

Self-Realization Fellowship

World Convocation 2010



More than four thousand SRF members and friends from around the world participated in our 2010 World Convocation, held in Los Angeles August 1-7.

This year was the 60th anniversary of the first Self-Realization

Fellowship World Convocation, which was held by Paramahansa Yogananda in 1950 at the SRF Mother Center. Foreseeing the ever-increasing number of truth-seekers who would participate in this powerful spiritual event as the years passed, he predicted to the few hundred who were present at the first one:

“They shall come from all parts of the world, thousands and thousands of them, just as you have, for Self-Realization is bringing the original Christianity of Christ and the original Yoga of India’s Krishna so that all people of all religions can follow one highway to the Infinite.”

For the 2010 Convocation, participants came from approximately 50 countries. They were welcomed by Self-Realization Fellowship monks and nuns from Paramahansa Yogananda’s ashram centers. The main events were held at the Westin Bonaventure Hotel in downtown Los Angeles, with daily visits to the ashram centers where Paramahansaji lived and communed with God.

Following are extracts from some of the classes held during the week.
(Other talks from the Convocation will be featured in future issues.)



From Sri Daya Mata's welcome message:

Loving greetings to all of you who have come from around the world to attend this year's Convocation. I remember how Gurudeva [Paramahansa Yogananda] used to look forward to occasions like this, when devotees would gather to think of God and to experience His divine love and joy. He often said, "I prefer a soul to a crowd, but I love crowds of souls," and he would warmly welcome each one of you.

In my meditations I will be deeply praying for you, that during this special week you may be able to lay aside the cares that are part of daily life in this ever-changing world and immerse yourselves in Guruji's teachings—in the truths that are eternal, in God's love, which is eternal. As you tune in with His infinite power and blessings, drawn by the magnet of your united devotion, He will uplift your mind, recharge your will to persevere on the spiritual path, and help you to realize how much each one of you is cherished by Him...

May you feel a new determination to make positive changes in your life—to become a more peaceful, loving, God-centered human being.

Convocation speakers, in addition to those featured on the following pages, included (clockwise from top left): Brothers Anilananda, Vishwananda, Satyananda, Ritananda, Bhumananda, and Chidananda. (Not pictured: Brothers Jayananda, Sevananda, Nakulananda, Naradananda, and Sister Draupadi.)

Excerpts from opening class, "Blessed Are the Peacemakers," Brother Achalananda:

"Blessed are the peacemakers," Jesus said in his Sermon on the Mount, "for they shall be called the children of God." Paramahansaji in his commentary on this verse in *The Second Coming of Christ* gives us a greater understanding of what these words mean: "They are the real peacemakers who generate peace from their devotional practice of daily meditation. Peace is the first manifestation of God's response in meditation. Those who know God as Peace in the inner temple of silence, and who worship that Peace-God therein, are by this relationship of divine communion His true children."

The peace that comes to meditating individuals through their deepening communion is "the peace of God, which passeth all understanding." Paramahansa Yogananda said that this is the only sure foundation of world amity. The more we contact that peace within, the more we are able to express it without—to family, friends, community, nation, and the world. It takes more than just a few to bring world peace. When more and more individuals manifest that inner peace that comes from God-contact—when it begins to spread and spread and spread, so that it starts to overpower the vibrations of hatred and anger and frustration that are so prevalent in this world—then we will gradually see positive changes on the planet.

It is not an easy thing to become a peaceful individual and spread that peace. It requires changing some very basic motivations of our human nature as egos. As long as we are caught up in our ego nature we are "children of man," not "children of God." Ego consciousness is restricted, small, narrow—filled to the brim with self-love. But the more a person experiences God's peace, the more natural it is to feel goodwill for others.

During this Convocation you have the opportunity to renew and improve your understanding and practice of the techniques of meditation, which expand the heart's natural love. Love is part of our real nature; it is natural to the soul, but we have covered it up. We have to take off the covering. Our Guru's meditation techniques help us to do so, and thus to become peacemakers.

We are in a pivotal time in our history on this planet, because not enough people have changed to higher spiritual ideals. It is a very dangerous time, because our scientific ability to use the powerful forces of nature,

“The more a person experiences God’s peace, the more natural it is to feel goodwill for others.”

such as atomic energy, exceeds the average spiritual maturity of humanity at large, which would enable that technology to be used wisely to bring peace and prosperity for all. As followers of this path, all of us have an important part to play in helping that greater understanding to be born. Master’s work is still ahead of its time, but it is growing, faster and faster, because the need for these teachings is becoming greater and greater.

It seems fairly obvious, to anyone who looks at present world conditions from a spiritual point of view, that the law of karma is going to bring some difficult times if humanity does not change willingly. But don’t get caught up in “doom and gloom” consciousness. Remember that as we tune in with God through practicing the techniques each day, meditating deeply, praying deeply, we are bringing about a greater communion with Spirit that naturally offers us an assurance that even as the world goes through difficult periods, we *can* get through. We have been given the tools to succeed. Use them to become a peacemaker — first inside, and then outside. God bless you, dear ones, and keep on keeping on!

From “Deepening Our Practice of Meditation,” Swami Smaranananda:



[Swami Smaranananda, who serves as General Secretary of Yogoda Satsanga Society of India, participated in this year’s SRF Convocation during a visit to the United States for meetings with the SRF/YSS Board of Directors. A monk of the YSS Order for more than 30 years, Swami Smaranananda resides at the ashram founded by Paramahansa Yogananda at Ranchi, and has traveled all over India giving classes and

Kriya Yoga initiations.

An audio recording of his talk at the 2010 Convocation, “Deepening Our Practice of Meditation,” is included on CD with this issue of *Self-Realization* magazine.]

Excerpt:

Bhagavan Krishna said in the Bhagavad Gita, referring to yoga meditation, “*Swalpamapyasya*

dharmasya trayate mahato bhayat”— meaning, “even a little practice of this religious rite will save you from dire fears.” We are not assured that all problems are solved and troubles taken away; but the fears that come out of them we are freed from, if we practice meditation. If we meditate regularly, we come to the stage where we make these words our own: “No matter what is happening around me, no matter what is happening to me, I can still be joyful.”

Everything in this world can be improved, and this applies also to our meditations. So during this satsanga I will share with you a few guidelines to make our meditations deeper and sweeter.

[Listen to the enclosed CD for the complete talk.]

Excerpts from “The Guru’s Unconditional Love for Each Disciple,” Sister Preeti:

There is an oft-told story of two men searching for Paradise. For many years they endure hardships as they seek, high and low, near and far, following countless paths, and blazing trails of their own. Then one day they come upon a very old wall, almost completely hidden with thick vines and bushes. With much effort they scale the wall, and when they reach the top, there it is — Paradise! One man jumps down off the wall, and runs eagerly into Paradise — arms flung wide open in joy — his long-sought goal reached at last. The second man pauses at the top of the wall and calls out after his friend, “You go on ahead. I’m going back for the others, to show them the way.”

Paramahansa Yogananda tells us: “The Guru is he whom God appoints to lead you out of the darkness of ignorance into the land of His eternal light.” The Guru has already made the journey and knows the way. With love in his heart, the Guru extends his hand to each disciple, offering to serve as his or her personal guide. He can point out the pitfalls and show us the shortcuts, and he is the very best of traveling companions, offering encouragement each step of the way.

Our Gurudeva, Paramahansa Yogananda, is known as a *Premavatar*. *Prem* means “love,” and an avatar is a soul who has attained union with Spirit and then returns to help mankind. So, *Premavatar* signifies an incarnation of divine love.

Each one of us has our own unique personal story to tell about how Master came into our lives. One devotee told me a story: she was travel-



CD

ing somewhere and had a window seat in the airplane. She was hoping no one would sit in the seat next to her, and was dismayed when a large young man dressed all in black and covered in tattoos sat down next to her. She decided to just ignore him, and took out a *Self-Realization* magazine — it was one with a photograph of Master on the cover. The man happened to glance over, and when he saw the picture he said, “If you don’t mind, could you tell me, whose picture is that?” For some reason, instead of just saying “Paramahansa Yogananda,” she felt drawn to say, “He’s the most loving being in the *whole* world.”

“I know he is,” the man replied. “He came to me in a dream and put his arms around me and kept calling out my name over and over, so tenderly, ‘Michael, Michael, Michael.’ I thought I’d never know who he was. You don’t know the things I’ve done in my life, and you have no idea what it meant to me to know that someone loves me.”

The Guru’s love embraces every disciple, no matter what we have done. Never doubt your Guru’s love. We may not think he could possibly love us, but God and Guru know otherwise. Now, who do we think is right?

The Guru’s hand is always extended to the disciple. In order for the relationship to blossom, love and friendship need to flow both ways. The more we reach out by giving our love, appreciation, friendship, devotion, and service to the Guru, the more we open ourselves to receive his love — and the deeper the connection becomes.



Excerpts from closing class, “Living With a Positive and Joy-filled Attitude,” Sister Namita:

When you go back to your daily life, take with you this affirmation: “I shall go forth with the courage of a hero, and the smile of a conqueror.” After having gathered so many gems of spiritual inspiration from Guruji’s teachings this week, each one of you is a different person, a better person, a more spiritual person, whether you realize it or not — because when we get in touch with Truth, in subtle but lasting ways we are purified and uplifted.

Gurudeva promised us: “Whoever comes to me in the right spirit, with devotion for God, will never be the same again.” You may not be aware of your change, but others see it, and God and Guru see it — how you have changed, how you have grown — because every little effort you make in

self-improvement, in meditation, in loving God, is propelling you toward that supreme, ever new joy we are all seeking.

I heard a story about a 92-year-old woman who was moving into a nursing home. Her husband had recently passed away, and she was not able to live alone. After many hours of waiting patiently in the lobby, she smiled sweetly when the nurse came to say that her room was ready. As the new resident maneuvered her walker to the elevator, the nurse was describing the little room she would be given, and she told the nurse, “I love it!” with the enthusiasm of an eight-year-old who had just been given a new puppy. “But, Mrs. Jones,” said the nurse, “you haven’t seen the room.”

“That doesn’t have anything to do with it,” the woman replied. “Happiness is something you decide on ahead of time. Whether I like my room or not doesn’t depend on how the furniture is arranged. It’s how I arrange my mind.”

We, too, can remind ourselves that we have control over how we react — how we arrange our mind. When we are facing challenges and difficulties, we need to remind ourselves that we have a choice: We can become embittered, angry, resentful — or we can allow ourselves to grow in wisdom and understanding.

Remind yourself of the truth that you are joy itself. That joy is our true nature. We are particles of God’s infinite body, tiny sparks of His life and consciousness. The Upanishads say: “From Joy I came, for Joy I live, and into that sacred Joy I will one day melt again.”

Close your eyes and repeat with me this ecstatic affirmation of joy given by our Guru:

In joy I feel Thee, night and day, night and day....

Ceaseless joy, Lord, night and day.

Ever new joy, night and day.

All desires I give unto Thee, O Lord, night and day, night and day....

Continuously, night and day, Thy joy, O Lord, Thy Joy —

Ever new joy, night and day; ever new joy, night and day!

“When we are facing challenges and difficulties, we need to remind ourselves that we have a choice: We can become embittered, angry, resentful — or we can allow ourselves to grow in wisdom and understanding.”

Many more photos and a brief video from this year's Convocation can be found at www.yogananda-srf.org/tmp/centers.aspx?id=86



Left: Sister Subrata hosts pilgrimage tour at SRF Mother Center. Opposite page, top: (clockwise from top left) Brother Ishtananda, Hollywood temple pilgrimage tour; Brother Santoshananda, Lake Shrine pilgrimage tour; Wishing Well at SRF Mother Center; meditation during Encinitas Ashram Center pilgrimage tour.



“Convocation is a great oasis for the planet where all people can come and drink of love and understanding and give it to each other.”

From Sri Daya Mata's closing message:

Although Convocation week has drawn to a close, I urge you to look upon this as a new beginning in your spiritual life and your relationship with God and Guru....Feel that Gurudeva is ever guiding and helping you, and that you have the support of belonging to a united family of souls who are earnestly seeking the Divine together.

As you return to your homes, our love and friendship go with you, and we will be praying for you each day. You are Master's "shining jewels," scattered around the world, and by living his ideals and anchoring your lives in God, you can have a positive influence that reaches farther than you may realize. Take with you the wisdom you have gained, and the light of God's love, that you may radiate His goodness wherever he has placed you. Jai Guru!



Left: Pilgrimage tour, Encinitas Ashram Center. Opposite page, bottom: (clockwise from top left) Nuns' kirtan; Sister Draupadi at Open House; Lake Shrine pilgrimage tour; pilgrimage tour participant; Brothers Naradananda, Bhumananda, and Brahmananda at Open House; Brother Nakulananda at Open House.

