



Paramhansa Yogananda



History, Life, Mission



Introduction

This book is fruit of a lifelong dedication as a disciple of Yogananda. It is lovingly offered by a devotee to devotees: to those who might be interested in detailed insider-information about Yogananda's life, and about the history of his work. It might be described as unorthodox, as it doesn't follow any particular party line.

Every topic has been diligently researched. Of course errors and misunderstandings are bound to be found: perfection is not of this world, and has certainly not been attained by the author. The texts are not written in scientific fashion, but are meant to read easily. Please forgive any inevitable inaccuracies in the English language: though the author has been speaking English daily for many years, it's not his mother tongue.

Most of these chapters have earlier been published in a raw form on another site, which is now regretted, since that site is uncharitable. But back then the author didn't know where else to place them.

If you should happen to find yourself in disagreement with any statements in the book, please take it as an opportunity to strengthen your "harmony-muscle." The book's intention is simply to describe Yogananda's history as accurately as possible. It doesn't claim to be always right, and presents the understanding of just one person.

All quotations and photos are in public domain.

A lot of work went into this book. If you find yourself being grateful for it, you might want to say *thank you* through a donation. On <http://yoganandaharmony.com> you will find a donation link.

May we all grow in our understanding of a *Premavatar*'s mission, blessing, love. One time a disciple was having an exceptionally difficult time, and he said to Yogananda, "Please bless me." The Master looked at him through his great luminous eyes, and then replied with profound gentleness: "I am blessing you all the time. So much I cannot even say – so much – it is better not even to ask. Just receive it."

Jai Guru,
and jai "*yogananda-Harmony*"

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Chapter 1

Timeline of Yogananda's Life

Yogananda's Childhood



1893-1902

He is born and lives in *Gorakpur* (to age 8). Here little Mukunda receives a mystical letter from God.

1902

He visits *Ichapur* (“at the age of 8”). An important moment, as here he has a vision of God as Light, described in the *Autobiography of a Yogi*.

1902-1904

He lives in Lahore (age 8 to 11). Here Divine Mother lovingly answers Mukunda’s prayers, bringing him two desired kites (see *Autobiography of a Yogi*).

1904-1906

He lives in Bareilly (age 11 to 12). Here Yogananda loses his mother who died in Calcutta, during wedding preparations for her eldest son, Ananta (see *Autobiography of a Yogi*).

May 1906- July1906

He lives in Chittagong (age 12)

From 1906

He lives in Calcutta (from age 12)

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## **As a Youth in India**



## **1908**

At the age of 15, Mukunda establishes his first ashram: the *Sadhana Mandir* in Calcutta. His favorite activity is meeting saints: Swami Pranabananda (with 2 bodies), the blissful Master Mahasaya, the impressive Tiger Swami, the levitating Bhaduri Mahasaya, the scientist J. Chandra Bose, and others.

## **1909**

His ashram is moved next to Tulsi Bose's home. It includes a "Saraswati Library". (In 1910 moved elsewhere.)

## **1910**

Mukunda meets his guru, Swami Sri Yukteswar. College begins in Calcutta, at least nominally- he is hardly present.

## **1913**

”Studies” continue in Serampore.

He meets Rabindranath Tagore for the first time, “shortly after he received the Nobel Prize”.

## **1915**

Mukunda receives his university degree.

In July his guru initiates him in the ancient Swami order, giving him the spiritual name, Swami Yogananda Giri.

## **1916**

Yogananda re-starts the ashram at Tulsi’s home. Here he accepts the first boys for school training.

Yogananda discovers the principles of the Yogoda-exercises, which later become his *energization exercises*.

From August to November he visits Japan.

## **1917**

Yogananda founds the *Yogoda Satsanga Society*.

He also starts a school in Dihika (Bengal).

## **1918**

The school is transferred to Ranchi (Bihar).

## **1920**

Still in India, Yogananda's publishes his first book: “Dharmavijnana” (Wisdom of Dharma)- later called *Science of Religion*.

Two years after founding the Ranchi school, he once again meets the Nobel-prize poet, Rabindranath Tagore, and discusses schools with him.

In Ranchi, he receives an invitation from America, to participate in a “Congress for Religious Liberals”.

In Calcutta, on July 25, the supreme Guru Mahavatar Babaji blesses him for his mission in the West.

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In America



1920

In September 19, Yogananda arrives in Boston.

Dr. Lewis becomes Yogananda's first American Kriya-disciple.

For three years, from 1920-1923, Swami Yogananda lives and teaches in Boston.

1922

In June, he establishes his first American teaching center at N.Waltham, MA.

1923

Yogananda publishes his book of poetry, *Songs of the Soul*.

He also publishes his first written lessons: **YOGODA INTRODUCTION**

Yogananda's starts his transcontinental lecture tours. He lectures in the major cities, in the greatest halls, of America. Thousands hear him everywhere.

He lectured in Worcester, MA (November 5), New York (November 24, for 4 months)

1924

Yogananda publishes his book *Science of Religion*, and also his *Scientific Healing Affirmations*.

May 1: He begins month-long classes in Philadelphia, PA. Here the well-known symphony conductor Leopold Stokowski becomes his student.

August 11: Yogananda begins a series of classes in Denver.

The famous horticulturist Luther Burbank becomes Yogananda's student.

He meets Tara Mata, his editor-in-chief.

In September, Yogananda visits Alaska, traveling in a steamer.

1925

Yogananda publishes his YOGODA COURSE.

In July, he meets his most highly advanced woman disciple, Sister Gyanamata.

October 25: Yogananda establishes his headquarters at Los Angeles, Mount Washington.

There at Mt. Washington, he tries to establish a "how-to-live" school.

Yogananda in this year begins to publish his magazine: He named it variously: East-West (1925 to 1936) and (1945 to 1947); Inner Culture (1937 to 1944); Self Realization Magazine (1948 to 1969); Self-Realization (1970 to present). The magazine features amongst other articles his commentaries on the *Second Coming of Christ* (from 1932), on the *Bhagavad Gita* (from 1932), and on the *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam* (from 1937).

He meets Kamala Silva (see photo, with her mother).

1925-33

Yogananda continues to lecture to thousands, all over America. His fame spreads.

George Eastman, inventor of Kodak camera, becomes Yogananda's friend and student.

1926

Yogananda publishes his ADVANCED COURSE IN PRACTICAL METAPHYSICS.

Clara Clemens Gabrilowitsch, the daughter of Mark Twain, becomes Yogananda's disciple.

1927

On January 24, President Coolidge receives Yogananda at the White House.

1929

Yogananda meets the famous opera singer Amelita Galli Curci, who becomes his disciple.

Durga Ma becomes his disciple.

He publishes *Whispers from Eternity*.

Dhirananda betrays him, even fighting against him in a lawsuit. Yogananda decides to visit Mexico, giving lectures and meeting Mexico's president, Portes Gil.

1930

Yogananda publishes his SUPER ADVANCED COURSE

1931

Daya Mata becomes Yogananda's disciple. With her arrival Yogananda's monastic order starts.

Yogananda also meets Yogacharya Oliver Black.

1932

On January 10, Yogananda meets Rajarsi Janakananda, his most advanced disciple and successor.

Yogananda publishes his *Metaphysical Meditations*.

He organizes a "Summer School" at Mount Washington.

In May, *East/West* publishes names of famous students of Yogananda:

Amelita Galli-Curci; Luther Burbank; Luigi von Kunits, Conductor of the New Symphony Orchestra of Toronto, Canada; Huston Ray, brilliant pianist; Countess Ilya Tolstoy; Homer Samuels,

distinguished pianist; Vladimir Rosing, eminent tenor and director of the American Opera Co.; Clara Clemens Gabrilowitsch; Maria Carreras, famous pianist; George Liebling, pianist-composer; R. J. Cromie, Owner-publisher "Vancouver Sun"; Louis van Norman, Commercial Attach, U. S. Dept. of Commerce; Douglas Grant Diff Ainslie, English poet and author; Alfred Himan, editor "Singing"; Rev. Dr. Arthur Porter, pastor, Salem Congregational Church, York, England.

1932-35

1932 Ananda Mata joins the monastic life.

From 1934 Yogananda withdraws from "campaigning" in America, and stays mostly at Mount Washington. Hard times begin, eating mostly self-grown tomatoes.

In 1934 Yogananda publishes his ADVANCED SUPER COSMIC SCIENCE COURSE.

Until 1934, he had used the Indian name *Yogoda Satsanga* for his organization, also in America. From 1934 on he calls it *Self-Realization Fellowship*. In 1935 Yogananda registers *Self-Realization Fellowship* as an official church.

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## **Europe, Middle East, North Africa**



**1935**

On June 9, Yogananda sails from the USA back to India. On his way, he stops in Europe, visiting by car England (lecturing in London, visiting Stonehenge), Scotland, France, Belgium, Holland, Germany (visiting the Bavarian stigmatist Therese Neumann), Switzerland, Italy (Venice, pilgrimage to St. Francis of Assisi, and lecturing in Rome), Greece (visiting Athenian temples), Israel (pilgrimage to Jesus' places), and Egypt (visiting ancient pyramids).

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In India



In August 22, 1935, Yogananda arrives by ship in Bombay. His first stop, still in August, is in Wardha, visiting the great political

saint, Mahatma Gandhi.
Then Yogananda travels to Calcutta, seeing family and friends.
In Serampore, he meets his guru Sri Yukteswar again, after 15 years.
The next visit is to his school in Ranchi.
In October and November 1935, in South India, he visits in Mysore (meeting Sir C. V. Raman, the Indian Nobel Prize physicist), Bangalore, Hyderabad, Madras, Arunachala (meeting Ramana Maharishi). He gives many lectures.
In December, Yogananda meets the great woman saint, Anandamoyee Ma in Calcutta, and later again in his school at Ranchi.
In late December 1935, the day after Sri Yukteswar's Winter Solstice Festival, Yogananda receives from his guru the highest spiritual title "Paramhansa."

1936

In January, Yogananda visits the Kumbha Mela in Allahabad. Afterwards he travels to Agra (Taj Mahal), Brindaban (Swami Keshabananda, and ancient temples), Delhi, Meerut (once his brother Ananta's home), Bareilly (visiting a boyhood friend), Gorakhpur (his birthplace), and Benares (Vishvanath temple, Lahiri Mahasaya's home).
In early March, back in Calcutta, a telegram calls him to Puri: there Sri Yukteswar entered Mahasamadhi on March 9.
In June, back in Bombay, Yogananda witnesses the resurrection of Sri Yukteswar.

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## **Back in America**



### **1936**

In September 1936 Yogananda returns England for a few weeks, lecturing there again, and arrives in late October in New York. In late 1936 he is back at Mt. Washington.

### **1936**

Returning from India, Yogananda is given the beautiful Encinitas hermitage as a gift from his most advanced disciple, Rajarsi Janakananda. A period of writing begins for Yogananda.

### **1938**

Yogananda publishes his *Cosmic Chants*.

He also publishes his PRAECEPTA LESSONS.

*The Golden Lotus Temple of All Religions* is constructed at Encinitas: the first temple to carry the name “of All Religions.” It slips into the ocean in 1942.

Yogananda dedicates the *Self-Realization Church of All Religions* in Washington, DC.

### **1939**

The YSS headquarter is established in Dakshineswar, India.

Brother Bhaktananda becomes Yogananda's disciple.

### **1941**

Yogananda founds a Yoga University at Mount Washington,

which is later discontinued because of lack of interest from the public.

### **1942**

He dedicates a *Self-Realization Church of All Religions* in Hollywood.

In the early 40ies Yogananda starts a “World-Brotherhood Colony” at Encinitas, inviting families to live there. It was discontinued due to lack of interest from the public.

### **1943**

Yogananda dedicates a *Self-Realization Church of All Religions* in San Diego.

### **1944**

He publishes his *Attributes of Success*, now called *Laws of Success*.

### **1945**

Mrinalini Mata becomes his disciple.

### **1946**

Yogananda publishes his main and most famous book, the *Autobiography of a Yogi*.

Uma Mata, Brother Bimalananda and Mukti Mata become his disciple.

### **1947**

He dedicates a *Self-Realization Church of All Religions* in Long Beach.

### **1948**

Yogananda dedicates a *Self-Realization Church of All Religions* in Phoenix.

Yogananda experiences his great samadhi. "I will always be in that state now, but nobody will know."

Swami Kriyananda becomes his disciple.

## **1949**

The *Lake Shrine* property is donated to Yogananda, which he dedicates as a shrine in August 1950.

Yogananda publishes his guru's book, *The Holy Science*.

On November 1, he greets India's Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru in San Francisco.

Brother Anandamoy joins the SRF monastery (he met Yogananda in 1948)

Peggy Deitz, Yogananda's later chauffeur, becomes a disciple.

## **1950-52**

Yogananda spends much time in seclusion, in his desert retreat *Twenty-Nine Palms*, to complete his writings, especially his Bhagavad Gita commentaries.

## **1950**

Roy Eugene Davis becomes Yogananda's disciple.

## **1951**

He dedicates the *India Center* in Hollywood.

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1952- Mahasamadi



On March 7, 1952, in the Biltmore Hotel in Los Angeles, during a function for Mr. Sen, the Indian ambassador to the USA, Yogananda consciously leaves his body. He had known the day, cause and circumstance of his passing beforehand.

His case is unique in America's history: for three weeks, up to the point when the casket is closed, Yogananda's body shows none of the normal signs of physical decay, odor, or disintegration. The Western world is amazed as it witnesses a "phenomenal state of Immutability," which was described in TIME magazine.

Chapter 2

Mount Washington's History



Ancient Rome, during the time when Christ was born, counted already one million inhabitants. Compare that to Los Angeles: in 1860 it was a home for only a handful of 4500 souls- not much more than a village. 13 years before Yogananda's birth, in 1880, Los Angeles ("the Benares of America") was still a relatively small town of about 12,000. But America was growing dynamically. It was a young culture, full of vigor. Yogananda loved its pioneering spirit: "Eventually? Eventually? Why not now!" With that expansive spirit, he knew his message could grow.

When Yogananda was a boy of 7, in 1900, LA's population had already grown to 100,000. Still not all that big, one might observe. True: and that is the reason why at that time Mount Washington was nothing but a bare mountain, inhabited only by squirrels, quail, rabbits and a few hikers and picnickers. The latter came

because of the fantastic view, for which the mountain was well-known.

It was that very view which inspired real estate agents to build a stately hotel on top of Mount Washington, 940 feet high. Their problem was that there was no road, no way to get up there. And the hill was quite steep. So a cable car had to be built first, which was inaugurated in 1909. At the same time a road was carved out of the mountainside, which led to the top. Of course in those days cars were relatively rare, and were not built for mountains at all.

Here is a picture of a typical car of the time. For more detailed information about the Mount Washington cable car and more, visit www.erha.org/washington.htm



The construction of the Mount Washington Hotel itself was finished by January 1910, during the year when Yogananda met his guru, Sri Yukteswar. By that time the LA population had already risen to a proud 320,000.

When in 1925 Yogananda became the owner of the spacious Mount Washington Hotel, he himself was still a somewhat young man of 32 years. The hotel, however, was much younger, only 15 years old. Still, during its first few years of existence it had already lived through many adventures, many changes, and many definite surprises, as we will see.

To complete the population picture: In that year of 1925, when Yogananda established his headquarters on top of Mt. Washington, the LA population had already risen to about one million inhabitants. When Yogananda passed on, in 1952, the number had risen to about two million, meaning about two million more than a mere 100 years earlier.

The "Mount Washington Hotel" was designed to be a mountaintop resort, with 14 beautifully landscaped acres. The elegant 3-story



structure was constructed by "Meyer & Holler," the same company which in 1927 also built Mr. Grauman's famous *Chinese Theatre* in LA. (A truly exotic building, especially for those early years, as one sees on the photo.)

Interestingly, the Mount Washington Hotel too had an Eastern touch to it, even before Yogananda acquired it: it had a beautiful Japanese garden in front of it, as well as a roof garden. In the original plans, this Japanese garden was to include an observation tower (Yogananda, as you will see, later had the same plan), offering a spectacular view of the beautiful mountains, valleys and the sea. The Mount Washington Hotel, incidentally, was built in the so-called "missionary style." Its mission, however, was very different from what the Western world had seen so far: Self-realization, the discovery of man's inner divinity.

Mr. Grauman and Yogananda, it may be added, were not only connected through their beautiful and special buildings. They became acquainted. Yogananda invited Mr. Grauman to visit Mt. Washington as a guest of honor for a feast for Indian athletes, in 1932. Yogananda, in turn, gave talks at his *Chinese Theatre*.

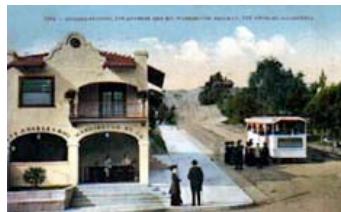
The Mount Washington Hotel had 18 rooms. Today it is fun to still see the original numbers on the doors. Each room had a private bathroom, which was quite extraordinary for the time, and proofed a great treat for future nuns who would later occupy these quarters. The monks were living in the basement, where employee rooms had been built, using a common bath.

Here is a picture of the impressive Mount Washington Hotel in the early years:



Tennis was a most popular sport at the turn of the Century. Thus two tennis courts soon graced the property. Tournaments of famous players were held there. Yogananda later used to play there too, even quite well, as he was an extremely fast runner.

The cable car ("incline railway") brought people up to the hotel. One could also reach it by automobile, but not all of them even managed the steep upward climb—some boiled over. The old cable car powerhouse was later converted into monks quarters, and today serves SRF as computer offices.



The hotel, after its opening in 1910, soon turned out to be a huge success: it became a favorite hangout spot for the rich. Mt. Washington became an exclusive and highly desirable hilltop residential site. It offered a fine dining room, with food cooked by gourmet cooks. Yogananda later became a worthy heir to that fine kitchen: he was a marvelous cook himself, inventing many tasty recipes and finding new ways of cooking, slicing, preparing. Everything in the hotel was of high quality: velvet carpets, brass

beds, furniture of oak and walnut. On weekends usually all rooms were rented out.

So well did the hotel business go that in September 1911, the LA Times stated that the hotel planned to add an additional 100 rooms and 50 baths! That plan, however, was never carried out. Too bad. Yogananda might have enjoyed the many extra rooms, and especially the monks.

It was also reported that 3,500 passengers were carried to the summit on a single Sunday afternoon (imagine the crowds!). The cable-car station down on Marmion Way was so busy that a refreshment stand was opened in the depot. It appears that Mt. Washington had truly become the 'in place'.

The building lots on Mount Washington, too, got a big boost: they sold increasingly well. Beautiful and costly homes began to spring up all over the mountain, where not a single house had been seen just a few years ago.

Most of all there was one fascinating reason why the Mt. Washington Hotel became so attractive: The 18 hotel rooms were being used by celebrities, such as..... lo and behold... Charley Chaplin, who always stayed at the hotel while making a film at the Sycamore Grove studios. Other stars of screen and sport also took rooms there. It became a gathering spot of the famous. Small wonder that people flocked in like birds. Did Yogananda know that his beloved headquarters once housed a Charley Chaplin, and all those other stars? Well, he must have known. Did he care? Did the nuns have fun at the thought that some movie star had once occupied their room?

But alas, Mount Washington's early glory was soon put to a rough test: hard times began. The film stars left the Sycamore Grove Park, moving to Edendale, and then to Hollywood: it had a devastating effect on the Mt. Washington Hotel. Once the stars had left, less and less visitors came to pay Mt. Washington a visit.

Another problem was that the automobile was coming within the financial scope of increasing numbers of people. Car owners soon discovered the pleasure of traveling to more distant destinations. Mount Washington Hotel became more and more forgotten.

In January 1919 the Mt. Washington cable car was actually closed down. With great effort the inhabitants tried to keep it going. But to no avail. The whole Mt. Washington mountaintop was now without any public transportation. Monastic life on Mt. Washington thus began quite involuntarily: without service by the cable cars, the entire top of Mt. Washington was completely isolated from the outside world. Automobiles could still drive up the steep dirt road, but it often defied the capabilities of those early vehicles. And without a car, Mount Washington could only be climbed by a hefty walk.

Incidentally, the cable-car tracks, which lead up to the hotel were only taken away in 1930. Thus Yogananda and his little early band enjoyed this "souvenir" of the old tracks for five years.

Lots of advertisement ensued to save the once famous Mt. Washington Hotel, but again to little avail. It suffered a steady decline, and finally had to close, sometime during the summer of 1921. By then Yogananda had reached America's shores, knowing that one day he would find the building of his visions.

Meanwhile in 1922 a Military School occupied the hotel: "An ideal school for boys and young men in an ideal location. From grammar school through high school. Personal supervision under high-class instructors. Individual instruction if necessary. On a 20 acre campus." The school didn't last, but Yogananda was soon to pick up the idea again.

In 1923 the hotel became the Goodrich-Mount Washington Emphysema Hospital. But the respiratory hospital closed in late 1924 or early 1925. The art of breath would not be lost there, however: Yogananda had a lot to say on that specific topic.

Just then, in January 1925, as if by divine timing, Yogananda arrived in Los Angeles. (In 1924, Yogananda had started his maiden cross-country lecture "campaign", after having stayed in Boston for his first three years in America.) Looking for a place for his headquarters, he finally found and bought the Mt. Washington Hotel. At that time it was full of vagrants, many of the windows had been broken. The place had become almost a wilderness. (The cover picture of this book is just there at that moment.) It had its good side, however: Yogananda acquired the hotel for a very reasonable price, \$45.000. Of course the help of Divine Mother's loving hand was involved! The story of how he obtained it is beautifully described by Swami Kriyananda in "The New Path."

It was a major step for Yogananda's mission. He rushed to send photos of his new headquarters to his guru, Sri Yukteswar. In his *Autobiography* he wrote:

"With the help of large-hearted students, by the end of 1925 I had established an American headquarters on the Mount Washington Estates in Los Angeles. The building is the one I had seen years before in my vision at Kashmir. I hastened to send Sri Yukteswar pictures of these distant American activities. He replied with a postcard in Bengali, which I here translate:

11th August, 1926

Child of my heart, O Yogananda!

Seeing the photos of your school and students, what joy comes in my life I cannot express in words. I am melting in joy to see your yoga students of different cities. Beholding your methods in chant affirmations, healing vibrations, and divine healing prayers, I cannot refrain from thanking you from my heart. Seeing the gate, the winding hilly way upward, and the beautiful scenery spread out beneath the Mount Washington Estates, I yearn to behold it all with my own eyes."



Interestingly, the Mount Washington headquarters and Yogananda's magazine "East-West" were born together: they are twins, so to speak. In the very first issue of East-West, Nov. Dec. 1925, Yogananda announced the formal opening of his headquarters in October 25, 1925. Actually, and maybe significantly, he had named it: "Mount Washington Educational Center"—Headquarters of Sat-Sanga and Yogoda.

Here is what the announcement said: "...The main object and desire of Swami Yogananda's heart is to have it made possible for him to establish a YOGODA-HOW-TO-LIVE-SCHOOL on Mount Washington for training children along the lines of YOGODA (harmonious development of all human faculties) and SAT-SANGA (Fellowship with Truth), aiming at similar physical, mental and especially spiritual results.

Besides the YOGODA-HOW-TO-LIVE-SCHOOL, Swami Yogananda also plans to offer to adult students, Courses in Psychology, Philosophy and all branches of Scientific Spiritual Realization, and also Correspondence Courses in the above subjects. Eventually the Center plans to have a Taj or Tower, a large Swimming Pool, a Library, Printing Press, and a Museum containing rare and interesting objects, especially from the Orient. Through the grace of the Great Divine Power, may this Center on Mount Washington become a magnet of world-wide interest and attraction, and be a Mecca for those who are spiritually hungry."

Yogananda's "main object and desire" for Mount Washington, then, was to establish a school for children. Is that surprising? Probably, because nowadays we would not easily hear that piece of information: we hear that Yogananda came to create a monastic order. But this early text seems to indicate that Yogananda saw his mission in the West in quite broad terms, of which a monastic order was only one (if central) part. Fun also to hear about the large swimming pool. That plan was actually fulfilled later: He had one built at Encinitas (still there), and one at 29 Palms.

Let's digress here for a moment. Trying to grasp the main directions of Yogananda's work throughout his life, one may see the following phases:

- 1) In India he started his mission by heart building a school, offering a balanced education to children, with spiritual practices as a main feature.
- 2) In America, after teaching in Boston for 3 years, a “main object and desire” was to establish a school, at Mount Washington. Swami Dhirananda, a close friend from India, was called to be in charge of Mount Washington, whenever Yogananda was touring. Yogananda announced in the first East-West magazine: “Dhirananda will conduct a Sunday School class for boys and girls every Sunday morning at Mount Washington, and attend to the work of the Yogoda Correspondence Course, as well as carry on further the spiritual work as it develops.” Besides the school, Yogananda's other goal of course was the spiritual training of adults.
- 3) Dhirananda's (a high soul, of course) departure in 1929 was a great blow to Yogananda, and actually seems to have changed the direction of his work: from then on, one doesn't read much more about schools. Instead, the monastic era started. Yogananda's monastic pillars arrived: Durga Mata (1929), Daya Mata (1931), and Gyanamata Mata (1932). “Yogoda Satsanga” became “Self-Realization Fellowship” in 1934, and in 1935 was registered as a church. Yogananda gave his heart and soul to those who wanted to live for God alone.
- 4) After returning from India, Yogananda often stayed in Encinitas, working on his writings. A new interesting direction crystallized: he began to talk and write frequently about his ideal of a “Golden World City,” or “World-Brotherhood Colonies.” He started such a one for families in Encinitas (with opening talk and all), and included Colonies in his “Aims and Ideals.” It was, of

course, not a change of direction concerning the monastic life, which he tried to strengthen in every possible way. It was a parallel vision. He wrote in 1946: "Dear Father, bless us with the physical power by which we can control constructively atoms and the forces behind it, bless us that we establish the temple of atomic control in the souls of men, and in Self-Realization, and in our Golden World City."

5) After Yogananda's passing, the monastic life alone remained.

Back to Mount Washington, Yogananda's headquarters:

In August 1927, in East-West, the first fruits of Mount Washington's labors were happily published. Note the following numbers - that's a lot of people. If they are accurate, they would be quite a challenge even for today. Nowadays, of course, no public classes and services are held at Mount Washington anymore. Mount Washington today is exclusively the SRF administration center.

- Total attendance in lectures, weekly classes, special classes conducted at *Mount Washington Education Center*: 20,000.
 - Total *Sunday School* attendance: 4,500. Children 1,500; Adults 3,000
 - Personal interviews to Yogoda students and non-students, helping them with advice and prayer concerning personal problems: 2,500
 - Prayers, help and written instructions on physical, domestic, moral and spiritual problems given students and non-students (by mail): 4,000
 - Inquiries received and answered relating to Yogoda Correspondence Course: 4,000
- Calls made upon sick people in Los Angeles hospitals and homes: 500
- Also lectures given before well-known clubs, churches, civic organizations and on the radio. Numerous plays, musical recitals, holiday parties and other entertainments were also given.

In short: they were extremely active! Here is a photo of that time, showing Christmas 1930 at Mount Washington.



Yogananda stated that he has meditated on every spot of the Mount Washington grounds. And indeed the meditative visitor easily feels his vibrations alive and present there. It certainly remains a blessed pilgrimage spot. One wonders how many divine ecstasies have happened on these sacred grounds.

To see “modern” Mt. Washington, 80 years after its birth, with visiting hours, visit the SRF website: <http://www.yoganandasrf.org>

Of course many more stories could be told about Mount Washington:

- How rooms were rented out to the public in the early days, with adds in *East-West*.
- The very few early disciples living there, and their way of living together; Yogananda was mostly gone on his “campaigns;” the painful troubles that followed.
- The incredible noise of the early Mt. Washington printing press.
- The various special plants and trees Yogananda planted on the grounds.

- Yogananda's long financial struggles to pay off the two mortgages on the Mt. Washington property, and Rajarsi's timely help in 1932, paying off the entire sum.
- The yearly long blissful Christmas meditations at Mount Washington, where Christ appeared many times, starting in 1931.
- The birth of the monastic order at Mount Washington in 1931 and Yogananda's "Summer School" programs in 1932.



- The addition of the Wishing Well (1934), and the Temple of Leaves;
- The tomato planting on the Mount Washington grounds, during times of financial hardship.
- The many famous people (musicians, stars, politicians, spiritual teachers) who honored Mt. Washington with their visit through the years.
- Adjusting the top floor to give Rajarsi his private quarters.
- How Mt. Washington in a way remained a "hotel" - disciples coming and going, not understanding what they had.
- The first-ever convocation at Mount Washington, in 1950.
- The relationship with Mt. Washington neighbors during Yogananda's life.
- The buildings which were later added to the headquarters.
- The plan to build a huge Mausoleum on the grounds, for Yogananda's (still incorrupt?) body.

But as everyone can see, all this would take us way too far. This chapter is already long as it is. Maybe it's best to finish instead with the poem Yogananda wrote for his beloved Mount Washington, his "life's dream," again published in his first *East-West* magazine, Nov.-Dec. 1925. Note the "Nippon (Japanese) camphor trees;" his dream to promote at Mount Washington the union "in deepest friendliness" of all churches, mosques, temples, so urgently needed today; and his repeated use of the word "freedom!"

Life's Dream
Dedicated to Mount Washington Educational Center

The summer-East
And the wintry West
They say -- but Mount Washington
Named rightly after that pioneer
Of Freedom's great career,
Thou dost stand, the snowless guardian Himalaya
Of the angel land in perpetual green regalia.

Nippon's camphor trees and perfumed wisteria and smiling roses
Palm, date and well-beloved spicy bay leaves of Hind stand close,
With endless scenic beauties
Of ocean, canyon, setting sun, moon-studded sky
And nightly twinkling cities
To declare Thy ever-changing beauty.

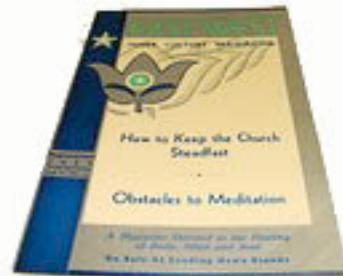
On thy crown thou shalt newly wear
A priceless starry-school which in all future near
Shall draw the lost travelers of the East and West
To find their goal and one place of rest.

Here one path
Shall merge with all other paths.
Here the love of earthly Freedom's paradise, America,
Shall blend forever with spiritual Freedom's paradise, India.
Here church in deepest friendliness shall all other churches meet.
Here the temple the mosque shall greet.
Here the long-divorced matter-laws
Will wed again in peace the spirit laws.
Here all minds will learn that true Art
Of living life and the way to start
Straight to the One great place
Where all must meet at last.

Jehovah! This is the land of solace
Where my life's dream in truth reappears!

Chapter 3

History of the SRF Magazine Presented (just for fun) by Andy and Serafi



"In this world, we are all a little bit crazy, and we don't know it, because crazy people of the same kind mix with the same kind of crazy people. When people differently crazy come together, then they find out about their own craziness."

One inspired day, after having reflected on these words of Yogananda, Andy, a free-style devotee, and Serafi, a devoted SRF-member, decided to come together to chat, finding out out about their "craziness" by mixing with each other. The topic they decided to discuss was "The history of SRF magazines."

Yogananda made another fun statement: "I sometimes think God must be watching in amazement this big zoo of human beings here." Well, Andy and Serafi were two somewhat different "animals" of God's big zoo, who perceived the world with very different eyes. So at first they examined each other doubtfully, but then happily sat down for a good cup of tea and a piece of cake. Soon they began appreciating each other's company. Did they

agree on everything? Hardly. But they were able to “agree to disagree,” as broad-minded people do.

They began to study the old SRF magazines. Serafi had brought an amazing stack of them, and Andy added a few as well. Their goal was to look carefully at the content and at the “feel” of the magazines, to get a better understanding of SRF at various points of its evolution. And truly, the beauty of the old magazines is that they convey the pulse and heartbeat of SRF at every point of its existence. Through them, one can almost intuit the life behind the monastic walls.

Thus immersing themselves, Andy and Serafi discovered a colorful panorama, a lively story, all highly interesting.

In the beginning, Serafi was confronted with a psychological difficulty: “I am so familiar with a certain way of knowing SRF, through decades of its publications, that it is hard to be open to a very different SRF of earlier times. One actually has to let go of all personal concepts about SRF to understand its past.”

Andy, by the way, had earlier discovered two websites which publish parts of the old magazines. But he quickly found out that as historical documents they are of little value, since they had been edited and revised, according to the taste of the publisher. Dhirananda, for example, a main player during the 20ies, who was much included in the early magazines, was entirely deleted. History should remain history, Andy thought, and not become part of organizational agendas.

Yogananda’s wrote a mission statement for this magazine, published in an introductory “Special Notice”:

“With this November-December 1925 issue, official organ of the YOGODA AND SAT-SANGA HEADQUARTERS at Mount Washington, Los Angeles, ‘East-West’ makes its initial bow to the American public. Its Aim and Purpose, as outlined by Swami Yogananda, is to inspire, to enlighten, and to encourage all to live

the Practical Spiritual Life... We plan to fill all issues with articles, poems, pictures, and editorials of genuine wide appeal and interest....”

So Andy and Serafi read and read, discussing magazines all day long. Andy took notes and later together they wrote up the following study.

Here the Magazine's History Starts:

Yogananda came to the West in 1920, and soon began putting the printing-press to work, to get his mission started. Even before establishing Mt. Washington, he had already printed *Songs of the Soul*, the *Yogoda Introduction*, *Science of Religion*, and *Scientific Healing Affirmations*.

While on his “campaigning” tour through America in 1924, he felt the time was ripe for publishing a regular magazine.

It was in November 1924, while visiting his much-loved friend, the “American Saint” Luther Burbank in Santa Rosa, that the name of the new magazine was created.

We read in *Autobiography of a Yogi*:

“Luther,” I remarked, “next month I am starting a magazine to present the truth-offerings of East and West. Please help me decide on a good name for the journal.” We discussed titles for awhile, and finally agreed on “East-West.” After we had reentered his study, Burbank gave me an article he had written on “Science and Civilization.” “This will go in the first issue of East-West,” I said gratefully...”

Actually the first issues were called “East-West World Wide.” The addition of “World Wide”, as one reads, was Luther Burbank’s suggestion. But from January 1926 it was discontinued, maybe because “East-West” already implies the concept “World Wide”.

“Next month” Yogananda wanted to get the magazine out on the road. But Brother Time often seems to refuse the desire to move too quickly: the first issue of “East-West” finally came out a year later, in November 1925, just after Yogananda had dedicated his Mt. Washington headquarters. He kept his word: Luther Burbank’s article “Science and Civilization” was included in this maiden issue.

The Twenties

What did Yogananda want to accomplish with his magazine “East-West”?

- He saw that many devotees he had met in different cities would benefit from this constant contact and inspiration: “My blessings to all my students. I will talk to you all thru the columns of this magazine, and remember you each morning in my seven o'clock prayer, that you may persevere in your practice and know the supreme joy of absolute spiritual realization.”
- He also saw it as an instrument to share with all, as he wrote in the first issue, “universal principles for making life more beautiful.”
- His hope was: “Let our hunger for knowledge make us forget our minor differences and teach us to gladly receive the truth-offerings of others.” His openness and universality were keenly felt in these magazines.
- And of course he saw it as a way to unite East and West, for “making understood the different good traits of Eastern and Western life in general, through fellowship and constructive exchange of practical ideas (Sat-Sanga).” He wrote beautifully: “Let the East and West be ever ready to exchange the best in them and thus make life complete.” (All these quotes come from the first issue, describing the “Aims of East-West”)

Science was important in his magazine, which was a big contribution of the Western world. So were the arts: poetry, paintings, musical notations. They fairly abound in the magazines of these early years.

On the very first page in the first issue, readers were invited to write their own contributions, or photos, and send them in for the publisher's consideration. The magazine was like an open field, so to speak, where all were invited to sow seeds of upliftment.

Here are the contents of the first issue, which is typical for that era of the magazine. Many different writers contributed.

- Dedication to Mrs. Mary E. Foster (who "made it possible to start and carry on this Magazine.")
- Cosmic Consciousness, by Swami Yogananda
- When God Walked in My Garden (Poem), by Elisabeth Swaller
- Swami Yogananda's Educational Work in India
- History of Swami's Work in America
- Life's Dream (Poem), by Swami Yogananda
- Formal Opening of Mt. Washington Center
- Science and Civilization, by Luther Burbank
- Greetings to Swami's American Students
- Los Angeles Class (picture)
- Luther Burbank (Poem), by Swami Yogananda
- A Prayer, by a disciple
- The Balanced Life, by Swami Yogananda
- "Dusky Sound," New Zealand (Picture)
- Pantheism (Poem), by a disciple
- The Path that Leads to God, by Harriet Hobson
- Sayings of Swami
- Greetings to India
- Swami Dhirananda, by Swami Yogananda
- My Native Land (Poem), by Swami Yogananda
- This and That (Notes)

The second issue of "East-West" offered an article on Buddha, on Sufism, on Guru Nanak (the Sikh founder), and again three poems

by various contributors, as well as a scientific contribution on “the World of Nature.” Dhirananda wrote a long article, and others. There is a nowadays un-published picture of Yogananda wearing a head band, which was given to him by American Indians.

The magazine was published bimonthly.

These first magazines were bigger in size than today, and were somewhat rustic. Well, and of course this reflects perfectly the heartbeat of SRF (or better: Yogoda Satsanga) during these early years in the West: it was all very rustic and simple.

Kamala writes that when she came with her mother to stay at Mt. Washington in Summer 1926, their room was completely empty, unfurnished. They had to paint it too. The “building was scarcely occupied, and we had our choice of dozens of rooms.” Imagine the big empty house!

Durga Ma writes that still in Dec. 1929, when she moved in, “some of the rooms were furnished with the individual’s own furniture, and some were empty.” To her new room a bed and mattress was brought. Yogananda personally carried a rug into her new quarters. Later she went to buy a dresser, a chair, and a table at a second-hand store. Other devotees used orange crates with planks to hold their mattress up, “and more crates for dresser and shelves.” Only 15 or 16 devotees lived there at the time. Again, imagine the totally different scene. Life at Mt. Washington wasn’t monastic then, either. The building, which wasn’t in great shape when Yogananda bought it, was painted for the first time only in 1933 (see Durga’s book)! One gets the idea.... life was rustic!

In May/June 1926 *East-West* offered space for publicity in the magazine, stating that 5000 magazines had been sold, and they ran out. For the next one therefore 10.000 would be printed. What a start!

It might be that Laurie Pratt (Tara Mata) was the editor of the magazine from 1925-1929 (in 1929 she left, in 1936 she came back). From Nov. 1937 onwards, the magazine states Laurie Pratt to be its editor. In the meantime other persons filled that role: Salome Marckwardt, Louise Royston.

Yogananda was much gone traveling, “campaigning.” Often, so Daya Mata writes, he mailed his articles from the city where he was lecturing, even during his trip to India, via Europe and Palestine in 1935-36.

What is the over-all pulse and heartbeat of these early magazines? A free breath of inspiration. Openness. Youth.

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### **The Thirties**

The Thirties began on a tough and rocky path. It was the period of America’s great economic crises. *East-West* had to pass through a terrible time. It got sick, so to speak, and lay in bed, unmoving. The printing-press stood still. Already not published had been: Sep-Oct.1928; Mar-Apr 1929; Jul-Aug 1929; Sep-Oct 1929. The Thirties were worse: Jan-Feb 1930 wasn’t published, neither were: May-June1930; Sep-Oct 1930; Nov-Dec1930. In 1931 not a single issue was printed. In Jan-Mar 1932 *East-West* had still not recovered. Durga writes that during these years the devotees at Mt. Washington didn’t receive any salaries.

Then in April 1932 Yogananda started his magazine again, with renewed speed and vigor: *East-West* now began appearing *monthly*. Yogananda’s “Second Coming of Christ” Bible-commentaries started right from the beginning of this new phase. Soon afterwards he added his Bhagavad Gita commentaries.

Dhirananda was gone. A frequent contributor instead was Bramacharee Nerode. From 1932 onwards Laurie Pratt (Tara Mata) wrote many articles about the Yugas and Hindu philosophy, while she was living outside SRF. It's fun to see that in March 1934 there was an add of Laurie Pratt as an astrologer in Atlanta, and later several adds for her Yuga book, published outside of SRF.

Tasty and healthy recipes were now a regular East-West feature.

The magazine now offered less variety of contributors. Yogananda and disciples definitively contributed the main chunk of it. The arts were a lesser presence, and science too, even though regularly there was a column "Scientific Digest." It seems that the tough times of the early thirties had acted as a fire which made Yogananda focus his energies more strongly around his message. The early 30ies also saw the beginning of the SRF monastic order. The over-all energy changed, obviously. Maybe God helped Yogananda to focus his energies, because if he had remained too all-inclusive, his work might not have been as effective.

In May 1934 Yogananda changed the magazine's name to *Inner Culture*, with the subtitle *East-West Magazine*. It went hand in hand with another big change: 1934 was also the year in which he renamed his organization from *Yogoda Sat-Sanga* to *Self-Realization-Fellowship*.

In May 1937 the size of the magazine changed. It had been bigger than nowadays, during the first 12 years of its existence. From now on it was printed in the size we see still today.

This was also the year when Yogananda added his regular interpretations of the *Rubaiyat*.

Often during this time Daya Mata and Ananda Mata typed the interpretations Yogananda dictated.

In his later years Yogananda asked disciples to edit the early articles: often earlier *East-West* editors had edited them poorly, had changed them, even added their own inspirations, while Yogananda had never glanced at them a second time. So they needed correction. However, the thought comes up: Yes, before Tara Mata came back in 1936, maybe earlier editors hadn't done a great job. So re-editing was necessary. But after 1936?

SRF published a letter by Tara, dated 1937, in which she writes about her privilege to help with this wonderful book (referring to his scriptural interpretations), and "my end is pure grammar, arrangement." In other words, she had done the editing job already. Back then in 1937 the *Gita* and *Bible* commentaries were still at the very beginning, and the *Rubaiyat* was just being born. The major portions of these works came later, and were under Tara's editorial wings, as the editor of the magazine. And Yogananda was, as SRF writes, very happy with Tara's work. One wonders, then, why further editing was deemed needed later on.

Back to the magazines: In October 1937 the subtitle changed. The new name was *Inner Culture- The Magazine of India*. Was it a change of concept, to predominantly teach the Indian way of Self-realization? And indeed, soon afterwards Yogananda changed the subtitle again. From April 1938 he called his magazine *Inner Culture - For Self-Realization* – maybe the better choice.

All this happened not long after Yogananda's return from his native land in late 1936. By the way, when Yogananda traveled through South-India, he met the illumined saint Ramana Maharishi. As Yogananda wrote, Ramana was a reader of the *East-West* magazines, and had a stack of them in his room. So was probably the Shankaracharya of Kanchipuram (one of the four main spiritual leaders in India), who had met Yogananda in 1935, and "followed his activities ever since."

Surely many others in India were following their spiritual ambassador in the West. Indeed, back then, was there any other

Indian saint living in America, successfully spreading the ancient yogic teachings? Yogananda's success in America was big news for India, certainly. India was proud. That's probably why Yogananda could unashamedly request India's Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru in 1948, via cable telegram (published in the magazine): "Deeply request you save half of Gandhi's ashes, some for India, some for America, to be buried beneath statues erected in two countries." Nehru responded positively, and that's why we find part of Mahatma Gandhi's ashes buried at Lake Shrine. Later, in November 1949, Yogananda went to San Francisco to meet Nehru personally. It is interesting to see how Yogananda was at home with great saints, as well as with the world's important politicians: he met the American president Calvin Coolidge, the President of Mexico Portes Gil, India's Prime Minister Nehru, ambassadors, Lieutenant Governors, Consul Generals. And he was equally at home with great artists, inventors, business people, normal people, he met two Nobel Prize winners. In other words, he was a man of the world.

Oops, we are really still in the 30ies! So: *Inner Culture* was published monthly. Imagine the work involved.

The feeling and heartbeat of the magazine: more mature, more focused, more centered around Yogananda's teachings. Central for sure were his interpretations of the *Bible* and the *Bhagavad Gita*.

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The Fourties

The 40ies saw many changes of the magazine. In July 1940 Yogananda decided to publish it quarterly. It might have been just too much work before.

In the early 40ies, Yogananda advertised in his magazine rooms at Mt Washington. One could rent them for a day or longer. This may show two things: Firstly rooms were still vacant, and therefore Yogananda's band wasn't very numerous (a fact which changed with the publication of his *Autobiography* in 1946). Secondly, it may show financial hardship, and/or wide-open arms for outside devotees.

About the rush that started in Yogananda's life after his *Autobiography* had been published (from the magazine, Nov.-Dec. 1948): "...The work has expanded beyond my imagination. Renunciates, in a steady stream, are joining our Headquarters Colony and our Encinitas Colony- and there is a long waiting line. ..." The arrival of the *Autobiography of a Yogi* was certainly a pivotal event for Yogananda's work, and so he urged readers of his magazine to "spread the message" by sharing with others their copy of the *Autobiography*, or by presenting copies to their friends. Wonderful feedback came streaming in, and Yogananda shared it through *East-West*.

Wait a moment! Why "*East-West*"? Hadn't the name changed to *Inner Culture* a long time ago? Yes, but in July 1944, interestingly, Yogananda changed the magazine's name back to *East-West*. The change lasted for only about three years, until June 1947. From then on the name changed to *Self-Realization Magazine*. It was still printed quarterly.

A typical index of the magazine during the 40ies (*East-West*, April, May, June 1945):

- An International Language, by A. Lavagnini
- My Easter Prayer, by Paramhansa Yogananda
- True Renunciation, by Hanumanprasad Poddar
- Attaining Freedom from Duty, Bhagavad Gita commentary by Paramhansa Yogananda
- To Divine Mother, poem by Kandhubhai Desai
- To Our Spiritual Father, poem by Sharon O'Neil
- Science in Ancient India, by Kumar Goshal

- Daily Deliberations for April, May, June, by Paramhansa Yogananda and many others
- Temple or Thieves Den?, Bible interpretations by Paramhansa Yogananda
- His Face in the Mirror, by Sri Bolanathji Maharaj
- Spheres of Science, New Vitamins
- Notes from the News (popular Hindu Dancers; Comparative Religion; Inspiration)
- International Fellowship (News from India; Science Transcends Boundaries; China-India handclasp; Protecting Minorities)
- Book Reviews by Virginia Scott (Letter from New Guinea; Your Kids and Mine; Life Out There)
- Directory of Centers

Articles on yoga postures started in long articles, from the late 40ies on, and continued for many years.

From January 1949 onwards Yogananda gave a new burst of energy to his magazine, starting to publish it bimonthly, instead of quarterly.

A note about copyright: Yogananda's magazines are in the public domain until Dec. 1942, free for all to use. Later magazines are under SRF's wings.

A note for interested readers: If you want to read and study the whole set of the magazines, you can find them in the *Library of Congress*, Washington DC. The *Stanford University Library* has many, too. The *British National Library* in London has a few (shelfmark P.P.636.ctd). You may also order copies of the magazines from them via internet, or go and make copies yourself. Legally, of course, you can only copy, or order copies, for issues until Dec. 1942.

Here is a beautiful and typical prayer of Yogananda printed in his magazine: “Heavenly Father, Jesus, Supreme Master Babaji, Great Master Lahiri Mahasaya, Master Sri Yukteswarji, Guru-preceptor,

I bow to you all. May Thy love shine forever on the sanctuary of my devotion, and may I be able to awaken Thy Love in all hearts.”

The magazines’ general pulse and heartbeat during those years: Dynamic, joyful, and alive with new ideas.

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### **The Fifties**

The magazine witnessed the two final years of Yogananda’s presence on this planet. The SRF environment was quite different then. Uniforms were not being used. Monks and nuns wore normal clothing during Yogananda’s lifetime. Imagine Daya Mata, Durga Ma, and all the others in informal clothes. “You don’t have to wear a uniform, robes, or saris, while I am here, that can come after I go to the Infinite,” Yogananda had frequently said (see Durga’s book). “You’ll never be able to organize the work while Master is alive,” Gyanamata added.

In the Sept.-Oct. 1950 magazine, in the printed Lake Shrine dedication talk, Yogananda explains that his boys “wear American dress, and so do I. This robe is only for spiritual occasions. I do not emphasize dress... Our boys and girls dress as Americans, but their hearts are different...”

Rajarsi didn't introduce uniforms during his presidency.

They were introduced in 1959, when Daya Mata returned from India. The sisters now began to wear elegant orange saris. The brothers received a Westernized outfit, also orange.

When Yogananda passed on, his magazine revealed divine timing: the last issue during Yogananda's lifetime contained, amazingly, an article titled "The Final Experience." It was the last in a series of

his commentaries on the Bible that had been running continuously for twenty years. In this issue he expanded on the words: "And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost." It appeared in the March 1952 issue, the exact time when Yogananda left for the higher planes.

Surprisingly, at that time the magazine still cost 25c, just like the very first issue 30 years earlier.

During Rajarsi's presidency (1952-1955) not many changes can be observed in the magazine. The reason might be his increasing illness, or that he was quite happy with what his Master had established.

Daya Mata was elected president in 1955. She writes that she was very reluctant to fill that role of leadership, which for her was "a tremendous test." When she was chosen by the board of directors, she questioned, "Why me?" However, soon afterwards in India, in an ecstasy, Daya Mata saw the presence of Babaji (described in *Only Love*). She mentally bowed to him, and sobbingly asked: "They chose me. I am so unworthy. How could it be?" Babaji replied sweetly, "My child, you must not doubt your Guru. He spoke the truth. What he told you is true." In fact, Yogananda had told her before his passing, "Now my work is finished. Your work begins." So she willingly shouldered the enormous task.

After some time of her guidance, the magazine shows a few significant changes:

- Yogananda's name and signature were changed to "Paramahansa," rendering them correctly in Sanskrit.
- Yogananda's "Aims and Ideals" were modified, eliminating the *world-brotherhood-colony* ideal, which, so it was explained, Yogananda had abandoned.

— The altars and prayers were modified, adding Krishna, flipping Sri Yukteswar's image, and switching Yogananda and Sri Yukteswar's positions – all for understandable reasons.

In the 50ies the magazine sold SRF travel altars. It is fun to see those original ones with five SRF Gurus. That altar arrangement was still publicly clarified (answering questions from students) in the magazine in Nov./Dec 1959: "Paramahansa Yogananda arranged himself the number and relative positions of the five pictures that show the line of SRF-YSS gurus."

Do these changes in the magazine reflect what happened within SRF during that period? Maybe. Some disciples say it was indeed a time of change within SRF:

— Everybody now took monastic vows. Yogananda's monastic order started in 1931, but there were always devotees around at Mt. Washington and Encinitas who didn't take the monastic vows, like Daya's brother Richard Wright, who held high positions in SRF until 1941 (Board of Directors, in charge of offices and personnel at Mt. Washington, SRF treasurer); or Peggy Deitz, who was Yogananda's driver, and came in 1949 to live at Mt. Washington. This new monastic setting was one reason why Reverend Bernard Cole left (for an explanation by Daya, see below)

— All monks and nuns now received a monastic name. Yogananda had given only few of them: Gyanamata, Durga Ma, Mataji, Rajarsi Janakananda; all other devotees kept their normal names. Daya Mata for example had been a monastic for over 20 years, but never received a monastic name from Yogananda. He called her Faye throughout.

— Kriyananda as a headmonk wrote a set of monastic discipleship lessons for the monks, and renunciant lessons were now held regularly. In general numerous rules were added to the monastic life.

— During that time Kriyananda was also the head of the SRF centers and wrote a set of guidelines for them. Later they were strengthened to rules.

— Monastic uniforms started.

Durga Ma wasn't always in agreement with the monastic developments: "Yogananda did not come to start a new church." She had been close to Rajarsi for many years, who much cherished the universal character of Yogananda's mission. Daya Mata in her book *Finding the Joy Within You* explains these crossroads and differences of opinion among SRF's directors, and how they were resolved by a divine experience, which set the direction for SRF's monastic future. Here her story is paraphrased for copyright reasons, her exact words can be found in her book, or in  
[http://www.yogananda-srf.org/tmp/py\\_notitle.aspx?id=1264](http://www.yogananda-srf.org/tmp/py_notitle.aspx?id=1264)

She explains that when a great teacher leaves the world, it often happens that different opinions arise among disciples concerning how his mission should be guided from now on. Daya shares that such questions arose during discussion about the work in 1955, right on the morning after she became the leader. One point of discussion was if the guidance of the work should be in the hands of the householders or monastics. Yogananda, she continues, had told them it was to be with renunciants like himself, but that directive was being challenged by some of the members of the board of directors. Daya found her mind troubled, as she also understood their point: true, why be bound by externals? A devotee is a devotee because he loves God, not because he is dressed with an ochre cloth. That night she sought Yogananda's answer in deep meditation and prayer. Late at night she saw her body get up from the bed, walk down the hall, and enter Yogananda's room (it seems to have been a vision of herself). As she did so, she saw his shawl fluttering. She turned around, and there stood her Guru. In deep joy she ran to him and knelt at his feet, exclaiming "Master, Master, you are not dead you are not gone! Death has no claim on you." Yogananda reached down and touched her forehead. As he did so, Daya instantly knew the answer she had to give at the meeting the next morning. Yogananda blessed her, and she saw herself once again sitting upon her bed. The next morning she met with the directors of the society, and gave the answer Yogananda had

conveyed to her. SRF thus became centered around renunciants. Daya Mata had good reason to be firm: within a very short time had received the *darshan* and blessing from both Yogananda and Babaji (see above).

Another interesting point of observation is the magazine's "Directory of Centers."

- In his various SRF centers, as one could read, Yogananda had appointed a "conducting teacher."
- After Yogananda's passing, in the later 50ies, that job was reduced to a few "Meditation counselors."
- Still later, even the center's "Meditation counselors" disappeared, as the magazine shows. Traveling monks became the teachers.

In the Nov/Dec 1959 magazine one finds an announcement that "Sister Daya" from now on was to be called "Sister Dayamata." Later she became Daya Mata. Also all other lady-disciples who had known Yogananda personally too were now named "Mata." All monks remained "Brother."

In that same magazine, in her article about the trip to India, Dayamata calls Brother Kriyananda respectfully "Kriyanandaji." She writes that she and Kriyananda enjoyed long talks together, they lectured side by side, and she inserted his notes from their conversation with the *Shankaracharya* in her article for the magazine. They traveled for months together through India, with Dayamata's sister, "Mataji," and Sister Revati. Dayamata describes how she enjoyed Kriyananda and Karunananda (Devi Mukkherjee) playing soccer with enthusiasm and ability, and that she too tried to kick the ball, but got her feet entangled in her sari. Sweet to visualize.

Soon (in 1960) Brother Kriyananda was announced in the magazine as the new SRF vice-president, and as a member of the board of directors, who had been "close to Yogananda." He already

was in charge of the monks, of the centers and meditation groups, and was the main traveling Kriya minister.

A further interesting study of the magazine is to look at those adds which advertise books by non-SRF authors, throughout its history. It helps diagnose SRF's heartbeat with the passing of time:

- Yogananda publicized spiritual books by other teachers, from outside of SRF. A common feature in the 30ies and 40ies were book-reviews, discussing and recommending books of various authors.
- In the 40ies SRF advertised a list of 16 books written by Swami Premananda (formerly Bramachari Jotin, who joined Yogananda in the late 20ies, and had been educated in the Ranchi school), and another list of 11 books by Sri R.K. Das (another Indian whom Yogananda had called to teach on his behalf, who "founded" and lead the SRF center in Indianapolis.) These books were ordered not from Mt. Washington, but directly from Sri Das' SRF center in Indianapolis, and from Premananda's SRF center in Washington DC.
- A little jewel is found in *East-West*, April 1946, where a spiritual book of Mr. Dr. K. Samras, "formerly of the Self-Realization-Fellowship," is advertised. He was still supported.
- After Yogananda's passing, in the late 50ies, SRF sold apart from the regular SRF publications several important scriptures: Patanjali's *Yoga-Sutras*, Shankaracharya's *Crest Jewel of Wisdom*, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, the *Holy Bible*. Also a vegetarian cookbook was sold, as well as *Stories of Mukunda*, a book about young Yogananda written by Kriyananda.
- From the 60ies onward, only SRF-books were sold. "The official organ of SRF" (as the magazine had always been called) showed some symptoms of contraction.

Generally speaking: the heartbeat of the magazine at that point seems simple, spiritually very sincere, young and light. It also shows SRF's direction toward a traditional Western monastic setup.

## **The Sixties**

From about July 1961, the magazine became quarterly again (it had been bi-monthly).

From then on, for the next decades, very few changes can be observed. There were 64 pages, and the set-up remained practically undisturbed.

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The Seventies

In 1970 the “Self-Realization Magazine” became simply “Self-Realization.”

From about January 1971 it remained a quarterly magazine, but was now divided into Spring, Summer, Fall, and Winter issues.

A letter from Daya Mata was included from the late 70ies onwards.

Otherwise the situation in the magazine remained calm. Vishnu, the Preserver, ruled.

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## **The Eighties**

Not many waves can be observed. The magazine reveals a happy consolidation.

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The Nineties

In the 90ies, judging from the magazines, something must have stirred SRF. The magazines, so steady and unmoving for decades, now began to wake up, began moving again. Brahma, the Creator, took charge.

In 1995, it seems, the SRF graphic designer-team changed. There is an obvious leap in quality. The design and layout has now become extremely professional and well-done. Before it had been beautiful too, but seemed more simple and homemade. All SRF magazines (and all SRF book covers) from now on were presented with the new SRF design and logo, and were obviously done by high-class professionals.

In 1999 once again fresh energy was poured into the magazine: SRF increased its number of pages from 64 to 80, adding articles of wider interest. Inside, for the first time, one color was used, instead of black /white. The price was raised from 75c to \$2.

The basic feeling the new magazine conveys is: top professionalism. “How we present ourselves to the world is keenly important to us.”

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## Two Thousand

Here we include public publishing information which has been printed yearly in *Self-Realization*. These figures tell us the distribution of the magazine, and its development during recent years.

In Spring 1972 it says, under “total paid circulation,” that they were 11,899 - 13,482.

In Winter 1984 it says, under “total paid circulation,” that they were 21,488 - 21,957.

In Winter 1992, under “total paid and/or requested circulation,” we see 26,332 - 26,396.

In Winter 1995, under “Paid/Requested outside-county mail subscriptions,” we see 19,393 - 19,048; and “Paid in-county subscriptions: none.”

In Winter 2000, under “Paid/Requested outside-county mail subscriptions,” we see 19,069 - 20, 604; and “Paid in-county subscriptions: none.”

In Winter 2001, under “Paid/Requested outside-county mail subscriptions,” 18,250 - 18,199; “Paid in-county subscriptions: none.”

In Winter 2002, under “Paid/Requested outside-county mail subscriptions,” 17,494 - 17,890; “Paid in-county subscriptions: none.”

In Winter 2003, under “Paid/Requested outside-county mail subscriptions,” 16,629 - 16,548; and “Paid in-county subscriptions: none.”

In Winter 2004, under “Paid/Requested outside-county mail subscriptions,” 15,157 - 14,634; “Paid in-county subscriptions: none.”

In Winter 2005 SRF stopped publishing this information. But the symptoms of the magazine were clear. Its heartbeat was getting a bit weaker. Doctors were called.

So things were stirred again, understandably. In 2005 a major change happened to the magazine: a CD was included, which presents a talk by an SRF minister. The price was therefore considerably raised from \$2 to \$6.

The newest feeling of the magazine seems to be: “It’s exclusively meant for you, our SRF members.” For who else will buy the

ministers' talks for \$6? With this strategy, the numbers might well have dropped even more, one fears.

To be sure: the energy of the magazine remains certainly beautiful, inspiring, and sattvic. Much positive energy flows into it. Universality peeks through its pages again: for example in the Fall 2006 issue we find wisdom of various great Masters, like Ramakrishna, Vivekananda, Ram Das, etc. One can feel sincere devotees at work, trying to make the magazine fly. But maybe they find themselves somewhat bound by a lingering mindset?

One can imagine the Heavenly Doctor diagnosing: "In this world, we are all a little bit crazy. You in SRF are a little crazy too (don't worry, it's everyone!). So why don't you mix with people differently crazy, to find out about your own little craziness? Some new fresh wind from outside might just infuse your magazine with young and creative life."

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Two Thousand Ten

The magazine remains beautiful, not modified since 2005. The letter at the end of the magazine might now be by Mrinalini Mata. Substantial changes during her presidency may not be very likely as she is over 80, but one never knows.

So let's observe what the future brings. As we have seen, there have been many changes in the magazine throughout the years, corrections, ups and downs. The magazine will certainly continue to evolve, and share with the attentive reader the current heartbeat within the monastic walls of SRF.

Chapter 4

The History of Kriya Yoga



Kriya Yoga, “the airplane route to God,” yet still relatively unknown today, comes to us with an incredible past and history. Its light has been shining on the firmament of the ages, as a redeemer of countless souls. Its history is filled with the most illustrious saints and masters. And all of us who are part of this sacred Kriya tradition are bathing in their silent blessings. Kriya Yogis are linked to a truly fascinating legacy.

When we talk about Kriya Yoga, we mostly think of Yogananda and his line of Kriya-Gurus: Mahavatar Babaji, Lahiri Mahasaya, and Sri Yukteswar. However, what we are seeing is like a chain of which we have picked only a little bit out of the ocean, and that is all we can see. The chain itself goes down under the ocean for who knows how far!

Kriya Yoga, it is said, reaches back to the very beginnings of yogic life. Why? The reason is that Kriya, the highest technique of Raja Yoga, draws on universal, central facts of human nature. "The law of Kriya Yoga is eternal. It is true like mathematics; like the simple

rules of addition and subtraction, the law of Kriya can never be destroyed. Burn to ashes all the books on mathematics, the logically-minded will always rediscover such truths; destroy all the sacred books on yoga, its fundamental laws will come out whenever there appears a true yogi who comprises within himself pure devotion and consequently pure knowledge.” (Sri Ananda Mohan Lahiri, a grandson of Lahiri Mahasaya, quoted in *Autobiography of a Yogi*)

Kriya of course has not always been called “Kriya Yoga.” Babaji renamed it “Kriya Yoga” for this age. Yogananda writes: “Kriya Yoga is described in certain scriptures as *Kabali Pranayama*” (or Kevali Pranayama, or Kevala Pranayama, according to dialect. “Kevala” means “alone”, referring to the Self). “Kabali Pranayama was considered to be the greatest of all techniques in controlling prana (life force).” It scientifically leads the devotee to breathlessness. “Breathlessness is deathlessness.” The result is Cosmic Bliss.

“Kriya is an ancient science,” Yogananda writes. Mahavatar Babaji rediscovered and clarified the technique after it had been lost in the Dark Ages. Babaji revealed to Lahiri Mahasaya: “The Kriya Yoga which I am giving to the world through you in this nineteenth century is a revival of the same science which Krishna gave, millenniums ago, to Arjuna, and which was later known to Patanjali, and to Christ, St. John, St. Paul, and other disciples.”

Let’s look at some of these world-famous Kriyaban-saints, since at least we know about these parts of the Kriya-chain!

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## Bhagavan Krishna

Around 700BC (plus incarnations much earlier)



Sri Krishna, an avatar, taught Kriya Yoga, as we've just heard. Thus Arjuna and his heroic Pandava-brothers received the Kriya technique from him.

Krishna's life as a Kriya-teacher alone would suffice to make our Kriya history unforgettable. But again we are seeing only the surface of a long invisible chain: Krishna had already taught Kriya in his former lifetimes. "In an earlier incarnation" he initiated Vivasvat into Kriya Yoga, as Yogananda writes in his *Autobiography of a Yogi*, explaining a certain passage in the Bhagavad Gita. Vivasvat in turn initiated Manu (his son), India's great law-giver. Manu later initiated his own son Ikshwaku.

For Westerners, these names don't mean very much. For Hindus, however, they do. It is as if we were told in the West, "Krishna gave Kriya to Noah." Manu in Hinduism is considered the progenitor of humankind, who gave laws and religious rules for Hindu life. Ikshvaku is considered to have been the very first king in ancient India (and founder of the Sun Dynasty). We are talking eons ago, much longer than our Western history is dealing with.

For those interested, here is the particular passage the of the Bhagavad Gita, in which Krishna reveals his role in the ancient history of Kriya Yoga:

"The exalted Lord said to Arjuna: "I gave this imperishable yoga to Vivasvat. Vivasvat passed on the knowledge to Manu; Manu in turn gave it to Iksvaku. (4:1)

Handed down in this way in orderly succession, the RajaRishis (royal rishis) knew it. But, Arjuna, by the long passing of time, this yoga was lost sight on earth.(4:2)

I have this day informed you about that same ancient yoga (Kriya Yoga), because you are my devotee and friend." (4:3)

Arjuna then asks how this can be possible, since Vivasvat lived long, long before Krishna.

Krishna replies: "Many births both you and I have passed through. I can remember them all, but you cannot." (4:5)

In short: Krishna refers to the incredible antiquity of Kriya Yoga, and to the fact that he has been around forever, in one form or another, to teach and revive it.

Kriya was taught again and again, but then was also always lost, with the ebb and flow of the Yugas. The history of Kriya Yoga is a long record of great yogis who brought this science back again and again to its central focus, with Krishna as the charioteer of it all.

In this Yuga cycle too, Kriya Yoga was guarded by "royal rishis" until the coming of the materialistic ages. Then, due to priestly secrecy and man's indifference, the sacred knowledge gradually became inaccessible. And once again Krishna, in the form of Mahavatara Babaji, revived it, in a most spectacular manner in a golden palace. A spiritual renaissance was set into motion for this age, which "will encircle the globe, and aid in establishing that brotherhood of man which results from direct perception of the One Father."

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Elijah

Around 850 BC



Elijah (Elias) is described as the loftiest and most wonderful prophet of the Old Testament. Elijah was the Master of Elisha (Eliseus), who, according to Yogananda, was later reborn as Jesus Christ.

Elijah (and therefore Elisha) practiced Kriya or a very similar technique (see *Autobiography of a Yogi*). Elijah, like Kabir and Jesus, was able through Kriya Yoga to cause his body to dematerialize at will. In death he “simply” ascended in “a chariot of fire.” Yogananda explains: “Certain yogis, like Elijah or Kabir, converted their bodies into astral currents and merged them in the Cosmic Light, without going through the ordinary phenomena of death.” Kriya Yoga was their “trick”!

At any rate, unknown to most people, we have Kriya Yoga prominently represented also in the Old Testament. Jews could therefore be inspired to practice Kriya too.

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## Patanjali

200BC - nobody knows for sure



Patanjali was one of the ancient avatars, and is known today as the “Father of Yoga.” He was the great exponent of Raja Yoga, and taught *ashtanga yoga* ("eight- limbed" yoga) in his famous *Yoga Sutras*. Patanjali’s teachings are central to yoga, and could never be thought away from yogic history.

And well: Patanjali too was a Kriya Yogi, as Babaji states in the *Autobiography of a Yogi*.

Most interestingly, Georg Feuerstein (one of the foremost yoga scholars today), in his acclaimed *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Yoga*, writes: “Even though Patanjali’s Yoga has achieved fame for its eightfold path, it is likely that this particular systematization was merely cited by Patanjali, and that his own contribution to Yoga was Kriya Yoga.”

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Shankaracharya

Most say around 700AD, others claim 500BC



Shankaracharya (Shankara), foremost exponent of the Advaita (non dual) Vedanta philosophy, was the reformer of the ancient Swami order in India. All the ten Swami orders go back to him as the first, “Adi” Shankaracharya. All swamis thus trace their spiritual lineage to one common guru, Shankara. He is certainly one of the most pivotal figures in yogic tradition.

Shankaracharya is widely recognized as a philosophical genius, a saint of the highest order, an incredible astrologer and writer. He established the four main “Shankaracharya Maths”, where the four main Indian spiritual authorities reside until today, in the four corners of India.

Mahavatar Babaji states in the *Autobiography of a Yogi* that it was he himself who initiated Shankara into Kriya Yoga. Yogananda told the fascinating story how Shankaracharya came to accept Kriya initiation from Babaji.

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## **Jesus Christ**

About 0 AD



Jesus lived in India during his “lost 18 years,” and practiced and taught Kriya Yoga. His disciples, the apostles, too, were Kriya Yogis, as Babaji states. Even St. Paul, who didn’t know Jesus personally, received Kriya- either in vision from Jesus, or from his direct disciples, in Indian fashion.

Through Kriya Yoga, St. John could share his cosmic experiences: “In the beginning was the Word...” In Revelation he talks about the mystery of “the seven stars”, and the “seven churches.”

Through Kriya Yoga, St. Paul could declare: “I die daily!”

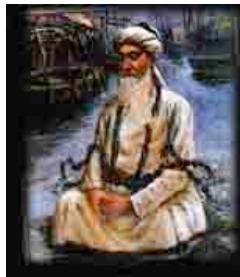
Kriya Yoga might daringly be described as the essence of Christianity, and Kriya Yogis as the truest Christians.

Jesus still today works hand in hand with Babaji, as Yogananda states. Kriya Yoga through them will finally spread all over the globe. Kriya Yogis today are spiritual forerunners, pioneers, like the early Christians. May they hold the light of Kriya high.

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Kabir

1440 - 1518



Kabir too was a great Kriya Master, as we read in the *Autobiography of a Yogi*, and received Kriya initiation from Mahavatar Babaji.

Kabir was called the “Creedless Master,” who scoffed at the ancient rivalry between Hindus and Muslims. He happily was the guru of both Hindus and Mohammedans.

The final act of Kabir’s life exemplifies beautifully his non-sectarian teachings: At his death the disciples were fighting if his body should be buried in Muslim fashion, or burned in Hindu fashion. Kabir rose from death, telling them: “Half of my remains shall be buried by the Moslem rites, and let the other half be cremated with a Hindu sacrament.” He then vanished. When the disciples opened the coffin which had contained his body, nothing was found but a dazzling array of gold-colored champak flowers. Half of these were obediently buried by the Moslems, who revere his shrine to this day. The other half was used for Hindu rites.

If Kabir should return today, again as a Kriya saint, he would probably work hard to dissolve the childish controversies of various Kriya lines, which teach: “Our Kriya tradition is the true, highest, and original Kriya.” He might answer (in Kabir’s poetic way): “All those who bathe in the Kriya-Ganga are my children.” And, “It is the flowering that counts, not the flower!”

Trailanga Swami

1601-1881



Trailanga Swami is described by his devotees as “the greatest of the known Kriya Yogis.” He was a rebel, a public problem child, ever naked, enormously fat, performing publicly all kinds of stunning miracles. He was a good friend of Lahiri Mahasaya. Trailanga’s guru was called Bhagiratananda Saraswati, who initiated him into Kriya Yoga. Trailanga Swami came to be known as Sachal Vishwanath (moving Lord Vishwanath or Shiva).

Here’s a little story, typical for his tumultuous personality: Ramakrishna, the great master, went to Varanasi to meet Trailanga Swami in 1869. Trailanga took his urine and sprinkled it on the idol of the Goddess whom Ramakrishna worshipped, and asked him: “What is the difference between my urine and Ganga water?” Ramakrishna, instead of being provoked or offended, saw that Trailanga’s words were his true inner realization. He therefore said about Trailanga: “I saw that Universal Lord Himself was using his body as a vehicle for his Manifestation.”

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## **Mahatma Gandhi**

1869-1948



The Mahatma (“great soul”) also became a Kriya Yogi, through Yogananda. He thus recognized the greatness of what Yogananda taught, and is now part of the Kriya tradition.

“Other prophets,” as Yogananda writes in his *Autobiography of a Yogi*, also practiced Kriya, and are part of the chain of the Kriya history. India’s ancient King Janaka (guru of Sukdeva, who was the son of Vyasa, the author of the Mahabharata), whom Krishna mentions in the Bhagavad Gita, was one of them, as Yogananda wrote.

Of course in this recent period we would have to add to the Kriya history the exalted disciples of Babaji, Lahiri Mahasaya, Sri Yukteswar, and Yogananda. Swami Kebalananda is just one luminous example, who said: “I myself consider Kriya the most effective device of salvation through self-effort ever to be evolved in man’s search for the Infinite.”

And as Kriya Yoga has an incredible past, with Jesus, Krishna, Patanjali, Shankaracharya in its midst, so will its future be glorious. The Kriya-chain is energetic, and keeps growing. Yogananda writes in his *Autobiography of a Yogi*: “The blessed role of Kriya Yoga has hardly more than just begun!”

Enough now of history and theory. Lahiri Mahasaya counsels us:

“Continue ceaselessly on your path to liberation through Kriya, whose power lies in practice.” So let’s get these currents going, going, going, to finally exclaim: “JAI KRIYA YOGA!”

## *Chapter 5*

### *A Short History of Hong-Sau, the Energization Exercises, and the Aum-Technique*



#### **Hong Sau**

The Hong Sau technique, as most devotees know, isn't a technique which Yogananda created some decades ago. It is ancient, and has been practiced by countless yogis for eons, just like Kriya Yoga and the Aum-technique.

Hong Sau, also, wasn't something Yogananda learned from Sri Yukteswar. He learned it from some other yogi, and then included it in his Kriya-teachings. That is why other Kriya lines don't practice Hong-Sau. What did Sri Yukteswar think about this new addition? In a letter to Yogananda, quoted in the *Autobiography of a Yogi*, he said: "Beholding your methods in chant affirmations, healing vibrations, and divine healing prayers, I cannot refrain from thanking you from my heart." Sri Yukteswar certainly

expressed the same appreciation for the Hong-Sau technique, otherwise Yogananda would never have taught it.

“Hong-Sau” is the Bengali pronunciation of the Sanskrit mantra, “Hamsa,” or “Hansa.” At least that is how it is usually explained. Or is “Hong Sau” maybe not only Bengali? Who knows how “Hamsa” was pronounced in ancient times! Swami Vivekananda once had a vision of ancient rishis reciting Sanskrit mantras, and said they sounded very different from the way they are chanted today. Yogananda writes in his Autobiography: “Ham-sa (pronounced hong-sau)...” In other words, he simply states that Ham-sa is really pronounced “Hong-Sau.” Was he a Bengali fanatic, or was there some deeper knowledge in him?

Hong Sau, we said, comes to us from a very distant past. “Hamsa” (Hong-Sau) is already to be found in the oldest of the Vedas, the Rig Veda (1550 BC, and earlier it was transmitted orally). It refers to the supreme Lord. It also stands in yoga scriptures for the Self (atman). Hamsa stems from the Sanskrit words “Aham-Sa,” which literally mean “I am He.”

Hamsa (Hong-Sau) is explained in ancient yoga scriptures to be the sound of the subtle breath itself: the entry of prana into the body causes the sound “ham,” the ejection of prana out of the body the sound “sa.” Therefore the body itself is thought to automatically recite this mantric sound 21.600 times a day. This spontaneous sound is widely known as “Ajapa Mantra” (unpronounced mantra), or “Ajapa-Gayatri,” (unpronounced Gayatri Mantra), or simply “Hamsa-Mantra.”

In his *Autobiography* Yogananda similarly states: “Ham-sa (pronounced hong-sau) are two sacred Sanskrit chant words possessing a vibratory connection with the incoming and outgoing breath. Aham-Sa is literally ‘I am He.’”

Yogananda described these mantric sounds as “sacred.” The ancient texts agree. The “Gheranda-Samhita” instructs to recite this potent sound constantly, to arrive at a state of exaltation.

“Aham”, when pronounced in mantric form as “Hong,” becomes a bija (seed) mantra, vibrating with the inhalation. Its vibration corresponds, as yoga treatises teach, to the ascending current in the ida nadi. “Sa” becomes “Sau” in mantric form, and vibrates with the exhalation, and with the descending current through the pingala nadi.

The ancient technique of “Hong-Sau” is meant to bring the yogi towards mental calmness, helps him to withdraw his energy inward, and to lead him naturally toward breathlessness. In breathlessness the twofold vibration of “Hong” and “Sau” combines into the single omnipresent vibration, Aum.

Several Masters and scriptures don’t teach “Hong-Sau,” but “So-Ham.” Again, in India some yogis teach the Sanskrit version “Hamsa.” All traditions need to be respected, but disciples of Yogananda should practice what their Guru taught. If his devotee thinks, “Maybe the official Sanskrit version, or the inverted version, would be the better way to practice,” well, he might simply lack a basic understanding of discipleship.

And if, on the other side, he thinks, “I must convert others to my Guru’s ‘better Mantra,’” again some understanding seems missing.

About the ancient symbolism of Hamsa/Hong-Sau: “Hamsa” is traditionally translated as “swan,” (even though literally it means goose), which in ancient Indian scriptures is the vehicle of Brahma, the Supreme Spirit. The swan is also said to possess the sacred knowledge of Brahma. The flight of the Hamsa thus symbolizes the escape from the cycle of samsara (reincarnation). The swan also lives on water but its feathers are not wetted by it, so similarly a “Hong-Sau-Yogi” learns to live in this material world (maya), while being untouched by all its illusions, temptations, and traps.

With “Hong-Sau” we strengthen the untouched observer inside. (The soul is the observer, Yogananda wrote.)

As the symbol of discrimination, the white Hansa swan is credited with the ability to separate the true soma nectar from a mixture of milk and water.

A “Parama-hamsa” symbolizes the “supreme swan,” the highest of yogis, a liberated being. Yes, Yogananda wrote his title “Paramhansa,” and it seems we should honor his choice. “Paramahamsa” could, for fun, also be translated as the “supreme Hong-So,” meaning “the supreme I-am-He.”

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The Energization Exercises

In contrast to the anciently-existing Hong-Sau-technique, the *energization exercises* were Yogananda’s personal creation. He started (or "discovered") them in 1916, as he writes in his *Autobiography*. In time he expanded them into a set of 49 exercises.

The *energization exercises* are his precious contribution to the world of yoga. But of course the principles of energization too are ancient (as are all true principles), and have been used by countless yogis in the past. In classic yogic terminology this method is called *prana-dharana* (concentration of prana), signifying the technique of projecting life-force (*prana*) into specific parts of the body, in order to restore specific organs, limbs etc. to health.

Yogananda, then, with the *energization exercises*, taught ancient principles in a new form, one might say. "People do not know what they have in these exercises," Yogananda wrote. Done well (pulling *prana* into the body through the medulla oblongata

through will power, and directing it to the body parts), they can perform miracles of healing, physically and psychologically.

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### **The Aum Technique**

The Aum-technique which Yogananda taught is equally ancient. Sound is one of the principal and oldest means by which yogis have thought to focus their attention. It is a practice of Nada-Yoga, which is a prominent teaching in the Yoga-Upanishads. The practice of listening to the inner sounds is called “Nada-Anusandhana” in yoga treatises. In those ancient texts the subtle sound one listens for is often called “Shabda.” The ultimate sound to be heard is called “Shabda-Brahman,” the sound of Brahman: “AUM.” The inner sound is said to bring bliss and knowledge, and is described as a boat which takes the yogi across the ocean of delusion, to the Absolute.

In several yoga scriptures, interestingly, different inner sounds were associated with the different chakras. As we see again, Yogananda taught ancient and ever-new wisdom. Indeed, could inner facts ever change?

The “Aum-board,” incidentally, which Yogananda recommended for the Aum-technique, can be admired on old Indian drawings.

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Jyoti Mudra

“Jyoti-Mudra” (Light-Mudra), the technique Yogananda taught for seeing the inner light (“Bhagavan Jyoti”), is called in Yoga

treatises “Shan-Mukhi-Mudra,” the ‘six-openings-seal.’” It is referred to, for example, in the ancient “Goraksha Paddhati,” which explains it as the blocking of the ears, eyes, and nostrils with ones fingers: one covers the ears with the thumbs, the eyes with ones index fingers, and the nostrils with the remaining fingers. This Mudra, one reads there, is recommended for the manifestation of the inner sound. Yogananda taught it for seeing the inner light. Interesting! Well, if one thinks about it, he also taught that the Aum-vibration is experienced as both sound and light.

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### **Maha Mudra**

Maha Mudra (Great Mudra) too is a very classical yoga practice. It is said in the *Goraksha Paddhati* (see above) that it purifies the entire network of the nadis. And the most central Hatha Yoga scripture, the *Hatha Yoga Pradipika*, says that Maha Mudra awakens Kundalini-Shakti, the “serpent power.”

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The Point Between the Eyebrows

Lahiri Mahasaya wrote in a letter, quoted in the *Autobiography of a Yogi*: “He who has attained a state of calmness wherein his eyelids do not blink, has achieved Sambhabi Mudra.”

This particular Mudra (also written “Shambhavi Mudra,” meaning “Shiva-Mudra”) is one of the most important (and often kept secret) Mudras of Yoga. It involves steady gazing at the point between the eyebrows, trying to become completely absorbed in the inner “sign.” “Mudra” means seal, and Sambhabi Mudra is

perhaps the most esoteric seal of all, known to saints of all religions (who are always depicted looking upward). It is a closure (seal) to the outward world, to become absorbed within. And Yogananda clearly described that secret “sign” which one sees in Sambhabhi Mudra.

Interestingly, as one understands from Lahiri Mahasaya’s letter (printed in his handwriting), he taught this divine practice to be done with open eyes. Yogananda taught that half-open eyes or closed eyes are both good. The painting of Babaji is a perfect Sambhabhi Mudra image, with open eyes.

Yogananda taught the ancient Sambhabhi Mudra to be practiced at the end of Kriya or Hong-Sau, with deepest soul-devotion. Never end your meditation with techniques. Sit for a long time: “I will leave my finite mansion for my Infinite Mansion through the tunnel of the Spiritual Eye and breathlessness.”

Yogananda, one might conclude, is much more of a traditional yogi than is generally known, continuing a long yogic tradition. He taught central and sacred yoga techniques of ancient lore for modern men and women, for you and me.

Well, the important thing is to practice: *banat, banat, ban jai* (doing, doing, one day done)!

Chapter 6

A Historical Question on Kriya Yoga Authority



This chapter might create some dispute, as it has done in the past. Let's go slowly then, breathing deeply!

It was prompted by a letter by SRF to its members, dated November 1995, which discusses their viewpoint of many controversial topics, among them a crucial one: "Who is authorized to give Kriya Initiation?" Their position is that only SRF monastics have such authority, not householders, since that was the Guru's wish.

For a moment let us remember Jesus and the apostles. He rebuked them, great though they were, for not understanding. After he had left his body, St. Peter was convinced that his message was only for circumscribed Jews. Hadn't Jesus said so? Wasn't he "the King of the Jews?" It was St. Paul, an outsider, who understood better: Jesus' message was for the whole world.

It seems, similarly, that history places a calm question mark behind

SRF's Kriya claim. And if that question mark proves valid, it would be a pity if a misunderstanding, based on personal disposition (we all hear what we are ready to hear), would prevail over what Babaji has brought. It would be a true pity if householders would accept in their hearts that they are "second-class citizens" in the Kriya-world, never able to give Kriya, and if monastics felt superior to them. It would be a pity if our precious Kriya history got weakened in that way.

Here is what the letter says:

"Owing to a shortage of monastics in the early years, Paramahansaji gave permission to a few householder disciples to give Kriya under the auspices of Self-Realization-Fellowship. But as his life drew to a close,... he stipulated that Kriya was to be given only by monastics of the SRF order from then on."

Let's look at what history has to say about their statement, which was certainly made with good intentions:

These "few householder disciples" whom Yogananda gave permission to give Kriya because of "a shortage of monastics" were in truth not momentary hole-filers, but some of Yogananda's greatest and most important disciples.

And was it really a matter of "the early years?" Not quite, if one looks closely. Up to the end of Yogananda's life, and even long afterwards, married disciples gave the sacred Kriya diksha, within SRF. Does that mean SRF was disobedient toward their Guru's wish (since "he stipulated that Kriya be given only by SRF monastics")? One wouldn't think so. SRF was simply doing the right thing: letting these married disciples continue to give Kriya, since they had their authority directly from Yogananda himself. Here they are:

- **Dr. Lewis**, the first American Kriya yogi, was a married man, not a monastic. He was authorized by Yogananda to give Kriya, including the higher initiations. His authority as a married Kriya

minister was never questioned until his death in 1960.

- **Yogacharya Oliver Black** was highly advanced, was married, lived in the spiritual community he had founded (not SRF), and was until his death a recognized Kriya-minister. His name was included in SRF magazines (until 1986 or later), in the lists of ministers authorized to give Kriya Yoga.

- **Rajarsi Janakananda** was a married man too. His wife Frieda died after him (see Durga Ma's book). Of course Rajarsi, as Yogananda's successor, was authorized to initiate disciples into Kriya Yoga. Nobody would have asked him: "But are you a monastic?" It seems the wrong question.

- **Prabhas Ghose**, the Indian YSS vice-president (the American SRF president is also the YSS president) until 1975, was a married man. He was Yogananda's cousin and married, as Yogananda writes in his *Autobiography*, "one of the girls whom my family selected as a possible bride for me." Prabhas became the married vice-president in YSS- giving Kriya Yoga.

- **Peggy Deitz** left the monastic life, following Yogananda's guidance. After that, in a letter in early 1952, Yogananda wrote her and her mother lovingly: "You two are most wonderful among my richest gifts of all-time friends and followers of SRF... So glad Peggy is such a good soul-minister of Self-Realization." In Yogananda's mind, Peggy was simply a non-monastic minister, and he asked her to give Kriya initiation out there, to whomever she felt guided to give it. That was at the very end of his life.

- **Kamala Silva** was married to Edward Silva upon Yogananda's request. Yogananda authorized Kamala to bestow the sacred Kriya initiation. She writes that in 1950 during a Kriya ceremony Yogananda blessed her, prayed silently, and then told her: "God bless you. I am giving my blessing to you for the thousands you will initiate into Kriya Yoga." It seems clear that Yogananda gave her a life-long Kriya-responsibility, as a married woman. (You

may listen to her beautiful voice recordings on www.kamalasilva.org)

This is why the claim is followed by a notable question mark.

Could we strengthen that question mark, giving it some further substance? Maybe. Let's look at our bigger Kriya history. Wouldn't Yogananda continue his Guru's and Paramgurus example? Probably (though not necessarily so). At any rate, what example did the Masters of our Kriya line give? None of them drew the line between monastics and householders when deciding whom to give the authority to bestow Kriya initiation.

- **Mahavatar Babaji** as we read in Yogananda's *Autobiography* chose a householder, Lahiri Mahasaya, as an instrument for disseminating Kriya Yoga to the world, stating that it was for "a deep purpose." He had a householder give Kriya initiation day and night, bringing back to society that lost ancient art. Normal people "will take new heart from you, a householder like themselves," Babaji told Lahiri. Should we scratch his directive for our modern age?

- **Lahiri Mahasaya**, called the "Father of Kriya Yoga," authorized both householder disciples and swamis to give Kriya initiation. Panchanon Battacharya was a householder, while Swami Pranabananda was a sannyasin. Most Lahiri-lines actually claim that householders should play the dominant role in spreading Kriya Yoga.

- **Sri Yukteswar** was a householder with wife and daughter, for most of the time when Lahiri Mahasaya was alive. He became a Swami only when he met Babaji, which was shortly before Lahiri's passing. Sri Yukteswar too authorized both householders and swamis to give the sacred Kriya initiation- a householder example is Motilal Mukkherjee, who is described in the original *Autobiography of a Yogi* as a "highly advanced disciple."

- **Paramhansa Yogananda**, following his Master's lead, authorized both householders and monastics to give Kriya, all life long.

Doesn't their example give value to our question mark? And since we are at it: could we make it even a bit more solid?

Lets look far back into our ancient Kriya history: we read that Bhagavan Krishna was married, as was the "Father of yoga," Patanjali. Both were married Kriya masters, according to Yogananda. Of course there was balance: historic examples of monastic *Kriyacharyas* (Kriya-teachers) would be Adi Shankaracharya and Lord Jesus (both teaching Kriya or a similar technique, according to Yogananda).

The SRF letter goes on to say that Yogananda originated a policy that "only the president, as the channel of Paramahansa Yogananda, has the authority to initiate in the Kriya Yoga," and that he/she designates yearly ordained ministers to conduct the Kriya ceremonies.

That statement too might not pass without our calm question mark.

SRF says that this policy was originated by Yogananda. Could it possibly be that they misunderstood? Other disciples state that this policy was installed only years after the Master's passing. Well, let us not quarrel here, but simply maintain this fair-minded question mark:

Did Yogananda really break away from the Indian Guru-disciple tradition, which authorizes the disciple? Did he really limit worldwide Kriya-authority not only to his organization, but to one single person (currently Mrinalini Mata)? What kind of energy does such a policy generate? Don't the *Kriyacharyas* automatically get de-authorized, weakened? Is that Babaji's way to spread Kriya to all lands?

There exist a letter of Yogananda, written four months before his passing (Nov.13,1951), to an Indian householder, K.S. Bylani in Poona. Yogananda tells him: "Please give Kriya Yoga only to those members of your family who are deeply interested and whom you feel will daily use it. God bless you and your family. My prayers will be with each of you."

Here's a funny and interesting conversation between Yogananda and Peggy Deitz (from *Thank You, Master*). "He told me to feel free to give Kriya or any part of his teachings to whomever I thought I should. I exploded, 'Master, I can't do that. Your office would have a fit!' He said, 'You divine nincompoop, whom are you following, the office or me?'"

SRF is a great and wonderful organization, doing much good, attracting marvelous souls. But in some matters it seems best to consider a question mark.

Chapter 7

Householder Swamis: Babaji's Historical Gesture



Here is quite a "juicy" question which might find formidable resistance amongst more orthodox devotees: "Does the Kriya Yoga tradition allow for a married person, a householder, to become a *swami*, even while he is still living with his wife or husband?"

"WHAT? NOOO WAY!" thunders with indignation the chorus of Indian orthodoxy. Their Western counterparts would not react differently: orthodox Catholics vehemently oppose the idea of a married man becoming a priest. It's an unacceptable offence to their ancient tradition.

Yet, in the *Autobiography of a Yogi* we read about a historic event at the Kumbha Mela where Babaji made Sri Yukteswar a Swami. This happened during Lahiri Mahasaya's lifetime: in January 1894, according to *The Holy Science*.

We also read in the *Autobiography* that Sri Yukteswar was later formally and officially initiated in Bodh Gaya: "After my wife

died, I joined the Swami Order and received the new name of Sri Yukteswar Giri." That event happened *after* Lahiri Mahasaya's lifetime (after September 1895), as Yogananda explains in a footnote: 'Yukteswar' was his monastic name, which was "not received by my guru during Lahiri Mahasaya's lifetime."

(Swami Prajnanananda wrote a book on Sri Yukteswar, and describes this formal event: "Swami Shriyukteshwarji was initiated into sannyas, monastic life, by Swami Krishna Dayal Gir of Bodhagaya, on Guru Purnima, fullmoonday, of July in 1906.")

Looking clearly at Yogananda's quotes, we realize: when Babaji made Sri Yukteswar a Swami at the Kumbha Mela, his wife was still alive. He was a married man. Babaji, then, made Sri Yukteswar a "married Swami." Sri Yukteswar back then fittingly called himself "Priya Nath Swami," as one reads in his *The Holy Science*. Priya Nath was his family name. He was a pioneering "family Swami."

But there's still more to come:

Yogananda made Rajarsi Janakananda a Swami, giving him the orange robe and a Swami-name in 1951, complete with vow and ceremony, while he was a married man. His wife Frieda died after him. She, according to Durga Ma's book, was the reason why Rajarsi ended up being buried in Kansas, not in Los Angeles, next to his Master. Yogananda, then, made Rajarsi too a "married Swami."

Is the Kriya-path after all not a highly orthodox one? Maybe because it is designed for Dwapara Yuga? *Good bye*, oh ye old stiff boxes. See you next Kali Yuga!

Swami Kriyananda, seeing the need to redefine the ancient Swami-order for this new age, founded an innovative *Nayaswami Order* ("naya" meaning new), which allows for married Swamis. It might take a long time to get widely accepted. But even Sri Yukteswar

got (and still gets) heavily attacked for his teaching that we are not in Kali Yuga anymore. Fortunately time is slowly moving ahead, changing people's consciousness.

Chapter 8

The Great Kriya Saga (History for Fun)



This book on Yogananda's history doesn't quite seem complete without the telling of some adventurous and mysterious saga: with kings, queens, knights, tragedy and victory. So here is one, simply for the reader's enjoyment. Well.... maybe only those whose nature is a bit playful will enjoy it. Others (the more serious readers) might wrinkle their eyebrows, but that's ok too.

So here the Saga begins:

Once upon a time.....

when men and women were becoming blind to the true and noble beauty of the Lord's earth, a great and mighty warrior-king appeared from the ancient Oriental lands, and began conquering the Western world. His mission, given to him by his wise father and forefathers, was to establish a new and glorious kingdom. It was a mighty task indeed.

He appeared alone, when he was still young, but his radiant force was such that still today many a story is being told about his matchless valor: thousands were conquered, for his heart was truly

mighty, noble, majestic, and also deeply wise. Light sparkled joyfully in his large, beautiful eyes as he went on conquering many lands. He was not tall, but his strength was so amazing that few could even understand it. His kingdom at first started small, but it grew every day as he strode from East to West to fulfill his glorious mission. His mighty sword was ever held high, brilliant, shining, carrying the symbols of wisdom, high-mindedness and indomitable strength.

The citizens of his kingdom were a happy folk, especially because of the ancient rite the King had taught them, which promised everyone complete freedom. A new light entered the citizen's hearts, and a newfound joy pervaded their lives. It was ray of hope in a world that was often all too dark. It was a new kingdom, more beautiful than anyone had ever seen before.

The King soon established a Great Castle, which at times was radiant with laughter, at times dynamically silent, and at other times fervently busy with so many royal chores. Friendship, freedom, and tolerance could be felt in every corner of the Castle. Great and noble citizens came to live there, to join the King in his great mission.

The King was known to be a man of deep love for all, loving his closest and dearest friends as well as complete strangers. He in turn was deeply loved and admired by many, but, as it always happens, not by all. His enormous success far and wide kindled flames of dark envy in the heart of some of his close friends. The flames grew. Burnt up from within, some finally turned against the King, betrayed him, and even fought bitter wars against him. The King had to suffer periods of deep distress and sorrow, since he ever loved his friends who had now declared to be his enemies.

Still the King's victories grew. His activities became even more expansive, and his name finally became known all over the world. He wisely established smaller castles throughout the kingdom. He trained people to become majestic themselves, and wrote many a

kingly instruction for the benefit of all citizens. His fame expanded, his rite became well-known, and his life-mission was gloriously fulfilled.

Alas, his end finally had to come, and he gave his prosperous kingdom into the hands of a great and mighty son, who had proved to be the closest to the King, among all his sons and daughters. But, as the hand of fate decided it, that worthy son's life lasted but a little while longer, and the reigns of the kingdom were soon passed on to one of the King's daughters, who now became the Queen.

The new Queen was beautiful, was a woman of much love, and of complete devotion to her father. She was supported by the high and noble ministers of the court, and by her most intimate inner circle of royal counselors. She also trusted her ordained knights to faithfully carry out her queenly commands.

Her reign was strict, though, and she held the reigns of the kingdom tightly in her hands. Such had been the command of her father to her. Her royal scepter was richly ornamented, and at times she used it in an uncompromising manner. She underlined her position on the mighty throne, declaring to be the only representative of the King in all the world. The various smaller castles of the kingdom were tied to her through strict obedience. The Queen would not tolerate any disobedience, disloyalty, or willful independence.

Thus it happened that a strong-armed knight, ranking high in the kingdom, highest after the Queen herself, and member of the inner circle, who had been made the "Chief of Knights" by the King himself, was fiercely sent away from the Great Castle, when he was in foreign lands, trying mightily to expand the kingdom's boundaries. He was branded a traitor, and his once-noble name was from then on broadcasted all over the kingdom as being a disgrace to the King. But that knight recovered and grew strong again, much to the Queen's displeasure.

More problems arouse for the Queen. Other Lords, far cousins of the same royal family, came invading the kingdom, bringing the same ancient rite which the King had taught. One came from the high Eastern mountains, another from the planes, still another from a far Oriental city. Their battles were successful, and they grew in strength.

Sometimes even wars were fought against them, since the Queen had proclaimed that in all the kingdom she alone was authorized to impart the ancient ritual. Even her knights could do so only in her royal name. She in her heart was a true royal monarch. But the citizens divided: some pledged their faithful unwavering loyalty to her, as the King's daughter. Some followed other Lords, who more strictly maintained the Eastern tradition. Others turned away completely. Still others merely criticized and complained about the situation and the Queen, while a few were constructive and plentiful in sharing the King's noble heritage in their own special way.

The Queen grew old. Her race was run. She, as a loyal daughter, had done her very best. The kingdom, however, had not expanded massively under her long reign. Yet she had protected it in all its beauty, so that the King's name would ever remain a shining light in the whole world. The gardens were blossoming, the lakes were bright, the Castle spotless. The Queen had placed mostly the high ladies of the court in charge, and everyone had been well trained to say "yes" to them, with a smile.

But under the rule of the Queen many a strong, self-motivated knight had been driven away from the Great Castle. Conquering warrior eyes and voices were seldom seen there anymore.

The royal flags, the Queen knew, were conscientiously kept high and impressive, proudly declaring the name of the Great Castle. And the majestic emblem of the King was ever kept bright and

polished, in golden color to underline its kingly value and importance.

A royal messenger, which the King himself had started long ago, is still being printed today and is regularly sent out to the citizens throughout the kingdom, but the number of its readers has diminished, as royal scientists have found.

Some valiant warriors within the Great Castle were still youthfully eager to climb their horse, as the King had always done, to fight bravely in the King's name. But the Queen kept her knights in line, orderly, well-behaved, controlled, their knightly prowess subdued. All was safe for her, and all in place, all was preserved, just as it was when the King was alive... as if time had stopped. And she was content.

What will happen now that the Queen has died? Will the newly-crowned Queen loosen the reigns, and will a fresh and vigorous air breath within the castle walls, even though she is advanced in years? Will the knights again be shining in their valiant armor, as the King had been? Will they be able to match the numerous invading Lords, who act in all God-given creativity and freedom?

If not, the Great Castle might in time become a monument only – the memory of a great and incomparable King – like many other castles of old, which now are but a ruin. Then the other Lords will laugh freely, reigning East and West, saying, "The Queen never understood that the essence of the rite of the King has always been 'FREEDOM!'"

Chapter 9

History not to Be Forgotten



The following quotes (all taken from older editions of the *Autobiography of a Yogi*) shed light on several beautiful sides of Yogananda. They show a spirit and a history to be remembered – even to be protected.

Yogananda's Humanitarian Gold Medal

Once upon a time...did you know this fun piece of history?

Yogananda was not only the inward monk, but was extremely expansive. In this spirit, in early editions of the *Autobiography of a Yogi*, he encouraged members not “to isolate themselves from the community, but to lead balanced lives of meditation AND constructive outer activities.”

Yogananda much appreciated humanitarian work, also outside his own organization. Thus he created “SRF Gold Medals Awards for Services to Humanity”, which were given annually as rewards to humanitarians in the fields of religion, art, science, and public service. During the opening ceremonies of India House in 1951 he presented eight such Gold Medals. The Gold Medals displayed the symbols of “a Cross, a five-pointed star with the eye of wisdom in the center, and a lotus- its roots in the mire and its crown in the sun, a symbol of ascent from mortality to Godhood.”

A part of the Master and his history not to be lost!

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### **Yogananda's Charitable Gift Shops and Welfare Fund**

*Once upon a time...did you know this fun piece of history?*

In the editions 3-5 of the *Autobiography of a Yogi* (1951-1955) we read about Yogananda's welfare gift shops: Renunciates sold donations made by members and friends of SRF. The proceeds of this activity were “wholly used for charitable purposes.”

Yogananda even established a “SRF Welfare Fund” to which the renunciates (receiving no salaries) donated “all gratuities”. Food, so one reads, was in this way provided “to children in India and Europe”.

This seems another precious Yogananda-feature to be kept alive.

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Yogananda's Universal Spirit

Once upon a time...did you know this fun piece of history?

Still taken from older editions of the *Autobiography of a Yogi*: Yogananda, in his beautiful universal spirit, called *all* his churches "Church of All Religions": The "SRF Church of All Religions in Washington, D.C.", "SRF Hollywood Church of All Religions", "SRF Church of All Religions in San Diego", and "another one in Long Beach". Today only the Hollywood Church retains that historic name.

We also once read about Yogananda's special feature of "universal benignity" in the *Church of All Religions* in Hollywood: "A universal benignity flows from small niches with statues of Lahiri Mahasaya, Sri Yukteswar, Krishna, Buddha, Confucius, Moses, St. Francis and a beautiful mother-of-pearl reproduction of Christ at the last supper."

The same church originally had its two pulpits for a specific reason: Yogananda's plan was to use one for SRF ministers, the other one for ministers of other religions whom he planned to invite – he had in mind a true "Church of all Religions."

In the 1946 edition Yogananda expresses his world-spirit in another way: "We shall arrange here (Encinitas) for many conferences and Congresses of Religion, inviting delegates from all lands. Flags of the nations will hang in our halls. Diminutive temples will be built over the grounds, dedicated to the world's principal religions."

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## **Yogananda and Freedom**

*Once upon a time...did you know this fun piece of history?*

It is interesting to read (in *Autobiography of a Yogi* editions before 1955) that Yogananda referred to Swami Premananda as "*the founder* of the SRF Church in Washington, D.C."

In the original 1946 edition Yogananda similarly wrote: "...during a visit to *his* (Premananda's) new temple,..." He seemed to have given a good measure of independence to others.

Babaji, concerning Kriya Yoga, similarly seemed to have given some measure of freedom. He left Lahiri Mahasaya the freedom to develop Kriya according to his own discernment: Lahiri, as we read in the *Autobiography*, "carefully graded Kriya into four progressive initiations," and "wisely sifted out four steps which he discerned to be those which contained the essential marrow, and which were of the highest value in actual practice." In other words he developed the Kriya he had received from Babaji.

So did Sri Yukteswar, and also Yogananda who both made slight changes which they deemed appropriate for teaching Kriya to their disciples. The core technique remained the same of course, but unfortunately it started a lot of quarrelling among disciples about which Kriya is the best, purest, and most original.

Yogananda also included in the Kriya procedure his *energization exercises*, which, as he writes, "I had discovered in 1916", as well as the Hong Sau-technique. Again, it was not exclusively a "carefully preserved" and "handed down" Kriya tradition.

In this context it is interesting to read Sri Yukteswar's letter to Yogananda (ch. 37), in which he thanks him for "your methods in chant affirmations, healing vibrations, and divine healing prayers". Yogananda as we see taught his own methods. He was an enlightened Master, of course, and not many of us would have that same right. At any rate, this letter too give an impression of Kriya Yoga as a breathing spiritual path, inspired from within.

This is a big and important topic. How free should future generations be in interpreting Kriya? Probably they would be wise not to touch what any of the great ones (Babaji, Lahiri, Sri Yukteswar, or Yogananda) have established. Yogananda's future generation, for example, should definitively teach Hong So, his *energization exercises*, the AUM-technique, and Kriya Yoga in exactly the same way he taught it, with all its elements.

But in all that our Kriya path should ever remain one of inner joy, freedom, and appropriate individual creativity.

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Yogananda Supporting Other Kriya Lines and Institutions

Once upon a time...did you know this fun piece of history?

Yogananda wrote in early editions of the *Autobiography of a Yogi*: "The Arya Mission Institution (of Panchanon Battacharya) undertook the publication of many of the guru's (Lahiri's) scriptural commentaries." Panchanon's institution was just one of several efforts to spread the new Kriya message.

Yogananda was friends with Tinkuri and Dukouri Lahiri, sons of Lahiri Mahasaya, who of course taught Kriya Yoga (and their family line continues today). Yogananda harmoniously shared with them the spreading of Kriya. Yogananda also visited Swami Keshabananda, who with his disciples spread Kriya Yoga (they still have active ashrams today). Did or would Yogananda object? Why should he? Or would he tell disciples of Ram Gopal Muzumdar to stop teaching Kriya?

Babaji, we read in the *Autobiography*, chose Yogananda "to spread the message and technique of Kriya Yoga in the West." Babaji's words "in the West" certainly imply an important mission, but don't seem to imply a worldwide monopoly.

Today Swami Shankarananda and others are doing a wonderful work of spreading the Kriya message in East and West. Yogananda, according to the early *Autobiography of a Yogi* would not object: "Kriya should be learned from a *kriyaban*."

Yogananda's Spirit Toward Other Great Teachers

Once upon a time...did you know this fun piece of history?

A memorable example of Yogananda's universal spirit can be discovered in a footnote in his *Autobiography*, in the first few pages of the original 1946 edition, where he recommends the Bhagavad Gita-commentaries of another great Master. His words are: "One of the best translations with detailed commentary is Sri Aurobindo's *Message of the Gita* (Jupiter Press, 16 Semudoss St., Madras, India, \$3.50)."

A generous spirit to be remembered!

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## **Yogananda's Openness to the Public**

*Once upon a time...did you know this fun piece of history?*

Yogananda was expansive, with a heart reaching out to the world, keeping the doors open to all, and being a dear friend to people everywhere. This too is a piece of history which will hopefully never be lost. (Quotes again taken from the *Autobiography* during Yogananda's lifetime).

There was a SRF Encinitas Hotel "for the accommodation of SRF members and the public". In later editions it became a SRF retreat for members.

In Yogananda's times in Dakshineshwar "suitable accommodations are available for Western guests, and particularly for those seekers who are intensely dedicating their lives to spiritual realization." Modern versions don't offer these accommodations.

The same in Ranchi: "A guest house is hospitably open for Western visitors." Today we don't find Yogananda's hospitality anymore.

At the Hollywood church once “stone seats on the lawn are an invitation to passers-by on busy Sunset Boulevard to enter and enjoy a few meditative moments.” Today Yogananda’s public invitation is not offered.

"The SRF Lake Shrine is open to the public." This sentence is now missing from the main text in the *Autobiography of a Yogi*, but we still find it under the Lake-Shrine photo.

We read in an early *Autobiography* (during Yogananda's life, in 1951) about *three* public SRF cafes which Yogananda operated: one at Lake Shrine (in the courtyard garden of the Dutch Windmill house), one in Hollywood (SRF India Cafe), and one in Encinitas. They are now history.

The “Cultural India House” is seen on a photo in 1951, invitingly facing Sunset Boulevard, showing a fence-less (maybe those days were less dangerous?) Hollywood Church. It was originally described by Yogananda as “a meeting place for East and West”. In it, there used to be a *Reading Room*, as one reads. It also offered a *Gandhi-Memorial-Library*. All these inviting public features today are history.

There is, in early editions, a sweet and touching testimonial for the *Autobiography of a Yogi*, by Prof. Piper (parts are still being used today). He wrote that after earnestly reading Master's book that "one has the happy feeling of being the lasting friend of a rare genius." His words seem most appropriate for who Yogananda was and is.

May Yogananda ever be remembered that way: a lasting friend to all, easily accessible from heart to heart, ever open to the public, to everyone.

## **Disciples Writing About Their Guru**

*Once upon a time...did you know this fun piece of history?*

In early editions of his *Autobiography* Yogananda wrote: "Like Jesus and other great prophets, Lahiri Mahasaya himself wrote no books, but his penetrating interpretations were recorded and arranged by various disciples. Some of these voluntary amanuenses were more discerning than others in correctly conveying the profound insight of the guru; yet, on the whole, their efforts were successful. Through their zeal, the world possesses unparalleled commentaries by Lahiri Mahasaya on twenty-six ancient scriptures."

"Various disciples" of Yogananda have followed their example, and wrote about Yogananda and his teachings as they understood them:

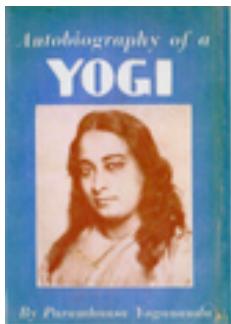
- Durga Mata: Trilogy of Divine Love
- Dr. Lewis: Treasures against Time
- Swami Kriyananda: The New Path
- Kamala Silva: The Flawless Mirror
- Meera Gosh: My Reminiscences of Paramhansa Yogananda
- Roy Eugene Davis: My Life with Paramahansa Yogananda
- Sananda Gosh: Mejda
- Hare Krishna Gosh: Experiences With My Guru, Paramhansa Yogananda
- Swami Satyananda: Yogananda Sangha
- Peggy Deitz: Thank You, Master

Again, "on the whole, their efforts were successful".

May we keep these features of Yogananda alive, his legacy of love and openness!

## *Chapter 10*

### *Historical Notes on the Autobiography of a Yogi*



Here are a few historical words on Yogananda's famous spiritual classic and masterpiece, the *Autobiography of a Yogi*.

Yogananda worked for 25 years on his *Autobiography of a Yogi*, which must certainly be counted as one of the most important projects of his life. It was an essential part of his mission in the West, given to him by his Gurus and *Paramangurus*.

And indeed it was his Master, Swami Sri Yukteswar, who requested him to write the book. He knew that it had been prophesied long ago by Lahiri Mahasaya, and that Yogananda was the one to fulfill that prophecy. One reads in the *Autobiography of a Yogi*:

"About fifty years after my passing," he (Lahiri Mahasaya) said, "my life will be written because of a deep interest in yoga which the West will manifest. The yogic message will encircle the globe, and aid in establishing that brotherhood of man, which results from direct perception of the One Father."

"My son Yogananda," Sri Yukteswar went on, "you must do your

part in spreading that message, and in writing that sacred life." Fifty years after Lahiri Mahasaya's passing in 1895 culminated in 1945, the year of completion of this present book."

In a later chapter, Yogananda continues:

"My object in seeking out Keshabananda was connected with this book. I had never forgotten Sri Yukteswar's request that I write the life of Lahiri Mahasaya. During my stay in India I was taking every opportunity of contacting direct disciples and relatives of the Yogavatar. Recording their conversations in voluminous notes, I verified facts and dates, and collected photographs, old letters, and documents. My Lahiri Mahasaya portfolio began to swell; I realized with dismay that ahead of me lay arduous labors in authorship."

Durga Ma writes that much of his authorship happened in Encinitas. Most of the time, as she relates, Yogananda wrote longhand. At other times he dictated to Daya Mata's shorthand. Or Daya Mata and Mataji (Daya's sister, Ananda Mata) would alternate in taking dictation on the typewriter. Yogananda liked it when they read the text back to him. The typed text, as Daya Mata recalls, was then given, piece after piece, to Tara Mata for editing. While writing, Yogananda would often pause, look up, and enter samadhi. In this way the *Autobiography of a Yogi* became a book charged with his superconscious vibrations. It was, Yogananda stated, "my principle work in life," and will be "my messenger!"

The book was completed in 1945. Yogananda obviously expected it to be published in early 1946: in *East-West* (Jan.-March 1946), in the 1946 New Year's message, he urged the readers of the magazine to "spread the message" by sharing with others their copy of the *Autobiography of a Yogi*, or by presenting copies to their friends. He also announced how he would use the proceeds of his book: to build the "Golden World City"(World Brotherhood Colony) in Encinitas.

But it took almost one more year before his masterpiece could

reach his readers. The *Autobiography of a Yogi* was finally published in December 1946. The problem was to find a publishing house for it: innovative and challenging thoughts never tread a smooth path. This was a pioneering work, filled with unheard-of yogic stories of stunning miracles. Tara Mata in fact had to search for a long time. The publishing house which finally accepted the job was the *Philosophical Library* in New York.

It was definitively a challenging year for Tara Mata. Trying to get the book printed, she lived away from her ashram and her guru, alone, in an unheated cold-water flat in New York, hitting a worldly environment. "She almost died," Yogananda is reported to have said. No wonder that later he gratefully exclaimed: "Without her, the book would have never gone through." He expressed his gratitude to Tara, who was also the book's editor, on the dedication page of his *Autobiography of a Yogi*, saying that he is "deeply indebted" to her "for her long editorial labors over the manuscript of this book."

Once it was printed, the *Autobiography of a Yogi* started to "rouse the world" (using Yogananda's words), and Yogananda received, as he wrote, "thousands of letters."

All kinds of other wonderful feedback began streaming in: On the flap of the dust jacket comments from several famous persons were printed. Nobel Prize winner Thomas Mann wrote Yogananda: "This renewed contact with the Yogi-sphere, its mental superiority to material reality, and its spiritual discipline, was very instructive to me, and I am grateful to you for granting me some insight in this fascinating world."

The *Autobiography of a Yogi* soon began to conquer the globe, country after country, culture after culture. With it, a new era started for Yogananda's mission: from now on, his was a world audience. As he wrote in his book: "Many spiritually thirsty men and women eventually found their way to the cool waters of Kriya Yoga. Just as in the Hindu legend, where Mother Ganges offers her

divine draught to the parched devotee Bhagirath, so the celestial flood of Kriya rolled from the secret fastnesses of the Himalayas into the dusty haunts of men." Through the *Autobiography of a Yogi* the mission of Kriya Yoga made indeed a major leap in all directions, everywhere, "into the dusty aunts of men."

Yogananda was happy. There exists a beautiful picture of him, proudly holding his literary jewel.

Already during Yogananda's lifetime the impact of *Autobiography of a Yogi* was stronger than his lecture tours, as he himself stated in 1948: his Autobiography was doing "what I meagerly did while traveling and lecturing to thousands." Even today, the *Autobiography of a Yogi* remains Yogananda's most important instrument to reach people everywhere. It has truly become his "messenger!"

Amazingly, still today, 65 years after its first appearance, the *Autobiography of a Yogi* is sometimes listed amongst the bestsellers in the spiritual field. It has been elected as one of the 100 most important spiritual books of the last century. And it is a book that will probably make even more history, if Yogananda's statement will prove to be true: "The blessed role of Kriya Yoga in East and West has hardly more than just begun."

Just think about it! Even today, without it, how many people would know about Kriya Yoga? Without it, how many disciples of Yogananda would be around? Without it, would the various Kriya teachers enjoy the same response they are getting from seekers?

Shibindu Lahiri (the great grandson of Lahiri Mahasaya) for example says that his success rests on the fame of the *Autobiography of a Yogi*.

Many different editions of the *Autobiography of a Yogi* have been printed from 1946 on. The book went through a lively development, especially after Yogananda's passing. Tara Mata was

not lazy.

Sister Gyananmata wrote how deeply she cherished and savored Yogananda's divine vibrations in the *Autobiography of a Yogi*. For the first few months she was actually content just to possess it, to have it close to her. Later she read it only on her very best days. "I am absorbed in you through the book," she wrote Yogananda in a letter. Gyanamata, as all other disciples, read the original edition, since she passed away in 1951.

In India both SRF and Ananda have both published that original 1946 edition, as a special historical document. In the West it is published as well, and has been posted on a growing number of sites, since now it is in the public domain. All can use it freely, including the photos. In this way it seems that the *Autobiography of a Yogi* has lately developed new wings. The *Autobiography of a Yogi* was, interestingly, Yogananda's only book which he published through an outside publisher, selling the copyrights.

It broke Yogananda's heart, by the way, that he couldn't name his beloved disciple Rajarsi specifically in his *Autobiography of a Yogi*, because of business reasons. Later, after Rajarsi's passing, finally he was mentioned by name.

Here is a question: What did Yogananda's mostly want to accomplish with his *Autobiography of a Yogi*? Why did he work for 25 years on it?

One might answer:

"He wanted to make his SRF mission known."

"He wanted spread India's ancient yogic science of Self-realization."

"He wanted to introduce the technique of Kriya Yoga."

"He wanted to inspire the reader with God-love."

"He wanted to uplift the general reader."

"He wanted to unite East and West."

Certainly true. But his universal and expansive mind, it seems, was even aiming at a further, a global goal: world-peace! Here are some of his quotes from the *Autobiography of a Yogi* (bold added):

“The yogic message will encircle the globe, and aid in establishing that **brotherhood of man** which results from direct perception of the One Father.”

“Toward realization of the world’s highest ideal—**peace through brotherhood**— may yoga, the science of personal contact with the Divine, spread in time to all men in all lands.”

“Kriya Yoga, the scientific technique of God-realization,” he finally said with solemnity, “will ultimately spread in all lands, and aid in **harmonizing the nations** through man’s personal, transcendental perception of the Infinite Father.”

“The effective **League of Nations** will be a natural, nameless league of human hearts...[flowing] from knowledge of man’s sole unity— his kinship with God.”

For his German readers, Yogananda wrote the following preface in Oct. 1950- a call for brotherhood, too:

“It is a great joy for me to hear that there will be a German edition of the *Autobiography of a Yogi*. Not less than seven German publishing houses wanted to translate and publish the book. This certainly proves that Germany is turning toward the thought of spiritual growth. After all, it was Germany in the late 18th century, where the vast Sanskrit-heritage of India found its first enthusiastic friends and translators. In 1936 I traveled by car through Germany. What a marvelous country! And how friendly its people! To my German readers I send this message: Let us walk forward together—Germans, Indians, the whole human race! What could delight the heart of our One Father more than when we rejoice in our brotherhood?”

Yogananda’s *Autobiography of a Yogi* is full of fascinating stories.

One story, however, which he originally intended to include, didn't make it into the book. The point of the story, which one of Yogananda's friends had personally witnessed, was to show that bodies can be changed "like car models!"

Here it is:

There was a young man in India who had died, and his body was lying ready for cremation. The family was about to set fire to the funeral pyre. At this moment an old yogi came running out of a nearby forest, shouting: "Stop it, stop it! I need that young body, cremate this one!" The family was utterly stunned. He fell to the ground, dead. A moment later the young man leapt up off the pyre; before anybody was able catch him, he ran off into the forest. The family could only cremate the old man's body. That was a yogi who changed his "model." His body had become too old- and so he got himself into a new "model."

Yogananda relates that he couldn't find his saintly friend who had witnessed this incredible scene- that's why he chose not to publish it in his book.

The *Autobiography of a Yogi* transmits his vibrations, Yogananda said, maybe especially his vibrations of love. Beautifully, therefore, all editions end with these words from his heart: "Lord, Thou hast given this monk a large family."

Here is a question: whom did he mean by "large family?" How big is his family? All Kriya Yogis? Or is his family much bigger? Oh Lord, help us to understand Yogananda's Divine Love!

## *Chapter 11*

### *Saintly History: The Passing of Four Great Disciples*



The idea behind this chapter was to describe the glorious passing of four great disciples of Yogananda: Rajarsi Janakananda, Sister Gyanamata, Oliver Black, and Dr. Lewis. But the lines expanded to tell quite a bit about their lives, becoming almost tiny biographies.

## Rajarsi Janakananda



Rajarsi Janakananda (James Jesse Lynn, 1892-1955, born in Archibald, Louisiana) was Yogananda's foremost disciple and successor, to whom he "passed his mantle," as he said.

Yogananda and Rajarsi incarnated practically at the same time – Rajarsi was just 7 months older. Yogananda actually spoke of them having "twin karma."

Rajarsi, or "St. Lynn," had been a disciple for many lifetimes. Yogananda once wrote to him: "You are the Hindu yogi of the Himalayas sent as an American Prince Maharaj Yogi, to light the lamp of Yogoda in the groping hearts of our Western brothers."

In another letter he told Rajarsi lovingly: "You are my Vivekananda." And: "I recognize your many changing faces of the past. How often in the gloom of incarnations, I have meditated with you. Such love and divine friendship, such golden cords that tied our souls in the past."

Rajarsi said about Yogananda: "A master is one who is an angel of God, and in our beloved Swamiji we have one who is the very embodiment of love, unselfishness, possessed with Divine Joy."

The love between Guru and disciple is love on its highest and purest level. Such was the relationship between these two God-filled souls. In Yogananda's letters to Rajarsi one can get a glimpse of their blissful inner soul-union. "You and me are one light in two bodies," Yogananda once said.

Rajarsi Janakananda had been raised in a poor family, but worked his way up to become a self-made millionaire. But he was different from most millionaires: he, a high yogi, was following his karmic mission to put Yogananda's work on a stable financial foundation.

Rajarsi met Yogananda in Kansas in January 1932. He thus appeared just in perfect time, when a huge mortgage for Mt. Washington had to be paid, at a time when the whole of America was struggling financially. Rajarsi, as Yogananda declared, "saved the work."

So restless was Rajarsi that he couldn't sit still for a moment, and was fidgeting about all the time. (Isn't it amazing how the surface of our personalities can totally disguise our true nature?) At their meeting, however, Rajarsi saw a blue light around Yogananda, filling the whole stage. He got totally absorbed, sat straight, and became perfectly motionless, perceiving a deep inner stillness. His old karma surfaced. From then on he was ever immersed in God. Within only five years Rajarsi attained samadhi. There is a beautiful samadhi-picture of him in 1937, printed in the *Autobiography of a Yogi*.

Rajarsi was a tough businessman, but in truth his nature was tender. When, as a child, a play became too rough, he withdrew, and when someone got hurt, he cried with him. He actually wore long hair up to the age of six- that old yogi!- and was a natural leader. When one hears his voice in a recording, it sounds amazingly soft and sweet.

Rajarsi was a man of few words, but when he spoke, they were to the point. Nothing escaped his sharp awareness. In his later years, when he wasn't doing business, he practically talked exclusively about God, Guru, and mediation.

Rajarsi meditated a lot, and cosmically. Once Yogananda was walking with another disciple on the grounds in Encinitas, when he saw Rajarsi meditating there. Pulling the disciple aside, Yogananda

whispered, “You have no idea what great blessings are drawn to the work every time one of its followers goes as deep in meditation as Rajarsi does.”

Rajarsi continued to live in Kansas, with his (pretty dreadful) wife Frieda, who in 1954 heard about Rajarsi’s million dollar gift to SRF, and “raised the roof” with anger. There he lead a meditation group. Whenever he could, he came to visit his Master, Yogananda. It was always a most special occasion. Yogananda took greatest pain to prepare Mt. Washington for his “beloved Nr.1,” working hard with the other disciples to make everything as beautiful and spotless as possible. Rajarsi tried to come for each Christmas, too. As a Christmas gift, he often gave large sums of money to Yogananda. In general, he helped Yogananda to resolve many precarious financial situations, including with his school in India.

When Yogananda returned to India in 1935/36 (the trip was, of course, sponsored by Rajarsi), Rajarsi secretly built for him the beautiful Encinitas hermitage, where Yogananda later wrote the greater part of his *Autobiography*. Yogananda actually stayed there most of his time from 1937 on (which was painful for many disciples who now saw him much less), because at Mt. Washington he simply couldn’t find the quiet he needed for his writings.

In time Rajarsi’s business stabilized, and he was able to spend more time with Yogananda. In 1946 finally a serious illness made Rajarsi come to stay at the Encinitas hermitage for many months. Thereafter, he returned often, remaining for months at a time.

Rajarsi never occupied an official position in SRF, except as a meditation group leader. In August 1951, however, Yogananda bestowed “sannyas” on him, giving him the orange robe, and announced that he would become the second SRF president.

In 1951, upon Yogananda’s request, Rajarsi bought for health reasons a farm house in the desert, in Borrego Springs. He later

went to live there, experiencing many visions of Yogananda, who had passed away in March 1952.

Rajarsi's health, unfortunately, got worse. He developed a brain tumor, and was first operated in August 1952. His days, however, were blissfully filled with one vision after the other of Yogananda. Rajarsi said that at one point he actually died, but that Yogananda brought him back into his body.

Rajarsi at that time made SRF the beneficiary of his life insurance, and also gave stocks worth of a million dollar to SRF. Altogether "SRF will have from three, four, yes, even six million in its assets to its credit." He was happy. His mission on earth was fulfilled.

In January 1954, Swami Atmanada (leader in YSS) and Prokash Ghose (future SRF vice president, cousin of Yogananda), the two disciples who wanted to come to see Yogananda's body when he had passed on (which is why the casket wasn't closed for three weeks, and why the miracle of his incorrupt body was revealed to the world), finally came to America. Atmananda then took his Swami vows from Rajarsi (he had before been made a Swami by a letter from Yogananda).

Later, in April 1954, Rajarsi had his second operation. A third one followed in October. All that time he was divinely united with Yogananda, in many blissful visions.

About his moment of passing:

His last day finally came. It was February 20, 1955. Daya Mata, Mrinalini Mata, Sillasuta Mata, and Durga Mata were with him. Durga Ma held his hand in hers to the end. Rajarsi, the illumined yogi, merged into the light. Even outwardly, a white light began to surround his head. The light kept getting brighter and brighter around it. Then his breath vanished. Yogananda's "little prince" was in Eternity.

As Yogananda had told him: "The Infinite Kingdom in yours!"

## Sister Gyanamata



Sister Gyanamata (Edith Anne Ruth D'Evelyn Bissett, 1869-1951, born in Woodbridge, Canada) first met Yogananda personally in 1925, in her own home in Seattle, where, incidentally, she had already hosted Rabindranath Tagore.

Just imagine the scene: the distinguished wife of a well-respected professor (the Bissetts had, for example, a famous private library with one of the largest collection in the world of texts about Lincoln), keenly intelligent, having read the works of the world's greatest thinkers, a mature woman of 56 years meets a 32 year young "Hindu swami in the ochre robe of renunciation." Physically, she could have been his mother. But such considerations were too superficial for her deep inner insight: she saw a Christ-like being in front of her, and vowed her heart, mind and soul to him. In her devotion, she kept orange flowers on the floor where her guru had stood. A perfect symbol of her life of complete devotion to him.

After that first meeting, alas, for five long years she didn't see Yogananda again. But she wrote him letters constantly. "She is an old devotee of incarnations," Yogananda wrote.

Her health, however, was not good at all. She had a heart attack and other serious physical illnesses. In 1930 doctors actually said they had not much hope for her surviving, and told her that they could not help her anymore. The Bissetts in that year went to live in La Jolla, not far from Yogananda's headquarters in Los Angeles. Whenever Yogananda returned from his travels, Gyanamata came

to visit him. Being the Master he was, Yogananda healed her of her fatal sickness. Her faith in him was measureless.

In 1932 she finally came to live in Mount Washington, after her husband had died. Yogananda said about him: “He was a great man of God. Few people knew that.” Without sign of disease, he had foretold his death three month before. That was the year Gyanamata too was “scheduled” to pass on, but Yogananda, as he said, “begged God” for her life, and with His grace kept her in the body for 20 more years. She was of inestimable value to him, even though outwardly she was not able to do very much.

After arriving at Mt. Washington, Yogananda immediately made Gyanamata a Sister (in 1932, while Durga Mata writes it was in 1931). Yogananda’s monastic order had then just started, with Daya Mata’s arrival in November 1931.

In 1933 Yogananda placed her in charge of his headquarters, whenever he wasn’t there. She succeeded Dhirananda, who had left, and Nerode, who was now traveling and teaching. Yogananda was relieved that Gyanamata was now there. She was reliable, he knew.

In 1935 Yogananda incorporated his society under the name *Self-Realization Fellowship Church*, with himself being the president, and Sister Gyanamata the vice-president. In that same year Yogananda left for India. While gone, Gyanamata was in charge of Mt. Washington, whom Yogananda therefore called the “Guardian angel of Mt. Washington.”

After Yogananda returned to California in Nov. 1936, he received the Encinitas hermitage as a gift from Rajarsi. Gyanamata moved there, being in charge of it. Here she lived from then on, as did Yogananda for much of his time. And here she finally left her body in 1951, aged 82.

The divine love story between Yogananda and Rajarsi could maybe only be matched by the story of Divine Love with “Sister.” While Yogananda walked hand in hand with Rajarsi, he of course couldn’t do that with Gyanamata. With her, the communion of love was purely inside. She always stood up when he entered the room, in silent inner contact with him. “She and I never talk, but we always understand each other,” Yogananda said. They wrote each other “thought letters.”

Amazingly, and revealingly, he once wrote: “She is a goddess. She and I are one.”

When Gyanamata died, Yogananda cried out, “Sister darling!” Many tears filled his eyes. His human side in him was missing her “terribly,” whom he called the “Queen of wisdom.” “But she will be back.”

At her Memorial Service Yogananda told people that “this is no funeral service for Sister, it is an expression of my love for her who lived so perfectly.” Gyanamata had suffered tremendously, year after year. Her suffering however, was not for herself, as Yogananda explained, but “for the sins of others who became saintly through her life.” She was “going through the terrible karma of others.” Gyanamata actually had disciples, as Yogananda once said. Blessed ones! She had achieved Nirbikalpa Samadhi already in her former life, and ranked as high as the greatest saints of Christianity. She had the same characteristics as Teresa of Avila, Yogananda wrote.

Gyanamata, by the way, was not the only disciple taking on the karma of others. In Durga Mata’s book we read that Yogananda explained that Rajarsi suffered for the karma of others, and that she (Durga) too was taking the karma of others.

Now about Gyanamata’s glorious passing:

It was November 17, 1951. In her last moments, Sister Gyanamata was radiant. She had an illumined smile on her face, and exclaimed

her last words: “Such joy, such joy, too much joy!” She took a few very long (Kriya) breaths, then her breath stopped, and she was gone. Yogananda arrived soon afterwards. “Touch her feet,” he said to those present. They were cold. “Now touch the top of her head.” The head was very hot, as if on fire. It was a sign, Yogananda explained, that she had left in a state of “Mukti,” final liberation. “Your seat God has kept for you in heaven.”

She had arrived!

### **Oliver Black**



Oliver Black (1893-1989) is not a very well-known disciple, even though Yogananda described him as second in Self-realization, right after Rajarsi. Third was Gyanamata. He was thus in extremely lofty company: we are speaking of a saint of highest stature. That must be the reason why he, as a family man and founder of his own spiritual community, was listed until his death in 1989 amongst official SRF ministers authorized to give Kriya initiation.

Oliver Black was born in Grover Hill, Ohio, in 1893, the same year Yogananda was born, who was only 8 months older. As Rajarsi, Oliver Black was a self-made man, a millionaire industrialist selling automobile parts in Detroit. He was an energetic and highly talented person, who started on a very small scale: in his garage, with an investment of only \$500. By the time Oliver Black retired from his business in 1952, it was valued \$35 million dollars a year.

He and his wife Ethel had two children: a son Robert, who was killed while a pilot in World War II, and a daughter Phylis. His wife died in 1970.

Oliver Black met Yogananda in 1931 at a private party. It was instantaneous recognition: "I instantly recognized him for the spiritual giant he was." Oliver's life of discipleship began that day, and bore wonderful fruit: "He changed the whole direction of my life."

It must have been a deeply fulfilling time for Yogananda: he met Rajarsi, Oliver Black, Daya Mata all in that same period, a time when Gyanamata moved to Mt Washington... all these shining stars in his spiritual heaven.

Oliver Black described his inner state at that time in colorful words: "When I first met him (at 38 years) I was afraid to get half a mile away from a drug store. I was a regular hypochondriac. Took pills for laxatives, aspirins for headaches, and probably would have taken tranquilizers if they'd had them. I was a victim of inner pressures too, like all of my colleagues. Besides running a successful company, I studied and taught a small philosophy class. We were trying to find an answer to man's existence."

The outward search for truth was now over. "Yogananda taught where to find it. You might say he handed me a blueprint, and I've been following it ever since."

However, the change Oliver Black made was not as big as Yogananda would have liked. His dharma was different than Rajarsi's: for many years Yogananda encouraged Oliver Black to withdraw from his business, and start teaching other truth-seekers. "Yogananda kept telling me to get out of business, but I just wouldn't listen."

True, Oliver Black was the leader of the SRF center in Detroit, but his guru had much greater plans for him. In May 1951, he wrote him: "With your organizational power you can do something much greater, much more lasting, much easier, and much more secure than present-day business organizations in which one works to pay taxes, ruining his health and happiness. Detroit, being in the center of the United States, has a great opportunity to draw true seekers, both from the East and West. I would like nothing better than for you to establish a sub-headquarters there."

In August, 1951, Yogananda gave Oliver Black in a ceremony the spiritual title of "Yogacharya," together with Rev. Bernard Cole and about five others. That was also the time when Yogananda gave Rajarsi his sannyas vows, the orange robe, and his monastic name. There is a photo which shows that ceremony (Bhaktananda is seen on it too). Researchers can find it on the internet.

After his last meeting with Oliver Black, Yogananda lovingly remarked, "Did you see God in his eyes?"

Yogananda passed on soon after that, in March 1952. It was a year of dramatic change for Oliver Black. Yogananda had repeatedly told him that if he did not leave his business willingly, something would happen to force him into the spiritual direction. And so it happened. In 1952, through a hostile stock-market takeover, Oliver Black lost most of what he had built up with so much effort, and most of his wealth. He still remained a moderately wealthy man, though. But now he retired from his business...finally!

A new phase started in his life: he created a Yoga school (Yogacharya Oliver Black's Self-realization yoga), in which he taught Yoga asanas, and trained other teachers- again with huge success.

In 1966, his weekly Sunday meditation and lecture services were attended by 200-300 people! His hatha yoga teachers were reaching thousands of students! And his yearly "Festival of Yoga"

in Detroit was attended by over 3000 seekers. His was the most successful yoga and meditation activity in the United States at that time!

Oliver Black's main focus, of course, was teaching meditation, and the deeper aspects of yoga. He initiated all of his yoga teachers in the highest techniques of meditation. But for some reason, in the early 70ies his success began to fade.

By 1971, he had sold off all his properties except for a beautiful, forested 800-acre land near Gaylord, Michigan, which became his full-time yoga retreat, called "Song of the Morning Ranch." There he lived and taught, together with Bob Raymor, another direct disciple of Yogananda. The retreat still functions today, though Yogananda's Kriya message seems not very central there anymore.

Oliver Black was known for his luminous face, his infectious laughter, his divine love and friendship. He uncannily knew people's thoughts, and many a miracle is told from his life. He lived up to 96 years- ever remaining young, healthy and active.

His passing was beautiful. It happened on September 16, 1989. He died as only an advanced yogi can. Throughout his last day, he went into meditation. Then came the time for his final exit: he arranged himself in the lotus posture, and sat quietly. His gaze was turned upward, fixing the point between the eyebrows. His soul at that moment left the body gloriously. The body gently fell backward, remaining in the perfect lotus pose, while his soul was streaming upwards.

Oliver Black had consciously entered the realm of Bliss.

## **Dr. Lewis**



Another highly advanced soul, very close to Yogananda, was Dr. Lewis (1893-1960, Boston). Yogananda wrote him: "Let only God consciousness reign between us; let the everlasting spiritual tie be stronger than ever." Their meeting in this life was a renewed friendship in God. And it will go on in the next, as Yogananda once told Dr. Lewis: "We have lived a good life together. It seems only yesterday that we met. In a little while we shall be separated, but soon we'll be together again."

Dr. Lewis came down to the material plane in March 1893, just two months after Yogananda. It was about the same time when also Rajarsi and Oliver Black incarnated. Those four men came down as a group of friends, it seems.

A birthday sidelight: Yogananda for many years avoided celebrating his birthday, and kept the date a secret – until 1939, when his younger brother Bishnu came to visit him from India. From Bishnu the disciples finally learned of Yogananda's birthday date, and his birthday was celebrated for the first time in the West. But, alas, Yogananda didn't reveal the year of his birth! Thus his birthday cake used to be decorated with only one candle, which he blew out while having his wish ("I still have a little strength of breath. I must take care I don't blow the cake away!"). Through the years it became a tradition at Yogananda's birthday gatherings that Dr. Lewis would try to cajole his Guru into revealing his age, but Yogananda always refused. "My age is infinite!"

Dr. Lewis was a married man, with a wife, Mildred, and two children: Bradford and Brenda. Their family lived in Boston, where Dr. Lewis was a dentist and had his practice.

After Yogananda arrived in America, in Boston, on September 19, 1920, he soon met Alice Haysey (Sister Yogamata), who invited her friend Mildred Lewis to come and meet him at their community church. After meeting him, Mrs. Lewis wanted her husband to meet Yogananda too. Dr. Lewis did, on Christmas Eve, 1920. “What is that ‘single eye’ the Bible speaks of?” It was a question which had haunted Dr. Lewis for a long time. “Can you show it to me?” Yogananda on the spot showed him the heavenly glory of the spiritual eye and the 1000-petal lotus. Dr. Lewis was ecstatic. He became the first American Kriyaban, and Yogananda’s friend for a lifetime. But he almost got into deep trouble with Mildred (go read in “Treasures Against Time”).

Yogananda writes in his *Autobiography* that he lived in Boston “in humble circumstances,” while trying to start his mission. Dr. Lewis at times invited Yogananda to stay in his home in Boston.

When Yogananda in 1923 left for his lecture “campaign,” he asked Dr. Lewis to remain in Boston, to lead the meditation group there, and to raise money to support his tours.

Throughout the years, Yogananda and Dr. Lewis remained in contact, outwardly and inwardly. Dr. Lewis later came “twice annually from Boston to Encinitas.” In 1929 Yogananda returned to Boston to give a lecture there. In 1942 he returned there again, with Swami Premananda. he recounts in the *Autobiography*: “Sir,” Dr. Lewis said to me, smiling, “during your early years in America you stayed in this city in a single room, without bath. I wanted you to know that Boston possesses some luxurious apartments!”

In 1945, Yogananda asked Mr. and Mrs. Lewis to move to Encinitas.

For Dr. Lewis life now changed significantly. A time of increased spiritual responsibility began: he lectured at the Encinitas and San Diego temples (later also in Hollywood), giving up to 7 lectures a

week. He also was put in charge of the Encinitas Colony (probably Gyanamata's health didn't allow her to do the job anymore.) In addition, he was in charge of the monks' training in Encinitas. Yogananda also authorized him to give Kriya Initiations, which he did until his passing. To get rest, he spent one day a week in silence, in Rajarsi's Borrego house in the desert.

When Yogananda passed away in 1952, Rajarsi became the SRF president, and Dr. Lewis the vice-president, remaining in that position until his passing. (Swami Kriyananda in 1960 was elected to follow him. The president by then was Daya Mata. After Kriyananda, Tara Mata was made vice-president, then Mrinalini Mata.) Dr. Lewis remained throughout very active in his ministry.

His passing was truly spectacular. It was April 13th, 1960. Dr Lewis was in hospital. In the evening he took a short nap. When he awoke he told Mildred, "I want to sit up straight." She arranged the pillows at his back, and he assumed the lotus pose.

She recounts: "His hands were upturned, his eyes closed. I sat beside the bed, thinking that I too would meditate. I was aroused in two or three minutes by a tremendous sound. It resembled the suction sound of a huge pump, or the breath sound of a giant Kriya. With the sound came a great flash of spiritual white light, whose brilliance might be compared to that given forth by a million electric light bulbs. Doctor's blue eyes opened; piercing flashes of blue light came from them. Then they were locked at the Christ center in the forehead. His head lowered somewhat, but his body remained erect. For an instant, the face of Swami Sri Yukteswarji appeared, enveloping Doctor's face."

In that moment, in lotus posture, with a straight spine, with a tremendous Kriya sound, the flash of a white light, looking into the spiritual eye, and with the divine presence of Sri Yukteswar, Dr. Lewis made his glorious exit from this world stage.

There can hardly be a better proof for Yogananda's promise: "For those who stay in tune to the end I, or one of the other masters, will be there to usher them into the divine kingdom."

## *Chapter 12*

### *Yogananda's Books and Written Lessons*



Yogananda wore many different hats during his lifetime. One was that of an inspired author, who tried to uplift us all. He tried with his pen to unite Eastern and Western religion. He tried through his books and lessons to teach practical spirituality. He tried to open our hearts to God, with poetry and song.

This chapter describes what he wrote, and when.

Yogananda may well be described as a long-distance runner, where his major books are concerned. In other words, he didn't sprint and finish one book, then starting the next. He wrote his main books, rather, over a period of decades, working on them side by side.

Thus Yogananda stated that his "Autobiography of a Yogi" took him 25 years to write – which means that he started it in 1921, soon after coming to America (it was published in 1946). His commentaries on the Bhagavad Gita and the Bible took him 30 years to complete – he published one article after another in his

magazine: those articles began to appear in "East-West" in 1932. His commentaries on the "Rubaiyat"(verses written by the Muslim mystic, Omar Khayyam) started to appear in 1937 in his magazine.

Apart from these "marathon" works, Yogananda actually didn't publish all that many books during his 32 years in America: his introductory book ("Science of Religion"), his two books of poetry ("Whispers of Eternity," and "Songs of the Soul"), his little book with affirmations ("Scientific Healing Affirmations") and one on meditations ("Metaphysical Meditations"); his chant-book ("Cosmic Chants"); a tiny booklet "Attributes of Success;" and his guru's book "The Holy Science."

Then of course he wrote many more articles for his magazine, as well as his various lessons. His lessons are given here with their content, so that you have an idea what they were all about.

## **1920**

Still in India, Yogananda's published his first book: "Dharmavijnana" (Wisdom of Dharma), later called "Science of Religion."

## **1923**

Yogananda published his book of poetry, "Songs of the Soul." He published YOGODA INTRODUCTION. These were Yogananda's first written lessons, basically describing some *energization exercises*; and giving a first introduction to meditation- but not *Hong Sau* yet.

## **1924**

He published both *Science of Religion* and *Scientific Healing Affirmations*.

## **1925**

Yogananda started his magazine: East-West (1925 to 1936) and (1945 to 1947); Inner Culture (1937 to 1944); Self Realization

Magazine (1948 to 1969); Self-Realization (1970 to present). The magazine featured amongst other things his commentaries on the *Second Coming of Christ*, on the *Bhagavad Gita*, and on the *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam*.

And he published his "YOGODA" COURSE. It described the Art of *energization*, *Hong Sau*, and several philosophical and spiritual topics.

Lesson 1—Yogoda System of Physical, Mental, and Spiritual Perfection

Lesson 2—Individual Charging of the 20 Body parts

Lesson 3—Mechanical Movement and Tissue-Will Exercises Combined

Lesson 4—Highest Technique of Concentration

Lesson 5—Highest Technique of Meditation

Lesson 6—The Cure of Nervousness

Lesson 7—Art of Developing Memory

Lesson 8—Art of Spiritual Healing

Lesson 9—Spiritualizing and Transmuting Creative Force

Lesson 10—Art of Material and Spiritual Success

Lesson 11—Psycho-Analysis and Dreams

Lesson 12—Occult Vision and Metaphysics of Cosmic Consciousness

Spiritual Pledge of Yogoda Students

## **1926**

Yogananda published his ADVANCED COURSE IN PRACTICAL METAPHYSICS

Lesson 1: The True Scientific Conception of Genesis

Lesson 2: Divine Will Healing

Lesson 3: How to Develop Intuition Consciously

Lesson 4: The Five Pranas

Lesson 5: Reincarnation

Lesson 6: The Law of Karma

Lesson 7: Spiritual Marriage

Lesson 8: Disembodied Souls

Lesson 9: Bhagavad Gita (The Hindu Bible)

Lesson 10: Chemistry of Feelings

Lesson 11: Spiritual Food

Lesson 12: Awakening of Kundalini or Serpent Force

### **1930**

In this year he published SUPER ADVANCED COURSE

Lesson 1—Christian Yoga and the Hidden Truths in St. John's Revelation

Lesson 2—Developing Response-Bringing Mental Whispers...

Lesson 3—Reversing the Searchlights of the Senses

Lesson 4—Art of Finding True Friends of Past Incarnations

Lesson 5—The Divine Magnetic Diet

Lesson 6—Installing Habits of Success, Health, and Wisdom in the Mind at Will

Lesson 7—Magnetism

Lesson 8—Obliterating the Malignant Seeds of Failure

Lesson 9—Conquer Fear, Anger, Greed, Temptation, Failure, & Inferiority

Lesson 10—The Art of Super-Relaxation

Lesson 11—Converting the Hands into Healing Batteries

Lesson 12—Esthetic Way of Developing Cosmic Consciousness

### **1932**

Yogananda published his *Metaphysical Meditations*.

### **1934**

He published the ADVANCED SUPER COSMIC SCIENCE COURSE

Lesson 1—Healing by Spiritual Affirmation and by Astral Food

Lesson 2—How to Develop Creative Intuition

Lesson 3—The Tree of Life—Adam and Eve Consciousness

Lesson 4—Reincarnation

Lesson 5—How to Contact Departed-Disembodied Souls

Lesson 6—Cosmic Meditations

### **1938**

He published his *Cosmic Chants*.

He also published the PRAECEPTA LESSONS: a compilation of previous lessons, with added stories, poems, topics etc. These lessons are much bigger than what had been published before. They were the bases of the SRF lessons of today. Each section included:

- Praeceptum inspirational poems
- Praecepta prayers
- Scientific techniques and principles
- Apologues
- Health culture
- Recipes
- Inspirational messages
- Affirmations
- Special features

### **1944**

Publication of *Attributes of Success*, now called *Laws of Success*.

### **1946**

Yogananda published his main and most famous book, the *Autobiography of a Yogi*.

### **1949**

Publication of Sri Yukteswar's book *The Holy Science*.

### **1950-52**

Yogananda spent much time in his desert retreat 29 Palms to complete his writings, and to write new books. These were extremely busy times for him, trying to get his books published. It was a race against his last hour, which he knew was approaching.

Surprisingly, in his 1951 *Autobiography of a Yogi* (3rd edition), Yogananda already announced that his *Bhagavad Gita* commentaries were published, and were for sale. They weren't. But this public announcement must have been his adamant affirmation that the book will see the light of day during his lifetime. In that *Autobiography of a Yogi* he wrote: "Another work, completed in

1950 during my stay at an SRF retreat near the Mojave desert, is a translation, with commentary, of the *Bhagavad Gita*. The book, *God Talks With Arjuna*, presents a detailed study of the various paths of yoga."

In a footnote on the bottom of the page he added: "Published in 1951 (see page 6n.)"

And on that page 6, in a footnote one reads that one may buy the book for \$3.50 from SRF.

He kept pushing hard. Yogananda wrote to Kamala in a letter (on Jan.17, 1952): "I have received a letter from the Consul General about joining with the celebration in San Francisco for the India Independence Day. I am busy getting the book ready for publication so I will be unable to attend."

And on Feb.20, 1952, he wrote her: "I have been snowed under with the work on the book, and have been unable to take care of letters that have arrived. The book is progressing very nicely, and I hope it won't be too long before it will be ready for publication. I am working day and night toward that end."

A few days later, on Feb. 25, 1952, Yogananda wrote to Peggy Deitz: "I am still at the desert where my days and nights are spent with God and working on the new book. It is coming along very well and I hope it will be ready for the publishers before too long. The *Bhagavad Gita* is being printed now, and after I have checked it over again, it will be ready for the public. I am sure you will like the latest book on *Genesis*, as the interpretation given to me by God has never before been presented."

The Master had worked day and night, the *Bhagavad Gita* commentaries were already at the printer and needed only a final check... it seems that only a few seconds were missing before publication. The goal was so near, but then, on March 7 1952, Yogananda passed on. His fire for publication was extinguished at that tragic moment. The publishing department had obviously more cautious feelings about the Master's books. More editing was

needed, they must have felt.

Thus 42 years passed before Yoganada's *Bhagavad Gita* commentaries got published in book form. The *Rubaiyat*'s timing was similar. 52 years were needed for the *Second Coming of Christ*. His commentaries on *Revelation*, *Genesis*, and the *Yoga Sutras of Patanjali* are still waiting for their moment.

It seems a lot of time, but one thing is certain: the editor disciples did the best they could, and certainly did what they thought best for their Guru's writings.

## *Chapter 13*

### *A Historical but Unknown Figure: Swami Dhirananda*



Swami Dhirananda was discussed already in the chapter about the “History of Mount Washington.” Here is a more complete story of this important player in Yogananda’s life, who nowadays (for understandable reasons) has become almost unknown amongst Yogananda devotees. And if they know about him, Dhirananda is usually a red flag: an enemy of Yogananda.

It is easy to put people into neat boxes: “good,” “bad,” “hero,” “villain,” “black,” “white.” But if we look a bit more fairly, we see that life is not like that at all. People are much more complex than that. So Dhirananda was not “black,” nor “white,” but simply a struggling devotee, with his bright and less bright sides- like the rest of Yogananda’s disciples, and like all of us.

What happened back in India, in the early days?

The following events are taken from Swami Satyananda’s book, “Yogananda Sangha.”

Dhirananda (Basu Kumar Bagchi) was one of the closest boyhood friends of Yogananda. They were practically of the same age, met in college, and were classmates there. They became close friends, traveled together in India, visited saints, meditated, sang many devotional songs to God, and founded a school and a library. Dhirananda is described as being dutiful, service-oriented, and highly knowledgeable.

Sananda, in his book “Mejda,” adds the fun story that back in India, Dhirananda was having troubles at home: he didn’t get the privacy he needed for his meditations. So Yogananda invited him to his home in Gurpar Road, saying, “We both travel the same path with heart and soul.” Yogananda kept Dhirananda’s presence in his attic room a secret, first. He lovingly shared his food with him. But of course Dhirananda’s presence became known to all, and he was accepted in the house as one of the family members.

Dhirananda’s family members were all disciples of Bhaduri Mahasaya (the levitating saint). Dhirananda used to go to Bhaduri’s meetings too, but once he joined Mukunda, he stopped going there.

Satyananda was part of that inspired circle of friends. Throughout his book, he describes Yogananda as the leader of the group. Yogananda was called “Bara (top or elder) Swami;” Dhirananda was called “Meja (middle) Swami;” and Satyananda, being a few years younger, “Chota (younger) Swami.” Later, however, they called Yogananda “Guruji.”

Upon Yogananda’s advice, Dhirananda received initiation into Kriya Yoga from Shastri Mahasaya (Kebalananda), and progressed quickly.

Yogananda in 1911 gave Dhirananda his orange dress, initiated him into swami-hood, and gave him his monastic name, “Dhirananda.”

Yogananda traveled a lot, and thus Dhirananda spent more time at their school, becoming the head teacher, and the central figure there.

When Yogananda left India in 1920, he told Satyananda, again and again, to be ready to come to America. In 1922 he wrote from Boston that one of them, Satyananda or Dhirananda, should come to America. Satyananda replied, no, he did not wish to go. Yogananda was a little saddened at that. Yogananda wrote: "Dhirananda must come right away. Satyananda, take up the fortitude to direct the Ranchi school."

As Satyananda writes, Guru Maharaj (Sri Yukteswar) "later said quietly and somberly that he felt that the beginning of an inauspicious future was connected with this journey that Dhirananda was taking."

Yogananda and Dhirananda soon started working together in Boston. They printed books, pamphlets, and circulars (mission statements), under the name "Yogoda Shiksha Pranali."

Then, in 1924, Yogananda started his cross-country lecture tour. In 1925 he inaugurated Mount Washington. Interestingly, in 1925, when Yogananda called Dhirananda to join him there, "Dhirananda had established himself quite well in Boston, in the area of teaching and mathematics, but at leader Yoganandaji's wishes, he shut everything down, went to Mount Washington in Los Angeles, and took on the responsibility of that center."

Dhirananda was certainly a great soul, and karmically very close and dear to Yogananda. In his first East/West magazine, in Nov/Dec.1925, when Yogananda announced that he had invited Dhirananda to be in charge of Mt. Washington, whenever he was not present, he also wrote: "I am powerless to tell how greatly he has helped me in carrying on my educational work in India and Boston, or of the good which the world has derived from his ideal character and exalted spiritual life. He will bless Mount

Washington with his presence there as the residential Swami.”

Not many of Yogananda’s known direct disciples actually met Dhirananda – they all joined Mt. Washington later, except Tara Mata (who joined Yogananda in 1924, even before Mount Washington was established), and Kamala, who came in Mt. Washington in 1926, and who was invited there by Dhirananda.

Even Durga Mata came later, in Dec. 1929; she writes that in May 1928 “Dhirananda had left the fold of his Guru.” (A little mistake – she herself later explains that it happened in 1929). All other disciples, then, tell their stories about Dhirananda by what they themselves have heard or read.

Masters, as Yogananda explained, live a dual existence: they have a very human side, which suffers and rejoices, and a divine one, deep inside, where they are completely free in God, in bliss, never forgetting that everything is just a great dream.

Yogananda, Durga writes, bore deep love for Dhirananda. When Dhirananda, “whom he loved so dearly,” left Mount Washington in 1929, after having lived there for 3.5 years as the resident teacher, Yogananda cried in pain: “My best friend has gone!” He was heartbroken. In a letter he once wrote: “I have given more to Dhirananda than to anyone else.” Yogananda was so distraught that he took off and went to Mexico, to forget his pain (also written in Durga’s book.) The disciples thought he might never return. Kamala writes that Yogananda was away much longer than planned. But “the Lord mended Master’s wounded heart.(Durga)”

That trip turned out to be quite fruitful- Yogananda met the Mexican president, lectured there, and wrote the chant: “Devotees may come, devotees may go, but I will be Thine always...” He also visited Xochimilco, which turned out to be one of the most beautiful spots on earth Yogananda had seen. In the *Autobiography of a Yogi* he writes: “As entries in a scenic beauty contest, I offer for first prize either the gorgeous view of Xochimilco in Mexico,

where mountains, skies, and poplars reflect themselves in myriad lanes of water amidst the playful fish, or the jewel-like lakes of Kashmir, ...”

Yogananda’s heart found peace only when he met his friend of friends, Rajarsi Janakananda, in 1932. Durga: “He often said that the Lord brought him back (from Mexico), because the Lord had a boy hidden in Kansas City, in the form of Rajarsi Janakananda, for him to love a million times more than he could love Dhirananda.” Yogananda wrote Rajarsi in a letter, Oct. 36: “All that I wished for Dhirananda, I only got such disappointment, but God has fulfilled many times in you.” The love and friendship between them was truly divine. It is deeply touching to read about it in Durga’s book. Yogananda wept tears of love for Rajarsi, sometimes hiding them with his hands, so as not to show them. And Rajarsi, the “little one,” or “beloved Nr.1” knew where to respond: not on a personal level, but from soul to soul, in God.

When Dhirananda left Mount Washington, he opened his own meditation center in downtown LA. Daya Mata relates that he actually set up his own organization, which created a lot of confusion among the LA members. She tells that this was such a heartbreaking moment for Yogananda that he even considered leaving everything, going back to India. Dhirananda had been an enormous pillar for Yogananda: Daya Mata states that his departure actually required a rebuilding of his society. (Daya, telling the story, doesn’t mention Dhirananda’s name, but it is clear who that “monk from India” was.)

However, Dhirananda’s new organization never got off the ground. His magnetism wasn’t as great as he may have believed. He probably thought himself equal to Yogananda, but once he turned away from him, his sails were empty, so to speak, while Yogananda continued to fill the greatest halls in America, with thousands and thousands of people.

Dhirananda ran his meditation center until 1933, and then

abandoned it, together with his Swami title, and became a very respected and successful University professor in Michigan. Good for him...but it still seems a sad story. Of course, he also could have become a great artist, a great businessman, a great star, or whatever. But what does that mean for a devotee like him, except emptiness for the soul?

Dhirananda married in 1934. He had a son and a daughter.

Dhirananda could not forget Yogananda. Did his envy grow, even then? Probably: in 1935, six years after leaving, he finally sued Yogananda, claiming former institutional partnership with him. He won, and collected \$8,000. Congratulations! He also, in the courts, declared that Yogananda was taking sexual advantage of his young female devotees.

Dhirananda rejected Yogananda ever since. Yogananda said he would never forsake him. One day he remarked, talking about Dhirananda: "No matter what he does, he will never find God except through this channel, ordained by God."

Yes, Dhirananda (a Ph.D.) was much more of a scholar than Yogananda. Yogananda openly admitted that he has never been a great scholar at all. Dhirananda's English was better too. But what does that say? In Sri Yukteswar's words: "A university degree, in any case, is not remotely related to Vedic realization. Saints are not produced in batches every semester like accountants."

The question is: was Dhirananda happy after he left? He wasn't, if his son is right. He was a sad man, and probably (says the son) because deep down, part of him always longed for the monastic life he left behind. (Plus his best friend in life and death!)

Several disciples seem to think that Dhirananda was the father of Mona, Tara Mata's daughter. True: Dhirananda and Tara left Mount Washington about the same time. Dhirananda left in May 1929. Tara also left in 1929, since she was pregnant. Mona was

born in October 2, 1929, meaning that she was conceived in the beginning of January 1929 (while Yogananda was in Boston, lecturing).

This, however, might be an untrue story about Dhirananda: First of all, Mona's appearance didn't show any sign of oriental influence (so one is told). Secondly, Dhirananda's son, who is quite frank about his father's "many flaws," described immoral behavior as "antithetical to who he was." Third, Tara left pregnant and married. It seems probable that she married the father of her child Mona. Who that was is unknown.

To finish that part of Tara's story: After returning from India, in 1936, as Durga Ma writes, Yogananda went to San Francisco to convince Tara Mata to come back to Mount Washington, to help him with his books. Yogananda held her in high esteem (she too is neither "black" nor "white," as some people seem to believe). He arranged for her and Mona to live in a bungalow near Mount Washington. Durga, by the way, out of tact, never mentioned Mona in her book, nor that Tara had married.

Yogananda described Dhirananda as one of his two Judas', the other one being Nerode. When Dhirananda left, as Daya Mata said, SRF (then still called *Yogoda Satsanga*) required rebuilding. Nerode (an Indian who met Yogananda in the early 20ies who became his student, and who also met Dhirananda) was therefore invited to be in charge of Mount Washington whenever Yogananda wasn't present, which was frequently. But from the early 30ies Yogananda mostly withdrew from lecturing, and Nerode was the one who was sent out touring, to promote the work and the lessons. Nerode was a good teacher, intelligent, successful, and traveled almost continuously from 1932-1937. As Dhirananda, he wrote his own books, which SRF published. Nerode married an American lady in 1931 (there is a film of Yogananda celebrating that marriage), and they had one son.

In 1939 Nerode too left and sued Yogananda heavily for \$500.000

(which might be compared to \$2 million today), claiming partnership with Yogananda. But Yogananda had learned his lesson ten years earlier, with Dhirananda: he had Nerode (and maybe others) sign a paper back then, in 1929, which declared that he was working as a volunteer. That paper saved Yogananda. Nerode lost the case. Much worse, however, was that Nerode accused Yogananda's morality even more than Dhirananda had. He accused Yogananda of pretty bad sexual misconduct, of having young girls at all hours in his room on the top floor, while he kept the older women on the floor below.

This was certainly no small thing: Nerode was well-respected teacher. Devotees (maybe still today, when they read these things) got shaken in their love and trust, in their discipleship to Yogananda.

Isn't it amazing how low good devotees can sink when *maya* blinds and squeezes them? Of course the easiest and most effective way to attack an opponent legally is a clamorous sexual scandal. That's what Dhirananda and Nerode did with Yogananda.

Here is a broader understanding of the Dhirananda story: Yes, Yogananda called Dhirananda a Judas. But did he ever reject him in his heart? Did Yogananda's love end for him, his concern for him, his loyalty? No, his love is unconditional, and that's the difference to most of us. When we say "Judas," we easily reject, our love usually ends, we might get angry, or completely push that person out of our lives. That's why Dhirananda is not much known today. The Master, however, even though the disciple may indeed have acted like a Judas, never stops seeing him for who he is: an angel of God, whom he loves. Thus Yogananda sent Dhirananda a box of mangoes every year for Christmas, as a gesture of his unconditional and undying friendship, but Dhirananda sent it back each time, unopened. The guru's love is eternal, the disciple's love is often fickle.

Amazingly, Yogananda had known for a long time what would

happen with Dhirananda. Even as a boy he said to his closest friend Tulsi Bose: “One day Bagchi (Dhirananda) will betray me and marry a white woman.” Isn’t it amazing that Yogananda still let him in the door, and gave him all he could? He also related that Dhirananda had already betrayed him badly in another lifetime. But the Master’s love is divine, ongoing.

And so the drama will go on and on. Who knows what the next lifetime will bring? Again Yogananda, as a divine messenger, will bring light and love to the world, and again people will try to pull him down, will throw dirt at him, will betray him, will misunderstand him. The Master’s love and patience remain, fortunately. And thus, one by one, the disciples will find their final release in God.

The best thing, it seems, is to learn from Dhirananda’s story, so that we ourselves don’t stumble and suffer more than necessary. Oh Lord, help us to watch this stupid ego!

## *Chapter 14*

### *Lahiri Mahasaya's Historical Bare Belly*



This is the story of Lahiri Mahasaya's original photograph.

Lahiri Mahasaya's on his original photo is seen with his laughing round bare belly. That photo has a wonderful history: it could only be taken when Lahiri approved to be photographed – taken without his approval the photo had shown an inexplicable empty spot where Lahiri had been sitting amongst his disciples. "I am Spirit," the Master smiled (see *Autobiography of A Yogi*).

The same photo saved young Yogananda from a dreadful death when he was stricken with cholera: "A blinding light" came from the photo, "enveloping my body and the entire room." Yogananda was instantaneously healed.

Many times, we read, while Yogananda was meditating in front of that photo, Lahiri Mahasaya would emerge from the frame and became a living form, sitting down in front of him. When Yogananda then tried to touch the feet "of his luminous body", he never succeeded: Lahiri always flew back, becoming a picture again.

The same holy photo protected a woman disciple, when furious lightening struck her house- even the book beside her. She desperately prayed to Lahiri, bowing to the photo, and was saved miraculously, as if by "sheets of ice".

Lahiri Mahasaya said regarding his photo, "if you deem it a protection, then it is so; otherwise it is only a picture."

It was one of Yogananda's "most precious possessions," as he writes. "Given to Father by Lahiri Mahasaya himself, it carries a holy vibration."

In 1935/36, as we read in the 1998 12th edition of the *Autobiography of a Yogi*, Yogananda asked a Bengali artist (probably Sananda, his brother, who also painted Babaji) to create a painting of Lahiri. That became the picture we usually see today. On it, Lahiri appears much more mild ("grandfatherly"), but less mystical and powerful than on the original photo.

In 1946, when Yogananda first offered his *Autobiography of a Yogi* to the world he didn't use the painting, however, but chose to print the sacred original photo of Lahiri Mahasaya.

It may be that he received some bewildered feedback from some of his readers. Or the quality of the photo was simply not sufficient. Whatever the case, for the 3rd 1951 *Autobiography of a Yogi*-edition, Yogananda chose to print the artist's painting of Lahiri – thus the original photo disappeared from the *Autobiography of a Yogi*. However, the painting still showed Lahiri's bright bare belly.

Some time after the Master's passing, this bare belly apparently became a bit too bold for some tastes. Thus in the 1954 5th edition we find Lahiri's chest beautifully dressed. The cloth, as one reads in a footnote of the 7th edition, was later added by a "Bengali artist."

After half a century, in the 1998 12th edition, Lahiri's original miraculous photo suddenly reappeared. The photo shown there, however, is actually worse in quality than what is available. At Shibirdu Lahiri's ashram in Varanasi you may admire and photograph one of the original prints: you will see much less stark black/white contrast, will see Lahiri's open eyes, and a quaint backdrop curtain.

In that same 1998-*Autobiography of a Yogi* we also find the explanation why the painting had been used for all these years: Yogananda had later designated it as the formal portrait of Lahiri for SRF publications; and that it hangs in Yogananda's Mount Washington sitting room.

Nowadays, if you visit Mount Washington, you will indeed find that painting hanging there, with a properly dressed Lahiri Mahasaya. But the observant eye discovers that this is actually a little adjustment that was made to the otherwise so carefully protected quarters of Yogananda: on a photo in the book "Paramahansa Yogananda – In Memoriam" you will see how he had enjoyed the painting: Lahiri was beautifully and freely bare-bellied (poor nuns!)

Lahiri-Joy to all, whether of "proper" or of "free" taste!

## *Chapter 15*

### *A Historical Question: SRF Running Colonies?*



Looking at the *Autobiography of a Yogi* of Yogananda's time, one gets the impression that SRF was intended to also run a World Brotherhood Colony. Yogananda writes in the 3rd edition, 1951, published a few months before his passing:

"Happy years sped by, filled with intense activities. A Self-Realization-Fellowship (SRF) World-Brotherhood Colony, envisioned in 1937 and firmly established by 1947, serves as a model for smaller SRF colonies. The buildings on the thirty-acre tract in Encinitas include several hermitages, a gift shop, a café, and a hotel for the accommodation of SRF members and the public. The beautiful grounds contain a lotus pool and a large swimming pool. A series of white pillars facing the highway are adorned with golden lotuses."

Colony activities include the many-sided training of disciples in accordance with SRF ideals, and the development of an extensive agricultural project that provides fresh vegetables for SRF residents at the Encinitas and Los Angeles centers.

"He hath made of one blood all nations of men!" An urgent need on this war-torn earth is the founding, on spiritual basis, of numerous world-brotherhood colonies."

Encinitas was, for Yogananda, in part a World Brotherhood Colony. So was Mt. Washington: in his printed Lake Shrine dedication talk Yogananda stated that "we have started trial colonies at Encinitas and at Mt. Washington in Los Angeles, and we have some colonies in India too. Ours is not a church in the ordinary sense."

Monastics and non-monastics lived in these places. And Encinitas, we read, was supposed to serve as a model for other SRF colonies.

Yogananda's Lake Shrine dedication talk (1950) is recorded, and in it he says: "I am not starting churches and other new cults. I don't believe in it!" And, "The greatest thing in the church movement is the building of colonies!" If that was his conviction, wouldn't he have wanted his organization to run them?

Maybe, but maybe not. True, he included the Colonies as part of his SRF *Aims and Ideals*, which were printed in that form until 1958. Still, could it be that Yogananda changed his mind for a specific reason? Was SRF not meant to build colonies after all?

Indeed in 1955 Yogananda appeared to Daya Mata (see chapter 3), inspiring her to develop SRF along monastic lines. The colony idea was abandoned, and she admitted that she "was not interested." Her heart was completely monastic. Could she have built and nourished colonies? On the other hand Yogananda told Kriyananda repeatedly, and so did Rajarsi in 1954, that "you have a great work to do," which Kriyananda understood to be the building of colonies. Kriyananda had vowed to do so already during Yogananda's lifetime, when he heard his Guru talk with intense power about the need for them (as reported in the SRF magazine). In this way two separate works began to flourish, not always without difficulties.

Here's a little historical question to ponder:

In religion, we seem to observe a particular phenomenon: often when a great Master leaves the world his following splits, reflecting the law of duality. One side represents the lunar ray – orthodox, protective, and conservative. The other side represents the solar ray – expansive, creative, and less conventional. In Christianity, St. Peter taught that Christ's teaching should be restricted to the Jews. St. Paul disagreed, and spread it creatively everywhere, and non-Jews could freely become Christians. In Islam we have the very conservative Shiites (majority in Iran and Iraq), and the less conservative Sunnites (though traditional and mainstream, they incorporated various customs and usages which arose historically, but which have no roots in the *Koran*). The Jews too have a strong orthodox and liberal division. In Buddhism we see the more conservative *Hinayana* branch, and the more liberal and expansive *Mahayana* branch.

Question: As history unfolds and develops, will we also see in Yogananda's case this natural dual development? And is his wise hand behind it all?

## *Chapter 16*

# *JISTORY?* *Yogananda's 13 Languages*



Written just for fun, this chapter has been constructed upon one sentence in Yogananda's *Autobiography*. When describing his birth and infancy, Yogananda writes: "My strong emotional life took silent form *as words in many languages*. Among the inward confusion of tongues, my ear gradually accustomed itself to the circumambient Bengali syllables of my people."

Our question, which will lead us as a thread through this chapter, is: Which were those "many languages" resounding in Yogananda's little ears, due to his former incarnations? Yogananda said he was an avatar. On these pages we are trying to follow the footprints he has left on earth.

Much of this chapter is based on what Yogananda said, but to be frank from the start: a lot of it is pure speculation. It is therefore written exclusively for his disciples— others must surely think it's sheer madness, or wild fantasy, or Guru-blindness. It is also written in a spirit of "exciting discovery," and obviously doesn't claim to be scientific or provable at all. Rather, it's intended to be

on the level of a fun evening entertainment.... a loooong evening, we admit... since the chapter is not short at all!

Following the language thread, we will embark on a long journey through many lands, many cultures, and many languages, crossing many centuries— ever at Yogananda’s side. However little useful: we hope you will enjoy the trip!

## LANGUAGE 1

### The “Beaker” language



Was it the “Beaker language” which Yogananda’s young ears heard inwardly? This was, as historians say, the language spoken on the British Island by the “Beaker People,” in Britain’s Bronze Age, 2500–600 BC.

To Richard Write, when visiting Stonehenge in 1936 (see Swami Kriyananda’s *The New Path*. Also Bradford, Dr. Lewis’ son, who accompanied Yogananda back from England to America, concurs), Yogananda revealed that he had lived there 3500 years ago — which would be about 1560 BC.

Surprisingly, this happens to be exactly the time of Stonehenge’s “heyday,” which was also the time of its final completion. It had been built in several constructional phases, dated by modern

archaeological techniques, beginning in 2950 BC, ending in 1500BC! Researchers write: "Impressive though it is, what we see at Stonehenge now is only a fragment of what it was in its heyday, when the final phase of construction was concluded."

Commonly Stonehenge is associated with the Druids, clad in their white robes. However, if historians can be trusted, the Druids came to Britain much later, in about 300BC. If those ancient Druids indeed used Stonehenge for their ceremonies, they must have inherited the site.

Today Stonehenge, situated on the Salisbury plain, in Wiltshire, Southern England, is called a "British Bronze Age monument." Sri Yukteswar's Yuga system, however, paints a different picture: Stonehenge was part of a more highly developed civilization than ours. Its construction started about 2950 BC, during the transition period between *Treta Yuga* and *Dwapara Yuga*. (The exact changing point was in 3100 BC.) Yogananda's lifetime at Stonehenge happened a good 800 years before Kali Yuga took over.

In other words: Stonehenge is a remnant of a more highly developed society. In fact, there is, as the American Astronomer Gerald Hawkins wrote in his book *Stonehenge Decoded* (1963), an apparently indisputable proof that Stonehenge was a sort of fixed computer, giving the exact positions for various astronomical events, some of them occurring at intervals of fifty years or more — far too long a time for any but an advanced society, with carefully preserved records, to keep track of. Stonehenge also determined the dates of the solstices and equinoxes; it allowed people to foretell eclipses of the sun and moon. And, as its admirers write, the most amazing fact is the precision with which it was built.

But Stonehenge was surely not only an astronomical observatory, but certainly served as an open temple, a sacred shrine for spiritual

purposes. It was probably used as such continuously, for thousands of years.

Stonehenge remains one of the great mysteries of our planet, and Yogananda lived in that “land of mystery,” at a moment when it had reached its greatest height. The “Beaker language,” too, remains a mystery. It was, so historians say, completely different to the languages now spoken in Europe. However, the study of Indo-European languages shows that Greek, Latin, Sanskrit, Germanic, Celtic, Anatolian, Indo-Iranian, Albanian, Baltic, and Slavic were all derived from the one common source of the *Aryans*, who lived in Iran and northern India. Was the “Beaker language” a completely separate phenomenon? The Beaker people originally came from central Europe.

Yogananda said: “Before taking a physical body, I see the personality I am to assume, and feel slightly uncomfortable with it. It is like having to put on a heavy overcoat on a hot day. I soon get used to it, but inwardly I never forget that this personality is not my true Self.” One wonders what personality he took on at Stonehenge. He certainly was a great saint, but that’s all we can say.

By the way... isn’t his unusual structure at “Lake Shrine” strangely reminiscent of Stonehenge? Doesn’t his open temple have a similar “feel” to it?

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LANGUAGE 2

Sanskrit



Surely ancient Sanskrit must have been among Yogananda's inner "confusion of tongues."

He shared with several disciples that he had been the great warrior Arjuna, the main disciple of Sri Krishna, who now lives in the Himalayas as Mahavatar Babaji, as Yogananda explained.

Yogananda said that he attained liberation many lifetimes ago. It was, he once hinted, during the lifetime when he had been the warrior Arjuna.

Arjuna (Yogananda) and Krishna (Babaji), together with Arjuna's brothers, the Pandavas, were victorious in the most famous war of India's history, the battle of Kurukshetra. Unrighteous kings were conquered, and India ("Bharata") became united.

During that lifetime, Yogananda said, Rajarsi Janakananda (his foremost disciple) was Nakula, one of the five Pandava brothers (see Durga Mata's book). Yogananda told Durga Mata that she too was with him at that time. It seems probable that other present disciples once incarnated with Arjuna, too. Yogananda, in fact, explained that a Master usually brings his disciples with him, to help him with his mission.

Swami Kriyananda, according to the ancient “Book of Brighu” was a king of one of India’s kingdoms at that time, and was highly developed spiritually. Yogananda interestingly said that “in ancient times, India was always governed, more or less, by religious kings, from 5,000 BC, down to 637 AD, when India was invaded by foreigners, Arabs, Moguls, Pathans, and English.”

Kriyananda, at the time of the conflict, had relatives on both sides, and decided therefore to retreat into the forest as a hermit, doubting his Guru’s counsel to fight. “Doubt,” Yogananda told him, “has been your greatest flaw.” Having doubted everything possible in the past, and having resolved them, Kriyananda says today, “I can well understand doubts of others, and can help them overcome them.”

The “Book of Brighu,” incidentally, also states that the present one would be his last incarnation. Yogananda told him similarly: “You will find God at the end of your life!”

According to the epic *Mahabharata* which describes the conflict between the Pandavas and Kauravas, Krishna ‘s death marked the beginning of Kali Yuga. Krishna and Arjuna, then, using Sri Yukteswar’s calculation, died (and lived, therefore) about 2700 years ago, around 700 BC. So we assume Arjuna’s lifetime to have been from about 760–700 BC.

A bit more history: Not long afterwards, around 560 BC, Gautama Buddha was born, an avatar, whose reforms of Hinduism resulted in the Buddhist religion. He had, as Yogananda wrote “many liberated disciples.”

Adi Shankaracharya (Shankara), it is usually taught was born around 700AD. The presently living Shankaracharyas, however, claim to possess records in their “math” (monastery), showing all the representatives of Shankara (the Shankaracharyas) throughout the centuries, leading to Adi Shankaracharya’s birth in 500BC. Yogananda doesn’t solve the dispute in his Autobiography: “A few

records indicate that the peerless monist lived from 510 to 478 BC; Western historians assign him to the late eighth century AD.”

Shankaracharya rescued India from the atheistic misconstruction that Buddhists had come to place upon the sublime teachings of their founder. Shankara is known as the foremost exponent of the *Advaita Vedanta* philosophy: “Only one exists, Sat-chit-ananda, all else is illusion!” He united many conflicting religious sects under one philosophical “umbrella”, which included (unknown to many) both Gyana and Bhakti Yoga, both the “Only One” concept, and the “I And You” relationship, as a step to that One-ness. Shankara succeeded in unifying India spiritually.

Yogananda mentions Shankara many times in his *Autobiography*, in his talks and writings. He must have felt a deep inner connection with him. When Yogananda became a Swami in 1915, he chanted a hymn of Shankara. Also it was the ancient Srinagar temple of Swami Shankara, which transformed itself in Yogananda’s vision into his Mount Washington headquarters. Yogananda, in addition, told many stories about Shankara’s life, some of which are not generally known. For example, he told the story of a black magician who wanted to execute Shankara; he told how a woman disciple of Shankara died because of her doubts; and he told the story of how Shankara received Kriya Yoga initiation from Mahavatar Babaji.

Yogananda himself, as he stated (in Durga Ma’s book), was in truth a disciple of Babaji. Sri Yukteswar, he explained, was his guru “by proxy.” Could it be that Yogananda and Shankara had been brother Kriyabans, at the feet of Babaji?

If so, Yogananda lived with Shankara, around 700AD. A certain devotee had a vision, in which he saw that Yogananda actually *was* Shankara. Who can tell?

A sidelight: isn’t it a surprising? Babaji was Yogananda’s *real* Guru. Then, in a letter to Rajarsi Yogananda wrote that “Lahiri

Mahasaya is my *astral* Guru (very few in the world know this);...it was through his wishes that I met Swami Sri Yukteswarji, my *earthly* Guru.”

Back to history: The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* says that agriculture in India dates back to the 7000 BC, and that the first cities were built in 2600BC. Indians, however, traditionally calculate their history in millions of years, and think of history as cyclical movements between higher and lower ages: the *Yugas*. Sri Yukteswar, as we know, taught that type of history too, but came up with his own unorthodox Yuga-calculations.

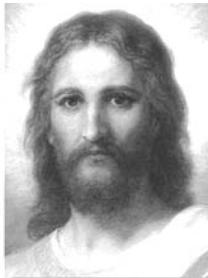
If the Indian concept is true, we find ourselves standing in front of a fathomless depth of history: of countless civilizations, adventures, and saints. Arjuna and Krishna, according to Indian tradition, are said to have been, in their earlier lives, the ancient rishis *Nara* and *Narayana*. They are said to have lived in Satya Yuga, which according to Sri Yukteswar ranges from 16300–6700 BC (both ascending and descending parts).

And before that? One wonders how far back into unknown history Babaji’s and Yogananda’s incarnations reach, as saints. One disciple of Yogananda, Norman Paulsen, saw himself in a vision with Yogananda in Lemuria, eighty thousand years ago: over 3 yugas ago!

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## LANGUAGE 3

### Aramaic



Was ancient Aramaic part of little Yogananda's inner "words of many languages?"

For his early lessons Yogananda (quite fearlessly!) originally dictated that the three wise men, who came to visit the newborn Jesus, were earlier incarnations of Mahavatar Babaji, Lahiri Mahasaya, and Sri Yukteswar. One finds good references that the three wise men probably came from India in Yogananda's "The Second Coming of Christ."

Many times Yogananda came to earth with those great Masters. Was Yogananda around at the time of Jesus too, 2000 years ago, around 0 AD, in ancient Israel? Some of his disciples firmly believe so.

Yogananda in that case would have come as an avatar, since he had achieved liberation as Arjuna. Swami Kriyananda actually once asked him: "Were you Jesus?" Yogananda replied: "What difference would it make? The ocean of spirit is the Reality. If one wave, or another one, becomes aware of its oneness with the ocean, both have attained the same awareness."

If we knew the answer, however, our "studies" could go even deeper. Just for the fun of it, let's assume for a moment that Yogananda was indeed Jesus. It would make it possible to trace

Yogananda's life far back into the past, to the times of Prophet Elisha (Eliseus) of the Old Testament, who according to Yogananda was the former incarnation of Jesus. Elisha lived during the reign of King Achab (875-845 BC).

It's an intriguing story: in his original Bible interpretations Yogananda wrote that the great prophet Elijah (Elias, John) was more highly developed than Elisha (Jesus), but then he fell, and later, as John, he found liberation through the ordeal of being beheaded. "Sometimes the Guru-Preceptor falls down, only to be lifted up by the advanced disciple, as Jesus uplifted the fallen Elias, or John the Baptist, who could only baptize with water."

Interestingly also, Yogananda said (in *Man's Eternal Quest*) that Jesus attained *most* of his perfection in his former incarnation as Elisha. And soon afterwards came the time when Arjuna found liberation.

Following this wild thread of thought, we see that the timing would actually make sense for Yogananda's evolution:

- As Elisha he attained most of his perfection (around 850 BC). Her surpassed Elias.
- As Arjuna he found liberation (around 700BC).
- As Jesus he came as an avatar. (0 AD). In this life Elias, now John the Baptist, found liberation too, as Yogananda wrote.

A further interesting fact is that Elijah (or Elias; John) was a Kriya master, as Yogananda states in his *Autobiography*. He certainly taught it to his disciple Elisha (or Eliseus; Jesus).

This would take us to the following picture:

- As Elisha, Yogananda practiced Kriya.
- As Arjuna he practiced Kriya too, surely, since Krishna taught it (see *Autobiography*).
- Shankara practiced Kriya and, as we saw, Yogananda might have been close to him, practicing Kriya too.
- As Jesus too he knew Kriya (see *Autobiography*), and taught it.

- As Babaji's disciple, whatever these incarnations were, Yogananda must have practiced Kriya.
- Yogananda practiced and taught Kriya,

Do we see Yogananda involved in a long ancient history of Kriya Yoga?

At any rate, Yogananda revealed a very intimate knowledge about Jesus' life, as one can see in his original Bible interpretations. He described many unknown occurrences, like "although Jesus was so great, he often allowed John, his beloved disciple, to lean on his breast."

Thinking about the "Jesus=Yogananda" possibility, some may ask how Yogananda could ever be Jesus? When Jesus appeared to Yogananda, did he appear to himself? How is that possible? However, we also know that Yogananda had visions of Krishna, whose soul had already gone on, to live in the body of Babaji. Still Krishna became alive for Yogananda, and communicated with him. Is it possible that an avatar may keep his former individuality alive, even while his soul is gone to another incarnation?

Jesus, according to Yogananda, lived in India and Tibet during his "lost 18 years," which are the major part of his life. The Bible doesn't say a single word about all those missing years. Yogananda referred positively to the book *The Unknown Life of Christ* by Nicholas Notovitch, who found ancient scrolls in a Tibetan monastery which describe Jesus' life in India. Jesus was called "Isa" then. The script describes Isa's visit to India during the exact time of his disappearance from Asia Minor. The sacred scrolls also revealed that as Jesus Christ had been visited by the Wise Men of the East, so he paid them a return visit to Tibet, and conferred with the Great Masters.

But more to come: several books have been published which claim that Jesus survived his ordeal on the cross, returned to India, and

lived up to a high age in Kashmir, where his tomb “Roza Bal” can still be visited in Srinagar (and many visit it daily).

Some convincing evidence is shown. At the tomb one finds chiseled footprints with markings of nail holes. Also the Kashmiri text Bhavishya Maha Purana (115AD) tells about the king of Kashmir, Shali-Vahana (about AD 80), who met a foreigner, a distinguished person wearing white robe, at Wien, a place near Srinagar. The foreigner called himself Ishvara Putaram (Son of God), Isha Masih (Jesus Messiah), and Kanya Garbam (Born of a Virgin). He said: “I appeared as Isha-Saih (Jesus Messiah). I received the Messiah-hood, (Christ-hood) in the land of the Mleechas (Amalekites, Israel).”

What did Yogananda have to say on the topic?

Nothing. But what makes one suspicious is that in his detailed Bible interpretations, Yogananda never mentions Jesus’ final bodily ascension, 40 days after his appearance to the apostles, even though it is quite an important part of Christian dogma. He talks about everything else: the immaculate conception (being true), about Jesus’ miracles (being true), his crucifixion, about his ascension (in consciousness) through the three worlds to the Father, his miraculous resurrection after three days, his appearance to the disciples for 40 days... but nothing about the bodily ascension afterwards.

Indeed, could a physical body even enter into the astral or causal world, or into the kingdom of God? It would fall right down! But then.... where did Jesus go after he those 40 days?

Isn’t it interesting that both John and Matthew, the two evangelists who actually knew Jesus, similarly wrote about Jesus’ life, his crucifixion, resurrection, and subsequent appearance, but didn’t write a single word about Jesus’ bodily ascension? Wouldn’t such a major event have been treated by them vividly? Only Luke (24:51), a doctor, and Paul’s disciple, and Mark (16:19), a disciple

of Peter, mention the ascension briefly, writing what they had heard. The main information about Jesus' ascension comes from the Acts (1:8-11), whose author is believed to be Luke (even Luke's teacher, Paul, didn't know Jesus; and his goal was to stimulate faith in people.)

Secondly, Yogananda wrote in his original Bible interpretations: "In the case of Jesus Christ, [the resurrection] was exceptional because even though in death his soul was separated from his physical body, by an act of will with Cosmic Energy, he rebuilt his dilapidated body and housed his soul there again. In this case, the soul of Jesus Christ resurrected *in the same body.*"

In other words: Jesus had died on the cross, but he returned to his dead body, revived it, and lived "in the same body." It was different from Sri Yukteswar's resurrection, who said: "From the cosmic atoms I created an entirely new body."

Jesus, Yogananda also explained, "immortalized" his body. Doesn't that too make one think that Jesus planned to continue his earthly life?

We are basically faced with this situation: Jesus took back his body, and then.... what happened then? What did he do?

Of course, spiritually speaking it is of little importance what Jesus did with his body. He could (and did, according to Yogananda) materialize it and dematerialize it at will, and could instantly enter any level of creation. Jesus was not identified with his body. He said about himself, in the Gospel of Thomas (*Acta Thomae*): "I am the light that is over all things. I am all: from me all came forth, and to me all attained. Split a piece of wood; I am there. Lift up the stone, and you will find me there."

The same Thomas, however, who was to become the apostle of India, later actually met Jesus in Taxila, India (now Pakistan), according to the *Revelatio Thomae* (later declared heretic.)

Might Jesus, then, indeed have lived in Kashmir after his physical resurrection? Were many disciples maybe waiting there, whom Jesus had gathered throughout his long earlier years in India?

Yogananda visited Kashmir with Sri Yukteswar, as he writes in his *Autobiography*. Did they possibly visit Jesus' tomb “Roza Bal” in Srinagar, when they stayed there? Or was Yogananda just out for sightseeing, as it seems?

Yogananda, we read, visited a Shankara temple near Srinagar, which transformed itself in his vision into his Mount Washington headquarters.

This, incidentally, is a very special temple, much referred to by “Jesus in India” researchers. It is commonly known as the Takht-i-Sulaiman (or Takhat Sulaiman: the Throne of Solomon), a site dating back to 2500 BC, which was rebuilt by Adi Shankara. It has a pillar dedicated to Jesus, which is considered one of the proofs that Jesus lived in Kashmir after he was crucified. The pillar has four inscriptions, two of which are still legible today, one of which mentions Jesus. The inscriptions have been historically recorded. They read:

- 1) The mason of this pillar is Bihishti Zargar, Year fifty and four.
- 2) Khwaja Rukun son of Murjan erected this pillar.
- 3) At this time Yuz Asaf proclaimed his prophethood. Year fifty and four.
- 4) He is Jesus, Prophet of the Children of Israel.

“Year fifty and four” was of the then valid Laukika Era of Kashmir, coming to 78AD. “Yuz Afal,” translated as “Jesus the Gatherer,” is the same name which is found on the Jesus tomb “Roza Bal” in Srinagar.

Yogananda visited that ancient temple, which carries a dedication to Jesus, and which was rebuilt by Shankara. A coincidental meeting of three Masters? And by the way: he obviously felt a

strong attraction to that particular temple, as he visited it again in 1936 (see his letters to Rajarsi from India).

Of course the claim that Jesus survived the cross and then lived in India is only a hypothesis, and apart of course challenges the official Christian teachings immensely. Even if Yogananda had thought it true (as have done Sai Baba and others), would he have ever openly said it? His commentaries and teachings would have been completely rejected by the majority of Christians.

Whatever the answer: do we have to scratch our heads and wonder if we should add ancient Aramaic to Yogananda's languages?

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LANGUAGE 4 & 5

Old French, Old English



Did also old French and English resound in young Yogananda's inner ear?

He stated to various disciples that he had been William the Conqueror, (Guillaume le Conquérant, 1027–1087AD), who spoke both those languages. Actually the old French language spoken in northern France during William's lifetime was called "Langue d'oïl." The nobility spoke "Anglo-Norman."

Fun: today, when speaking English, we actually have William's (Yogananda's) handwriting on it: "The French language of the Norman rulers eventually merged with the Anglo-Saxon of the common people [in Britain] to form the English language." (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*)

In an article, Yogananda says these amazing words about his lifetime as William (also on a CD he tells the story):

"I remember 900 years ago I was in the Tower of London; and when I went there in 1936 I began to investigate it. I asked if there was no toilet in a certain part of the tower. The keeper said no, but I remembered where it was, and went to the curator and asked if it was in a certain place at one time, and he said, yes. I had remembered that. I have remembered many things about that incarnation. As a child I used to eat with knife and fork secretly at

night lest the family find out. My brother found out and said, 'What is this heathen habit?' I don't remember how I got them, but when he kept on asking I said I was an Englishman before. He was shocked at my reply ... Do you know my brother and I, as children, used to plan an invasion of England? And I could have done it too, because I had done it before."

A bit of Norman history: William the Conqueror was a descendant of the Viking Rollo, who had invaded Normandy in 886AD. After 30 years of war with the King of France, Charles, they made peace. Rollo married the daughter of Charles and converted to Christianity. Normandy became a pretty independent duchy of the King of France. 150 years later William was born and became the 7th duke of Normandy.

William was destined to become also the king of England: the most famous and most discussed medieval king, and probably the most misunderstood of all.

Indeed, it is quite difficult to grasp the greatness of William, hidden behind the strange role he had to play. When reading historical texts, we are informed about outer facts, which often sound appalling, but we can't easily understand the deeper, divine will behind it, nor the deeper nature of the saint involved. Thus Yogananda wrote in his *Autobiography*: "Like all biographical sketches, [Sri Yukteswar's] words had given the outward facts without revealing the inner man." In truth, with William the divine Light had descended onto earth. It was a Light destined to fulfill an unusual mission.

William was an illegitimate child, and therefore he was branded "bastard" by those who didn't like him. His father was Duke "Robert the Magnificent," also called, for wrong reasons, "the devil." His mother was Herleva, the beautiful daughter of simple tanner, also popularly called Arlette from Falaise. Arlette had had a prophetic dream when she was pregnant with William: a mighty tree grew out of her womb, growing taller and taller, until it

covered all of Normandy and England. The dream was superconscious, and proved true. The tree growing was indeed mighty – it was God's own tree.

It is also told that when William was just born, in the castle of his father in Falaise, his very first act was to grasp a handful of straw, and hold it so tightly that the nurse could scarcely take it away from him. She intuitively understood this to be an omen, and predicted that the baby would grow up and make himself famous by seizing great territories. This prophecy proved to be true too.

Yogananda also, when a little child in his mother's arms, received a prophecy from Lahiri Mahasaya: "Little mother, thy son will be a yogi. As a spiritual engine, he will carry many souls to God's kingdom." Yogananda's was to be a spiritual role, while William's mission concerned power, politics, dharma. God intervenes also in the political world: an interesting thought to ponder.

Yogananda was William's "heir." He too showed considerable power, not only sweetness. He was lovable, we all know that. Yet he also emanated astonishing power. Just listening to his voice on a recording is enough to make the point. Resounding clearly in that voice is not a gentle lamb, but the mighty roar of a spiritual warrior.

William became the king of England, and changed Europe's history forever. His life has been described as a blazing comet entering the planet. Michael H. Hart, in his known book *The 100: A Ranking of the Most Influential Persons in History* places William on rank 68. In the heavenly eyes, William's life was probably much more highly placed, for reasons hard to decipher. William lived at the crossroads of history, and probably set important tracks for mankind. Historians call the period from 500AD-1100AD the "dark age" of the middle ages. The time after that marks the most enlightened phase of medieval times. Just during the moment of transition towards that higher historical phase William made his appearance. (Indeed, often the years prior

to 1066 are called the late "Dark Ages," and years after 1066 the "Middle Ages." That year 1066 was William's pivotal year). "The Norman Conquest," says H. C. Davis (a foremost historian on the subject), "raised the English to that level of culture which the continental people had already reached,... to make England in her turn a leader among nations."

English-written history, of course, doesn't describe William in a favorable light at all. He is rather described as a villain of history, much slandered and sullied. And it is apparent why. We all have our national pride. The English are known for being especially patriotic, a feeling which was deeply offended by William, a mere Duke of Normandy, who was presumptuous enough to invade and conquer their English motherland. In fact, would anybody of us easily swallow that, if it happened to our own country? And would our own historians paint a beautiful picture of such an intruder? Many nasty legends were told about William, and were colorfully embellished over the years. England and France, furthermore, had long been bitter rivals. William thus became widely known as a man of avarice, guile, and ruthlessness.

To understand William we need to understand the times he lived in. He had a divine mission to fulfill for ushering in a new cycle in history. These were cruel times, indeed barbaric. As we said, historians call that period the "dark age" of the middle ages. A normal moral man of that time would today be considered dangerous. Everywhere one found killing, poisoning, cruelty. Had William just said smilingly, "Be in peace, dear brothers, and love each other," they would have cut off his smiling head right away. He had to use appropriate means for those times, which nowadays are hard to understand.

In modern times, after almost 1000 years, more realistic books have been published about William, by highly respected historians. The best known is *William the Conqueror*, by David C. Douglas (often quoted from now on). He is very fair-minded, but even though... could we ever expect a historian to see the deeper truth in

a divine person, especially after all this time? Who would even be able to recognize and understand such a disguised saint should he appear today, right among us? Very few. Most people would have their strong opinions about him, and most of them probably quite wrong. Who is able to understand the divine plan and scheme of things? Even devotees must sometimes scratch their heads! Saints have power, they proclaim and do uncomfortable things, and are often hard to tolerate. When they are safely dead, yes, then people can handle them better. But when they are alive, many egos rebel.

William claimed the English throne unjustly, English historians declare. Norman history tells a very different tale, of course. Here's the story of the famous Norman conquest:

In January 1066 the English king Edward (a half-uncle of William, a saint, canonized, and truly loved by his people), childless, had just died. In 1051 he had promised the English throne to William. But Harold Godwinson (Edward's brother-in-law, and the most powerful earl and minister) claimed that a few days before his death, King Edward had changed his mind and conferred the crown to him (if that is true, nobody will ever know). An authoritative counsel, called the Witan, declared Harold to be the king. Harold, with remarkable speed, had himself be crowned. He had, however, only two years earlier (in 1064) sworn on holy relics that he would uphold William's claim to the English throne (under pressure, the English say). But Harold broke this promise. He now declared to have higher duties to follow. For Norman eyes this perjury could have no other consequence than the invasion of England. Massive activity followed: William gathered forces, allies, and built huge amounts of ships. He received support for his invasion from Pope Alexander II, and received a papal banner to carry into battle.

According to Orderic Vitalis and William of Malmesbury, Harold's brother Gyrth tried to prevent him from engaging William in battle, urging his brother not to break the oath which he had sworn to William confirming the latter's succession. Harold, however,

had ignored Gyrth's advice. Friends and brothers, and even his own mother, tried to stop Harold. Gyrth, told Harold (Orderic Vitalis): "Reflect also, in your wisdom, on the oath you have taken to the duke of Normandy. Beware of incurring the guilt of perjury, lest by so great a crime you draw ruin on yourself and the forces of this nation, and stain for ever the honor of our own race." But Harold was angered by these advices. (Still Orderic Vitalis): "Holding in contempt the wholesome advice of his friends, he loaded his brother with reproaches for his faithful counsel, and even forgot himself so far as to kick his mother when she hung about him in her too great anxiety to detain him with her."

These words of strong warning to Harold, from all sides, of refusing wise counsel, sound much like the advice given to Duryodhana, who was the evil and power-hungry enemy of Arjuna and his brothers, the Pandavas, during the battle of Kurukshetra, told in the Mahabharata.

Talking about Arjuna and William, two of Yogananda's previous lifetimes: of both one reads the same story, that nobody but themselves was strong enough to use their bow. Both were extraordinarily strong, physically. Yogananda was too, as he sometimes demonstrated.

Those medieval times were terrible, but also full with signs and wonders: in April 1066, for one entire week, an unusually bright comet with blazing tail was seen in the sky (depicted also in the famous Bayeux tapestry). It was deemed to be a heavenly omen. Materialists today laugh at those "omens", but Shakespeare wrote: "When beggars die there are no comets seen. The heavens themselves blaze forth the death of princes."

So William crossed the English Channel in late September 1066 AD to fight Harold, conquered England, and became one of the most famous figures in history for winning the Battle of Hastings. William's invasion was a massive risk, with everything to lose if he was unsuccessful. At first, actually, things didn't look very

good for William. Strong unfavorable winds didn't let him cross the ocean with his fleet. William used his time of waiting in frequent prayer. God was ever his polestar. Orderic Vitalis (an English monk-historian) wrote: "Duke William and the whole army committed themselves to God's protection, with prayers, and offerings, and vows, and accompanied a procession from the church, carrying the relics of St. Valeri, confessor of Christ, to obtain a favorable wind." When they finally could sail, William lost, due to rough storms, quite some ships and soldiers. Many saw in it an ill omen. But William the Conqueror had an indomitable will which could never be discouraged. "The stronger the will, the stronger the energy," Yogananda used to teach in this life too.

An incident very revealing of the duke's character occurred when they were sailing across the Channel. The Mora, William's ship, lost contact with the rest of the fleet which threw some of the duke's crew into a state of fear. William's response was to order calmly dinner to be served. He sat down pleasantly to eat with great relish, as if he were in a room in his house at home. He was a true leader, leading his men in any given situation. In time, the rest of the fleet caught up with the duke's ship, and the rest of the journey was smooth.

The famous story is told that when William landed at Hastings, the first thing that happened was that he stumbled and fell on the ground. A shock went through the army – they saw another ill-omen. But William at that moment showed his strength, character, and excellent leadership. He rose vigorously and exclaimed with a loud voice: "So determined am I to conquer this land that, lo, I have grasped it with both hands." A cheer of victory came from the army.

Yogananda too always had the strong charisma of a leader, already as a boy. As a young man he was approached and asked if we wouldn't lead a revolution against the English, to free India. But that wasn't Yogananda's dharma in this lifetime. He answered:

"India will be freed in my lifetimes, with peaceful means." And so it happened.

As things turned out, it was divinely fortunate that William hadn't left earlier for the battle. Harold had been waiting for months at the cost for his attack, ready to fight with the most fierce warriors of Europe, as the Saxons were known, with their terrible battle axes. But waiting for months, he finally couldn't hold his soldiers together. They disbanded. William's organization was better: the duke, waiting also, on the other side of the Channel, "utterly forbade pillage", writes William Poitier, one of his biographers. "He made generous provisions both for his own knights and for those from other parts, but he did not allow any of them to take their sustenance by force. The flocks and herds of the peasantry pastured unharmed throughout the providence. The crops waited undisturbed for the sickle without either being trampled by the knights in their pride, or ravaged out of greed by plunderers. A weak and unarmed man might watch the swarm of soldiers without fear, following his horse singing where he would."

The long time of waiting was fortunate for William also for another reason. At a certain point, Harold had to march North with his army, to fight against King Harald Hardrada of Norway, who was invading England with the help of Tostig, Harold's own brother. Harold won that battle brilliantly at Stamford Bridge, but also lost many soldiers. Two days after his victory Harold heard that William had landed in England. Harold immediately marched down South to meet William. His soldiers were confident after their recent victory, but certainly they were also tired and less numerous. William, who had expected to fight directly after landing, waited. He actually organized a happy feast for his soldiers, depicted on the famous Bayeaux tapestry.

When Harold was on his way South to meet William the Conqueror, an inauspicious omen was waiting for him. Here is the story (all these stories can be found in appropriate websites or history books): A long time ago, when Harold had been praying to

the Holy Cross of Waltham he was miraculously cured from paralysis. Thus he re-founded the church now known as Waltham Abbey. Now, just before the battle of Hastings, he paused here for prayer. But the black Abbey crucifix, the very same one which once had healed Harold of paralysis, this time miraculously bowed its head, refusing to look at him. Quite understandably, this was regarded as a strong ill omen. Harold was marching into his dark fate, and God knew. (Waltham Abbey continued to be regarded as a healing shrine, and here Harold was eventually buried.)

When William heard that Harold was approaching Hastings with his army, he prepared himself spiritually, as Orderic Vitalis writes: "He then heard mass, strengthening both body and soul by partaking of the consecrated host; he also reverently suspended from his neck the holy reliquies on which Harold had sworn. Many of the clergy had followed the Norman army, among whom were two bishops, Odo, of Bayeux, and Geoffrey of Coutances, with attendant clerks and monks, whose duty it was to aid the war with their gravers and counsels.

When Harold came close, he and William exchanged messages, both telling the other to avoid the battle by retreating and accepting the right of the other. None accepted. William then sent a message to Harold offering to submit their rival claims to the test of law. Harold spurned the proposal. Then William asked Harold to spare the blood of countless soldiers, by fighting a one-on-one battle. But Harold didn't accept the challenge – small wonder, since William was known to be amazingly strong. So the battle began on October 14.

Harold didn't attack. He positioned himself to his tremendous advantage on top of a hill, called Senlac Hill, so that the Normans had to fight uphill, while the Saxons had an enormously strong line of protection with their shields. Normans used horses, Saxons didn't. William fought on a magnificent warhorse, a gift from King Alfonso from Spain.

It was a furious combat from morning to night, and for a long time no side seemed to prevail. At a certain point the Saxons shouted, "William is dead." The Normans were terrified, and retreated. The Saxons stormed after them. It is a famous moment: William took off his helmet, galloping to the scene, shouting, "I am here, I am here!" At this point the Normans turned around, and attacked. The Saxons, before so solidly arranged for battle, were now quite scattered, and suffered serious losses. Many historians think that this moment was actually pre-meditated, because William used that tactic soon again, and had used it before. His strategies were known to be brilliant. He finally won that battle in that same way: again he had his soldiers attack and suddenly turn around, pretending to escape. The Saxon soldiers, who stood solid and strong until that point, saw victory and stormed after them. In that moment William's soldiers turned around, and overran the bewildered and unprotected enemies. In all that, William himself was never in the safe background. That wasn't his temperament.

Another decisive stroke for winning the battle were William's archers (William's specialty, a characteristic brought over from his life as Arjuna.)

William of Poitiers, who wrote William's life and knew him closely, wrote: "Duke William excelled both in bravery and soldier-craft. He dominated battles, checking his own men in flight, strengthening their spirit, and sharing their dangers. William was a noble general, inspiring courage, sharing danger, more often commanding men to follow than urging them on from the rear. The enemy (at the Battle of Hastings) lost heart at the mere sight of this marvelous and terrible knight. Three horses were killed under him. Three times he leapt to his feet. Shields, helmets, hauberks were cut by his furious and flashing blade, while yet other attackers were clouted by his own shield."

The Normans prevailed. Harold was finally killed by an arrow in his eye. It might even have been William's own arrow, for he is

known to have galloped with some knights toward Harold, when the situation finally allowed it.

One of his knights in a wild gesture of victory cut off the leg of Harold, and waived it in the air. William was disgusted, and severely dismissed that knight from the army. This gesture shows William to be a man of dharma, of right action, even in the midst of war.

14 October 1066 is a day history will never forget, and Hastings is said to have maybe been the most important battle in English history. The victory was William's. Still it wasn't a happy day for him. After the battle was won, he, as Arjuna had done after Kurukshetra, returned to the battlefield in the evening, and deeply mourned over the many dead English warriors.

William was crowned in London, in Westminster Abbey, on Christmas of 1066. Until 1071 he had to fight against many rebellions, he reacted in fierce manner, and finally won.

Modern historians tell us that it is extremely difficult for our modern mind to understand these early medieval times and circumstances, and to judge things intelligently: why and how things were done. Our modern yardstick of judgment is not appropriate. It is useless to project onto the people of William's day our modern sentiments and thoughts. William had no chance other than to act appropriately for his barbaric times.

For example, it is easy to criticize William for cutting off people's hands. No other king, however, would have been as lenient: the normal procedure under the same circumstances was to kill the offenders right away. To be any more lenient than that would actually have cost him the respect of his enemies, and made it impossible for him to rule. This was, for William, the penalty for assuming the responsibility for such a mission in the first place.

Or one hears about William landing at Hastings, ravaging the countryside. But this (as in all other such cases) was a military strategy, as opposed to simply letting his men loose to scavenge and pillage as they chose. William knew Harold to be impetuous. Knowing full well that his army was now within Harold's own earldom of Wessex, the duke wanted to provoke an immediate attack. William needed to fight soon, otherwise his provisions wouldn't last for his big army.

Yogananda was once asked, referring to his tough life as William, with all these bloody battles to confront: "Is it possible, Sir, for a liberated master not to live in a state of samadhi?" He replied: "One never loses the awareness that he is inwardly free."

William formed the destiny of England. The Anglo-Saxon way of life had finished forever. A new era started. Here are the most important changes:

Loyalty to King

All English land belonged to the crown, and William's vassals had to swear fealty directly to the crown. Earlier it was Saxon practice that each man swore allegiance to the person of his lord. Now William was making loyalty to the nation, in the form of the crown, supercede loyalty to the individual person of a lord. The earls were very independent before, almost as powerful as the King. Union wasn't known at all. William thus united England under his crown: all Earls had to swear their loyalty. If they didn't, they lost their lands to Norman barons.

Government

Now England's ties lay with France, rather than Scandinavia, as it had been before. England became European. As a system of government, the English is the oldest in the world (discounting possibly the Vatican). William's insistence on everyone pledging allegiance to the king, rather than to his immediate liege lord, was probably the main thing that saved that system of government from

the disintegration that occurred elsewhere throughout the medieval world.

With William, it was also the beginning of a new dynasty, which lasts until today. All the English Kings and Queens, every King Henry, the Queens Elizabeth and Victoria, are all descendants of William the Conqueror and his wife Matilda, including the present Queen Elizabeth II and her son Prince Charles.

Laws

New structures of government, laws and taxation regimes were now established in England. However, William also adopted or adapted many Saxon laws and structures of government, thereby maintaining continuity of life. Laws were strict and offered protection. No woman or unarmed man needed to fear anything under William's reign. His soldiers were commanded to act absolutely righteously. William was rigorous: Odo of Bayeux, William's half-brother and most trusted advisor, had been left in control of England while William was in Normandy. In 1082 William heard complaints about Odo's behavior. He returned to England and Odo was arrested and charged with misgovernment and oppression. Found guilty he was kept in prison for the next five years.

Church

Anglo-Saxon churchmen were replaced gradually by Normans. William chose well educated men of good character. Under the administration of Lanfranc (who was Sri Yukteswar, Yogananda revealed), now Archbishop of Canterbury, new monasteries were founded, while rules and discipline were enforced more stringently. Church and lay justice were separated; the bishops were given their own courts, allowing common law to evolve independently. William retained the right to appoint bishops and impeach abbots. He used these churchmen as his major administrators, for they were by far the best educated members of society.

"Landscape" of England

Castles were brought to Britain by William the Conqueror. They weren't known in England before him, who now built them everywhere, as strategic points to ensure his control. The castles were given to Norman barons to hold for the king. William also built the Windsor Castle. Today, as one of the Queen's official residences, Windsor Castle still plays a formal role in State and official occasions. The famous Tower of London ('White Tower') was built by William: For over 900 years the Tower has dominated the city of London and today is still one of the capital's most prominent landmarks and a world famous visitor attraction. SRF monks, when visiting London, at times enjoy a visit of the White Tower. It is indeed special to tune into the Master in this way. The most attractive place there is a round chapel where William used to pray.

The Domesday Book

The thing for which William is best remembered, aside from winning the battle of Hastings and making England a European kingdom, is the Domesday Book. The Domesday Book was, in effect, the first national census: William was an innovator! It was a royal survey of all England for administration and tax purposes. William needed proper records so that his new, efficient Norman bureaucracy could do its job, especially when it came to collecting all the revenues due to the crown. Inspectors were sent into every part of England to note the size, ownership, and resources of each hide of land. For the times the Domesday Book represented an amazing accomplishment. It also left exact records behind which give historians a lot of data about Norman English life.

Below is an assessment of William the Conqueror from the famous Anglo-Saxon Chronicle (a collection of annals, written in old English, narrating the history of the Anglo-Saxons, written late in the 9th century and updated until 1154.) It was written by monks in monasteries and abbeys, and describes William both in a positive and a negative light. Interestingly, even though it was written by the English, right during the time when they were being the

"victims" under Norman rule, it still gives a more positive assessment about William than what most history books offer us today:

"If anyone would know what manner of man King William was, the glory that he obtained, and of how many lands he was lord, then will we describe him as we have known him, we who had looked upon him and who once lived at his court. This King William...was a very wise and great man, and more honored and more powerful than any of his predecessors. He was mild to those good men who loved God, but severe beyond measure to those who withheld his will. He founded a noble monastery [Battle Abbey] on the spot where God permitted him to conquer England, and he established monks in it, and he made it very rich. In his days the great monastery at Canterbury was built, and many others also throughout England; moreover, this land was filled with monks who lived after the rule of St. Benedict; and such was the state of religion in his days that all who would, might observe that which was prescribed by their respective orders.

King William was also held in much reverence. He wore his crown three times every year when he was in England: at Easter he wore it at Winchester, at Pentecost at Westminster, and at Christmas at Gloucester. And at these times all the men of England were with him, archbishops, bishops, abbots and earls, thanes and knights. So also was he a very stern and wrathful man, so that none durst do anything against his will, and he kept in prison those earls who acted against his pleasure. He removed bishops from their sees and abbots from their offices, and he imprisoned thanes, and at length he spared not his own [half-]brother Odo. This Odo was a very powerful bishop in Normandy. His see was that of Bayeux, and he was foremost to serve the king. He had an earldom in England, and when William was in Normandy he [Odo] was the first man in this country, and him did William cast into prison.

Amongst other things, the good order that William established is not to be forgotten. It was such that any man...might travel over the kingdom with a bosom full of gold unmolested; and no man durst kill another, however great the injury he might have received from

him. He reigned over England, and being sharp-sighted to his own interest, he surveyed the kingdom so thoroughly that there was not a single hide of land throughout the whole of which he knew not the possessor, and how much it was worth, and this he afterward entered in his register. The land of the Britons [Wales] was under his sway, and he built castles therein; moreover he had full dominion over the Isle of Man; Scotland was also subject to him...; the land of Normandy was his by inheritance, and he possessed the earldom of Maine, and had he lived two years longer, he would have subdued Ireland by his prowess, and that without a battle.

Truely there was much trouble in these times, and very great distress. He caused castles to be built and oppressed the poor. The king was also of great sternness, and he took from his subjects many marks of gold, and many hundred pounds of silver, and this, either with or without right, and with little need. He was given to avarice and greedily loved gain. He made large forests for the deer, and enacted laws therewith, so that whoever killed a hart or a hind should be blinded. As he forbade killing the deer, so also the boars; and he loved the tall stags as if he were their father. He also commanded concerning the hares, that they should go free. The rich complained and the poor murmured, but he was so sturdy that he took no notice of them; they must will all that the king willed, if they would live, or keep their lands,...or be maintained in their rights. Alas that any man should so exalt himself.... We have written concerning him these things, both good and bad, that virtuous men may follow after the good, and wholly avoid the evil, and may go in the way that leadeth to the kingdom of heaven."

The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle also says: "His anxiety for money is the *only* thing on which he can deservedly be blamed; . . .he would say and do some things and indeed almost anything . . .where the hope of money allured him."

In a nutshell, the Chronicle is saying: William was wise, powerful, great, held in reference, and established safety and order in a dangerous time. But on the other hand he was avaricious,

oppressive, wrathful, and made people suffer by taking too much from them.

History in those days was written by monks in their monasteries. They of course have a rather monkish view of life. How can they, from that perspective, understand what it takes to rule? Kings and queens have to act in ways that would be wholly different from the way of the monk or the scholar, which is why the latter don't often have the karma to be kings or queens.

Modern historians too write of William's avarice. But they are historians, not men or women whose role it is to rule. They cannot understand from experience how necessary it is for a strong country to have revenues. There is nothing in William's personal life to indicate an avaricious nature. Rather, he was extraordinary self-controlled—austrere, even.

Now let's look on the other side of the Channel, and let's hear what the monks of Normandy had to say about William. Two contemporary descriptions of men who knew William have survived. One of these was written shortly after his death by a monk at Caen (from Douglas' book):

"The king excelled in wisdom all the princes of his generation, and among them all he was outstanding in the largeness of his soul. He never allowed himself to be deterred from prosecution of any enterprise because of the labor it entailed, and he was ever undaunted by danger. So skilled was he in his appraisal of the true significance of any event, that he was able to cope with adversity, and to take full advantage in prosperous times of the fickle promises of fortune. He was great in body and strong, tall in stature but not ungainly. He was also temperate in eating and drinking. Especially was he moderate in drinking, for he abhorred drunkenness in all men, and disdained it more particularly in himself and at his court. He was so sparing in his use of wine and other drink that after his meal he rarely drank more than thrice. In speech he was fluent and persuasive, being skilled at all times in

making known his will. If his voice was harsh, what he said was always suited to the occasion. He followed the Christian discipline in which he had been brought up as a child, and whenever his health permitted he regularly and with great piety attended Christian worship each morning and evening, and at the celebration of mass."

William was famously abstemious in food and drink and he particularly abhorred drunkenness. He was a man of known self-control, also concerning women. Regarding his corpulence in his later years, we must consider the possibility of a medical condition which contributed to it. This possibility makes far more sense than concluding that William suddenly changed the habits of a lifetime, by starting to eat without being able to control himself.

William also furthered art and music. Normandy was the site of several important developments in the history of Western music in the eleventh century. Yogananda recounts an interesting detail: "So many experiences I recall from other times! Although I had never learned anything about music in this life, I have played many Indian instruments and have been told I would make a fine musician. This aptitude is a result of knowledge carried over from the past."

William of Malmesbury (an English contemporary historian and monk, who considered history a branch of moral philosophy) wrote in his "Historia Anglorum":

"He was of just stature, ordinary corpulence, fierce countenance; his forehead was bare of hair; of such great strength of arm that it was often a matter of surprise, that no one was able to draw his bow, which himself could bend when his horse was in full gallop; he was majestic whether sitting or standing, although the protuberance of his belly deformed his royal person; of excellent health so that he was never confined with any dangerous disorder, except at the last."

The best text to study, if we want to understand William (from our point of view) is William Jumieges (who wrote "Gesta Normannorum Ducum") and William of Poitiers (who wrote "Gesta Guillelmi II Ducis Normannorum"), two close companions and biographers of William. Their texts are usually discredited as being exaggerated and as being merely Norman propaganda. But for us it is more reasonable to think that even these "disciples" didn't even fully grasp the greatness of William the Conqueror. He was even more, beyond their words of praise and admiration. In fact, few disciples fully understand their master, even if they are 100% devout and loyal.

William the Conqueror surrounded himself with the most saintly souls of his time. It seems to have been a time when saints descended: Lanfranc, St. Anselm, St. Osmund, who was ordained William's royal chaplain. Would any low-consciousness king seek the company of saints?

The story of meeting between Guru and disciple, Lanfranc and William, is a fun one, and can be found in the internet (find the right pages!). In this life, when Yogananda met Sri Yukteswar, he knew (*Autobiography of a Yogi*): "This was not the first sun to find me at these holy feet!"

William was a highly religious man. He started what Douglas call an "extraordinary ecclesiastical revival" in Normandy and England, achieved side by side with Archbishop Lanfranc (Sri Yukteswar). Another great player in the team was the famous St. Anselm, disciple of Lanfranc. William built countless monasteries and churches in Normandy and England. Religious life flourished. Building monasteries almost became a fashion with the barons. Douglas writes about this "ecclesiastical revival" as being almost as important as the political achievements of Duke William. Concerning building, Yogananda once said: "From childhood I was interested in creating buildings. My first attempt at construction in this life was the renovation of a little mud hut in Calcutta when I was a young boy. This interest was prominent

because I had done much building during my incarnation in England."

The famous "Simple Prayer" of St. Francis (also called "The Prayer of Saint Francis", or "Peace Prayer"), by the way, was actually not authored by St. Francis, but by William the Conqueror, or by one of his bishops, maybe even by Lanfranc. The earliest version of it has been found in William's breviary. (See book by the Franciscan priest Albert Haase, "INSTRUMENTS OF CHRIST, Reflections on the Peace Prayer of Saint Francis of Assisi"). After that, the prayer completely disappeared, and surfaced only in 1912, in Assisi. (How? Nobody knows).

Was William cruel, as texts always teach? On the surface it certainly seems so. Douglas writes puzzled that William remains "something of an enigma," because these cruel sides (which in truth were, as he himself states, strategic measures) are clearly balanced with William's obvious positive sides, such as generosity, being affectionate and inspire it in others, sincerity in piety, and being surprisingly lenient to dangerous opponents who came into his power. Douglas concludes that in William "there was an element of paradox." Was there? He was God's instrument. It must be remembered that God sends not only gentle sunshine on the earth, but also purifying storms and floods.

William, as we said, didn't have the choice to be sweet and mild. These were tough and dangerous times. From early youth William's life was fraught with danger, because of envy and opposition, even from within his own Duchy of Normandy. Imagine: he, an illegitimate child, became the duke when he was only eight years old. Of course some barons, hoping for their own power and glory, deeply resented him, and repeatedly tried to kill him. William had to struggle for survival. Three of his guardians were murdered and his relatives had to keep him hidden. Later, the King of France and others challenged him, his life, his Duchy; and still later, after having conquered England, William faced rebellion after rebellion. In the end he was attacked even by his own son,

Robert, who wanted Normandy for himself. Again: sweet smiles would only have killed William. In these dark medieval times being a king excluded ahimsa (non-violence) and demanded an iron hand.

Still: in an age where it was common practice to execute one's enemies, the only time William actually ordered the death penalty was once, for treachery (which Yogananda also in this life called the "greatest sin".) Doesn't this fact alone speak volumes about his "cruelty"? Which other king behaved like this, in those days?

William actually legally abolished capital punishment (imagine: in that medieval time)! His law established: "I also forbid that anyone shall be slain or hanged for any fault, but let his eyes be put out and let him be castrated." The punishment sounds crude and cruel to modern ears, of course, but for those dark times it was probably revolutionary— and convicted criminals were must have been grateful to hang on to life.

William also legally put an end to slavery, which had still been practiced in Saxon England. His laws forbade it. Another fact which speaks volumes about his character. He was a man of dharma, of principles, of righteousness, and absolutely strict in making sure it would be followed.

The sheer energy and one-pointed determination of William scarcely need comment. Throughout his life, he responded to one crisis after another, forever jumping into action. His energy was extraordinary, to say the least. Yogananda too, was a man of energy without end. His "conquest" was the Western world, where he too never stopped until victory was achieved.

How history can become a lie! Even today news in the media may well be distorted. Hearing once one of the horrifying stories which are being told about William, Yogananda exclaimed: "How they distort history! That's not at all what happened!"

In French historic sources, in fact, William described not only an extremely powerful, courageous and intelligent person, but also a patron of the arts, a wise leader, and a truly great man.

William of Jumieges wrote: “He was strong in body and tall in stature. He was moderate in drinking, for he deplored drunkenness in all men. In speech he was fluent and persuasive, being skilled at all times in making clear his will. He followed the Christian discipline in which he had been brought up from childhood, and whenever his health permitted he regularly attended Christian worship each morning and at the celebration of mass.” If we were able to look into William's soul, we would see nothing but the shining light of God.

William the Conqueror was a man of generous character, was highly self-disciplined, forgiving, protected his people, and demanded virtue from his soldiers. In an unchaste age, he was completely faithful to his wife Matilda. This self-control certainly speaks for itself, and was not often found often amongst kings – mistresses were common in those days. Orderic Vitalis speaks with reverence of those “wise and eloquent men who for many years lived at King William's court.”

William and Matilda were known to be deeply devoted to each other, leading a happy marriage. (that too sings a song about William's nature). Their harmony was not because she was a meek little sheep before him (though her body was very small). She, the Queen of England, was quite strong-willed, and is known to have opposed William at least once. She was the mediator between William and his son Robert, when the two clashed. William and Matilda's love and devotion to each other is testified in their letters to each other, which still exist. William bestowed power on Matilda, as it was unheard of in his days, when women could never be rulers. Matilda ruled Normandy whenever William was in England. William the Conqueror was more than modern for his times.

Yes, William was a man of enormous power, strength, courage, with an iron fist; but does that alone describe him? It doesn't. William had a deeply loving side, he cared for people; and had an extremely devotional heart. How could it be otherwise if later he became Yogananda? Similarly: just describing Yogananda as being only sweet doesn't present the whole picture. Yogananda had also the other side of the coin: incredible power.

When Matilda died, the distraught William built a marvelous bejeweled memorial over her tomb in Caen.

William and Matilda are generally said to have had 10 children, 4 sons and 6 daughters; no illegitimate children are known. (By the way: all daughters and most sons were very religious children.) They were:

- Robert Curthose, 1052/4–1134: Duke of Normandy after William; he was the most troublesome of the children, who even betrayed him, and fought against him.
- Richard: born 1054; he was killed in a hunting accident in 1075?
- Adelaide (or Adeliza, or Alice), c. 1055–?; died a virgin
- Cecilia (or Cecily), c. 1056–1126, abbess of Holy Trinity, Caen
- William “Rufus,” 1056–1100, King of England after William's death
- Matilda
- Adela, c. 1062–1138
- Agatha, c. 1064–c. 1080
- Constance, c. 1066–1090
- Henry “Beauchlerk,” 1068–1135, William's youngest son, who later became King Henry I, the king of England and Duke of Normandy .

One possible reason why Yogananda came as William might be the training of his disciples, who had lessons to learn in the rounding out of their characters for their spiritual development. In fact, many of his disciples were with him in that lifetime as William, as Yogananda said.

About Agatha

Agatha is mentioned by the historian Orderic Vitalis, who states that she was betrothed successively to Harold of England (who broke that promise), and later to Alphonso VI, King of Galicia and Leon, Spain, who had asked William for a daughter. But Agatha is reported to have died a virgin- the marriage not being consummated. She must have been only about 16 years old, if recorded history can be trusted. She was buried in the Bayeaux Cathedral, Bayeaux, Normandy, France. Interestingly, Yogananda told Daya Mata that she had been Agatha, and that he had indeed sent her to become the Queen of Spain. But Agatha was intensely monastic by nature, and desperately desired to “marry God alone.” (Story told by Daya herself). She arrived on ship in the Port of Spain, and they discovered her dead in her cabin: she had died praying on her knees, for her release from that ordeal. Her knees must have suffered extremely. So much so, as Daya relates, that the influence carried over into this life, in which she suffers from knee problems. Again Yogananda placed that inward soul into a position of great outer responsibility. This time, however, Daya shouldered her enormous task, though she has often called it, understandably, “a burden.”

Her former lifetime lingered with her, of course. Daya had definitively a regal quality about her. Fittingly (karmically speaking), for her 50 year anniversary of service she was even given a crown by the SRF monks and nuns,. Also outwardly, to the consternation of some, she is known to travel in a queenly car and live in quite a queenly house. Her older sister, Ananda Mata, is said to have had that noble quality around her as well. Was Ananda Mata, then, maybe a daughter of William too? Was she maybe Daya’s older daughter, Cecilia, who, as it is written, was the abbess of “Holy Trinity,” in Caen?

About Henry

At William’s deathbed, his youngest son Henry, who was to inherit only money, asked him: “But how shall I use this inherited money,

with no land on which to spend it?" William pronounced these famous words of prophecy: "Be at peace, for you will end up owning what both your brothers now have." His prophecy came true, since Henry later ruled over both England and Normandy, successfully carrying on what his father had started. William had obviously deeper than usual vision.

Swami Kriyananda writes about his inner perception to have been King Henry. Kriyananda too emanates a regal aura. He and Daya both said they felt like brother and sister. "I feel you have been close to Master in other lives," Daya told him, too.

Once these two noble children were quite close: side by side at Yogananda's feet; then working together as the SRF president and vice-president; traveling for months through India together; and later fighting a lot, as brothers and sisters often do.

Henry, as William had prophesized, had a great role to play for his father (and is of course not treated much better than William by many historians). Similarly, Yogananda told Kriyananda repeatedly, "You have a great work to do."

About Robert Curthose, Duke of Normandy after William

Dhirananda was, as Yogananda stated, William's oldest son, Robert Curthose. William was deeply upset and saddened by his beloved son's betrayal, who had left him and united with the enemy. Robert himself wanted to be the Duke of Normandy, but William refused him. They eventually fought, and William actually was wounded by Robert in battle. Later William and Robert reconciled, and William left Normandy in Robert's care, after his death. But Robert ruled quite badly- even his father's work was at stake. Orderic Vitalis wrote: "Wishing to please everybody, [Robert] was too ready to accede light-heartedly to any request." Nobody judged him a good ruler. Once Henry became King of England, Robert never accepted him as such (since he was William's firstborn son), and fought Henry, but lost. Henry, to make sure Robert wouldn't continue to create ever more troubles,

put him in jail for the rest of his life. However, he treated Robert "generously, and with honor." His brother lived, as historians now write, "in considerable luxury."

Dhirananda in this life again betrayed Yogananda, left him, fought against him in the courts. Karma repeats itself, until we stop it.

About William "Rufus," King of England after William

He is said to have been a somewhat rough man, but ever loyal to his father. He too suffered much under the British historian's pen, but has recently been described in a better light. He died hunting, and historians of course have speculated that the accident was in reality Henry's greedy plot to obtain the throne- a theory which by now has been quite disproved. In Yogananda's lifetime William Rufus was a certain Mr. Vickerman, a businessman and devoted follower of Yogananda, who lived in New York. He was a highly advanced spiritual person, not part of SRF. Usually history describes Rufus as an anti-religious ruler. In fact, he was only "anti-churchianity".

The "giant"

Yogananda told his disciple Norman Paulson that he too was present back then: "You were my giant." Norman has a large body in this lifetime, too. Norman recounts: "In later years Yogananda revealed to me why he called me his "giant returned." Norman recounts: "I experienced in a vision the Battle of Hastings as King William conquered England. I was beside him in this battle, and was of such stature I could look him straight in the eyes while standing beside him as he sat astride his horse. I carried a gigantic battle axe which in effect allowed no harm to come to his person (Paulsen, 1984)."

Another warrior

To Jerry Torgerson Yogananda said, "You were good: You used to fight for me."

The linguist

Was Tara Mata around in William's times as well? It sounds like it, since she said, "Even as William, Yogananda never mastered the English language."

By the way: for those who would like to make a pilgrimage to Normandy, and walk in the footsteps of Yogananda as William, here is a perfect travel book (e-book): *Walking with William of Normandy*, www.crystarpress.com

Another "by the way": Omar Khayyam from Persia was a contemporary of William the Conqueror. He lived from 1048-1131, was a mathematician, astronomer, and later became famous through his poetry. Most of all he was a Self-realized seer, as Yogananda said, and "so grossly misunderstood," just as William. Yogananda in this life wrote commentaries on Omar's poems. Were the Omar and William connected, somehow?

A third "by the way:" a much more sophisticated and in-depth book about William as an incarnation of Yogananda, and of Henry I as an incarnation of Kriyananda, is Catherine Kairavi's *Two Souls, Four Lives* (Crystal Clarity Publishers).

Here is a difficult question: why would God want William, an avatar, to conquer England? What was the divine plan behind it? Isn't it absolutely puzzling?

The answer is simply, God alone knows: "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." (Bible)

But the human mind longs to understand, and tries to come up with a sensible answer. A possible answer, therefore, could be: William united England, a country that had never known unity before, and created in it a power and a union which were never again destroyed. Eventually, England helped to unite the world: it colonized America in the West, and colonized India in the East.

Both these actions, of course, were in itself not always praiseworthy, but they set the stage for the world's future: America and India, Yogananda prophesied, will together lead the nations in Dwapara Yuga. England's eventual unifying effect is also obvious if one observes the spread of the English language, which is becoming the language of the world, unifying all countries.

Or another answer would be:

The union in England which William created was only the outer platform for the real work which was happening: the religious reformation of that time. This religious reformation and revival was enormous, that's for sure. (If it was positive or not is still debated amongst some scholars.) Christianity flourished (see Douglas). Was William's life maybe indeed "one of the crucial steps in the building of Christendom", as author Hilaire Belloc explains in his book *William the Conqueror*? Yogananda, as we shall see later, also saved Christianity in Spain from the Moors. In this life as Yogananda he tried to save Christianity from "being crucified," teaching "original Christianity." Might he be a hidden knight for Jesus and Christianity?

About the end of the divine drama:

In 1087, while on another "campaign" in Normandy, William was violently thrown against his saddle, suffering inner injuries, which couldn't be healed. He was brought to Rouen, and lingered for six more weeks.

Now what about the famous death-bed confession of William? What shall we make of it? He is recorded to have said at the end of his life (recorded by Orderic Vitalis): "I tremble my friends, when I reflect on the grievous sins which burden my conscience, and now, about to be summoned before the awful tribunal of God, I know not what I ought to do. I was bred to arms from my childhood, and am stained from the rivers of blood I have shed... It is out of my power to count all the injuries which I have caused during the sixty-four years of my troubled life."

For one, as Douglas writes, "The scene may have been over-colored by later writers, for the purpose of edification."

Secondly, it certainly was a hard life for Yogananda/William. He had a mission to fulfill, ordained by God. William's acts were the tough price he had to pay for accepting this mission. His human heart might indeed have cried and repented, even though he knew that he had done the will of God.

Third: Yes, maybe at his death-bed his human side lamented, just as Christ, in his human side, was able to cry at the door of death: "Father, why hast Thou forsaken me?" Or Joan of Arc, the French saint and heroine, said during her last confession that she had been selfish and cruel. Was she really? It looks as if the last moment is a difficult one even for saints, because the human side surfaces. Even Sri Yukteswar, the lion of wisdom, was not free from it. When he faced his end, "for a moment, Master trembled like a frightened child" (*Autobiography of a Yogi*). Also Lahiri Mahasaya "trembled as though touched by a lightning current" (*Autobiography of a Yogi*), when he heard that he would soon leave the body. There is something very human to this moment, it seems, even for the great ones.

William the Conqueror finally realized that his death was imminent. Orderic Vitalis reports: "The wise king ordered all his treasures to be distributed among the churches and the poor." Those who don't like him interpret it as an act of repentance. Others see it as part of William's generous character.

William passed on in a beautiful way, as only a saint can. The night before, as Orderic Vitalis recounts, William passed "in great tranquility." His incarnation ended in the early morning, on September 9, 1087, at Rouen. His was a Mahasamadhi, a merging in AUM. The bells of church were ringing. William turned his eyes and hands prayerfully toward heaven, invoking Mother Mary and Jesus Christ. At that moment he consciously left his body. One

more task for God had been fulfilled. William, incidentally, passed on at the age of 59, just as Yogananda.

A group of the king's closest friends gathered after his death to share both their grief and their reverence, for the leader and the friend they had lost. All spoke of his generosity, affability and greatness of spirit (see Douglas). Many of these intimate associates of the Conqueror's, not surprisingly, entered monasteries after his death, for the remainder of their lives. They were yogis, disciples, aspiring saints, and companions of lifetimes. Others aided William's sons in manifesting the vision he had for the Anglo-Norman kingdom. In this lifetime, again, Yogananda had disciples who were mostly monastic, and others who put most of their energies in his outer mission.

On the very day of William's death a surprising incident happened far away: some Normans living in Rome and in Calabria affirmed to have mysteriously known about William's passing. Did William appear to them, just as Yogananda appeared in flesh and blood to his disciples?

William's body was buried in Caen, in the Church of St. Stephan. What about the story of his body emanating a terrible stench, because it was injured when put forcibly into the stone coffin, so that the service had to be finished hurriedly? The account is given exclusively by Orderic Vitalis, and seems an unlikely story, given the account that now follows, concerning William's body.

This is a fascinating fact which can't be found in any British history book— again one has to go to French historians. One of the best researched books is *William the Conqueror*, by Michel de Boüard, a highly respected professor, author, and historian of medieval Europe. The following information is taken from his book, and can be verified:

In 1522, 435 years after William's passing, the official historiographer of Caen, Charles de Bras, records the following

historic incident: a cardinal, an archbishop, and a bishop came from Rome. They were obviously coming with a special mission, the nature of which is unknown. They were welcomed by the abbot Pietro di Martigny, and asked him to open the coffin of William the Conqueror: the body of William was found in a state of perfect incorruption,

One is wonderstruck. William, as Yogananda, left behind an incorrupt body. Both left the world this miraculous sign of their saintly soul, like a "heavenly signature."

Of course materialistic minds try to explain such phenomena with special embalming methods. But William's funeral was actually a hasty, somewhat chaotic affair, without extra-special treatments. And other Kings, treated doubtlessly with the best balms, weren't kept incorrupt. William is a definitive exception.

As a sidelight: when William the Conqueror's body was found incorrupt, as Michel de Boüard writes, immediately an artist was called who made a spontaneous painting on wood of William's likeness. In the years afterwards many paintings of William were made, probably all based on that artist's sketch.

Over the ensuing centuries William's tomb was twice desecrated by French rebels – by Huguenots (1562) and Revolutionaries (1793), so today only a thighbone is left. In 1983 scientists determined by the thighbone that William was indeed a tall and sturdy man, especially for that age (people were much smaller back then. If you see the knight's armors from those days, they seem to belong to children). William's burial place today is marked by a simple stone slab.

By the way: Edward of England, the King who had promised the English throne to William, knew William well, and was actually his half-uncle. As it happened, Edward had lived for 25 years in Normandy, (1016-41; William was Duke of Normandy from 1035) in exile, since the Danish Viking king Canute the Great (Cnut) had

conquered England. Edward (called "the Confessor") was an extremely religious man. In 1102, 36 years after his death, his tomb was opened and it was found that his body too was incorrupt! Miracles happened there. King Edward was canonized in 1161 by Pope Innocent II, and became England's patron saint until he was "toppled" by St George.

William the Conqueror and king Edward, then, were "twin incorrupts." Playing the drama of kingly lives, they seemed to have helped each other. One wonders if they had come down on earth together, as old friends.

King Edward, interestingly, began a divine tradition, generally known but little understood. He, with his kingly touch, was able to heal people from scrofula. William the Conqueror received that healing power, which was then handed down through many generations of kings and queens. God probably smiles at the "expert" historians, who scratch their heads with these unscientific (but recorded) occurrences, as they are able to see only the surface, but not His secret divine workings.

A contemporary of Shakespeare, called John Hayward, a well-known historian, wrote in 1613 about William: "Verily, he was a very great prince: full of hope to undertake great enterprises, full of courage to achieve them: in most of his actions commendable, and excusable in all. And this was not the least piece of his Honor, that the kings of England which succeeded, did accompt their order only from him: not in regard of his victory in England, but generally in respect of his virtue and valour."

But even John Hayward, who called William the Conqueror "a great prince", did of course not understand the great God who was acting in and through William. That vision is difficult to achieve, especially in the case of William the Conqueror.

LANGUAGE 6

Old Spanish (Castilian)



Old Spanish must have been in the mental mix of Yogananda's remembered languages!

According to Swami Kriyananda's book "Conversations with Yogananda," Yogananda said that centuries ago he had been a military commander in Spain, to liberate the country from the Moors (African Muslim people, of Arab descent), to protect Christianity. (The famous El Cid might immediately spring to mind— but that's hardly possible, since he lived at the same time as William the Conqueror.)

The Moors conquered the Iberian peninsula in the 8th century. Their presence there lasted more than five centuries, until they were driven out of most of Spain in the 13th century. Toledo was conquered in 1212, then Cordoba in 1236— and by about 1250 the Moors only held the city of Granada in the very southernmost part of Spain.

Studying who was responsible for driving them out, one is intrigued to find out that it was the combined work of Alfonso VIII of Castile, and his grandson, who was a rare King-Saint: Ferdinand III of Leon and Castille, called "Fernando El Santo." (Not to be confused by the much more famous Ferdinand II, "the Catholic,"

who also fought and won against the Moors in their last stronghold in Granada, in the 15th century, and supported Christopher Columbus, but unfortunately also initiated the Spanish inquisition.)

As a historical sidelight: Alfonso VIII married Eleanor, the daughter of Eleanor of Aquitane and Henry II of England. Thus, Eleanor was William the Conqueror's great great granddaughter. Alfonso VIII's daughter Berenguela was the mother of Ferdinand III. In short: Ferdinand III was a direct descendant of William the Conqueror!

When Berenguela's brother Henry died in 1217, she renounced her rights to the throne, in favor of her son Ferdinand III. Ferdinand III thus basically succeeded his grandfather Alfonso VIII, and victoriously continued his battle against the Moors.

King Ferdinand III (1198–1252) was a saint indeed. Many miracles have taken place at his tomb, and pope Clement X canonized him in 1671. As William, he was a conqueror: Through his victory over the Moors, he completed the reconquest of Spain.

Now we come to the most striking fact: Ferdinand III's body is officially said to have remained incorrupt, still today, and can be visited in Seville. At this point one gets highly suspicious: not only that Yogananda may indeed have been King Ferdinand III, but... is an incorrupt body his heavenly signature for his lives on earth? Can it be something like his secret code?

A further study of Back to King Ferdinand's life reveals many astounding similarities to William the Conqueror. Here are a few facts of his life:

- In 1217, at age 18, Ferdinand became King of Castile (central independent Spanish Kingdom. Spain back then consisted of several kingdoms). In 1230 he succeeded to the crown of Leon (a northern kingdom), uniting the two kingdoms. “Union,” incidentally, might be a general key word for Yogananda’s

mission, in the outer and inner sense (“Yoga”). As Arjuna, he united India. As William, he united England. As Ferdinand III, he united Spain. As Yogananda he united religions, and united souls with God.

- He took as his counselors the wisest men in the State. (William too had the wisest men as his closest friends. Lanfranc is said to have been the wisest man of his time. St.Anselm is said to have been very wise, too.)
- A stern judge when it came to the law, he was gentle and forgiving in his personal life. (William was very strict as well when it came to law, and extremely generous in his private life.)
- He took the greatest care not to overburden his subjects with taxation. (William too took genuinely care of his people.)
- Following his mother’s advice, Ferdinand, in 1219, married Beatrice, the daughter of Philip of Swabia, King of Germany, one of the most virtuous princesses of her time!
- God blessed this union with ten children: seven sons and three daughters. (William too had ten!)
- The highest aims of Ferdinand’s life were the propagation of the Christian faith and the liberation of Spain from the Moor’s yoke. He was victorious, and took away from them all territories, excepting Granada, whose king nevertheless did homage to Ferdinand.
- He united Spain through his conquests. (Just as William united England.)
- In the most important towns he founded bishoprics, reestablished Catholic worship everywhere, built churches, founded monasteries, and endowed hospitals. (William too built many monasteries and churches.)
- He watched over the conduct of his soldiers, confiding more in their virtue than in their valor. (William had done exactly the same.)
- He fasted strictly. (William too was a man of strict self-control.)
- He wore a rough hairshirt, and often spent his nights in prayer, especially before battles. (William too prayed much, especially before battles.) Amid the tumult of the camp he lived like a religious in the cloister.

- Christianity and the happiness of his people were the two guiding motives of his life.
- He reformed Spanish law, and compiled it into a form used for centuries after. (Just like William.) He was an excellent administrator and just ruler, often pardoning those who worked against the crown. (Again, like William.)
- He strove always to use his power to better his people and his nation. (As did William.)
- He founded the University of Salamanca, the Athens of Spain.
- Ferdinand's firstborn son became king Alfonso X, "El Sabio," the Learned, or the Wise, whose court was a center of culture. He furthered astronomy, and established the form of modern Spanish. He also wrote 400 pieces of music. Swami Kriyananda went to Seville in 2010, visiting Fernando's incorrupt body, and was certain that it was Yogananda. His role back then might have been Alfonso X.

Together with Ferdinand III a band of saints seem to have descended from the heavens onto earth:

Ferdinand's sister *Blanche* (canonized as well) would become the mother of St. Louis IX of France (1214-1270), who is said to have been the greatest saint among European Kings ever, and the only canonized King of France. It is indeed fun to study his inspiring life: he, the King, washed the feet of the poor during Easter; he fed the needy *daily*; and with his own hands he served pilgrims a good lunch. After his death miracles happened at his tomb: just as it was the case with his uncle Ferdinand III.

During Ferdinand's lifetime other great saints were busy on the earthly stage: St. Francis of Assisi (founder of the Franciscan order); St. Anthony of Padua; St. Dominic (founder of the Dominican order); St. Thomas Aquinas.

Ferdinand felt close to these saints and their activities: he was a devout member of the Third Order of St. Francis, which had just been newly founded. He was buried in the great cathedral of

Seville before the image of the Blessed Virgin, clothed, at his own request, in the habit of the Third Order.

The question is: did little Mukunda hear Ferdinand's saintly voice in his inner ear?

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## LANGUAGE 7

### Standard Spanish



Did an older version of standard Spanish language ring in young Yogananda's mind? He said to some disciples: "I have been, amongst other things, a ruler, a poet, a warrior, and a hermit (many times)."

His many lives as a hermit will hardly become known. But the poet? Who was that poet? Poetry came easily to Yogananda, he said, because of that former lifetime. He wrote exquisite mystical poetry.

Many disciples have fancied that Yogananda was the king of poets, William Shakespeare, since he recommended reading a few lines of his works every day. In his original Gita-commentaries he even named Shakespeare together with Christ and Krishna, all being "great luminaries."

Kamala, in "A Flawless Mirror" writes about a memorable evening with Yogananda, at their family home in Santa Barbara. Yogananda surprised everyone with a spontaneous dramatic portrayal of Anthony's famous oration in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, from flawless memory! Where did that memory come from? Yogananda certainly wasn't a book-learner.

The Master (as writes Swami Kriyananda) once told Dr. Lewis that his wife Mrs. Lewis, in a former life, had been Queen Elizabeth I, of England (1533-1603), a contemporary of Shakespeare (1564-1616). This could be seen as a slight hint that others might have been around at that time: Dr. Lewis, and therefore maybe Yogananda.

However, we are taking a different route here (it's all just for fun anyway, and quite un-provable!): Following the suspicion that Yogananda left as his personal "heavenly signature" his incorrupt bodies, we are lead to the famous mystical poet, St. John of the Cross (1542-1591), whose body is still incorrupt. St. John is, of course, one of the greatest figures in mystical Christianity and was incidentally a contemporary of Shakespeare.

When St John of the Cross (Juan de Ypres y Alvarez) died, he was buried in a vault beneath the floor of a church. When the tomb was opened, nine months later, the body was fresh and intact; and when a finger was amputated to be used as a relic, the body bled as a living person would have done. When the tomb was opened for a second time nine months later, the body was still fresh, despite the fact that it had been covered with a layer of quicklime. At further exhumations in 1859 and 1909, the body was found to be still fresh. The last exhumation was in 1955, when the body – after nearly 400 years – was still "moist and flexible," although the skin "was slightly discolored."

St. John was the advisor and confessor of St. Teresa of Avila, who later became, as it is assumed by many disciples of Yogananda, Sister Gyanamata.

In her book, *God Alone*, Gyanamata describes how someone had seen her in another (apparently saintly) incarnation. Is that how her Teresa-legend grew? Yogananda did say: "Gyanamata has Teresa's characteristics." And he also described St. Teresa as being "of our line."

Teresa died in 1582. Her body, amazingly, is preserved incorrupt too. Again, do we see “twin incorrupts?” Do we see here a heavenly play of divine love? Teresa’s body was exhumed several times after her death, and each time found sweet-smelling, firm, and incorrupt. Her heart, hands, right foot, right arm, left eye and part of her jaw are on display in various sites around the world. St. Teresa’s incorrupt heart and arm are enshrined and displayed at the Carmelite convent in the town of Alba de Tormes.

Yogananda said about Teresa: “After 25 years of suffering, the angels thrust a breath of fire in her heart and St. Teresa said, ‘It seemed I couldn’t endure it and then suddenly I saw Him.’ That is the eternal romance. That is the wave becoming the ocean. The body of Christ became the ocean of Oneness which Teresa felt.” Gyanamata, as Yogananda said, had attained Nirbikalpa samadhi in her previous lifetime. Was that the moment?

St. John was much younger than Teresa (by 27 years), just as Yogananda was much younger than Gyananmata (by 24 years). St. John’s ministry included guiding Teresa herself. He became her director and confessor. She referred to him in a letter as a “divine and heavenly man.” On Nov. 18, 1572, while receiving Communion from the hands of John of the Cross, she received the favor of the “spiritual marriage” (divine union.)

St. John of the Cross is generally known as one of the most important Christian mystics, as an immaculate mystical poet, and a reformer at St. Teresa’s side. His most famous books, “The Ascent of Mount Carmel,” and “The Dark Night of the Soul” are both an explanation of some verses of his poetry, beginning: “In a dark night with anxious love inflamed...” He taught meditation, soul knowledge, and the inner light.

However, we won’t get deeper into St. John’s life, since Yogananda never seems to have mentioned him very much. It seems that if he had been St. John, he might have written more

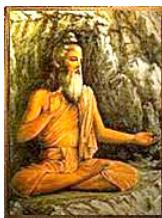
about him. Thus, being happily doubtful, we just include two verses of St. John's exquisite poetry:

“I was so ‘whelmed  
so absorbed and withdrawn,  
that my senses were left  
deprived of all their sensing,  
and my spirit was given  
an understanding while not understanding,  
transcending all knowledge.

He who truly arrives there  
cuts free from himself;  
all that he knew before  
now seems worthless,  
and his knowledge so soars  
that he is left in unknowing  
transcending all knowledge.”

## LANGUAGE 8

### Hindi



Was little Yogananda, then called Mukunda, also hearing Hindi in his little inner ear?

He says at the beginning of his *Autobiography*, “Clear recollections came to me of a distant life, a yogi amidst the Himalayan snows.”

Let's boldly place that “distant life” in the empty slot between 32 AD and 700AD, where no traces of any of Yogananda’s lifetimes can be found. He has been a hermit many times, he said — so we might actually be lucky. Let's also dare to designate Hindi as his language for that particular lifetime – quite opportunistically, since Hindi was missing from his list of languages.

Furthermore, let's (again boldly) make him live close to the ocean, as Yogananda once said: “In one incarnation I had lived by the ocean. As a little boy I used to see in my mind's eye many places and events of that incarnation.” We dress him in an orange robe, since, when his brother Ananta ridiculed him about running away into the Himalayas (“Where is your orange robe? You can't be a swami without that!”), Yogananda said: “But I was inexplicably thrilled by his words. They brought a clear picture of myself roaming about India as a monk. Perhaps they awakened memories of a past life; in any case, I began to see with what natural ease I would wear the garb of that anciently-founded monastic order.”

Brother Ananta, by the way, was an old acquaintance of Yogananda. In an article "Have We Met Before?", he states: "All those in my family I knew from past lives." He even stated, amazingly: "Nobody has crossed my path in this life except for a reason."

Yogananda was obviously not timid at all! The first thing he does in his *Autobiography*, on the very first page, is to confront the Western reader with the startling concept of reincarnation. That was in the 40ies, when almost nobody believed or taught it. Back then yoga, orange Swamis, reincarnation, etc. were practically unknown, and were certainly pretty strange.

Another tiny hint of a previous lifetime of Yogananda in India comes from Durga Ma's book. He often told Durga: "I will take you to India when I go. I will show you the hermitage where you were with me as a sister, not a blood sister, in your previous incarnation." Once Yogananda took Durga to Phoenix, Arizona, to a Spanish building with a patio in the center, which felt familiar to Durga. Yogananda explained: "It should, for it is almost the exact replica of the hermitage in India where you were with me, that I was telling you about." He also explained to her that she was "a dancing girl in a temple." Durga adds: "When I first came to Mt. Washington, he used to give me an apple or a banana to eat. I never knew why for many years. Later he told me the reason. It was because he liked to see me hold those articles with only my first three fingers, and the other two fingers would stick way out. This brought back memories to his mind of my temple duties when I was in an Indian temple, offering incense and flowers on the altar."

Yogananda told Kamala that she lived in Brindaban in a recent incarnation. Who knows if she was together with Durga, in that "Spanish" hermitage, with Yogananda?

Another very faint hint comes from a talk by Yogananda, where he obviously describes true incarnations of his: "In this one

incarnation I can sleep and dream that I am born in England as a powerful king. Then I die and dream I am born a devout man. And then I die again and am born as a successful lawyer. Again I die and am reborn as Yogananda.” The “powerful king in England was William, of course. Was the “devout man” St. John of the Cross, or a hermit life? Who, Yogananda, was the lawyer?

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A WILD “SPECULATION PAGE”



It's getting worse and worse: now we enter into purest and wildest (and totally un-answerable) speculation: Yogananda said that “in ancient times, India has always been governed, more or less, by religious kings.” (One thinks of King Janaka, King Krishna, King Rama, King Yuddhistira.) As we have seen, Yogananda was a king once or twice in Europe. Wouldn’t he have been a great king in India too?

If so, would he have left behind signs about such a life?

Maybe! In his *Autobiography*, when Yogananda talks about the famous king Asoka, he actually says little about him. Instead, he refers to Asoka as the grandson of a great King, Chandragupta Maurya. Yogananda goes on to describe Chandragupta, even though Asoka is significantly more famous, and is considered the greatest emperor of the Mauryan dynasty.

Yogananda dedicated space to emperor Chandragupta not only in his *Autobiography*, but also mentioned him also in his public talks. Why would he repeatedly describe this particular king? As a praise him or to India’s great past culture? Maybe. Or is there more to the picture? Was Yogananda maybe himself King Chandragupta?

Chandragupta (340–297 BC), historians say, united India, and became the first king to rule over a unified, independent India. Standard weights and measures were established, and India’s first coins were minted. Chandragupta’s empire was very tolerant of a variety of religions, including Buddhism and Jainism.

All the following information about Chandragupta is taken from Yogananda's *Autobiography* and his talks:

Alexander "the Great" invaded India in 327 BC. Chandragupta met Alexander as a youth. (Was this the reason why Yogananda tried to meet Hitler again in this lifetime, who once was, as he said, Alexander the Great? Alexander was spiritually inclined, and Yogananda wanted to reawaken that interest in Hitler.)

King Chandragupta (king from 321–297 BC), after Alexander's death, drove the Greeks from India in 305 BC, destroying the Macedonian garrisons left in India. In the Punjab, he defeated the invading Greek army of Alexander's general, Seleucus, and conquered the kingdom of Magadha (Northern India.) His kingdom extended from the bay of Bengal to the Arabian Sea.

He then received at his Patna (then Pataliputra) court the Hellenic ambassador, Megasthenes. Megasthenes gives us an account of the times that is well worth reading: The inhabitants, having abundant means of sustenance, exceed, in consequence, the ordinary stature, and are distinguished by their proud bearing. They are also found to be well skilled in the arts, as might be expected of men who inhale pure air and drink the very finest water. All Indians are free, and not one of them is a slave. The Indians do not even use aliens as slaves, and much less one of their own countrymen . . . They live frugally and observe very good order. Theft is a very rare occurrence. The simplicity of their laws and contracts is proved by the fact that they seldom appeal to law. They have no suits about pledges and deposits, nor do they require either seal or witness, but make their deposits and confide in each other. They neither put out money in usury nor know how to borrow. . . Truth and virtue they hold alike in esteem . . . In contrast to the general simplicity of their style, they love finery and ornaments.

The reign of the Gupta Kings has been called the Golden Age. The best authorities agree that the country was never as well governed in ancient times as in the days of the Guptas. The people were

happy and honest, and capital punishment was unknown. There was no need for “an eye for an eye; a tooth for a tooth.”

The Emperor Chandragupta decided seven years after his victory over Seleucus to hand over the reins of India’s government to his son. Traveling to South India, Chandragupta spent the last twelve years of his life as a penniless ascetic, seeking self-realization in a rocky cave at Sravanabelagola, now honored as a Mysore shrine.

Chandragupta died in 297 BC, after a glorious reign of 24 years. (He was about 57 years old- more or less like Yogananda).

Chandragupta’s son, Bindu Sara, handed over the empire intact to his own son, Asoka, after 25 years of reign. Asoka upheld the equal rights of animals with men to the King’s care. About 272 BC, he sent missionaries to lands as distant as Egypt and Syria to preach Buddhism. India’s missionaries converted China (one-fifth of the population of the whole globe) and Japan to Buddhism.

LANGUAGE 9, 10, 11

Italian (Latin), Greek, Egyptian



Nothing but pure speculation:

One wonders if Yogananda, when he went to Europe in 1935, revisited some of the places where he had lived before: already we have seen that he revisited Stonehenge; he revisited London (and France), where he had lived as William; he visited Israel, where too he possibly had lived.

What about Italy? In 1935 Yogananda came to visit the shrines of St. Francis (1182-1226), whom he actually referred to as being “of our line.” He also called St. Francis his “patron saint.” According to some rumors amongst disciples of Yogananda, Sri Yukteswar was the reincarnation of the St. Francis of Assisi. Another story says that Francis attained liberation in this lifetime, and was a disciple of Jesus. Who can tell?

And did Yogananda maybe live in ancient Greece with its enlightened teachers, since he also visited the Athenian temples? He wrote: “I was captured by the ancient ruins and their associations in Rome and Greece.” What did he mean with “associations?”

By the way: Yogananda talked highly about Pythagoras, who lived from 580-500BC, at the beginning of Athens’ Golden Age, and taught “All is Number,” immortality of the soul, reincarnation, the soul’s union with the divine, the liberating power of abstinence, and vegetarianism. Pythagoras also introduced the concept of a

spherical Earth, 2000 years before Christopher Columbus proved it, and is considered the founding father of cosmology. He founded in Croto (Crotone), South Italy, a philosophical, religious community: the Pythagoreans. Yogananda said: “Pythagoras was one of the great Grecian philosophers. He remembered definitely that he was a herald once in Greece, and that he was once a warrior too. He remembered many incarnations.”

How did Yogananda know “definitely” the particular memories of Pythagoras? None of his writings have survived.

A sidelight: Pythagoras influenced the philosophy of Aristotle, who was the grandfather, teacher and tutor of Alexander “the Great.” Alexander later claimed his divinity. He must have misunderstood something of the noble Greek teaching! Yogananda tells in his *Autobiography* how the Indian sages later humbled and taught him. Alexander, had, however, obviously some good karma: he was taught by his grandfather Aristotle, had contact with saints, and even brought home with him a “true yogi,” his “Indian guru” (see *Autobiography*). Later, Yogananda said, he incarnated as Hitler. When he first rose to power, Yogananda, seeing his karma, had actually hopes for him (same as with Mussolini), and later even tried to have an interview with him in Germany in 1935, to get him on the right track again. But Hitler turned to evil ways, unfortunately. The destruction was great. Average people, it seems, can do little good, and little harm. Great people can do great good, and great harm. Karmic consequences are then extremely bitter, of course.

And what about ancient Egypt, in its golden era? Yogananda went to visit the pyramids. He wrote: “The sphinx and the pyramids talked to me much about ancient history.” In general, or was it personally lived history?

If the latter, we would have to add three more languages to Yogananda’s list: Italian (Latin), Egyptian, Greek!

LANGUAGE 12

Hirayalokese



Let's leave the past now, and ask: what about the present? Which language is Yogananda speaking right now, busily roaming through the high astral realms? Is he with Sri Yukteswar, who has been "directed by God to serve on an astral planet as a savior," called *Hiranyaloka*?

Do they then speak the vibration-language "Hiranyalokese?"

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## **LANGUAGE 13**

### **World-English**

And what about the future? When Yogananda wrote in his *Autobiography* that as an infant he remembered being a Himalayan Yogi in a past life, he added: "These glimpses of the past, by some dimensionless link, also afforded me a glimpse of the future." Later he confided to disciples something about that future: he would be reborn after 200 years in India (about 2150 AD). He would go to live in the Himalayas — his attraction never seems to have diminished! Again his close disciples would be with him, he said, toward the end of his life.

Also in his poem "My India," he expressed this desire to be reborn in India: "Not in Heaven or the land of prosperity would I be

born— if I have to put on a mortal garb again. A thousand famines may prowl and tear my flesh, yet would I love to be again in my Hindustan... Yet would I there in India love to reappear!"

In his next life, then, about 140 years from today, will English be his language, since it will have become the language of the world?

At any rate, looking at the overarching history of Yogananda's past and future, we get a staggering picture: Yogananda stated to various disciples that he was an avatar, that he was liberated many lifetimes ago. On an audio tape we can hear him say: "I came liberated!" But not only that. He gave us, in "God's Boatman," this incredible promise: "Oh! I will come again and again! If need be, a trillion times — as long as I know one stray brother is left behind."

A trillion times! Oh Lord! How many Yugas would a trillion lifetimes be, in Sri Yukteswar's system? If we calculate 50 years for each lifetime, saying that one comes right after the other, we would get over 2000000000 (2 billion) Yugas!!! Can anyone even picture that many years, let alone Yugas?

Looking at this staggering timeframe of the Masters, one is inclined to relax a bit with one's own little world, which sometimes seems so very big and important.

To end on a humoristic note: Yogananda might be in for a big problem: when he will become an infant in the far future, after many, many lifetimes, won't all these hundreds of languages create a total "inward confusion of tongues" in his mind? Aha! This might be the *real* reason why he advocated a single world language.

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OVERVIEW OF YOGANANDA'S POSSIBLE INCARNATIONS

1500 BC	Living at Stonehenge
Around 850 BC	Elisha
760–700 BC	Arjuna
340– 297 BC	King Chandragupta
Around 0 AD	Jesus, or in his time
700 AD	With Shankara
1027–1087AD	William the Conqueror
1198–1252 AD	Ferdinand III
1542–1591 AD	St. John of the Cross
1893–1952 AD	Yogananda
2150– ? AD	Hermit in the Himalayas

Chapter 17

A Historical Turn of Events?



Daya Mata and Swami Kriyananda were fellow disciples of Yogananda, and more than that. They worked and traveled together as ministers, and later served together as SRF president and vice-president; they felt close to each other as brother and sister: a relationship rooted in past lives, as they both knew.

Kriyananda was later thrown out of SRF. For a long time, however, Daya Mata resisted Tara Mata's forceful efforts to dismiss Swami Kriyananda. He writes: *I learned later, from Daya Mata, that Tara had spent that year trying for hours every day to convince her that I must be ousted "for the good of the work." "In another fifteen years," she insisted, "he'll be strong enough to divide the work. We must get rid of him now!" Finally, in a very emotional scene, Daya Mata capitulated.*

After the separation, Daya and Kriyananda still met each other privately, outside of Mt. Washington. Their connection however

came to an end when Kriyananda told Tara Mata on the phone, "It isn't everyone who thinks the way you do," without mentioning any name. Tara suspected that he might be talking about Daya Mata (rightly so), and as a consequence she demanded that Daya give up seeing him. Daya, to keep peace, decided she had no other choice.

In 1970 she told him: "I've never accepted the things Tara said against you," adding, "Even on her death bed, Tara was bitter against me for what she considered my betrayal."

After Swami Kriyananda was dismissed from SRF in 1962, for many years he carefully avoided speaking critically about SRF. Nobody at Ananda, in fact, knew the real story behind his separation, his pain, the treatment he had received. Kriyananda wanted to protect SRF, being his Master's organization. He encouraged Ananda members to visit the SRF centers and their convocation, and recommended to study the SRF lessons.

That protective pattern changed drastically when SRF started a lawsuit against him, maybe two. "Maybe", because it can't be proofed that the second one too was SRF's workings, even though the main accusing lawyer was an SRF member, a lawyer who was working for SRF, and the accusing women were almost all connected with SRF.

Daya now openly stated that she was not against the good people at Ananda, but against Kriyananda. She now felt him to be a threat for SRF and took a harsh stand against him, in order to defend her Guru's work. Legal actions were heavy. It must have weighed on her heart, as she told Kriyananda personally: "I can't face Master [after death] until this legal issue has been resolved."

During the lawsuit Swami Kriyananda defended truth as he knew it: he wrote first a booklet about *My Separation from SRF* (1992), then a big book, *A Place Called Ananda*, telling his incredible story. He now began to talk about it frequently, in public. Tara

Mata was the main goal of his descriptions, but so was Daya Mata, whom he didn't compliment anymore (while in his book "The Path" he had written glowingly about her).

SRF cares about its public image, and wasn't pleased about Kriyananda's new writings. Nor was it pleased that important parts of the lawsuit, such as the rights to the *Autobiography of a Yogi*, were being lost. Tension rose. Swami Kriyananda often said he felt aggressive and angry vibrations coming to him, affecting him physically.

The lawsuits ended in 2002. The tensions didn't, however, as Kriyananda hadn't been stopped: he was more active than ever, reaching millions through TV shows, articles, YouTube, and other activities.

Some years later, in 2010, Swami Kriyananda once again put hand to the sword, writing a detailed book, "Rescuing Yogananda," in which he described how deeply SRF had lost Yogananda's spirit. His goal was to create such public outrage that SRF would be forced to change direction.

He worked hard on that new book. A first edition was soon printed, put in the internet, and made available through Amazon. He soon expanded and improved it, and a second edition was about to be printed. But suddenly he withdrew it, requesting that all printed copies be destroyed.

What had happened? Ananda published the following account on the internet:

A Letter of Explanation from Swami Kriyananda

I had a dream recently in which a saint, not from our line of gurus, said to me in reference to this book, "It is not your place to judge." He didn't need to tell me to what he was referring. I knew it was to this book.

I replied, "But it says important things, things that need to be brought out."

He replied, "All right, I agree. But now, drop it. Your job is not to judge anyone, but to see God everywhere, and in everyone. Let this book be a one-time-only statement. You be a child of God. Judgement is of the ego; divine acceptance is of the soul. So forget the book now, and think only of Him."

He was severe, but also very sweet. I was deeply grateful to him. And I agree with him completely. My feeling from this dream was one of deep bliss. From now on I drop the subject altogether. It is no longer something about which I care to initiate any further discussion.

When I first had this dream, I thought the saint had approved of my getting out one edition of the second, improved version. But a nagging thought wouldn't leave me: "Why even publish this edition? I've already presented my key thoughts. Whatever good they might do has been done. Enough said." Finally I decided it was my conscience talking to me! So I wrote our publishing house and asked them to stop the print run. It has meant some loss of money, but better than an offense to my conscience.

Swami Kriyananda

It certainly shows Kriyananda's greatness to change his direction in a second, once he sees it needs correction. His friends recount that it was a moment of heightened love at Ananda, and of great respect. A new cycle seemed to have begun. Kriyananda was in a period of bliss. He told his friends: "Life is so blissful. The more

you give your life to God, the more thrilling it becomes. Appreciation and gratitude are the main attitudes we should hold toward life."

During that time an Italian artist-friend, Sandro da Verscio, finished a marvelous bust of Kriyananda, which expresses the deep love and gratitude Ananda feels for him.

The saint appeared to Swami Kriyananda on December 31, 2010, just before the New Year was beginning, and exactly one month after Daya Mata's passing. Are her passing and that unexpected turn of events somehow connected? Is there now a historical opening for unity and harmony between SRF and Ananda? Are maybe saints or angels also appearing to SRF leaders, changing their hearts as well? Is there a ray of hope for a more respectful future, for "Yogananda-Harmony?"

One can only hope so.

Chapter 18

A Historical Reunion



This book ends with a dream: a harmonious gathering amongst all of Yogananda's close disciples, sharing together their incredible and true experiences with their Master. Let's imagine them sitting in a circle. Each disciple gets his turn to speak, each sharing one amazing testimony. As a disciple tells his story, others nod in agreement, because they have seen or experienced a similar incidence. In this way the atmosphere among them increases in holiness, a presence is felt. A clear picture slowly emerges of who Yogananda was and is: a soul much greater than the world might ever know. Yes, this historical reunion is just an imagination, but still, every single experience that is being shared is based on truth, has indeed been lived.

Daya Mata: "He is Deathless"

Daya Mata initiates the discussion by sharing how she experienced Yogananda appearing to her in flesh and blood after his passing.

Gyanamata: "He was a Divine Healer"

Gyanamata recounts that she was healed from a fatal disease through Yogananda's intercession, when Doctors had given her no more hope.

Brother Bhaktananda: "He was a Master over Matter"

Brother Bhaktananda says that he witnessed Yogananda materializing carrot juice, which never became less in his jug.

Swami Kriyananda: "He was a Premavatar"

Swami Kriyananda remembers how looking into his eyes he felt such a overpowering divine love from him that tears would flow down his cheeks – his love was deeply soul-moving.

Ananda Mata: "He was One With Divine Mother"

Ananda Mata remembers the Cosmic samadi Yogananda experienced in 1948. She saw him talk in ecstasy with Dine Mother. Ananda Mata heard two distinct voices coming from Yogananda's tongue, her Guru's own voice talking to Divine Mother, and Divine Mother answering him through his own mouth.

James Coller: "He was Omnipresent"

James Coller tells about the moment when he found out that Yogananda knew his thoughts and actions, of secretly eating hamburgers for example. The Master explained, "I know every thought you think."

Tulsi Bose: "He was the Conqueror of Death"

Tulsi Bose, Yogananda's boyhood friend, reveals that he was present when he brought back to life a man who had already been dead, certified by doctors.

Peggy Deitz: "He was a Commander of the Elements"

Peggy Deitz, Yogananda's witty chauffeur, speaks about how she witnessed Yogananda levitate.

Kamala Silva: "He was Christ-like"

Kamala recounts that once she saw Yogananda appear with a blue skin, like Krishna. Blue, Yogananda explained, is the color of Christ-Consciousness.

Sananda Lal Ghosh: "He worked with Cosmic Power"

Sananda Lal Ghosh, his brother, tells the tale how he experienced a long miraculous drive with Yogananda in his car, without any gas in the tank.

Swami Hariharananda: "He was Light-Filled"

Swami Hariharananda shares how during an initiation ceremony, he saw Yogananda shining like a sun from within.

Durga Mata: "He Sent the Comforter"

Durga Mata talks about how she always used to hear the AUM sound when Yogananda was coming back to his headquarters, returning from his travels.

Roy Eugene Davis: "He was a Shakti-Giver"

Roy Eugene Davis remembers how he experienced strong kundalini surges in his spine after having been with his Master.

Hare Krishna Ghosh: "He Possessed Divine Will"

Hare Krishna Ghosh, his nephew, experienced how Yogananda locked the clasped hands of a big audience, which was unable to open them as long as he didn't release them.

Swami Satyananda: "He was A Tiger Tamer"

Swami Satyananda shares how many years back Yogananda was in the jungle near Ranchi with his school students and teachers. It was night, and they were sleeping in a hut. They heard a wild Bengal tiger approach who wanted to attack their cows: the door to their stall had been left open. Yogananda without fear went outside and

faced the tiger. The killer slowly approached. The power of love flowed from Yogananda's eyes. Suddenly the beast, instead of springing, rolled affectionately at the Master's feet! Love had conquered it.

Dr. Lewis: "He was a Master Over Sleep"

Dr. Lewis lets everyone know how he found out that Yogananda wasn't ever sleeping, even while snoring: he was fully aware.

Mrinalini Mata: "He was an Annihilator of Time"

Mrinalini Mata shares how Master knew her past lives. She had been a saint, he said, in more than one of her past lives.

Brother Bimalananda: "He had a Strong Invisible Hand"

Brother Bimalananda shares his story about how he was high up on a ladder, with a heavy bucket on his shoulder. Suddenly he missed a rung, and the heavy bucket began pulling him backward. He would have fallen to his death, but chanted "Om!" and some invisible force pushed him slowly back up to the ladder.

Norman Paulson: "Yes: He had a Strong Invisible Hand"

Norman Paulson remembers driving a big truck down Mt. Washington. At the steepest part of the hill the brakes failed completely, and immediately he knew he'd be hurtling to his death over the edge of that steep embankment. Desperately he prayed to Master: "Is this what you want?" Suddenly the truck slowed to a complete stop. The brakes still weren't working, but he was able to park safely.

Shraddha Mata: "He was a Flower Charmer"

Shraddha Mata tells of how she once was watching a "rose devotee." The rose kept turning in its vase

Oliver Black: "He Showed Heavenly Kindness"

Oliver Black reminisces about a day when it was pouring rain, and he was to take a drive with his Master. When Oliver stepped out of

the door no raindrop touched him. He remained completely dry. Yogananda smiled with love, "For you, Oliver!"

Brother Anandamoy: "He is Immutable"

Brother Anandamoy remembers how astonished he was when Yogananda's body, three weeks after his death, looked completely unchanged, looking fresh like a rose. He simply seemed to be sleeping.

Tara Mata: "He Will be Back"

In his next life, Yogananda foretold, he will live in the Himalayas and gather once again his close disciples. And once again they will have many miraculous stories to tell for future generations.