

The Successful Youth

By Swami Tejomayananda

Before we talk about success let us first determine what we mean by youth. We will define youth as those individuals who are between the ages of 18 and 30 and have lots of enthusiasm. They are industrious and want to make a name for themselves. However, we find that this youthful energy can also be misdirected. This happens because some of the youth lack an ideal toward which they can direct their energies.

An Ideal Youth

- 1. Being morally good**
- 2. Helpful to others**
- 3. Having a clear conscience**
- 4. Love for learning**
- 5. Having high hopes or aspirations**
- 6. Able to hold on to principles and values**
- 7. Being physically fit**
- 8. Having great inner strength.**

Our scriptures define an ideal youth as not only being of a certain age, but also as someone in whom you find the virtues of goodness and nobility. They list the physical, mental and intellectual attributes needed to be an ideal youth and affirm that one who has these qualities and the resourcefulness to make use of them, will have a fuller and happier life.

Success

We all strive for success in life but what is success? By definition, success may be the attainment of a desired object or a certain goal. But suppose our goal is to become wealthy and we become rich at the expense of another person, then that cannot be considered real success. For true success we should see whether it is gained through noble or ignoble means. Both the goal and the means are important. Even if the goal is good but gained through unfair means, then the gain is not glorious.

True abiding success is that in which lies the welfare and well being of all people. When all are happy, then our happiness is automatically included. When we strive selfishly only for our own happiness, we can make many people miserable. Secondly, true success is that in which lies prosperity for all, steady inner growth, and firm and abiding spiritual values (*dharma*). In order to gain true and lasting success we need certain qualities which we will now discuss.

Vision of Life

First we must have a comprehensive vision of life. This vision has to be characterized by the welfare of all beings. Even though we have to live life day-to-day, event-to-event, and project-to-project, we need to constantly maintain the total vision. Some people become embittered with life's unpleasant experiences because of a faulty vision. But people with the right vision, see the oneness of all, and find the world to be the best teacher. To them the world is wonderful! Whether you want to be a successful singer, dancer, or a professional, your vision should be to serve society through your chosen path. Only then will there be an abiding success that blesses all of humanity, including you. That is true achievement.

Three kinds of Vision

- 1. Sattvika – pure vision, ability to see the oneness of all.**
- 2. Rajasika – impure, governed by likes and dislikes.**
- 3. Tamasika – dull and dark, fanatic and angry.**

There are three kinds of vision of life and they depend upon the condition of our minds.

The first type of vision (*sattvika*) sees the oneness of all beings, the unity in diversity, which manifests itself in the form of love and service towards all.

The second vision (*rajasika*) sees only the differences. Such an attitude gives rise to likes and dislikes in our minds. The third vision is *tamasika*. It sees only parts of the whole, wherein we set our hearts on one little thing and behave as though it is the "be all and end all" of life; and life becomes unimaginable without it. This narrowness of vision makes a person fanatic, angry, and frustrated.

Discrimination

One's vision also depends on one's ability to discriminate. In Sanskrit this faculty of discrimination is called *buddhi*. It enables us to clearly distinguish between right and wrong. This faculty is also of three kinds. In the *tamasika buddhi* there is total confusion, right is perceived as wrong and vice versa. The person who has *rajasika buddhi* is confused and the right decisions are made only at times. When the *sattvika buddhi* predominates, the difference between right and wrong is clear and all doubts are gone. If we desire our own welfare and at the same time that of the world, we must be able to see the oneness of all beings (a *sattvika* vision) and know the difference between right and wrong (*sattvika buddhi*) then the result will also be *sattvika*.

Fortitude

When we undertake any activity, we are bound to face obstacles. To overcome them, we require other important qualities such as: fortitude, courage, patience, and the ability to hold on to our principles, ideals, values and goals. The word fortitude is *dhrti* in Sanskrit and there are three types of fortitude.

People with *tamasika dhrti* spend their time grieving about the past, fearing the future and daydreaming in the present! They begin to enjoy living in sorrow and are not motivated to achieve anything in life. Those with *rajasika dhrti* have various ambitions, and sometimes fulfill them, but many times get frustrated and do not contribute much to society. Only those who have determination, perseverance, and fearlessness (*sattvika dhrti*) are a great blessing to this world. That kind of fortitude leads to true success. All the great and dedicated people have enriched our culture for eternity. They provide solace and enlightenment to millions of people even now.

Faith

Faith is another important quality we need to be successful. We need to bear in mind that if it is the Lord's Mission, the Lord alone is capable of accomplishing it. That is faith! So why don't we give charge for once to the Lord and see how He works! When you are in the Lord's service then where is the problem? Let us consider ourselves privileged to be in His service and trust that He will see us through life's tasks, that is His promise.

Let me share an incident with you. After Gurudev Swami Chinmayananda attained final rest, *mahasamadhi*, I was chosen to be head of Chinmaya Mission. A reporter asked me whether I was fit to assume this role. I responded that I am confident that if I am not fit, I will be made fit with the blessings of the Lord and Guru.

Sometimes that faith is shaken and that happens because we depend upon people or a thing instead of the Lord. The Lord is a great taskmaster who frustrates you whenever you turn your attention away from Him. So always remember – we must have that faith without fear – to be in service of the Lord is a great thing! In moments of weakness or doubt, we must remember Gurudev's words – "We can! We must!" Then we say, we will!

Plan of Action

In order to be successful a plan of action is essential. Absence of a plan could lead to chaos. The first and most important step is to determine the objective clearly. For example, if you want to become a doctor, you must be clear whether your objective is to be a world-famous specialist, and earn a lot of money, or to serve the poor with your knowledge, in which case super specialization is not required. Today, there are many young people who leave India to go to the U.S.A. They first come on a student visa, then graduate to a work permit, then a green card, and finally become a citizen. After some time they want to return to India with the intention to reconnect to their roots. However, they find it difficult to

Plan of Action

- 1. Decide and outline the objective.**
- 2. Identify the means required to achieve it**
- 3. Gather and mobilize your resources.**
- 4. Execute the plan.**

leave what they have accomplished in the affluent U.S.A. Then they wonder what they should do. This is mainly because of undertaking activities without a clear objective. There is nothing wrong in going to the U.S.A. to earn money or settle down, but non-clarity of vision will create problems.

The next step is to identify the actions needed to achieve the objective. For example, if we want to go to the U.S.A., there are many prerequisites such as passing examinations and obtaining a visa. We need to identify these and plan how to achieve them. Swami Chinmayananda used to say beautifully, "Plan out your work, then work out your plan." Do not stop at the planning stage. Many projects remain on paper because people do not go beyond the planning stage. After planning, work out your plan.

For the execution of your plan, you will need many resources. In our example of going to the U.S.A., money needs to be arranged and would be one of the key resources. But resources can also be in the form of your own mental and physical fitness. Thus resources can be internal or external. We must be clear whether we are mentally prepared for the life in the U.S.A., which could be very different from the life that we are used to. One must start mobilizing these resources. So, the first step is to plan, then identify the means required to achieve it, mobilize your resources, and then do the actual work necessary to carry out the plan.

Goal and Objective

Now we are adding two words "goal" and "objective." A goal is an ultimate achievement. In order to achieve that goal we have to undertake various activities, which will be geared towards reaching it. Thus, all our activities have a specific intent and purpose. For example, personally my ultimate goal is spiritual – Self-realization. As a *sannyasi*, I require purity of mind, which is obtained by selfless action. So the objective of the selfless action is purity of mind. The objective of selfless action is not directly the realization of the Self. Let us say I practice *japa* (repetition of prayer). The specific objective of *japa* is to attain single-pointedness of the mind. Both purity of mind and single-pointedness are required for the achievement of the goal of Self-realization. Hence both are geared towards the goal, but each of the activities has specific objectives.

So far we have seen that vision, discrimination, fortitude, faith, and plan of action need to be developed so that we can attain true success and happiness in life.

Happiness

Happiness is also of three kinds. We are all familiar with the kind of happiness that can be derived from the senses; these are called *rajasika* and *tamasika* happiness. Happiness that arises out of drinking or taking drugs is delusional and is called *tamasika* happiness. This kind of happiness is neither an achievement nor a success, but is actually a total defeat. There is also the happiness born of the contact between the sense organs and the sense objects, which appears to be giving a lot of joy, but in the end creates only problems. This is called *rajasika* happiness. Both *tamasika* and *rajasika* happiness appear to be giving joy, but in fact, they create bondage.

Sattvika happiness is not necessarily enjoyable in the beginning but it is like nectar in the end. We know that happiness can be derived from the senses through sound, color, taste and smell, but we cannot comprehend the happiness that is possible when the mind becomes calm. If we know that kind of happiness, then all the excitement and charm of the outer world ends. *Sattvika* happiness is that happiness which comes through grace, from purity of mind, and from the very source of happiness itself and is independent from the world of objects.

Measuring Success

Success has two aspects – an external aspect and an internal aspect. For example, an external measure of success for a student is his/her marks or grades. But the internal measure of success is measured by the amount of love the student has developed for his studies. This internal aspect is subjective. There are many students who perform brilliantly but actually do it out of compulsion. We have a tendency to judge students by their performance in one final exam and then label them as

successes or failures. But every day in school teaches a student something, and that is an achievement that we tend to ignore.

Let me give another example of how to measure success properly. Suppose we decide to meditate and get up early and sit for half an hour. But after some time we feel that we were a failure at meditation because we noticed that our thoughts were wandering, then that would not be proper way to measure success. The very fact that we got up early, which never happened before, and we were able to sit for half an hour in a single posture is an achievement in itself. So, congratulate yourself!

The other aspect about success is to check if the specific purpose of each action has been achieved. Success is measured one action at a time, slowly succeeding step by step in our journey towards the goal. Never lose sight of the ultimate goal. Intermediate successes should enhance our confidence in achieving greater and higher things. So one measure of success should be increased self-confidence, it is a fact that success increases one's confidence and joy.

Next, we measure success in terms of whether or not the actions are causing harm or benefiting other people. The real idea of success lies in the welfare of society not in individual happiness at the cost of others. Our goal is, "May all be happy." The scripture says: *sarve bhavantu sukhinah* – May all be happy. *Sarve santu niramayah* – May all be healthy (free from disease). *Sarve bhadrani pashyantu* – May all see happiness only, everywhere. *Ma kashchit dukha bhagbhavet* – Let no one suffer. This is our goal and we must go on working towards it to the best of our ability.

We can contribute to society in many ways – by being cheerful at all times and by doing and saying something good, or even through a nice thought. True success is measured by how much we are growing internally, and how much we are able to contribute positively to the welfare of society. This kind of success is gained wherever there is *dharma*. Only a person who follows righteousness attains success.

All of us have great potential, but a vision or reason is required for the potential to manifest and to enjoy true success. The company that we keep and the goal that we follow become instrumental in bringing out that potential. Study the life of great persons, find out who inspires you, look for the characteristics that made them great, and try to bring them into your life.

An all-rounded personality is one who is successful in all aspects of life. Otherwise as Swami Vivekananda said, "Once in a lifetime even a fool can do something great!" That does not make the individual great.

A great person is great in every little thing he does. Such a person's character is revealed in every activity he undertakes! Greatness actually becomes the nature of that person!

Practical Tips

Let me give you some practical tips. Look at your inner beauty, not just your external appearances. I read somewhere, "Your inner beauty is reflected in the smiling faces of others around you." Carry inspiration and knowledge with you. Be steady in your studies. Be honest. The most important thing is honesty with yourself. Learn the art of time management so that you are able to give time to your studies, your job and your family. You may think that these are very general instructions, but let me tell that these are really important and require great attention. We already looked at the importance of having an ideal, a *sattvika* vision, and a plan of action; these are all necessary to achieve your goal.

So be happy wherever you are! Wherever you go you should be like sugar in milk. The sugar is not seen but it gives it its taste. Do not be like lime and spoil the milk. Instead, sweeten the milk. Then you will have greater and greater joy within yourself, and others around you will also be happy. That is called true success.