There is a Power that will light your way to health, happiness, peace, and success, if you will but turn toward that Light.

— Paramahansa Yogananda
Focusing the Power of Attention for Success

BY PARAMAHANSA YOGANANDA

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Success has a relation to the satisfaction of the soul in the context of the environment in which one lives; it is a result of actions based on the ideals of truth, and includes the happiness and well-being of others as a part of one’s own fulfillment. Apply this law to your material, mental, moral, and spiritual life and you will find it a complete, comprehensive definition of success.

People think of success in different ways, depending on their aim in life. You even hear of it in connection with stealing: “He was a successful thief”! This shows that not all kinds of success are desirable. Our success must not hurt others. Another qualification of success is that we not only bring harmonious and beneficial results to ourselves, but also share those benefits with others. Suppose a wife engages in the spiritual practice of prolonged periods of silence, and at such times refuses to talk even to her husband and children. Though she may succeed in keeping silent, and thereby gain some degree of personal
inner peace, her behavior is selfish and detrimental to her family’s happiness. She is not truly successful unless the accomplishment of her good intention also benefits those to whom she has a responsibility.

Likewise, the attainment of material success means more than that we are individually entitled to enjoy our prosperity; it means that we are morally obligated to help others to create a better life as well. Anyone who has the brains can make money. But if he has love in his heart, he will never be able to use that money selfishly; he will always share with others. Money becomes a curse to the miserly, but to those who have heart it is a blessing.

Henry Ford, for example, makes a lot of money, but at the same time he doesn’t believe in charity that simply encourages people to be lazy. Rather, he provides work and a livelihood for many. If Henry Ford makes money by giving others prosperity too, he is successful in the right way. He has greatly helped the masses; American civilization owes much to him.¹

Even the greatest of saints are not fully redeemed until they have shared their success, their ultimate experiences of God-realization, by helping others toward divine realization. This is why those who have that attainment are dedicated to giving understanding to those who don’t understand.
Thus, if you find joy and pleasure in the culture of your mind to achieve true success, not only do you insure your own happiness, but that of others as well.

**A Different Standard of Success in East and West**

There is a different standard of success in the East and in the West. But the East is fast imitating the worst of what it sees in movies from the West. The storybook ideal of happiness that the movies depict brings some solace to your heart; but when you look at real life, you see that success is not so simple. Life can often be cruel. You have to fight even to live. Think of all you have to do just to feed the body and keep it strong and free from disease. Even if you succeed, that success is only temporary, because eventually the body has to be dumped into the earth again. To have a successful existence you have to fight so many forces, within and without, that would rob you of worthwhile achievement.

The West concentrates on the partial or temporary success that belongs to this present life. The East concentrates on the complete success that belongs to eternity. Those who have attained eternal success we call *siddhas*, which means those who have been judged successful by the Master of the Universe. Such a one is completely happy in body, mind, and spirit. He may have few or no
possessions, yet he has great wealth—mental contentment, and spiritual understanding of the correlation of the soul and Spirit, and of the body and its essential relationship with the Cosmic Life. That is true success. In the East, they nurture in the child’s mind the desire for this kind of success. In the West, you give your child a little bank and teach him to look to money for fulfillment. To strive for sufficient material means is good, but children should also be taught the value of success that will never fade. Soul wealth lasts forever in the bank of eternity, and you can draw happiness from it any time.

But even spiritual success can be one-sided, if you have material responsibilities and are unable to meet them. Only a great yogi who has freed himself from the laws of nature can completely ignore all material concerns. In the East, the doctrine of spiritual happiness was nurtured and material sufficiency was more or less neglected. In the West, you have some physical comforts, but very little mental happiness. What is needed is balance between the two. If you only go after one thing in life, no matter what it is, you will become one-sided. For example, an artist may concentrate on his art to the exclusion of other important considerations. The result of this imbalance is that he becomes nervous and unhappy. But art and God together are a marvelous combination! Busi-
ness and God, science and God, service and God—such combinations make for all-round success and happiness.

Wealth on the one hand, and disease and trouble on the other, have numerous aspects. The beauty of the West is your cleanliness. Here the mosquitoes and bedbugs haven’t much chance to survive, whereas in the East they are plentiful. But don’t congratulate yourselves too much about that; for here you have worse things—such as unpaid bills and financial worries from living on the installment plan—that bite your peace.

There Is More to Life Than Mere Existence

God didn’t create this earth as a place for us to just eat, sleep, and die; but to find out His purpose. A few wise ones have beheld the divine schema, but so many others are blind and don’t see it. The earth becomes a torture chamber to those who live in ignorance of God’s plan. But when you use life’s experiences as your teacher, and learn from them the true nature of the world and your part in it, those experiences become valuable guides to eternal fulfillment and happiness.

The Lord has made delusion so strong! We are living in a bedlam. You think money means happiness, but when you get it you find you are still not happy. You may have money and lose your health; or have good health and