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How to Express Everlasting Youthfulness

*First Self-Realization Fellowship Temple
at Encinitas, California,* March 20, 1938*

The kingdom of God is not in the clouds, in some designated point of space; it is right behind the darkness that you perceive with closed eyes. God is Consciousness; God is absolute Existence; God is ever new Joy. This Joy is omnipresent. Feel your oneness with that Joy. It resides within you, and it encompasses infinity. Beyond the gross vibratory boundaries of matter, the Immutable Infinite reigns in all His majesty and vastness. Endlessness—that is the kingdom of God; conscious Bliss, eternal and boundless. When your soul has expanded and feels its presence everywhere, then you are united with Spirit.

We bow to the Infinite on the altar of the horizon where the sky meets the ocean; and we bow to the transcendental Infinite on the altar of peace within us.

In spite of all our demonstrations of ignorance, God continues to give us life by His indwelling presence. He is sleeping in the sod; He is dreaming in the flowers; He awakens in birds and animals; and He knows that He is awake in the human being. In the superman, He finds Himself again.

In ages past, the *rishis* and masters of India, secluded in their hermitages, unraveled the mysteries that hide the Omnipresent Spirit. Their research has given us the valuable techniques and methods that tune the body and mind to the Illimitable Source of life and intelligence residing in every human being. By concentrating within on the Infinite, you can receive this boundless power.

Knowledge acquired from the study of books or from

* The Golden Lotus Temple. See footnote on page 259.

learned human beings is limited; but from the Infinite, the unlimited power of wisdom can be had. How to attain that? We teach the method in the weekly lessons sent from our headquarters at Mt. Washington.* The truths in these lessons have come from God and from the research of the masters of India.

Know the Reason for Your Existence

It is an insult to your Self to be born, live, and die without knowing the answer to the mystery of why you were sent here as a human being in the first place. To forget God is to miss the whole point of existence. Learn to feel God, and to enjoy Him. Make it a habit and you will see in time how much you have gained. Acquiring material possessions and prosperity is no safeguard against sorrow. There will come a day when you will feel totally helpless, a mere pawn of destiny; and then you will begin to realize that God alone is your haven of security. He doesn't want to impose Himself on anyone. You must take the initiative to seek Him through your own fervent desire, preferring Him to all other desires. As the swan can swim through muddy waters with its feathers remaining unsoiled, so should you live in this world. If you coat your mind with the oil of nonattachment, then material desires cannot cling to you.

The dewdrop that separates itself from the lake and floats in isolation on the lotus leaf will be dried up unless it returns to the lake. So, before life evaporates in material desires, better slip into the consciousness of God. The dewdrop of life will then not have to suffer death but will be eternal. Birth is separation from the Infinite; death is not an end of life but a transition to a higher state. Freedom from birth and death is a return to God. The dewdrop belongs to the sea. Separated, it is vulnerable to the sun and wind and other elements of nature; but when the droplet returns to its source, it becomes magnified in oneness with the sea. So it is with your life. United to God you become immortal.

While we are yet separated from the Eternal Sea, our aim should be to manifest as much as possible our essential divine

* See information on page 419 about receiving these Lessons from Yogoda Satsanga Society of India.

immortality. On the lotus leaf of material happiness the dewdrop of life must remain untouched and unpolluted until it slips into the vastness of God's presence. How to express our innate immortality in spite of contrary limitations is the purpose of our subject on making youthfulness more lasting.

Youth Is a State of Mind and Soul, As Well As of the Body

Everyone is interested in youthfulness. In one way or another everyone is seeking the fabled "Fountain of Youth." But what is youth? All young people are not necessarily youthful; some are already old and jaded far beyond their years. In contrast, some elderly people remain youthful in spite of their advancing age. They keep their minds young. Their smiles trickle down from their souls into their bodies and faces; their very life blood throbs with the joy of being. And then there are those dull, lifeless persons who are as good as dead before they die—and they don't even know it. They are the "walking dead." You see many people like that—negative, critical, moody, dispirited. There is no excuse for a wrong state of mind. You must be always positive-minded, cheerful, smiling, vibrant. By all means, practice this mental youthfulness that comes from the core of your being.

Thus, the age of the body has no real connection with youthfulness. It is the state of the mind and the expression of the soul that make a person youthful. The definition of youth is that state of body, mind, and soul in which one feels the acme, the zenith, of joy and power. If you want to, you can retain that state indefinitely. Conversely, by carelessness you can lose it very easily.

Let us first approach this subject from the mental standpoint. The mind is the controller; that is, it is at the controls of this body. The body itself is designed by the mind. We are the sum total of the consciousness we ourselves have created over a period of incarnations.* This mind, or consciousness, is the supreme force that governs all voluntary and involuntary activities of this bodily factory with its multifarious outputs.

* See *karma* and *reincarnation* in glossary.

The Five Mental States of the Consciousness

We judge our condition as desirable or undesirable by the degree of happiness therein, or by the lack of it. Accordingly, there are five mental states: happiness, sorrow, indifference, peace, and true joy.

Waves whipped up in the middle of the ocean by a storm rise high, recede into a hollow, and then rise again, one after the other, until the storm ceases and the waves dissolve in the sea. Likewise with the mind. The mental peaks are life's alternating joys and sorrows; the hollows in between are indifference or boredom. These are the first three mental states.

You can usually recognize a person's mental state by his face. If you ask a person whose face registers happiness what has made him happy, you will find that some desire had been satisfied—he got a raise, he accomplished something he wanted to do, or was otherwise gratified. A desire fulfilled gives joy.

When you see a person with a glum or sour face, his expression tells you that he has met with some disappointment. A desire contradicted produces unhappiness. The desire for health is contradicted by pain; the desire for money is contradicted by poverty, and so on.

Then there are the people in between. Ask them, "Are you happy?" "No." "Are you sad?" "No." They are in the middle, neither on the crest of the wave of happiness, nor on the clashing wave of sadness; they are in the intermediate hollow. That is the neutral state of indifference.

One cannot remain indefinitely on the crests of either buoyant happiness or turbulent sorrow, or in the dumps of boredom. In this world of competing dualities, the ordinary being is tossed up and down—rising on a wave of joy, sinking into the trough of indifference, and then getting tumbled by a wave of sorrow. They little know anything beyond these states of consciousness. To be thus jostled about is to surrender free will to a seemingly capricious destiny.

What man* needs in order to live a successful and satisfy-

* In his talks and lectures, Paramahansa Yogananda generally used the masculine gender, as was the custom of his time. His usage, however, was rooted not in the narrowly exclusive sense of the word *man*, denoting only half of

ing life is evenness of mind. That can be attained only by concentration, mastery of the mental faculties. Even the most terrible sorrow is healed by time; nothing is gained by reliving it every day. Sorrowing for someone who is gone does not help him or yourself, nor does it change that sad fact. Making yourself miserable by nurturing an inferiority complex or punishing yourself for past mistakes or failures will not get you anywhere; it paralyzes your mental faculties. Never allow yourself to get into negative mental ruts. And do not be bored with life either. That is a very uncomfortable state. It slowly stewes you. Don't bake yourself and your potentialities in the oven of indifference.

Beyond the first three conditions of the mind—happiness, sorrow, and indifference—is the state of peace. Very few people reach that plane. Those who have money and health and satisfying relationships—everything they really need or want—may say: "I am not happy or unhappy or indifferent. I am contented; I am peaceful." After a period of turbulence, such a condition is welcome. But if for a long time one has peace that is merely the absence of joy and sorrow, he will say, "Please knock me on the head so I can feel if I am still alive!" Such peace, being a negative state in which excitation has been neutralized, is not lastingly satisfying.

So now comes the positive aspect, the last or fifth state of consciousness: the attainment of ever new joy. That state is found only by contacting God in deep meditation, through the practice of such techniques as those given by the masters of India. That all-fulfilling joy will never grow stale. How to describe it? If for ten days you were not permitted to sleep, but were forced to stay awake, and then allowed to fall asleep, the joy you feel at that moment, compounded a million times over, would not begin to express the joy that I am speaking about.

the human race, but in its broader original meaning, the word is derived from the same root as Sanskrit *manas*, mind—the uniquely human capacity for rational thought. The science of yoga deals with human consciousness from the point of view of the essentially androgynous Self (*atman*). As there is no other terminology in English that would convey these psychological and spiritual truths without excessive literary awkwardness, the use of *man* and related terms has been retained herein.

Jesus and other divine ones spoke of that joy. Saint Francis and Sri Chaitanya* knew that joy. Why else would saints deprive themselves of material gain, except that they found something greater? This path of Self-Realization doesn't tell you to cast aside everything of this world, but it does urge you to give up lesser, obstructing things for the superior, lastingly fulfilling true joy in life.

The time has come for you to know and understand the purpose of religion: how to contact that supernal Joy, which is God, the great and eternal Comforter. If you can find that Joy, and if you can retain that Joy all the time, no matter what happens in your life, you will stand unshaken amidst the crash of breaking worlds.

So that is the first law of retaining youth: You must have a happy state of mind, a state that is untouched by the events of life. In that joy, not even death can shake you. How could Jesus say, in the face of crucifixion, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do,"† unless he had that inner joy which even the tortures of the flesh could not take from him? In that steadfast mental foundation, he could, with his dying breath, express love for those who were the instruments of the death of his body. That is the invulnerable state you must strive to cultivate.

Learn to Smile Sincerely in All Circumstances

Seeking God in meditation is the direct way to attain a joyous and youthful state of mind. There are additional practices that will also help to nurture mental youthfulness. First of all, learn to smile—sincere smiles. Wherever you are, no matter how trying the circumstances, smile from your heart. Harbor no form of anger or malice. Try to give genuine smiles to all—friends, family, strangers alike. Half the secret of youthfulness lies in that. If you have a contagious smile that wells up from

* A brilliant scholar, Sri Chaitanya in 1508 had a spiritual awakening and became inflamed with love for God, whom he worshiped as the avatar Lord Krishna (see glossary). His fame as a *bhakta* (devotee of God) spread throughout India in the sixteenth century.

† *Luke 23:34* (Bible).

your true inner being, you are youthful. I often say that if you can't smile, then stand before a mirror and train yourself to smile by pulling the corners of the mouth up!

The day you make up your mind to smile, you will see that everything seems to conspire to try to make you cry! That is life. The day you make up your mind to be patient and forgiving, it will seem that others suddenly become harder to get along with. That is life. We are often crucified by others, but their meanness should not affect our resolutions to be kind. Let others pursue their way; you be bigger and adhere to your way. It is not the approval of human beings that you want, but the certification of God. Once you find His pleasure, you will be happy. Try to please others insofar as you can, and try not to offend anybody; but don't let that work against your primary duty to please God, first and foremost. It is not worth it.

Practice your smile of mental youthfulness all the time. See how many hours at a time you can keep your balance in spite of your trials. When you can remain cheerfully evenminded always, you will find every cell of your body alive with great joy.

God has blessed me these many years. Whether my smile is seen outwardly or not, divine joy is always with me now. The great River of Joy is flowing beneath the sands of my consciousness. Neither the changefulness of life nor the specter of death can take that away from me. It was hard work to make that state permanent and unchanging, but it was worth it.

So many people have thrown away years upon years and have not found joy. Why imitate them and go after those things that promise happiness and give unhappiness? Contact the Spirit in meditation, and you will know that what I have told you is true. You will possess a joy you will not part with, even if the whole world is offered to you in exchange. Money, sex, wine—nothing can match that supreme joy. It is an ever-burning radiance in your soul.

The Importance of Willingness, and of Being Less Self-centered

Willingness also is important in order to retain youthfulness. When you like someone, you don't mind cooking or doing other forms of service for that person; but if you have to do it

for someone you don't like, your unwillingness makes you tired and irritable to do anything for him. This same principle is applicable in every situation: If you are unwilling, then you have no energy or interest. If you are willing, you have the vitality and enthusiasm of youthfulness.

Another key to mental youthfulness is to learn to be less selfish and self-centered, and more giving and caring toward others. To hold on to the joy found in contact with God in meditation, you must practice His quality of loving all, of being just and kind to all. Forgive your enemies. What a wonderful release you will have from the bondage of anger and jealousy. Reach out to help others every day, in whatever way you can—and especially by bringing souls to the spiritual path to seek God. Give to all that same love with which you love your family and dear ones. God gives you loved ones that you might learn to expand self-love to include love for others. And He allows death and other circumstances to take away dear ones that you do not confine your love to only a few, but learn to give it to all. The more universal your love becomes, the more your expanded consciousness will be filled with the joy of His omnipresent Being. The Bhagavad Gita says: "When a man beholds all separate beings as existent in the One that has expanded Itself into the many, he then merges with Brahman (Spirit)."*

Is Eternal Youth of the Body Possible?

Then comes the bodily aspect of youthfulness. Various saints who have remained in secret seclusion, hidden from the skeptical gaze of an unenlightened world, have lived far beyond a normal life span, maintaining youthfulness not only of spirit, but of the body as well. Mahavatar Babaji† is one such. Jesus, in a different way, demonstrated mastery over the elements of his body. He said, and then proved, "Destroy this [bodily] temple and in three days I will raise it up."‡ Such pow-

* XIII:30.

† The perennially youthful master who is first in the Yogoda Satsanga Society of India/Self-Realization Fellowship line of Gurus, and who revived the ancient science of *Kriya Yoga* in 1861. (See glossary.)

‡ *John* 2:19 (Bible).

ers have been proven by great masters in India. The higher laws have not been much demonstrated in the West because its culture has concentrated on external material development, whereas the East has devoted itself to an inner research into the realms of Spirit.

Why be astonished that some masters, to fulfill a divine purpose at God's behest, choose to live unusually long lives? We see in nature that there are animals that can live much longer than ordinary human beings. Yet man is supposed to be the superior creature. Why is he less long-lived? Because as human beings we are uniquely gifted with free will, privileged to do anything we like; and by misuse of this endowment, man chooses to do all the things he should not do. His wrong habits of living, thinking, persistence in disunion from God, are passed from generation to generation in the process of evolution, severely limiting the expression of his divine potentiality—physically as well as mentally and spiritually.

When in the mother's womb the human body starts to grow from the division of the first cell—consisting of the union of sperm and ovum—an embryo is formed within four days. The whole potential of the body is there on the fourth day. In the beginning, the formative cells are called germ cells, each one capable of becoming any kind of bodily tissue. According to a specific design, they mysteriously start to specialize to form nerves, bones, skin, blood, organs—all the components of the body. As the body parts are formed, the specializing germ cells become somatic cells, locked into their specific functions and the limitations of those functions. That means they do not always obey the conscious mind, because the evolutionary and individual karmic habits and thoughts of centuries are embedded deep within their composition.

For example, man is able to grow two sets of teeth; so why can't he grow a third set, and a fourth? Because the very cells of our bodies are hypnotized by the evolutionary patterns of generations lodged in our brains and in the cellular makeup. The more we get away from the subconscious hypnosis of the evolutionary state of civilization, the more free we shall be. How to convert somatic cells back into versatile, creative germ cells, which can rebuild and rejuvenate body parts, will be

the future endeavor of science.* Our bodies should be able to change in whatever way we will them to do so.

The Greater the Will, the Greater the Flow of Energy

Learn to keep your will strong—a calm will, not a nervous will—and your body will then be full of energy. It is by the power of will that you bring energy into the body and utilize it. The greater the will, the greater the flow of energy. Learn how to draw that energy not only from food and oxygen, but from the Infinite as well, because a time will come when no matter what physical measures you take, your body will be weak. Food and oxygen are useful to the body only when acted upon by the inner life current. If this grows weak from physical and mental abuse, the outer supports of life become ineffective. The methods I teach show you how to recharge every part of your body with life energy coming direct from the omnipresent vibratory power of God that surrounds you and is within you. It is that power which has created your body and which sustains it. By the practice of the Energization Exercises† and especially by *Kriya Yoga* you can enliven your whole being with Divine Life.

Every gram of flesh has within it enough energy to light the city of Chicago for two days. You feel heat and vitality in the flesh generated by that energy, but not the tremendous energy itself within the atoms of the flesh. Each atom is a dynamo of power. You can vitally recharge every cell of the body by *Kriya Yoga* meditation, and by the exercise of will to tap the cosmic source of power. If you keep your will intact, and use that will to perform all your physical and mental actions with cheerful

* In recent years scientists have begun to report preliminary successes in achieving this. Robert Becker, M.D., a researcher in orthopedic surgery in New York, has used electrical stimulation to cause somatic cells to revert to the nonspecialized state of germ cells, enabling frogs and rats to regrow lost limbs (even though these animals do not naturally regenerate body parts). Dr. Becker and several other researchers have used this technique on human beings to heal bone fractures that had been diagnosed as irreparable. Further experimentation and research continues to this day.

† Formulated by Paramahansa Yogananda and taught in the *Yogoda Satsanga Society Lessons*. (See glossary.)

willingness, your body and mind will remain vitally youthful.

Obey the Laws of God Embodied in Cosmic Nature

Nature, cosmic creation, is the embodiment of the laws of God. So you must learn to obey these laws. Disease, mental inharmonies, and all kinds of misery are the consequences of disobedience. By misuse of free will, human beings choose to misbehave; and their actions, being contrary to divine law, later react upon the nervous system and the consciousness, creating inharmonies in body and mind.

When it comes to diet, the laws of health are constantly broken. Most people dig their own graves with their knives and forks. The animals in the zoo are fed more scientifically than the average human being. You should govern your eating habits by what you should eat, and not merely by what pleases your sense of taste. Your diet should include a predominance of fresh fruits and vegetables, and natural whole grains and legumes. Avoid too many refined starches and too many sweets, and greatly limit the intake of fats—these can be very injurious to health. The best candies are nature's sun-dried fruits, un sulphured. Those who eat a lot of meat should break off that habit by strictly avoiding all forms of beef and pork, and eating fish, poultry, or lamb only occasionally. Every piece of meat eaten should be accompanied by a large serving of lettuce. Far more preferable is a totally meatless diet that includes instead some dairy products, eggs, and vegetable protein foods. Unsalted peanuts or almonds or raw garbanzo beans, ground finely and mixed with orange juice, makes a good source of protein as a substitute for meat. Take milk in between meals, not with meals.

Avoid overeating. Ingesting more than the body needs can be as harmful as wrong eating. Don't think you have to eat just because the dinner bell rings. And when you do eat, eat less. Also, learn to fast one day a week and three consecutive days once a month on fresh fruits or unsweetened fruit juices.

Proper elimination is very important. Fresh fruits and vegetables help to clean out your body. When fasting, it is good to take a mild natural laxative in orange juice.

Posture, also, is important to good health. Poor posture

constricts the healthy flow of the life energy in the various body parts and vital organs. The best posture is chest out, shoulders back, stomach and abdomen in, and buttocks tucked under. Don't stand with a swayback or with hunched shoulders. Don't sit in a slumped position with the spine out of alignment, hampering breathing and the free flow of life energy in the spine. Psychologically, a hunched posture suggests a defeatist attitude. Always sit and stand erect. Be master of yourself, with your mind on the infinite power within and around you.

Take regular exercise, such as walking every day. Learn to breathe properly—calmly and deeply, filling the lungs all the way to the lower lobes. When the system is well oxygenated by proper breathing and exercise, the life force therein vitalizes the whole body, including the brain.

Lastly, in connection with the physical aspects of youthfulness, it is extremely important to conserve your power of sex. Overindulgence in sex and misuse of Nature's creative force will bring on disease and old age quicker than anything else. It devitalizes the body and weakens the immune system. Married couples should practice moderation, and single persons should observe abstinence.

By adhering to good-health practices, and by not diminishing the inner life energy through wrong physical and mental actions, you will enhance your ability to retain health and youthfulness. Even bad health karma from past lives can be thus greatly mitigated. No matter what your past is, it is never too late to try to change; it is never too late to correct your bad habits.

The "Fountain of Youth" Is Within the Soul

In the final analysis, the sought-after "Fountain of Youth" is to be found in your soul. Your true Self, being made in the image of God, is immortal. It never undergoes the ravages that affect the body. "No weapon can pierce the soul; no fire can burn it; no water can moisten it; nor can any wind wither it....The soul is immutable, all-permeating, ever calm, and immovable—eternally the same."* Right within your body is this immortality. You are dreaming delusion's dreams of weakness

* Bhagavad Gita II:23–24.

and frailty, and thus you do not see that behind you, and within your soul, is the everlasting immutable power of God. You must realize this. If you can once attain that consciousness, then even death cannot disturb you. Those who know God have that consciousness. They know the science of the atomic structure of creation, and its source and essence in the creative thought of God. To know Him is to see the body as a part of Spirit. The miracles of this realization are not to be demonstrated before the staring curiosity of people; but all God-realized saints have in some way quietly manifested that power.

In your dreams, you can make yourself whatever you want to be; you can do whatever you want to do. Sometimes you are sick, and sometimes rich, and so on. Mind can do anything in that dream state. When you learn how to control your mind during the waking state, realizing that its power is a part of the consciousness of God, you can similarly have complete mastery over the body. Meditation upon the soul is the method by which the mind can be made to work its wonders under your control. When you find your true Self, the soul, you shall see that the body is nothing but an emanation of God.

Those who are sincere seekers and follow this path steadfastly shall know the mystery of the everlastingness of the soul. If you can be cheerful and evenminded in all circumstances, and do all things willingly, you can be mentally ever youthful. If, in addition, you obey health laws, and use your will to draw on the infinite cosmic energy, you can promote vital youthfulness in the body. And, above all, if you know that you are immortal, made in the image of God, your whole being will glow with that eternal youthfulness; and if it is the will of God, you will not have to experience so-called death when you cast off this mortal body.* And even if you do undergo the natural transition of death, it will be seen only as a peaceful dream.

Make a solemn resolution to meditate every morning and

*In his *Autobiography of a Yogi*, Paramahansaji writes: "Many yogis are known to have retained their self-consciousness without interruption by the dramatic transition to and from 'life' and 'death.'" He himself left the body consciously at the time of his passing in 1952.

before going to bed at night: "First, last, and always, O Spirit, I will keep my engagement with Thee in meditation. You have blessed me to come in contact with this great truth of Self-Realization and its Masters, that through this gateway I may find Thee. Bless me to be steadfast until I find Thee."

Feel your oneness with the Father. Pray to Him that you perfect your body and mind, that in their harmonious instrumentality you may feel His presence within you. May the glory of Spirit abide with you. May His energy charge your body and mind, and His spirit awaken within your soul. Feel His glory registering His Infinite Immortality in your body, mind, and soul.