and guru, not for ego's sake.

On one occasion, Master singled out a few qualities: If you want to be attuned with Master, be humble, strong in perseverance, love him, and have total faith in him. With the power of faith, march on.

Attunement pre-supposes a degree of humility. You must be able to acknowledge, "Thou art the doer, not I".

First, have sufficient understanding to acknowledge that there is a power higher than our own intelligence. We have recognized our guru as a way to transform human consciousness to divine consciousness.

Humility recognizes all the special gifts come from God. Realize that Thou art the doer and rely more and more on that source every moment by taking it and depending upon it.

If you want to be in tune with the Omnipotent Infinite, be stronger in perseverance.

Master had this to say about perseverance: "It is important that we persevere daily. Each time we meditate, if we are mentally restless, ignore that restlessness. If you are feeling sleepy, shake it off. Persevere in absorbing the good qualities no matter how many times you fail. Have confidence if you want to be in tune. Have Infinite Consciousness".

There was a man who lived in a little town in New England. For ten years he had considered himself an atheist. As he read "The Autobiography", he felt intuitively this trust in Paramahansa Yogananda. He was speaking the truth.

He decided, "He knew God and could take me to God".

We find that we can go to him with all of our pain and sorrow. If you want to be in tune, love him. There is no more important duty than to love the guru.

Just go on yearning to love him more. Use the power of affirmation. God is love. We only have to awaken to the power in us.

Daya Ma repeatedly said, "I love you, Lord." She said that repeating this just ten minutes a day will transform our lives.

This is our experience at the ashram. We have such joy in finding a treat at our door: a flower, a fruit, sometimes a note. Sometimes it's anonymous through which a sister shared Guruji's love.

Often we never know how much sharing Guruji's love means.

If you want to be in tune with God and guru, faith is essential. Faith means the total, truest intuitive conviction, knowing that his help is ever ready to flow into our lives, no matter how dark it seems. As our conviction grows, we can experience faith in more difficult conditions.

In the eleventh chapter of Autobiography of a Yogi, "Two Penniless Boys in Brindaban", Brother Ananta challenged Mukunda to test his faith. He sent Mukunda and his friend to Brindaban, but with the provision that they couldn't take any money with them, couldn't ask for food or money, and couldn't tell anyone about their predicament. When they returned to Ananta's home, Jitendra repeatedly expressed his concerns.

We have read about the miraculous ways in which the boys were cared for with sumptuous meals and lavish blessings.

Most of us are closer to the Jitendra end of the spectrum, but we have each grown in faith in less drastic tests.

If we can rise above those emotions, fear, and distrust, we can realize how much Guruji helps us, and we rise in faith.

Guruji said, "Depend on God and he will look after you. Your very life depends on God. If you want to be in tune; March on! March on! We go forward in determination ready to overcome all obstacles; ready to overcome our little selves."

I experienced the power of marching in high school with our marching band. As we marched, we stopped at three cemeteries along the way. On Memorial Day, we owned Main Street and could bravely march forward fearlessly.

Master said, "I know those who are marching on. Never be discouraged by this move, this show of life. No matter where you go, you are walking in the footsteps that will lead you back to God".

Guruji said, "As you march along this path, every lesson is precious. Everything else is temporary. Only the association with God is permanent. To seek Him and to find Him is your most important duty".

So next time, out of attunement, turn to Guruji. Use one of the 26 qualities and with the power of faith, march on! Jai Guru!

#### *Footnotes*

*\*Yogananda Site: "Talk to Me: Prove Me": Sr. Ambalika entered the SRF ashram in 1950. She passed away in 1996 at the age of 100. "The one time I saw Master alone in the ashram was shortly before his passing. I was in my room and a strong thought came into my mind telling me to go to the library. I knew it was from Master and thought that perhaps there was a book he wanted me to read. So I entered our small library (now used as the organ room adjacent to the chapel). I started looking at the book titles to see which one I should read, and I was working my way down from the top shelf, looking at every book. Suddenly I heard footsteps coming, and then approaching the open library door. I knew it was Master, but I didn't turn around. I kept looking at the books, running my finger over each title. Then I heard his voice saying, "Thank you." At that, I had to turn around. I went over to the door where he was standing, and he touched me on the forehead, blessing me. "I am very pleased with you," he said. So that was my time alone with Master here". Sr. Ambalika*

<https://yoganandasite.wordpress.com/2016/06/03/talk-to-me-prove-me-sister-ambalika-direct-disciple-of-paramahansaji/>

*\*\*\* "Awaken" Part II "The true meaning or definition of religion can be only one: That system of behavior and application of truth by which man can remove his threefold suffering—of body, mind, and soul—by the roots, so there is no possibility of recurrence. This is what religion is—or what it is really meant to be." Daya Mata\*\**

*\*\*\*Autobiography of a Yogi, Chapter 20, "We Do Not Visit Kashmir".*

*\*\*\*\* " God! God! God!  
From the depths of slumber,  
As I ascend the spiral stairways of wakefulness,  
I will whisper:  
God! God! God!  
Thou art the food, and when I break my fast  
Of nightly separation from Thee,  
I will taste Thee, and mentally say,  
God! God! God!  
No matter where I go, the spotlight of my mind  
Will ever keep turning on Thee;  
And in the battle din of activity, my silent war-cry will be:  
God! God! God!  
When boisterous storms of trials shriek,  
And when worries howl at me,  
I will drown their noises by loudly chanting  
God! God! God!  
When my mind weaves dreams  
With threads of memories,  
On that magic cloth will I emboss:  
God! God! God!  
Every night, in time of deepest sleep,  
My peace dreams and calls, Joy! Joy! Joy!  
And my joy comes singing evermore:  
God! God! God!  
In waking, eating, working, dreaming, sleeping,  
Serving, meditating, chanting, divinely loving,  
My soul will constantly hum, unheard by any:  
God! God! God!*

*Paramhansa Yogananda, Whispers from Eternity, 1929 First Edition published by Yogoda and Sat-Sanga*

*Master said that this poem was given to him by St. Francis*

\*\*\*\*\* To enroll now, visit: <https://yogananda.org/lessons>

\*\*\*\*\* <https://yoganandasite.wordpress.com/2017/10/06/the-26-qualities-that-make-man-godlike-bhagavad-gita-sister-priya/>

**Self-Realization Fellowship  
Convocation Notes  
August 10, 2019. 7:30 pm  
Satsanga with Brother Chidananda  
President SRF/YSS**

What a glorious sight! Beautiful gathering of these dear divine souls of God and guru! Please be seated.

My dear divine friends! Those whom I can see and those whom I know are watching via the video from elsewhere in the hotel, as well as all around the world; I can't tell you what a thrill it is to come together like this as a gathering of souls, souls whose inner flame has been lit with the love of God by our divine Gurudeva, Paramahansa Yogananda. So it's such a joy that we have this time this evening to spend in divine fellowship.

**Meditation**

To begin, let's go where we can truly meet, yes, as souls. Close your eyes. We begin tonight by going within and entering into that sacred space of divine communion where we not only meet as souls, but most importantly, where our souls touch the Divine Presence.

Throughout this week, you have been meditating, you have been learning the art and science of divine communion. With that momentum that you have built up, let us quickly and directly dive into that presence.

Feel at the back of your head, at the base of the skull, feel that divine center, in the medulla oblongata. Let your attention let your awareness and feeling rest there momentarily. That, as we know from our study and practice of meditation, is the mouth of God.

From that point, that great divine life, that cosmic sacred vibration of Om, or holy ghost, flows into our body.

Feel that vibration. Feel that life and infinite energy that is flowing from the infinite spirit into your body.

And as it flows into the brain two powerful currents of that energy flow into our two eyes. It's easy to feel, isn't it; after we've been meditating.

Feel that divine Om flowing through the brain into the two eyes, and then most importantly direct that current from the two eyes into the single eye of divine perception: the point between the eyebrows. That current that flows into those eyes by an act of will; by an act of devotion, by an act of spontaneous yearning to see God, to feel God, to know God: Direct that current into the point between the eyebrows- the Christ Consciousness Center, the center of kutastha chatanya, divine consciousness.

Feel those currents flowing to that center. And we mustn't think of it just as a center, as a point there in the forehead. Because it is so much more than that. This is a divine portal, a divine temple where that infinite spirit is manifesting in reality, in those three universal expressions, three universal manifestations.

In that white starry light at the center of that point is the absolute spirit transcendental, beyond all motion, beyond all vibration, eternal, unmoving: The life of our life; the being of our being.

Also in that sacred space, then there is the manifestation of spirit: As the Christ, the kutastha consciousness, the infinite love that pervades all the universe, that pervades all creation; And then surrounding that blue light of Christ Consciousness, the Om, the holy vibration.

Feel those currents flowing through those two eyes into that sacred temple of Om, Tat, Sat: That great Om vibration in that light of gold that surrounds the spiritual eye. That Om becomes very personal in the guru-disciple relationship.

Paramahansaji, our Gurudeva said that the guru is always present in the Christ Center of the disciple. Now feel that personal presence of our guru and param- gurus. They're there. They're there: reaching down, stooping down, as Guruji, said from spirit, from heaven, to lift us up.

Now become conscious of their help, of their presence. Jesus Christ, Bhagavan Sri Krishna, Mahavatar Babaji, Lahiri Mahasaya, Swami Sri Yukteswar, and our guru Paramahansa Yogananda. (Pause) Feel their presence, and gratefully accept their outstretched hand to lift you up into that divine and sacred presence of God.

Ommmmmm. Peace.....Amen

I wish all of you could have a turn to be up here, not only because then you could give the talk, not that. It's because you would then see such an incredible sight of the light and the love, the living presence of God, of our guru, of God, who he represents, shining from so many faces: Shining from this sea of faces.



You know after Guruji settled into Mt. Washington, he used to pray to Divine Mother.

He would say to Divine Mother, "Don't make me a teacher. All I want is to drink of your name in the company of your devotees. All I want is to drink of your love, to drink of your joy in the company of your devotees, in the company of true devotees".

That is our legacy.

And that as we come to the end of this week of Convocation this is what I want you all to crystalize In your hearts, in your minds. I haven't come here to give another class, another talk, because you've heard it all and then some. But I want just to, as I said, to just crystallize the experience that you've had here, that you can take with you, to remember and to feel, and to hold onto it in the weeks and the months ahead.

Now, first of all, let me just take a moment to say thank you and express my gratitude for all of you who have, you've sent such beautiful sweet little notes, little remembrances. Let me just take this opportunity to thank you. I read each one, and they touch me. Because my only wish, my only desire is to please my guru and then to do whatever I can to serve all of you. So it touches me when there's that reciprocity, when there's that feeling of our connection on that level, on that spiritual level, as brothers and sisters on this spiritual path.

It's very sweet. So thank you. And let me also take the time now, let's all of us, to express gratitude, to express our thanks to literally hundreds of devotees, of monks and nuns who have put on this Convocation. (Extended applause)

You know It's far more than these monastics, these monks and nuns in the orange robes who come on up here on the stage to talk to you. That's the tip of the iceberg. And to make that possible there's an incredible infrastructure and divine army, really, of those who have served all of you this week, and for many weeks, many months beforehand; planning, figuring out all of the logistics, and becoming ready; and then, during this week, getting ready to welcome you to Guruji's home.

And to all of them, thank you, thank you! Thank you! And let me especially say, because this year we've extended that experience, we've extended that week of Convocation just so far beyond just the locale here. I've been getting e-mails; I've been getting messages from all of them, from all over the world.

And this one says, "Namaste and greetings from Perth, Australia".

Hello Perth! I know you're there.

And they said, "We're writing to thank you sO0000000 much for having the live stream events available around the world. Our Perth meditation group celebrates 60 years this year.

Brother : (All right?) (Applause) So, Perth, from your world-wide family of brothers and sisters, congratulations on your 60th anniversary.

"Our Perth Meditation Group watched the live stream from our chapel, and it was amazing. We got phone calls and messages from fellow devotees the next day, and we were overwhelmed with love, and joy and inspiration. Although we are over 9,000 miles away, we felt we were with all the devotees, experiencing Convocation. Please thank all of the monastics and lay members for making this available to the devotees of God and guru".

And from equally far, even a little farther away from Hyderabad, in southern India, our YSS Center there: "It was such a delight to see the Convocation live, online. We had the screening of the inaugural talk and also the kirtan meditation at our center in Hyderabad. The devotees were surcharged with devotion during the kirtan."

Brother: Yeah, we know what that was like. We'll talk about those in a moment, but those were really divine, all of those kirtans; all of those meditations.

And so they go on, "Although it was late in the night and in the middle of the week, and heavy rains, the chapel was filled with devotees who joined in. It was an experience of a lifetime. It was just as if we were transported to a divine realm, another realm. So we look forward so much to the talk on Saturday morning, Friday night here for us, our time, here in Hyderabad. We'll be coming together, our time, sharing divine vibrations that come from the opposite side of the world".

Can you imagine? Just take a minute and think of what this represents. All of us here at the Convocation, that are here physically in the hotel; we're been bathed here in that vibration. We've been charged with the joy and the happiness and the spiritual fellowship throughout this week. And to think of that flowing and being available to all of those devotees in the farthest distance possible away from Los Angeles.

And I know, I know this is what our guru had in mind when he started the term "World Convocation". It just took a few decades to get there.

The thing about Guruji- he lived in the eternal now. There, past, present, and future were like a movie on the screen his consciousness.

And when he perceived something, then he would say, "This is what we are doing", and sometimes he would say, "This is what we have done".

And yet, according to our limited consciousness. that's divided up into past, present, and future, what he was seeing in that now, we won't, maybe don't experience for 50, 60, maybe 75 years later.

But now, you're beginning to see, now we're beginning to see that unfolding of that divine mission to which he gave his life. And this is certainly so wonderful, this idea of the Convocation reaching around the world.

You know one time he gave this analogy. He said, "One time in Mysore, I visited a sandalwood factory. And each piece of the sandalwood, each shaving of the sandalwood, contributes to this fragrance that just permeates the entire factory, the entire precinct. And anyone who comes anywhere near that they enjoy the fragrance".

And then he said so sweetly, "Similarly, when I go to our SRF temples, there are so many good souls, so earnestly, so devotedly communing with God, that I feel that spiritual vibration emanating from their collective goodness".

And that's all of you.

And he put it into perspective for us, he said, "The actions of each individual, that is in each individual experience that each one has in that environment, in that effort of communing with God, those actions leave electromagnetic etchings in the brain that influence interactions, that influence one's character, that influence one's whole life. And they leave the vibrational traces in the ether which register in and influence the minds of others, the consciousness of others".

So what you have created, hand in hand with our guru, this week: his grace is there, and your willingness, your receptivity that has pulled that out of the ether, and brought it out, into this gathering, and shared it, emanating out, really as a blessing to the whole world.

This is a cause of celebration! You know, thinking about those devotees that are watching so far away: Well, I wanted to see what that was like too. So I subscribed. I put in my password. And there was that beautiful divine kirtan coming through on Wednesday morning.

I wanted to see what that experience was like, and it was so powerful! Just like these devotees said, it's transforming!

You know, those chants of Guruji. We can never underestimate their power. Let me just say a little bit about that.

We have the techniques- the basic techniques of meditation the energization exercises, the Hong Sau technique, the Om technique, and, of course, kriya. And we have the teachings that we study. We have the gatherings and the fellowship, that satsanga that we enjoy with each other. Now we have those New Lessons of practicing these teachings and ultimately to give us a glimpse of what the teachings will deliver.

But the chants. ..The chants are an absolutely vital, an absolutely wonderful element of what our guru has given us. It comes to express what each of us embodies, what each of us is yearning for.

You know when I think back to that kirtan ...and if you were there, and even if you weren't there, you can subscribe: Or watch it again. Just those thousands of voices chanting in unison, "My Lord, I want to see only you, you, you....only you, My Lord, I want to see only you, you,....only you. My hearts aflame, my souls afire. Just for you. Just for you. Just for you ".

How our guru yearns for that heart awakening in each one of us. At least once a day in our meditations or whenever we can do it, whenever we can manage to put ourselves into that yearning, into that crying, into that state whereas he said, "What does anything matter as long as I can find God. It rips aside the veils of Maya: That yearning of the heart".

And we can tap into that. We can create it in ourselves. It may be foreign in the beginning. I know it was for me. I was not naturally a devotionally inclined person. Maybe some of you are the same when you come on the path. But you take the fire; you take the divine fire of those chants, and you plant them in the consciousness, and you envision them, and you repeat them. And you feel them. It rips aside the veil of Maya.

You say, " Lord, I want to see only you, you, you".

You see, for what is it without that? Without that, this world is a mess, isn't it? You know If we don't see, if we don't feel that divine vibration, that divine presence that underlies all things, that underlies all human beings, that underlies everything in this world; it's just delusion. It's just delusion.

We go through life like Shakespeare's Hamlet saying, " O, How weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable seem to me all the uses of this world!"

And yet, when we come on that path, when we allow Guruji to take that spark, to take that spark of yearning, that spark of divine consciousness and ignite our own hearts , then he said, in his words ( a little less Shakespearean, but a little more to the point) and he said, "With God, life is a nest of fun. Without God, life is anything but fun".

Same thought. Just one in the King James' English and one in our guru's beautiful words.

As I've said, you all have heard such a wealth, a treasury of Guruji's teachings throughout the week.

So I was thinking, before I came down, "Guruji, What do you want me to convey, what do you want me to convey to these devotees"?

And I used a wonderful auxiliary technique. I'm sure you all can find it. You ask for guidance from Guruji and then you take one of his books and just open it. So I did that.

I said Guruji, "Please tell me, what do you want me to emphasize? What do you want me to share with the devotees at Convocation? And I have The Autobiography right next to my meditation seat, and I just opened it up, and do you know what page it opened to?

The beginning of this chapter, "Babaji the Yogi Christ of Modern India." And you know, this is the thing about him talking to us when we know that guruji is working through our intuition because right away, right away, I knew what the message was.

Because in this chapter are these words and this is, I know what he wants you to appreciate, what he wants you to be reminded of. You've read this maybe dozens of times, maybe hundreds of times, but in today's world, with the particular challenges the particular difficulties and climate that we are going through now, Listen to this message!

Guruji says this: "Babaji is ever in communion with Christ. Together they send out vibrations of redemption and have planned the spiritual technique of salvation for this age."

Imagine, imagine those divine beings, as he said, one in form and one not in form.

"The work of these fully illumined masters is to inspire the nations is to forsake wars, race hatreds, religious sectarianism, and the boomerang evils of materialism."

Could there be something that's more timely? That something that we could put into words that's more an expression of what our world, what each one of us, yearns for, is looking for: to forsake wars, race hatreds, religious sectarianism, and the boomerang evils of materialism."

Then he goes on; "Babaji is well aware of the trend of modern times and realizes the importance of Self Realization equally in the west and the east; especially of the influence and complexities of western civilization; and realizes the necessity of spreading the self-liberations of yoga equally in the west and in the east. "

What that says to me is that over these past months and weeks, and even in recent days, even in going back further, the world tends to weigh on us. Doesn't it? There's a sense of even fear and concern of where's it all going. It seems that things are getting more and more chaotic; more and more unspiritual, and dangerous, and tension producing, and fear-producing.

And I tell you there's no greater comfort, there's no greater antidote for this than to just stop, just stop and remind ourselves that these two Divine beings are watching over the destiny of humanity. They're watching over the destiny of our planet.

And Guruji goes on about Babaji.

He says, " Babaji's mission in India has been to assist prophets in carrying out their special dispensations. He thus qualifies for the scriptural classification of a Mahavatar, a great avatar.

The chief 19th-century disciple, as we know, was Lahiri Mahasaya, revivalist of the lost art of kriya yoga.

And he didn't say this, but we can fill in the next sentence, yes, the chief 20th-century disciple was Paramahansa Yogananda. Behind these works, behind these teachings is the living presence of Christ and Babaji, who together, have planned this work have planned this special dispensation and how it will support revolutionize and energize and spiritualize the lives of each one of us. Think of that day, 100 years ago next year.

We have a big year next year. The Centennial of Self Realization Fellowship -1920 when our guru had just arrived in Boston. We're looking forward to a very special year. I think some of you recently got some information about that in our newsletter. But 100 years ago!

Think about that event! Because these are not just stories in a book, they're not just words on paper. These are things that are a source of spiritual vibration, a source of spiritual life for each one of us.

When Guruji was there in his was home on Garpur Road, he heard a knock on the door and opened it, and there was Babaji. Imagine! As Sri Yukteswarji said, the spiritual state of Babaji is beyond human comprehension. And there he was standing at the door.

And Guruji said, "This was my most sacred of my human experiences".

And Babaji, in that meeting, set this work of Self Realization Fellowship/Yogoda Satsanga Society, in motion when he said, "Kriya Yoga, the scientific technique of self-realization, will ultimately spread in all lands and aid in harmonizing the nations through man's personal, transcendental perception of the Infinite Father".

And then Master said, "With a gaze of majestic power the Master electrified me with a glimpse of his cosmic consciousness".

He said, "If suddenly there should arise a sunburst of a thousand suns flooding earth with beams undreamed of, then might that holy one's majesty and radiance be dreamed of. That light, that glory, that Inconceivable spiritual consciousness."

Again, it's so to our benefit; it's so to our interest, to our salvation to make that conscious connection with that spiritual power that came for each one of us.

You know, those words of Babaji have a very, very important, a very ,very vital significance. Again, he was talking about the great need to transcend the causes of violence, the causes of war, the causes of hatred and division in the in this world today; And in those words, he made the point that the solutions are not political solutions. They're spiritual solutions.

That's why, he said, the science of Kriya, the science of God-realization, will be what unites humanity, which raises the consciousness of humanity, which raises the thoughts of humanity away from the senses; away from materialism; the thought of this petty little ego encased in a mortal, vulnerable body that has to keep looking out for its rights and privileges. And instead, we partake of that soul consciousness; that kinship that we all share as children of God.

That's what our world is going through. That's what our world is struggling to awaken into.

You know Guruji foresaw many, many years ago the pattern of what our world, what our civilization would go through. Many of you know this. Many of you have read this and knew that he told us, he forewarned us that there would be a bumpy road; there would be crises. There would be difficulties for humanity to navigate as we make our way climbing into that higher age, into that more enlightened age of civilization.

And he talked about that crisis that the world would go through as it divests itself of wrong and constricting mindsets, and superstitions and religious dogmatism, and awakens into a higher age.

You know, I remember in the 1980s and 1990s, and many of you will remember our beloved Sri Daya Mata, who would come at the end of Convocation and bestow her blessings and her words of encouragement and solace? Who was here for one of those? Look at that! (Scans audience)

Do you remember that? When she would walk into the room? I remember that when she would walk into the room, and right away you would feel everyone's hearts just opening up. And then she would talk.

And one time about this subject, she said something (that I wanted to bring back to your minds) to share with us. She said that over the past few decades when the world gets into a particularly troublesome situation, either the economy perhaps goes into a recession or depression, or the outbreak of some armed conflict, or some other thing that causes us to be upset and fearful; and she said, "People would ask me, 'Is this the world crisis that Guruji predicted, that he foresaw?'"

And do you know what she said?

She said, "What would you do if it was?" (Laughter)

And then she said, "And then do just that".

What would you do if it were? Then just do that.

Because what he counseled, and what he saw for this era of awakening civilization, and that he embodied in the SRF teachings, in the SRF Lessons, these are exactly, these are exactly what we

have to cling to, what we have to embrace, what we have to, again and again, renew our commitment to, renew our alignment with, and then we have nothing but to worry about. Then that raft of divine teaching, that raft of divine consciousness, and more than that, that raft of personal divine presence of the gurus will see us safely through whatever comes.

He says, "I have already given you the counsel that you need to get through the world crisis. It's the same counsel that I have already given: the teachings of God-communion and of balanced spiritual living, the pattern of life that humanity at large must adopt as we evolve into the higher age".

I want to just pause and reflect here on the beautiful divine timing and the arrival on the scenes of these beautiful SRF Lessons. I know that many of you are feeling their power. I know that many of you are feeling, from your personal comments, from the notes and the letters that come to me, are feeling nothing short of a rejuvenation of your spiritual efforts; And most important that personal connection, that personal lifeline between yourselves and God and guru.

Now Let me say one thing about this too. You know, these Lessons are very powerful; those lessons with the volume, the sheer volume of material, you know sometimes, and they come every two weeks.

And then you think does Master really want me to become a master of Lesson 4 before I start Lesson 5? (Exhales emphatically! )

No. He doesn't. Just relax. You know and remember. ( Laughter) You don't have to, we don't have to read and absorb every word, every principle form, every concept, and every technique and every principle in the two weeks before the next lesson comes.

But you know, from these messages, from these letters that all of you have sent in, I know you're getting the most important point, and that is: It's not about the information.

Yes, it's about learning to meditate and learning the techniques and learning to do them in the most correct way, in a way that will bring you most quickly in progress with those techniques and those principles.

But remember, beyond the information as our revered past presidents Daya Mata and Mrinalini Mata wrote in that beautiful message that comes with Lesson 1, "It's about the connection, not with the words, but with Him who's behind those words".

And the Ma's have said to us, "Feel that you are sitting at the feet of the guru, Paramahansa Yogananda, sharing his divine insights into the realm of spirit. When you study, and each time you meditate, make that presence real to you. And seek his help and tune in with the transforming power of his love and wisdom. As he said, 'After I'm gone, the teachings will be



the guru'. Through your study, through your receptivity, through your assimilation of the teachings, you'll be in tune with me and the great gurus who sent me'. "

And the Ma's went on, and said, "Many teachers can impart temporary inspiration, but only an advanced Master can transmit the vibratory power of God that changes the brain, that changes the inner being of the receptive disciple. A true guru's words are living. They are Instrumental in conveying that unseen power of the guru's blessings to the disciple attuned with them".

That's what we're studying. That's the value of taking a few minutes each day and bathing the .consciousness, attuning the consciousness with concentration, with gratitude, to that vibratory power of the guru's teachings.

So this past year has been a wonderful one for so many of you who have been receiving and studying those lessons and it gives me a huge amount of joy to look forward to next year when we will begin releasing them in other languages besides English. (Extended applause)

We hope very much in the centennial year of 2020 that those lessons will be published in German, Italian, Portuguese, and Spanish.

I hear, "Yeah yeah! " What language was that? A universal language right?

Then in other languages that are beginning, and as they become ready, you can look forward to receiving those in succeeding years in Thai, Dutch, Russian, Polish, Bulgarian, and Japanese. That's the SRF lessons.

YSS, never one to be left far behind, is hard at work doing translations of the Lessons in Hindi, Bengali, Tamil, and Talugu. So think about that next year, or two years from now just feel that joy that we've felt this year by extending the Convocation around the year. When we share that concentrated spiritual power, in all of these different languages around the world, believes me we are seeing the beginning of a different world.

So to circle back to what we were talking about a few minutes ago. It's natural. It's natural to feel a certain period of anxiety; periods of consternation or fear.

You know, you just open a newspaper on one of the news websites, not too much I hope. It's natural. But we have to keep in touch. We have to be aware of the world we live in. It's natural sometimes to feel that trepidation. Every time you do, every time you do, just every now and then remind yourself, that not only are there advanced divine beings watching over the destiny of this world but realize that also each of you has a transcendental divine being, our sat guru, Paramahansa Yogananda, personally looking after you and guiding you and protecting you if you take advantage of the opportunity that you've been given.

Do you feel that? Are you happy about that? (Laughs) (Extended applause).

We're in good hands!

Now, those of you who began the New Lessons series when they were first released on February 1: You've been getting them every two weeks. And now, oh, I should have checked. Where are you now? You're on Lesson 13? Have you gotten 14 yet? 14? 12? 13. Okay. So then you'll, over the next few months, you'll get to the end of that series of 18, and then, after that: Ah! It's going to be tremendous when you get those lessons on Kriya Yoga. (Applause) And that will take us to the end of the year.

Now I want to give you a preview because this is again tying in the message that I started with, that I know our guru wants you to walk away from this Convocation with. And that is this renewed sense, not just a new understanding or an intellectual understanding of this, but a visceral conviction of the heart and soul to who and what you are connected with. So, listen to what Guruji says about this. This is in one of the final lessons of the kriya series.

Guruji says, "Out of the millions of people in the world, through your good karma from the past you have, and present good determination and discrimination of your free choice, you have chosen to follow the path of Self Realization".

Listen carefully, because as always, he packs a lot into these words.

He goes on and says, "The scriptures of India say that when devotees are deeply in earnest they are led to their appointed guru and given the opportunity for their spiritual progress".

Jesus was referring to this law when he said, "No one can come to Me unless the Father which sent Me draws that soul, draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day."

And so, Guruji says, "And so I declare that you have been led to SRF and YSS. You have been led and have been able to come unto this path and its gurus because the heavenly spirit who chooses gurus for his devotees has listened to the subconscious prayer of your willing heart".

Isn't that beautiful?

"The heavenly spirit who chooses gurus for his devotees has listened to the subconscious prayer of your willing heart: The prayer that you may find truth not dogma: That you may find wisdom and not words: That you may find satisfaction not in theoretical knowledge but in practical wisdom and realization".

Now, he sums it up, " Since you were nominated by Divine Grace and elected by your own free will to pursue this path, it is vitally important to continue with your studies and find what lies ahead for you. You have been privileged to receive the highest spiritual, religious and guru given meaning enshrined in the immortal lines of the lessons as I have received them from the Infinite".

"Always remember, dear ones, that you have been traveling by the shortest route that leads to God. The universal scientific path that leads yoga and self-realization teachings but also remember that you must keep traveling on and on by putting into practice throughout your life; the principles and techniques from the vast immeasurable ocean of eternal truth that you have read and at least theoretically understood in the relatively short time allotted from the relatively short routine of your life".

You know, there's no secrets from the guru. And yet that magnanimity of heart! He understands. We may only have a few minutes. Even to carve that out of our lives, that guru, he understands we may only have a little time.

Listen to what he is saying it will do for our lives, even if we only carve out time for a little bit of study, a little bit of meditation. And he talks about the need for making an effort to carve that time out.

He says, "The sanctity of American life and life everywhere is being invaded by telephone calls, radio, television, movies, aimless visiting and useless chats, social gatherings, and fruitless engagements, destroying your inner peace and making it nearly impossible for you to find true happiness and live self-realization in your life. Social expectations of family and friends who do not understand your spiritual aspirations often drain away the time that could be spent in meditation. (Yes?) Almost everybody wants you for what they can get out of you. Few consider in what lies your real welfare and happiness".

But this is so beautiful!

He says, " But if you become an uplifting influence on your family and friends, through the good behavior and spiritual qualities you develop by applying these teachings, then they will be inspired to silently or vocally approve of your following this path and taking time to silently commune with God".

To bring that about he said, "Therefore, I have another vitally important suggestion for your life that you may really feel you are progressing in God-communion. Introspect at the end of every day. Write out how and analyze how you can improve. Fearlessly face your character flaws and bad habits. Write out the definite steps by which you are going to banish these traits and replace them with divine qualities and behavior. Through your exemplary, spiritual life formed by self-realization teachings and their practice, you will help to uplift your fellow sufferers in your family, your community, and the world.

What a prescription! You know our guru had such human understanding. On the one side, he brought the highest absolute truths, the most powerful scientific techniques. He set the bar, he set the standard high because that's what he wants each of us to achieve. That's what he knows each of us can achieve.

At the same time, nobody was more compassionately understanding of the difficulties of the challenges that we face, of the difficulties, the challenges when we commit ourselves to such a lofty and lifetime goal. He understands. He understands. You have to keep reminding yourself of that.

And there's so much that he gave us. So much that he wanted this organization to do for all of you. Isn't it?

You know again going back to the state of the world today, sometimes we could get the feeling of, "Why is it so hard for me to meditate? I must not be a good meditator. I must not be a good devotee".

But, you know that is a complete misperception. You know, in the world today, each one of us who is striving to meditate is going against this strong and powerful diversionary current. Swimming upstream. So don't blame yourself! Don't blame yourself!

Even back in years, decades ago, Gyanamata talked about this to some devotees and she said, "I saw some letters that devotees wrote to Gurujī. (this was in the years of WW II) and she said, "They were having so much trouble meditating".

And he said, " Yes, many people are experiencing that, and it's because of the vibration that we're contending with, the vibration that we are striving to overcome, striving to penetrate through, striving to rise above by practicing these teachings.

Each one of you is heroic. Each one of you who commissioned that, never blame yourselves for the struggles or the perceived lack of progress. Don't do it. Because you, as I said each one of you, and I say with the eyes of faith even though I can't see with my physical eyes, those of you who are watching from behind this camera, and there are centers and groups and individuals watching from around the world. You are becoming true disciples of Self Realization, of Paramahansa Yogananda. Just keep on!

Now you know when we meditate, even this week, how much we've experienced the help of meditating with others. So I want to share with you a glimpse of something else that Gurujī is doing for his disciples around the world. We're going to need the video screen in a few minutes.

Because soon now, in the coming weeks or months, it's going to give us great joy to inaugurate the very first online SRF online meditation center. (Applause)

You know there are so many benefits, tangible and intangible that come from participating in centers physically at one of our temples or meditation groups. But there are so many devotees from around the world who are meditating but not only is it too far to go to a center or meditation group, for some of them, in their lifetimes, may never even meet another SRF devotee. Imagine! Imagine! So for all of them, here's what we're going to do.

(Viewing of video prototype for online SRF meditation in-home).

All right. Can you show the first picture here? This is just a prototype. I really just wanted to do this because you are all here together at this Convocation, but it gives you an idea- an online meditation center.

And just like any of our physical meditation centers this will be guided meditation and administered by the monks in our Member Services at Mother Center but it will be run and the services and meditation services will be, just like in our physical centers and meditation circles by our wonderful lay members around the world.

So you'll see, you go in there and then it says, this is what Guruji says: (Go to the next picture.) "Group meditation is a castle that protects the new spiritual aspirant as well as the veteran meditators. Meditating together increases the degree of self-realization and magnetism of each member of the group by the law of invisible vibratory magnetism".

So the way this is going to work is that any devotee around the world who wants to get into that invisible vibratory magnetism and support of their individual efforts can come to this online meditation center. We're going to use video conferencing software. This will be explained. I'm not going to get into all of the technical details, but there's freely available video conferencing software. We already use it in SRF in our conferences. I talk fairly often with our monks in YSS and our other ashrams around the world, so each devotee who wants to participate will use this video conferencing software and go at the designated time to one of our meditation services.

Now, there's two parts to this. There's going to be meditation services, (Now, go to the next picture); online group meditation, you see that picture, those, all those little individual squares, those are all the video conferencing windows of devotees. This is just our test group that we've been working with for several months now all over the United States, in those little windows (on the screen). So we'll have those meditations and then we're also going to have online study groups. (Extended Applause)

Again, this goes back to what we were saying about the lessons. I know all of you feel, all of you have been touched and set on fire with the potential of the spiritual transformation that can flow into your life from these lessons and from the other books and writings of our guru.

And, for some time now, in some of our temples and some of our centers, devotees get together. And this is how it works. They'll come together in a group and let's say the study at that point, let's just say the lessons, because we're going to start that. I hope as soon as we're able to get the technology set up.

So, everybody will come with their Lesson 1, and first one person will read a paragraph. And everybody else will follow along, listening. And then there just will be a period of silence, of meditation for a few minutes to absorb that. Then the next person in the group will take a turn

and read the next paragraph. And then the next person and the next person. You know this thing as I said has been going on in some of the centers. I know Boston has been doing this for quite some years, and Encinitas Temple, some of our other temples do this on different nights of the week.

And I remember it was such a joy: They would write several times sometimes to our beloved Mrinalini Ma and say, "We're going through Gita; we're going through "The Second Coming."

And she was so thrilled. Because she gave her life, to the teachings, to making these teachings, not just the teachings, but to be making this living link, through the consciousness of the guru, through the teachings- to be making these teachings available to devotees all over the world. And how thrilled she was when Gururji's disciples would come together and study in that way. One of the long-time devotees who had been participating in that wrote to me recently and said, " Here's how we do it. One person reads. Then we have a silence. Then the next person reads a little bit, and then we have silence. And I tell you at the end of the hour , Brother, we were all drunk. We were intoxicated!"

That's what we want to feel. (Applause)

So, we have a couple of little videos here. I want to again let you have a glimpse of, this is going to be maybe next month or sometime soon.

Can I be like Gururji? It won't be 50 years. I promise you that. I'm not going to hold to that strict interpretation of the eternal now, but you will get them soon. I'm going to tell you about that in a minute because it gets even more inspiring. But let's watch these little videos.

The first one you'll see, this is how you go to the site, and you select the meditation you want to participate in. First, there's group practice of the energization exercises, and then, of course, the opening prayer and other meditation practices. So let's watch this video together.

(Video Shown)  
(Extended applause)

I know you are all clapping because you can feel the potential of this. And probably behind that, you can feel the great joy that our guru must feel. And one of the aims and ideals of Self Realization Fellowship and Yogoda Satsanga Society, you know, one of the basic objectives of SRF, as established by Gururji, is to create temples of self-realization in all lands and individual temples in the homes and hearts of devotees all over the world.

Again, that power of group meditation. It will change the lives of individuals. It will change the tenor of the vibrations of our contemporary world.

I want to say we have two more videos now. Let's see the next one. These are just some comments of some of these devotees who have been participating in, developing the prototype.

I'm going to tell you more about these devotees in just a minute because it's very inspiring. We had this prototype group, this test group over the last couple of months while this was being constructed, and I wanted to share with you some of what they experienced. So let's see that video.

(Video plays).

(Extended applause)

Beautiful! What can you say?

You know, one of the devotees there that we saw, in other comments, she was saying, as this site was being developed over the last few months, she said, (They live in Iowa) "This was such a harsh winter. There were actually four or five Sundays or Thursdays when the devotees (couldn't come) when it was blizzarding. They couldn't even come to the service. But then to have something like this! And then they don't miss a beat".

So lots and lots of possibilities.

Let's just see the last one. This shows a little bit about the online study that will happen.

(Video plays) (Extended applause)

Now, as exciting as that is, that's only half of the story. You know, permit me just for a moment, just to reflect back on these last two years. When the Board asked me to assume this responsibility there was such a consciousness of the spiritual giants in whose footsteps I was going to be trying to follow in. And there was such a sense of responsibility to Guruji and his work and, yes, a sense of responsibility to all of you.

And not just responsibility. but a sense of the opportunity. A sense of this, because of the literally astounding accomplishments that had been worked on year after year, decade after decade by our guru and by those great divine ones in whose hands he entrusted his work, in the decades after his passing. So much of it has been ripening behind the scenes.

And so I jotted down some things that wanted to remember; that I wanted the other monks and nuns, the wonderful lay members that serve with us to focus on. And I won't share all of them now. Some other time I'll talk about them. But just to mention three of them to keep forefront in the priorities:

One was to complete the publication of Guruji's teachings. One was to fully take advantage of the opportunity to use digital media, digital tools, to maximize dissemination of the teachings and to serve in a better way all of Guruji's spiritual family around the world.

And another one was this. And you'll see why this relates to what we just saw. And that was to tap more into the vast pool of wisdom and ability and devotion and dedication that exists in our guru's worldwide family of lay members of Self Realization Fellowship/Yogoda Satsanga Society.

I feel so strongly about this. When looking out here and knowing other devotees in other countries and around the world; We have an unbelievable opportunity and resource. We have devotees that have been meditating that have been practicing inner discipline, inner sadhana, following the teachings for decades: 20, 30, 40 years.

I applaud all of you! (Applause)

And now I want to add a greater opportunity in the sadhana of anybody who wishes to have it; a greater opportunity for the dimension that is so powerful and so sweet and so transforming in sadhana; and that is guru seva-: service to the guru.

There's so much that you beautiful, wonderful devotees who have lived the life, who are living the life, can do for Master's work. And believe me I am going to, and the monks and nuns that I work with at Mother Center and in our other ashrams centers are going to, will be concentrating on this over the next year or two.

So, some months ago, I reached out to two or three long-time lay members and expressed this. And they reached out to a few more. So there was a group of maybe twenty or twenty-five. And you know they are the ones that created this online center for all of you.

(Extended applause).

They created it for the Mother Center, for Center Department. Now it will be run, as I said, by our monks and our Center Department. But this is just an example. I said to them to come up with some examples of things that they know devotees around the world would benefit from- that they would be helped by.

And they worked together. They did all of the programming, all of the thinking, all of the planning; and are still working. As soon as Convocation is over, we are going to get back to work and finish it.

But this is a tremendously satisfying first step. And I can't even begin to estimate the great blessings and the great benefits and spiritual and material progress that this will bring to Guruji's work. So a great thanks to these devotees. You'll be hearing more about this.

(Extended applause)



As I said, these are prototypes.

Don't call Mother Center and say, "Where can I log to that nice study group?"

Because I promise you the person answering the phone has no more idea than you do. So just watch your e-mails and the newsletter, and all of this will roll out. And there will be lots of things on its heels. So I look forward to this centennial of Guruji's work.

So we've come out of this past year with the tremendous blessings and spiritual re-charging embodied in the new edition of the SRF Lessons. Now, we'll build on that. We'll grow that. We'll draw more and more devotees, and in these different ways that you've had a glimpse of. And we'll have something to show to our guru, our param gurus, and yes, to Babaji and Christ, who set this work in motion a hundred years ago.

(Extended applause)

There's so much more that I could like to say, that I would like to say. But more than that, so much more that, that I would like to do for all of you.

I know that all these monks, all these nuns (Gestures to them, but points to monks when he says, "nuns" and to the nuns when he says, "monks".) Laughs. What's the garb of a temporary incarnation?

These souls! I know they feel as I do. There are not enough hours in the day to do what we would want to do out of our great love, our great respect, our great friendship and bond and kinship with all of you.

We pray for you. We cherish you. We love you! (Extended applause). So even though we could say more, I've shamelessly gone on beyond the allotted time. Do you forgive me?

Well, let's have a moment of silence. Let's just practice one thing together. You know in that online study group the passage that one devotee read was on vibration, meaning that great Om vibration, that holy ghost Om vibration that we touched and contacted and invoked at the beginning of this event tonight.

That great vibration we had while we practice the Om vibration has sound and it has light. Many of you know this affirmation that we often practice together.

"I am submerged in eternal light.  
It permeates every particle of my being.  
I am living in that light.  
The Divine Spirit fills me within and without".

Beautiful, powerful affirmation!

Now tonight, let's take the other aspect of it that was in that reading, and that's the aspect of sound. Quiet your body. Quiet your mind. Tune the heart and mind radio to an all-pervading cosmic vibration of Om, Holy Ghost, the voice of God.

And feel:

" I am submerged in eternal sound.  
It permeates every particle of my being.  
I am living in that sound.  
The Divine Spirit fills me within and without.

I am submerged in eternal sound.  
It permeates every particle of my being.  
I am living in that sound.  
All of my atoms are spiritualized in that sound.  
I am living in that sound.  
It permeates every particle of my being.  
I am living in that sound.  
The Divine Spirit fills me within and without.

All of my cells are drinking from the ocean of that sound.  
I am expanding in that sound.  
I am devoted to that sound.  
I am loyal to that sound.  
I am one with that sound.  
The Divine Spirit fills me within and without.

( One more time.)

I am submerged in eternal sound.  
It permeates every particle of my being.  
I am living in that sound.  
All of my atoms are spiritualized in that sound.  
It permeates every particle of my being.  
I am living in that sound.  
All of my atoms are spiritualized In that sound.  
I am living in that sound.  
I am devoted to that sound.  
I am worshiping that sound.  
I am loyal to that sound.  
I am expanding with that sound.  
I am one with that sound.  
The Divine Spirit fills me within and without.

(Silent Meditation)

OMMMMMMMMM. OMMMMMMMM. OMMMMMMMM. Amen.

Well, my dear divine friends, God, and guru bless each and every one of you, until we meet again, either in person or in one of these virtual venues. You'll see me on that meditation site from time to time, and some of these other monks and nuns. I look forward to each joint effort that we make together to anchor our lives in that joy, in that security, in that courage and faith, and understanding, and spirit of giving that flows from every contact we have with that Divine Beloved of our souls. Jai Guru!

(Applause and pronams as all in the audience stand ).

I'll see you, at our next Convocation, and some of you, I'll be looking forward to and visiting you in Italy and Germany in October, and then onto India for three programs in three cities in India to again share this kind of satsanga, this kind of fellowship. I hope to see many of you there, and if not, when we meet again. God bless you. Jai guru!

(Applause and pronams as all stand in reverence as our beloved Brother Chidanandaji blesses all.)

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<https://yogananda.org/a-beginners-meditation>

*Scribe's Note: These notes are intended to be shared with devotees who were unable to attend Convocation or who want to read lecture notes to recall and internalize the Convocation talks. These notes are not authorized by SRF but were requested by Devotee2Devotee. The satsanga by Brother Chidananda is, however, a transcript from the SRF website. All of these talks are the intellectual property of Self Realization Fellowship. Sadly, some individuals have taken large sections or entire works of SRF copyrighted material and used it as their own in booksclasicming authorship. Please don't do this. When you return to the astral, Master will have something to say to you about this.*

*Once again, there is no way to convey the spirit, enthusiasm, and God-filled energy that comes through in these inspiring Convocation talks. These are just notes and can't begin to capture the energy that comes through. Please do feel free to share with credit to SRF/YSS.*

*"God is like a little child. He knows no guile. But if you play the slightest deceit or trick on Him, He is gone. That is why it is so hard to get hold of Him. You have to catch Him in the net of your unconditional love. Love means craving for God. God appreciates love more than devotion: in devotion, there is distance and awe, perhaps fear; in love, there is unity, at-one-ment. Do not*

*despair if you do not yet feel an unconditional love for God. Salvation is for all. If you choose to delay on this path of evolution, it is your loss. You cannot stand still; you have to go forward or backward. But you must be redeemed sometime. To be redeemed is to drop the ignorance that covers the soul."*

*- Sri Sri Paramahansa Yogananda  
( Journey to Self-Realization)*

**SRF Convocation 2019  
Brother Nakulananda  
"Divine Friendship: Seeing God in All" Part II  
August 10, 2019**

Here we are at the end of Convocation with another glorious well of divine fellowship and inspiration! When I was assigned this class, I thought, "Okay. I have to wait out a whole week".

But there is one advantage to speaking at the end of the week. By the end of the week, the light and love in your faces have grown and all of you are filled with it. When I looked at the title of the talk, "Divine Friendship: Seeing God in All", I thought, "That's not a challenge for me right now".

We learn something at every Convocation, and there is so much to do on the spiritual path. It's easy to get overwhelmed. So, just take one or two points. Pick one or two points you can give to God and guru.

Master has given us so much, and we've seen so much in the New Lessons. Every devotee here has shared with me how much they are getting from the New Lessons-not just in words but the feelings. If one puts oneself in tune with the seeds he is planting in our consciousness we gain so much. We have all the books and Guruji's lectures. But we have something else. The example of Guruji's life itself.

Part I begins here (See Brother Nakulananda Part I-From Yogananda Site (With thanks to Joy Divine!)\*\*

We have so much in the *Lessons*, and the scriptural commentaries, the Bhagavad Gita and the Bible, all of Gururji's lectures. At the same time, we have something else that is just as vitally important for our sadhana, and that is the example of the Guru's life itself. Master was a walking, talking scripture.

When an avatar comes to earth, that is divinity that is descending into flesh. He comes from his home in omnipresence, in that bliss consciousness of God, infinite bliss consciousness. Yet out of his compassion and love and caring for all of God's children, he comes back to play a role in this lila, to dream the dream, to take on some karma in order that he can keep a physical body. And the thing that is so inspiring about our guru's life is because we see both the human and the divine aspect in all of his actions.

And he went through so many of the experiences that we go through in our daily lives. He experienced severe physical illness. Diseases almost took his life. The loss of loved ones. He grieved for his mother and his guru and others. He was disappointed when some disciples would turn away from him. So he went through all the different types of things that we go through in our lives, to show us how we can follow him in his example. He went through those things, but he emerged supremely victorious, because he had that attunement with God, and that perseverance and determination, and all the qualities that we are trying to live in our own lives.

See also (scroll down this link to) ~ [Why do avatars go through obstacles, trials and problems?](#) And one of the turning points in Gururji's life, we read in *Autobiography of a Yogi*, as his guru Swami Sri Yukteswar said to him. . .if you do not reach out, how can others benefit from the teachings of these kindhearted masters who have brought yoga to the world? Gururji said, "*I used to want salvation only for myself. . .he made me understand that the ultimate joy in my own salvation would come when I shared it with others. From that time on I wanted salvation so that I might give it to everyone. I wanted to drink God's omnipresent nectar not only through my*

*own soul mouth, but through the countless mouths of all other souls. I wanted to share Him with all. That is Love.” . . .*

See also~ Love Thy Neighbor as Thy SELF~ Bro. Nakulananda

So at that time Guruji made an adamant resolve that he was going to do something. And then he founded his boys' school, first in Dihika and then he moved it to Ranchi. . . And then when he was meditating in the store room he had that vision of western faces. He said, *“The vision continued, a vast multitude gazing at me intently swept across the stage of consciousness.”* So he saw a vision, of all those that were waiting, those thirsty seeking souls to come.

YOGANANDA at Congress of Religious Liberals, Boston, 1920

And he didn't waste any time. Within a couple of hours he said goodbye to his beloved Ranchi school, the teachers, and he entrained for Calcutta. And the next day he got the invitation to speak at the Congress of Religious Liberals in Boston. [*Master became India's delegate to the International Congress of Religious Liberals, Boston, MA.*] And he went to Sri Yukteswarji and said, should I go to America? And he said, “All doors are open to you, it's now or never.” So he made all his preparations to come to America to begin his work.

“A Smooth Life is Not a Victorious Life”

But it was not easy for him. He lived his life, a simple life in India being with his Guru. So simple. And then he was going to this strange land. He hardly knew any English at all. He didn't know anybody. . . Sri Yukteswar told him, “Don't worry. Everything will be alright. God is with you.” But when they were on that steamer ship when he was ready to depart, he saw the great avatar Sri Yukteswar sat sphinx-like in his cabin. Even he was stern and grave because he was going to be missing his beloved disciple.

Guruji said I cannot begin to describe the feeling of aloneness that I began to feel when the steamer left the dock. He said that he hardly spoke any English, he was dressed in a makeshift turban and an ochre flannel swami robe. And he said most of the passengers were American or European and they looked at Master with some trepidation. He said, “You can imagine what a sensation my appearance made among them. A number of amusing rumors were circulating

about me. As I had first class passage I was thought to be well off, and some speculated that I was also well out of my mind.” [laughter from the audience]

So he had these challenges. And then he said, when the steamer was heading into the harbor in Boston, he said, “As I saw America for the first time my thoughts were very sad. Gazing at the twinkling lights of the harbor I thought of India, and how alone I was here, not a soul I knew.” And he said, “Then I remembered the faces I had seen in vision that day in Ranchi. I have since met and recognized many of them, including some of you who are here today. Others are yet to come.” \*\*\*

And when I think of that I think of all of us, that Master saw in vision. Bro. Chidananda said a Master’s consciousness is not past, present and future. He is in the eternal now, and he knows each one that has been drawn to him. And that is why Guruji wrote that poem, ‘On Coming To the New Old Land America’ –“Sleeping memories of friends once more to be did greet me. sensing my coming, the pilgrim land to adore . . .”

“Friends once more to be!”

So as I said in the beginning, Master plays both the human and the divine role. That infinite divine consciousness lives in him and it flows through him, but also he played that role, that drama in this world to show us how we, too, can live in this world.

How we can love one another—enemies, so-called enemies as well as friends. The more we do that, the more we will change this world, as Master said, “Reform yourself and you will reform thousands.”

Master has come to awaken each one of us . . . “That Divinity, that love for God, can reach out and inspire, and bless and light the way. . .” (Mrinalini Mata) \*\*\*\*\*

Guruji said, “Even before I had left India to come to this country, and later, when I first arrived in Boston, I was aware that there were many true friends of past lives that I would meet again here. I looked for those who were to come here to be with me in God’s work. Every day I called for them, ‘Where are you? Where are you who were walking with me before?’” Take this

personally. Guruji is looking for each one—Where are you? He’s calling us. “Suddenly I see a face in the crowd and I say to myself, there is one who has heard my call. . .” He is talking to each one of us.

This is the end of the first century of our Guru’s work. And when we come together again next year [2020] we’re going to be celebrating the next century of Master’s work that is going to be going out even further and touching more souls. . .

From Master’s poem “Friendship”. . .

“Ah, Friendship, where thy soul-born flowers fall, there on that sacred shrine of fragrance, the Friend of all friends prays to come, and to remain.”

“For centuries to come,” Daya Mata says, “that beloved voice will continue to awaken souls, drawing them into the shelter of the loftiest and the most beautiful relationship, that between the devotee and God.”

Jai Guru

Part II

Guruji explains that from a cosmic perspective, all that exists is garnered from the law of duality that created the positive and the negative. Through the law of infinity, He created many. Because He created this cosmic period, the whole idea is to play our role and then return to the One. Spirit attraction unites people in divine love. It works through emotions, intelligence, intuition, and friendship. Your soul merges in divine friendship with the God in every person on earth. This is the whole plan of God.

Paramahansa Yogananda said, "Friendship is the highest form of love. Thus that temptation is that we just want to seek God for ourselves. The soul consciously understands this".



St. Catherine of Siena\*\* lived a tertiary, very solitary life. Her one visitor every day was Jesus. All she wanted to do was commune with Jesus. One day when He left her, He said, "Love of me and love of your neighbors is the same thing."

She really struggled with this. She argued with Him, but He won.

He reminded her, "Did I not give you two commands, to love God and to love Thy neighbor?"

And thus was this young girl of 21 pushed into the world of many wars in the time of the western schism. She ended up negotiating on behalf of two or three different popes. She became a counselor for different nations. She was then sent by Gregory XI to negotiate peace with Florence. After Gregory XI's death and peace concluded, she returned to Siena.

She was a sought-after counselor for different nations. She accomplished all of this because her God advised her that seek friendship could be cultivated and formed by those unrelated as well as with family members and those related by marriage.

It is so important to cultivate divine friendship in marriage. That means giving unconditional love and loyalty to one another. When a husband and wife have trouble, it is often because of selfishness. It's a matter of giving without expecting anything in return.

My father was a very wise man. He saw to it that my mom was happy. I never saw them fight. There is a study that says of 90-100 propositions, if each spouse is only giving 10% and expecting to receive 10%, they will be happy. But there has to be that respect in a marriage where the husband and wife come together in love, as in Master's poem on friends: noble, fruitful, and holy.

Ma said that if you study this poem, it will give you an understanding of the human condition. It requires work, effort, and selflessness.

George Bernard Shaw had this to say about marriage: "When two people are under the influence of the most violent, most insane, most delusive, and most transient of passions, they are required to swear that they will remain in that excited, abnormal, and exhausting condition continuously until death do them part."

They are required! Remember the aura of your wedding day. The honeymoon adds to the glow. Then comes reality: marriage not infatuation or celestial celebration. It's hard work because we have to get out of ourselves.

Also in marriage, you need to communicate every day to let the other know how you are feeling and to find out how they are feeling. Daya Mata said that when communication stops marriage falls apart.

There is a story about a wife who went to a lawyer asking about divorce.

He asked her if she had a claim.

She said, "We have about two and a half acres".

He asked if she had a grudge.

She replied, "No, but we have two cars."

"Does your husband beat you?" he inquired.

"No. I usually get up earlier than he does."

"Are you sure you want a divorce?" the lawyer asked.

"No. I don't want a divorce. It's my husband. He claims we have difficulty communicating".

(Laughter)

God plants seeds of love, and parents automatically are given this.

Master writes: "Friendship comes to us as a true expression of God's love. We are drawn back to God because we were separate. Friendship starts with ourselves."

Krishna said, "All mankind must be friends not only with others but with our Self. God is the only faithful lover. "

To have a friend, you must be a friend. You also have to see the God in yourself. Love yourself. This love is the unfoldment of your true soul nature.

You are your own greatest enemy and your own greatest friend, With introspection, we see things in ourselves that we don't like. Jesus said, "Love Thy neighbor as thyself": the Self-that Divine potential Self-contacting the true Self in all of us.

When I was growing up, my parents' friends used to ask me, "What do you want to be when you grow up?"

I answered that I wanted to be happy. Then, to appease them, I said, "When I grow up, I want to be a mathematical engineer".

A teacher was asking her kids, "What do you want to be when you grow up?"

Little Tommy answered, "Possible."

When she asked him why, he answered, "Well, my mother is always telling me that I'm impossible. " (Laughter)

And now, we have that book of Guruji's, "Undreamed of Possibilities".

Babaji felt the vibration of different saints.

Daya Mata said that when we are in a mood, we should ask ourselves if we are thinking about God or thinking about ourselves. Negative thoughts emphasize spiritual weakness. This is why affirmations are so important.

"The eternal life of God flows through me. I am immortal. Behind the wave of my mind is the ocean of cosmic consciousness."

When we affirm these truths with deep concentration we become more and more identified with our true Selves.

Daya Mata often said to be true to your soul. "To thine own self be true".

She said that with that and a little bit of meditation every day and one will find freedom.

Master's cup was so full that he would give to everyone who came to him. But he found that he couldn't do this with George Eastman, the inventor of the Kodak camera. He said that he felt cold like steel.

Master said, "He was well known for his philanthropies, and, like other men of great wealth, no doubt had cause to wonder about the motives of others he met; he didn't know what I was after".

"Without preliminary, he asked, "Do you accept my invitation to come to my home?" To which I replied, "I will be glad to, if you accept my invitation also." He agreed. Later, when he came to my apartment and saw me cooking the meal of curries, he said, "You know, I like to cook, also."

We became a little friendlier. Then I remarked casually, "Mr. Eastman, isn't it true that most rich men have no real friends? I want to meet you as a friend, not as a man of wealth."

He smiled. Master said, "From that moment, and during our two-hour visit, I saw a different Eastman, the real Eastman because I understood him and met him on the plane of sincere friendship. The next day he sent me a camera, which I have to this day".

When you unconditionally love your friends, you will see that divine friendship in them\*\*\*\*.

Back in the "80s, Dale Carnegie wrote a popular book, "how to Win Friends and Influence People". He tells the following story about a man and his dog.

"Why read this book to find out how to win friends? Why not study the technique of the greatest winner of friends the world has ever known? Who is he? You may meet him tomorrow coming down the street.

When you get within ten feet of him, he will begin to wag his tail. If you stop and pat him, he will almost jump out of his skin to show you how much he likes you. And you know that behind this show of affection on his part, there are no ulterior motives: He doesn't want to sell you any real estate, and he doesn't want to marry you.

Did you ever stop to think that a dog is the only animal that doesn't have to work for a living? A hen has to lay eggs, a cow has to give milk, and a canary has to sing. But a dog makes his living by giving you nothing but love.

When I was five years old, my father bought a little yellow-haired pup for fifty cents. He was the light and joy of my childhood. Every afternoon about four-thirty, he would sit in the front yard with his beautiful eyes staring steadfastly at the path, and as soon as he heard my voice or saw me swinging my dinner pail through the buck brush, he was off like a shot, racing breathlessly up the hill to greet me with leaps of joy and barks of sheer ecstasy.

Tippy was my constant companion for five years. Then one tragic night - I shall never forget it - he was killed within ten feet of my head, killed by lightning. Tippy's death was the tragedy of my boyhood. You never read a book on psychology, Tippy. You didn't need to. You knew by some divine instinct that you can make more friends in two months by becoming genuinely interested in other people than you can in two years by trying to get other people interested in you.

Let me repeat that. You can make more friends in two months by becoming interested in other people than you can in two years by trying to get other people interested in you.

Yet I know and you know people who blunder through life trying to wigwag other people into becoming interested in them. Of course, it doesn't work. People are not interested in you. They are not interested in me. They are interested in themselves - morning, noon and after dinner".\*\*\*\*\*

There was a man who was a football coach who had a horrible season. In addition, he was disrespected in his home life. He tried to find solace from his wife. He told her, "My dog is my only friend. A man needs at least two friends".

He lamented, "So she went out and bought me another dog".

In an ideal marriage, both the husband and wife are seeking God. If your spouse is not on the path, you can still use unconditional love.

When I came upon the path, I found that my friends were not interested in the same things, and one by one I lost those friends. When I came to Lake Shrine, there were so many devotees whom I met who welcomed me with open arms. I felt that I had finally come home.

I had to make some money. The student department told me to see Brother Turiyananda. It was a different kind of life- living and working with him. He was kind of like a Samurai warrior. They broke the mold when they made Brother Turiyananda.

Brother Turiyananda said without as pause, "Go to work on the Alaska pipeline".

I was a skinny kid, and it threw me for a shock.

Then he told me if that didn't work out to go work on the oil rigs in Texas.

So then I when to Brother Dharmananda. He told me, "Stay here, volunteer at the Lake, and live in that environment."

Then, one day, Brother told me, "I want you to begin making the announcements. "

I told him, " Anything but that!" ( I was very shy).

He said, "It will be good for you."

On the first day, I had a cold. I was driving my VW bug. I was cold and shaking. I was tempted to drive past Lake Shrine to Santa Barbara. But I didn't.

When I got there, the minister was at the Lake sitting in a chair. He said, "Just look at Lahiri Mahasaya's picture". I had never had a relationship with Lahiri Mahasaya until that day.

So, Brother Dharmananda said, "And now we'll have the announcements". He looked at me with a big smile. That is the gift of divine friendship.

I thought I had better hurry up to serve, because then, after that, I won't have to do any more speaking. (Laughter)

In a world of duality, there will always be those who misunderstand, as I did. Part of the light of love is learning to love even those who disagree with us.

Our guru greatly admired Abraham Lincoln. He saw him as an accomplished actor on the stage of life. Lincoln said, "If you would win a man to your cause, first make him into a friend. If I make him a friend, have I not slain my enemy"?

Daya Mata said that when she first became president, there were many little inharmonies. Ma said she asked Master. "How do I deal with them"?

Then later, in India, she faced more inharmonies. She said to Babaji, "Babaji, show me what to do. I'll do anything"

Babaji told her, "Love is the way to change people".

Ma had so many experiences of turning enemies into friends. In India, devotees struggled with not only an American but also a woman, trying to teach them. She knew what she would be facing when she gave the satsanga there.

Ma said that she was talking to Master in her meditation, looking at his picture. He came out of that picture and blessed her, and she addressed that satsanga in that state of consciousness. During the satsanga, a person stood up to leave and asked others to follow him.

Ma said, "Looking at him, I could only see the Divine manifest in that form".

Sometimes there are lessons that you have to go through. Master said that some enemies of the past followed him into this lifetime. Even our enemies of the past are part of the tests of life.



Master said, "Never hate anyone".

Master plays both human and divine roles as infinite consciousness flows through him to show how we too can love in this world. The more we love, the more we can change the world.

He told us, "Reform yourself and you'll reform thousands".

\*\*\*\* (The concluding remarks are also included in Part I.)

Master has come to awaken each one of us .

Mrinalini Mata said, "That Divinity, that love for God, can reach out and inspire, and bless and light the way."

Guruji said, "Even before I had left India to come to this country, and later when I first arrived in Boston, I was aware that there were many true friends of past lives that I would meet again here. I looked for those who were to come here to be with me in God's work. Every day I called for them, 'Where are you? Where are you who were walking with me before?'"

Take this personally. Guruji is looking for each one.

"Where are you"? He's calling us.

"Suddenly I see a face in the crowd and I say to myself, there is one who has heard my call."

He is talking to each one of us.

Daya Mata asked, "How many today have heard that great soul summons? For centuries to come, that beloved voice will continue to awaken souls, drawing them into the shelter of the loftiest and the most beautiful relationship, that between the devotee and God."

This is the end of the first century of our Guru's work. And when we come together again next year, 2020, we're going to be celebrating the next century of Master's work that is going to be going out even further and touching more souls.

The most important relationship is that between the devotee and God, as reflected in Master's poem "Friendship".

"Ah, Friendship, where thy soul-born flowers fall, there on that sacred shrine of fragrance, the Friend of all friends prays to come, and to remain."

Jai Guru

### ***Footnotes***

\* Saint Catherine of Siena (25 March 1347 – 29 April 1380), a laywoman associated with the Dominican Order, was a mystic, activist, and author who had a great influence on Italian literature and the Catholic Church. Canonized in 1461, she is also a Doctor of the Church. She was born and raised in Siena, and at an early age wanted to devote herself to God, against the will of her parents. She joined the Dominican tertiaries. She made herself known very quickly by being marked by mystical phenomena such as invisible stigmata and a mystical marriage.[3] Her influence with Pope Gregory XI played a role in his decision to leave Avignon for Rome. She was then sent by him to negotiate peace with Florence. After Gregory XI's death and peace concluded, she returned to Siena. She dictated to secretaries her set of spiritual treatises The Dialogue of Divine Providence. The Great Schism of the West led Catherine of Siena to go to Rome with the pope. She sent numerous letters to princes and cardinals to promote obedience to Pope Urban VI and defend what she calls the "vessel of the Church." She

died on 29 April 1380, exhausted by her penances. Urban VI celebrated her funeral and burial in the Basilica of Santa Maria sopra Minerva in Rome.

The devotion around Catherine of Siena developed rapidly after her death. She was canonized in 1461, declared patron saint of Rome in 1866, and of Italy (together with Francis of Assisi) in 1939. She was the first woman (along with Teresa of Ávila) to be declared a "doctor of the Church," on 4 October 1970 by Pope Paul VI. She was also proclaimed patron saint of Europe in 1999 by Pope John Paul II. Catherine of Siena is one of the outstanding figures of medieval Catholicism, by the strong influence she has had in the history of the papacy and her extensive authorship. She was behind the return of the Pope from Avignon to Rome, and then carried out many missions entrusted by the pope, something quite rare for a woman in the Middle Ages. Her Dialogue, hundreds of letters, and dozens of prayers, also give her a prominent place in the history of Italian literature.

*\*\*Brother Nakulanda; The Guru, Human and Divine: Paramahansa Yogananda Comes to America, 1920 ~ Bro. Nakulananda; Yogananda /Site With thanks to Joy Divine!*

*\*\*\*See also: "The Guru: Messenger of Truth" Sri Mrinalini Mata, CD, download SRF Bookstore*

*\*\*\*\*Yogananda, Paramahansa. Journey to Self-Realization: Collected Talks and Essays on Realizing God in Daily Life – Volume 3. Self-Realization Fellowship. Kindle Edition. Many thanks to Joy Divine of the Yogananda site for finding this story for me!*

*\*\*\*\*\*How to Win Friends And Influence People By Dale Carnegie, (III)Six Ways To Make People Like You- Part Two (1)*

*\*\*\*\*\* If You Would Know the Guru (Mrinalini Mata) <http://bookstore.yogananda-srf.org/product/the-guru-messenger-of-truth/>*

*Note: This is the last of the 2019 Convocation lectures. For notes on more talks by monastics, visit the Yogananda site. Most importantly, if you have not yet sent for the New Lessons, every monastic advised in these talks that we do so. (See link below) Please feel free to share while acknowledging Paramahansas Yogananda and Self Realization Fellowship.*

<https://yogananda.org/lessons>

Out of the millions of people in the world, through your good karma from the past you have, and present good determination and discrimination of your free choice, you have chosen to follow the path of Self Realization".

The scriptures of India say that when devotees are deeply in earnest they are led to their appointed guru and given the opportunity for their spiritual progress ".

And so I declare that you have been led to SRF and YSS. You have been led and have been able to come unto this path and its gurus because the heavenly spirit who chooses gurus for his devotees has listened to the subconscious prayer of your willing heart ".

The heavenly spirit who chooses gurus for his devotees has listened to the subconscious prayer of your willing heart: The prayer that you may find truth not dogma: That you may find wisdom and not words: That you may find satisfaction not in theoretical knowledge but in practical wisdom and realization".

Since you were nominated by Divine Grace and elected by your own free will to pursue this path, it is vitally important to continue with your studies and find what lies ahead for you. You have been privileged to receive the highest spiritual, religious and guru given meaning enshrined in the immortal lines of the lessons as I have received them from the Infinite".

Paramahansa Yogananda



