
How-to-Live Series

Where Are Our Departed Loved Ones? is one of a series of pocket-size booklets on the teachings of Paramahansa Yogananda, author of *Autobiography of a Yogi*. These informal talks and essays offer inspiring and practical guidance for living our lives in a spiritually harmonious way—with grace and simplicity, with an inner equanimity in the face of life's seeming contradictions, and above all with joy, secure in the knowledge that we are at every moment in the embrace of a loving Divine Power.



The Spiritual Legacy of
Paramahansa Yogananda

ISBN-13: 978-0-87612-405-5

ISBN-10: 0-87612-405-8

5 0250



9 780876 124055

U.S. \$2.50

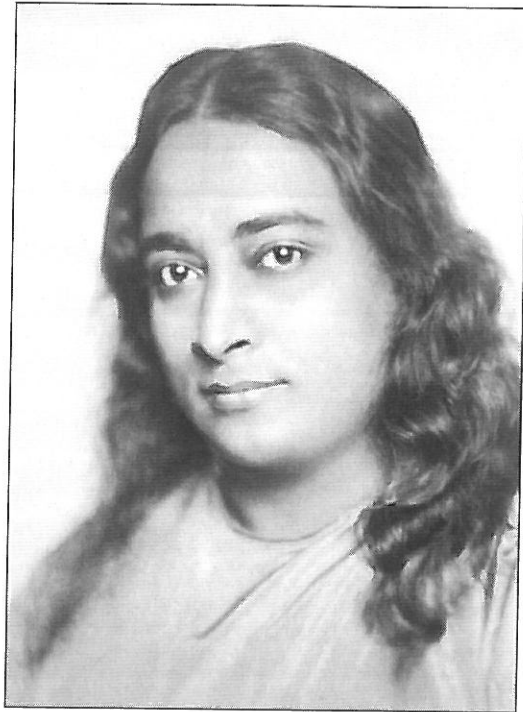
Paramahansa Yogananda

Where Are Our Departed Loved Ones?



Self-Realization Fellowship

FOUNDED 1920 BY PARAMAHANSA YOGANANDA



PARAMAHANSA YOGANANDA
(1893-1952)

Where Are Our Departed Loved Ones?

by
Paramahansa Yogananda

"How-to-Live" Series
No. 1704


Self-Realization Fellowship
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A publication of
SELF-REALIZATION FELLOWSHIP
Founded in 1920 by Paramahansa Yogananda

ABOUT THE "HOW-TO-LIVE" SERIES: These informal talks and essays were originally published by Self-Realization Fellowship in its quarterly magazine, *Self-Realization*. Some have also appeared in anthologies and on recordings produced by the society. The "How-to-Live" series was created in response to requests from readers for pocket-size booklets presenting Paramahansa Yogananda's teachings on various subjects. The series offers guidance by Sri Yogananda and some of his longtime disciples, Self-Realization Fellowship monks and nuns, many of whom had the opportunity to receive the spiritual direction and training of this beloved world teacher over a period of many years. New titles are added to the series periodically.



Authorized by the International Publications Council of
SELF-REALIZATION FELLOWSHIP
3880 San Rafael Avenue • Los Angeles, CA 90065-3219

Self-Realization Fellowship was founded by Paramahansa Yogananda as the instrument for the worldwide dissemination of his teachings. The Self-Realization Fellowship name and emblem (shown above) appear on all SRF books, recordings, and other publications, assuring the reader that a work originates with the society established by Paramahansa Yogananda and faithfully conveys his teachings.

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~ This Printing, 2019 ~

Reprinted from *The Divine Romance*

ISBN-13: 978-0-87612-405-5

ISBN-10: 0-87612-405-8

Printed in the United States of America
1704-J5859

Where Are Our Departed Loved Ones?

BY PARAMAHANSA YOGANANDA

*A talk given at the first Self-Realization Fellowship
Temple, Encinitas, California, August 28, 1938*

Science has not created or invented anything; it has only discovered what is already existing in God. If we put our minds to it, we can similarly resolve the mysteries about which I am going to speak today.

When I talk to you about these things, it is not from what I have read or studied, but from my own direct experience of Truth. You may think it strange, but when I am speaking, I am at that moment seeing whatever I am describing to you. And why not? Through an X-ray machine, you can see the skeletal frame and all of the organs of the body. Certainly the human consciousness has much greater powers of perception than any machine. The little brainless radio can pene-

trate the ether and receive messages broadcast from miles away. Our consciousness is far more sensitive than this when we learn to finely tune it. Behind the body and all the thoughts identified with it is the subtle inner world, which is vitally linked with this world. You can behold this inner world when you have advanced spiritually.

The Unperceived World of Thought

We are accustomed to perceiving and responding primarily to gross manifestations that can be picked up by the senses. For the most part, we remain unaware of the subtle forces around us. Yet every thought we think sets up a particular subtle vibration. Do you know that because of this you can't hide from others what you really are? If you have done wrong, you know it. Even though you think you may be hiding it, the consciousness of having done wrong is present in your thoughts. People will find you out, because those thought vibrations will be reflected in some way in your behavior. The

same of course is true of good thoughts. When you mentally utter the word "God," and keep on repeating that thought within, it sets up a vibration that invokes the presence of God.

Thoughts are so subtle that no instrument has been able to record them.* This is why we have voices; they enable us to convey our thoughts. But if you advance spiritually and cultivate deep calmness within, you will be able to feel and read the thoughts of others. When you are disturbed or restless, your mind radio is so out of tune it cannot receive their mental messages. If your consciousness is always fixed on externals—the body, desires, what somebody else has or is doing—it will never be aware of the subtle activities that are going on within and around you.

The five senses are extremely limited. The eyes can behold only certain vibrations

* Brain waves resulting from thoughts may be recorded, but not the thoughts themselves.

of light. The ears can receive only certain rates of sound vibrations—any vibration too high or too low is not perceived. Unheard by most people, the whole universe is sending forth music: the great sound of *Aum* or Amen, the Holy Comforter, emanating from all creation. “They seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand.”* Thus Jesus referred to the limited nature of the senses.

Man is the inventor of instruments that can perform miraculous tasks he himself cannot do. The microscope gives him a supersense through which he can see many things invisible to the naked eye. The radio has made available more knowledge about the world than any other modern invention.† But remember, it is man’s mind that has discovered the universal principles

* Matthew 13:13.

† This talk was given in 1938. The subsequent development of television has vastly increased the scope of world communication.

which made possible the microscope and radio. It is the power of the mind you must cultivate. When you develop spiritually, your sight and hearing—each one of your senses—become so refined that you can perceive all the subtleties of which I speak. You will perceive the vibrations of thought, which are the true essence of the gross vibrations to which the limited physical senses are attuned.

You will be able to see right through others’ outer pretenses and perceive their thoughts. But it won’t influence your attitude against those persons. You won’t judge them, because you will understand them. God knows all the thoughts—good and bad—of every human being; yet He loves all His children just the same. If you are always looking at the world through a blue glass, everything will appear to be blue. So if you look through a blue glass of prejudice or hatred or emotion, you cannot behold people or conditions as they really are. As soon as

you become ruffled by such feelings, your voice becomes harsh and you feel antagonistic and spiteful. But when you are calm and at peace within, you love everyone and feel friendly toward all. This is the harmony God intended for His creation. You should develop changelessness, evenmindedness, in this changing world; then the evil thoughts of others will not disturb or influence you. You will begin to feel the true subtle nature of human beings and the universe in which we live, and become more aware of the fourth dimension.

Where Is Heaven?

The fourth dimension is the sphere of lifetrans,* which can be perceived only through the sixth sense of intuition. As your senses become spiritually refined, they become intuitive, and you become more and

* The astral world. The subtle sphere of the Lord's creation is a universe of light and color composed of finer-than-atomic forces: vibrations of life energy or lifetrans. (See glossary.)

more conscious of that other world. And where is that other world? Many people think it is far off in the skies, but this is not so. The fourth dimension, the astral world—heaven—is just behind the gross vibration of this physical realm. On the astral planets, life is not dependent upon breath or food or oxygen. This is not a fantasy of an overwrought imagination; it is the finding of my own experience. But one must develop spiritually in order to experience and understand the higher forces and laws of life. One such exalted soul was Trailanga Swami.* He used to float on the Ganges for days together, and sometimes would remain under the water for several hours or days. And why not? When you understand life, you know that it is more than its physical components. Realized souls can operate the laws of the higher realms even though incarnate in a physical body.

* More about the life of this saint may be found in Paramahansa Yogananda's *Autobiography of a Yogi*, Chapter 31.

Because you don't see these things, you think they can't be true. But you must realize that your realm of experience is but an infinitesimal part of the Lord's creation.

**We Are Made of God's Thoughts, Which
Death Cannot Destroy**

You are beholding only the middle of life; you do not see the beginning or the end. It isn't even reasonable to assume that death is the end—that we who are so intelligent and full of life cease to exist as soon as we fall asleep in death. The whole human being is a cluster of the creative thoughts and consciousness of God, which physical death cannot destroy. If death were the end, then there is no God, and there are no realized masters—it is all a pack of lies. The great ones wouldn't urge you to become better, for what would be the use if, good or bad, we are all junked at the end of life? What would be the value of the scriptures? Why should good men try to be even better? There would be no justice whatsoever if this present ex-

istence is all there is to each individual life. What of those souls who lived only a few years, or lived in blind or crippled bodies?

**Know the Right Way to Find
Your Loved Ones**

True spiritualism is a wonderful science. It enables us to know that there is a life beyond this world, and that all of our loved ones do, indeed, continue to live on, though they have shed the physical body. But the modern practice of spiritualism has ruined the meaning of the real search for knowledge of the spirit world. Many who believe themselves to be spiritualists don't really know what they are talking about. Some have a little understanding, but too often they are victims of their own imagination; or worse, they become subconsciously possessed by disembodied tramp souls* seeking a human vehicle. These tramp souls delude and misguide the medium and, indirectly,

* See pages 22–24.

those who seek his counsel.

Once I was sitting with some students in a gathering where a gypsy was present. Everyone was flocking around this fortune-teller. I was quietly observing her. Soon I realized she was not actually answering what they asked her, but rather some queries she was cleverly putting to them. The students urged me to have my fortune told. The room was rather dark, so the gypsy couldn't see me too clearly. In a high squeaky voice I asked, "When will I divorce my husband?" She quickly responded, "Right away." Then I stood up, and she saw my trousers below my robe. "You deceived me!" she exclaimed angrily. Supposedly she was reading our minds; but I had read hers. Because of my long hair she had thought I was a woman, and that is why I tested her with that question.

So in spiritualism, as in any other field, there are some frauds; and among those that do have some psychic development,

there are many who are well-intentioned but whose psychic powers are not guided by wisdom and Self-realization. In any case it is unwise, and can be dangerous, to toy with the spirit world through séances and mediums. You cannot contact saints through such channels; and if any spirits are invoked, they will be for the most part from the lower astral realms. But if you are truly sincere, it is possible by meditation and spiritual development to contact departed loved ones or great saints.

The Astral World Has Many Spheres

When we awaken in the morning, we find we are exactly the same as before we went to sleep. Similarly, when we and our loved ones awaken in the astral world after death, we are exactly the same; only generally we may be more youthful in appearance and free of disease.

We don't become angels merely by the instrument of death. If we are angels now, we will be angels in the hereafter. If we are dark,

negative personalities now, we will be the same after death. Just as there are slums and beautiful parts of the country here, so it is in the other world. According to the way you have lived your life on earth—whether you have lived a good, pure life, or a mean, ugly one—you go to a better or a darker region in the astral world. Jesus spoke of these different regions: “In my Father’s house are many mansions.”*

The astral planes are of differing atmospheres, or vibrations, and each soul that passes on from this earth is attracted to whichever atmosphere is in harmony with its own particular vibration. Just as fish live in the water, worms in the earth, man on the earth, and birds in the air, so souls in the astral world live in whichever sphere is best suited to their own vibration. The more noble and spiritual a person is on earth, the higher the sphere to which he will be attracted, and the greater will be his freedom

* John 14:2.

and joy and experience of beauty.

On the astral planets, beings are not dependent upon air or electricity in order to exist. They live on variously colored rays of light. There is more freedom in the astral world than in the physical world. There are no bones to break, because there are no solids there; everything is composed of light rays. And everything takes place by the power of thought. When souls in the astral want to produce a garden, they merely will it, and the garden comes into being. It remains as long as it is willed to. When a soul wants the garden to disappear, it goes away.

Communication With the Astral a Secretly Guarded Science

Communicating with souls in the astral world is not a simple accomplishment. It is a science secretly guarded by nature. God does not want us to limit our love to the members of our family, but to learn to give that same love to the whole world. It is to teach us this that the members of our fam-

ily are taken away one by one; thus we learn to turn our love to others. But if we love purely and unselfishly, and develop spiritually, we can learn the secret science of maintaining a link with our loved ones after death.

The human heart is so strong, and often so unreasonable! A boy meets a girl; they fall in love with each other. They grow up, marry, have children, and think, "These are mine." Possessiveness makes people forget they were strangers before they met, that death will sever their present relationship, and that the children they call their own have only been given to them to look after during one lifetime. When their loved ones are snatched away by death, they grieve and wonder what life is all about.

The attachment of human affection is such that losing our loved ones brings a severe longing in the heart, and often creates rebellious thoughts within. Though I was still a little boy, I knew deep in my con-

sciousness, long before her death, that my mother was to go. When she passed on, I cried and cried. I searched everywhere, but I couldn't find her. "Divine Mother," I prayed, "if You are here, You must answer me. Why did You make me love my mother so much, and then take her away? Was it to punish and torture me?" The answer came when the Cosmic Mother said, "Who gave you mother, who gave you father? It was I who gave you your beautiful mother." When I realized it was because of God that I had such a wonderful mother, I thought, "God alone holds the key to this mystery of life," and I began to search deeply within and to pray. Divine Mother answered and told me why my mother was taken away: "It is I who have watched over thee, life after life, in the tenderness of many mothers! See in My gaze the two black eyes, the lost beautiful eyes, thou seekest!"

After I found Divine Mother, I also found my earthly mother again, in the astral

world, and talked to her. Such communication is possible. You can convert yourself into a broadcasting instrument or a receiving set. If you seek a departed loved one by very strongly and continuously meditating on that soul, you will receive an answer. But if your desire is not strong enough, your restless thoughts will disturb your meditative concentration. If your thoughts are running hither and thither when you are broadcasting your heart's message to a soul, your broadcast will be short-circuited. You must have a tremendous desire and powerful concentration in order to contact a soul who has gone into the other world. And you must send your thoughts to that soul continuously. Also, the one to whom you are broadcasting must be developed enough to receive and be able to respond to your call. It is easiest to contact souls that are on your level or plane of consciousness, and with whom you have had a deep affinity and close relationship. Communing with highly

evolved souls requires much more powerful concentration.

**The Saints Cannot Come
to the Spiritually Unprepared**

You cannot tune in with great saints unless you are spiritually receptive. If the person who is invoking the presence of a holy personage is not spiritually ready, that saint cannot communicate with him. Suppose you are invoking the soul of Jesus Christ, or Krishna, or Buddha. Divine ones such as these won't come until your consciousness has become so refined through meditation that you can receive them. The vibratory power of their manifestation is so intense it could burn the body and brain of one not attuned. I have seen these avatars* and many saints; you can, too, when your own spiritual vibration becomes very strong. These divine souls are all present in the ether—no one has ever become nothing after leaving the

* See glossary.

physical body. They respond to your prayers and bless you. They live in the astral world unless they have reincarnated on earth or on other higher planets where the evolution of man is further advanced.

So you should develop yourself. Strive to be more in tune with the divine ones, such as Christ, Krishna, and the great Gurus of Self-Realization.* If in deep attunement you inwardly see one of these Great Ones, beneficial changes will begin to take place within you, through their blessings. These are not simple matters we are discussing.

You must never be negative—that is, never sit quietly and make your mind blank in order to become “open” to messages from the other world. This practice makes one receptive to tramp souls that are roaming

* See *guru* in glossary. The Gurus of the Self-Realization Fellowship lineage are Mahavatar Babaji, Lahiri Mahasaya, Swami Sri Yukteswar, and Paramahansa Yogananda. (*Publisher's Note*)

in the ether, seeking human vehicles for expression and experience in the physical world. These souls are of low type, with strong attachment to this world, which prevents them from natural adjustment to the better life in the astral world. Instead of remaining in the astral world, they hover between the astral and physical planes and are occasionally successful in possessing someone whose mind is weak and dwells on a low level of consciousness. The “devils” that Jesus cast out* were tramp souls.

The man Hickman, who murdered a little girl many years ago, was possessed. I have studied him thoroughly. He was a good boy, but abnormal sexual drive and abuse weakened his brain, and a tramp soul took possession of his body. This is the reason he killed the girl in such a vicious way. Souls

* “When the even was come, they brought unto him many that were possessed with devils: and he cast out the spirits with his word, and healed all that were sick” (Matthew 8:16).

trapped in human forms not their own usually destroy the brain—the personality—of the one they have possessed. This is why many mediums go wrong. Good departed souls do not possess you; they do not even come without a proper invitation—one that is issued from a high level of consciousness.

In order to draw good souls, you must have deep concentration and lift your consciousness to a pure, spiritual plane. In the superconscious state, you can consciously direct the trend of your experiences. So if you are meditating, you are on a high plane of thought; tramp souls, or negative or evil souls living on the lower astral planes, cannot get in touch with you.

One who is highly developed, and has mastered all levels of consciousness, can see into all realms of the astral world, high and low; and he can spiritually help the souls on those planes to work out some of their karma.* That other world is as real to

* See glossary.

me as this one. Sometimes when I sleep on my left side, I see all kinds of dark souls dancing around. I bless them, and they go away. I rarely see such souls when I sleep on my right side, because the right side of the body is the positive side. There is a stronger flow of divine life current there, whose spiritual vibration serves as a screen blocking off negative forces. This is why, during practice of the Self-Realization *Aum* Technique,* the meditator is taught to concentrate on the cosmic vibration in the *right* ear.

When you are thinking of God or meditating upon God, or concentrating at the Christ Consciousness center at the point between the eyebrows,† no astral beings can intrude on your consciousness. God is deeply respected in the other region—even by lower astral beings, who cannot stand high spiritual vibrations.

* Taught in the *Self-Realization Fellowship Lessons*.

† See glossary.

Technique of Sending Thoughts to Departed Souls

To send your thoughts to loved ones who have passed on, sit quietly in your room and meditate upon God. When you feel His peace within you, concentrate deeply at the Christ center, the center of will at the point between the two eyebrows, and broadcast your love to those dear ones who are gone. Visualize at the Christ center the person you wish to contact. Send to that soul your vibrations of love, and of strength and courage. If you do this continuously, and if you don't lose the intensity of your interest in that loved one, that soul will definitely receive your vibrations. Such thoughts give your loved ones a sense of well-being, a sense of being loved. They have not forgotten you any more than you have forgotten them. There is still the dim memory in their consciousness of the loved ones they have left behind.

When you want to feel a response from such souls, concentrate at the heart cen-

ter.* When you concentrate deeply enough, they may first appear in dreams. It is possible for them to do so. Sometimes you may have the same significant dream several times. So not all dreams are meaningless. If your mind is calm and attuned, you will know someone is trying to get in touch with you through that dream. As you develop spiritually, your loved ones may appear to you in visions in meditation. And when you are very highly developed, you can behold those souls right here in front of you. St. Francis used to see Jesus Christ in the flesh every night. But you must be really advanced before you can have such an experience. If you deeply meditate on God, He will show you all of these things.

Instead of weeping and feeling a sense of loss after the death of those who are dear to you, always send them your love. By doing so you can help the progress of their

* The *anahata chakra*, the subtle dorsal center and seat of feeling in the body.

souls, and they can help you. Never drag them down by unreasonable feelings of selfish attachment and sorrow. Just say to them, "I love you."

Send your thoughts of love and goodwill to your loved ones as often as you feel inclined to do so, but at least once a year—perhaps on some special anniversary. Mentally tell them, "We will meet again sometime and continue to develop our divine love and friendship with one another." If you send them your loving thoughts continuously now, someday you will surely meet them again. You will know that this life is not the end, but merely one link in the eternal chain of your relationship with your loved ones.

**We Can Find Loved Ones
Who Have Been Reborn**

Ordinary souls remain in the astral world for a karmically predetermined time, and then reincarnate on earth.* Highly ad-

* See *reincarnation* in glossary.

vanced souls can remain in the astral heaven as long as they wish. But what if the souls of some that you loved are reborn on earth while you are still seeking them? As you go on sending them your love, they will feel your thoughts. When they are asleep—that is, when their conscious mind is asleep and the subconscious is awake—they will receive your love. In time, those souls will be aware of the vibrations you are sending them, and they will remember and understand. Furthermore, you will surely be attracted to one another again, and will feel the closeness of your previous relationship.

If you are spiritually developed, you will consciously recognize souls you have known before, just as I recognized my master, Swami Sri Yukteswar, when we met in this life. He had been broadcasting to me. This is why Master was often in my thoughts, and how I came to know him long before I ever met him in this life. Many times I had seen him in dreams and in meditation.

When I was sleeping or meditating I got the vibrations he was broadcasting to me. So when I met him, I recognized him at once. Similarly, when your loved ones are reborn on earth, if your love for them is strong they will be brought back to you. They will be drawn into your life once again, in this incarnation or the next.

Generally, in each new incarnation, nature makes us forget the particular personalities and relationships of souls we knew in previous lives. What a blessing! Imagine how confusing it would be if you remembered all the roles you and your loved ones played in past lives. You wouldn't know which mother, father, spouse, or child to love. God prevents this chaos by dimming our memory so that we are free to perfect the relationships of our present incarnation.

**True Love Draws Souls Together
Life After Life**

But even though we may not remember anything specific about previous-life rela-

tionships, love between souls—or even a deep attraction of hate—draws those souls to one another life after life. This is why, in this incarnation, you have felt strongly attracted to certain souls and not to others. You always feel naturally drawn to those you knew before. A close friendship is impossible with anyone you have not met in former lives. This is a fact. When you think of someone as a friend, it is because you have known that soul before, and your previous relationship makes you feel closer to that person. By reaching out to know and understand others we should increase our treasure-house of friends and loved ones from one incarnation to another.

When in this life you are attracted to souls whom you like, but with whom you have quarrels and misunderstandings—as sometimes happens between family members—and you have to strive constantly to get along with one another, it means that in your previous life your relationship was half

as friends and half as enemies. An example of this was Judas, who betrayed Jesus. Judas had known Christ in other lives, and was destined to be in that wonderful family of disciples. Even though he betrayed Christ, Jesus loved him unconditionally, as the mother loves even a wicked son. Jesus knew all of the twelve disciples before, and they had known him. This is why there was instantaneous attraction and acceptance. Lord Krishna similarly recognized his most beloved disciple: "O Arjuna, many births have been experienced by Me and by thee. I am acquainted with them all, whereas thou rememberest them not."*

The relationship between disciple and guru is the most beautiful because it is unconditional and everlasting: Through all incarnations they are in touch with one another. And at the time of death, the guru comes to guide the disciple through the transition from the physical body to the astral heaven.

* Bhagavad Gita IV:5

I have met in this life many, many souls I have known before; and they have also recognized me. In previous lives they were mine, and I was theirs. Most of those who have come to me in this life are souls I knew before.

We may remember not only people we knew and loved in previous lives, but places as well. When I came through London on my way back from India, I visited many localities where I had been in a former life. The memory of those places was stored in my consciousness. You may have had similar experiences: A new area seems so familiar to you that you feel certain you have been there before.

The Soul and Its Joy Last Forever

There is so much more to life than what the ordinary man perceives and feels. Life and death hold no more mysteries for me. I know that I and all souls are ever-living manifestations of the one Life, God. The physical body and its comforts and pleasures

do not last, but the soul and its joy last forever. I don't care about my body anymore. When you have finished your dinner, the plate no longer has a purpose. I am interested only in Spirit, who can make a thousand Yoganandas if He wants to. The body, which is so dear to the ordinary man, is no longer important when you find God. I never pray for my body. I have given it back to the Lord. His love is so great, it has taken away all attachment to this physical form. In His love all my desires have been satisfied many times over. I want nothing more. In my heart I can find but one wish: "May Thy love shine forever on the sanctuary of my devotion, and may I be able to awaken Thy love in all hearts." This is my only desire.

Dear ones, don't waste your time. You are wasting time, and you know it. I speak frankly and freely to you, because I have nothing to gain from you except your own highest spiritual welfare. You can't reach happiness or God by anyone else's assur-

ance. You have to work for it yourself.

Wherever I find souls who are receptive, I try to speak to their minds. To those who are not interested I say little, because they don't want to listen at all. But those who are sincerely seeking God I try to reach through their thoughts, and draw them to Him. In God, you and your loved ones have existence and joy everlasting.



PARAMAHANSA YOGANANDA
(1893–1952)

“The ideal of love for God and service to humanity found full expression in the life of Paramahansa Yogananda.... Though the major part of his life was spent outside India, still he takes his place among our great saints. His work continues to grow and shine ever more brightly, drawing people everywhere on the path of the pilgrimage of the Spirit.”

—from a tribute by the Government of India upon issuing a commemorative stamp in Paramahansa Yogananda’s honor

Born in India on January 5, 1893, Paramahansa Yogananda devoted his life to helping people of all races and creeds to realize and express more fully in their lives the true beauty, nobility, and divinity of the human spirit.

After graduating from Calcutta University in 1915, Sri Yogananda took formal vows as a monk of India’s venerable monastic Swami Order. Two years later, he began his life’s work with the founding of a “how-to-live” school—since grown to seventeen educational institutions throughout India—where traditional academic subjects were offered together with yoga training and instruction in spiritual ideals. In 1920, he was invited to serve as India’s delegate to an International Congress of Religious Liberals in Boston. His address to the Congress and

subsequent lectures on the East Coast were enthusiastically received, and in 1924 he embarked on a cross-continental speaking tour.

Over the next three decades, Paramahansa Yogananda contributed in far-reaching ways to a greater awareness and appreciation in the West of the spiritual wisdom of the East. In Los Angeles, he established an international headquarters for Self-Realization Fellowship—the nonsectarian religious society he had founded in 1920. Through his writings, extensive lecture tours, and the creation of Self-Realization Fellowship temples and meditation centers, he introduced hundreds of thousands of truth-seekers to the ancient science and philosophy of Yoga and its universally applicable methods of meditation.

Today, the spiritual and humanitarian work begun by Paramahansa Yogananda continues under the direction of Brother Chidananda, president of Self-Realization Fellowship/Yogoda Satsanga Society of India. In addition to publishing his writings, lectures, and informal talks (including a comprehensive series of *Self-Realization Fellowship Lessons* for home study), the society also oversees temples, retreats, and centers around the world; the Self-Realization Fellowship monastic communities; and a Worldwide Prayer Circle.

In an article on Sri Yogananda's life and work, Dr. Quincy Howe, Jr., Professor of Ancient Languages at Scripps College, wrote: "Paramahansa Yogananda brought to the West not only India's perennial promise of God-realization, but also a practical method by which spiritual aspirants from all walks of life may progress rapidly toward that goal. Originally appreciated in the West only on the most lofty and abstract level, the spiritual legacy of India is now accessible as practice and experience to all who aspire to know God, not in the beyond, but in the here and now....Yogananda has placed within the reach of all the most exalted methods of contemplation."

HOW-TO-LIVE SERIES GLOSSARY

ashram. A spiritual hermitage; often a monastery.

astral world. The subtle world of light and energy that lies behind the physical universe. Every being, every object, every vibration on the physical plane has an astral counterpart, for in the astral universe (heaven) is the "blueprint" of the material universe. A discussion of the astral world and the still subtler causal or ideational world of thought may be found in Chapter 43 of Paramahansa Yogananda's *Autobiography of a Yogi*.

Aum (Om). The Sanskrit root word or seed-sound symbolizing that aspect of Godhead which creates and sustains all things; Cosmic Vibration. *Aum* of the Vedas became the sacred word *Hum* of the Tibetans; *Amin* of the Muslims; and *Amen* of the Egyptians, Greeks, Romans, Jews, and Christians. The world's great religions state that all created things originate in the cosmic vibratory energy of *Aum* or *Amen*, the Word or Holy Ghost. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God....All things were made by him [the Word or *Aum*]; and without him was not any thing made that was made" (John 1:1,3).

avatar. From the Sanskrit word *avatara* ("descent"), signifying the descent of Divinity into flesh. One who attains union with Spirit and then returns to earth to help humanity is called an avatar.

Bhagavad Gita. "Song of the Lord." Part of the ancient Indian *Mahabharata* epic, presented in the form of a dialogue between the avatar (*q.v.*) Lord Krishna and his disciple Arjuna. A profound treatise on the science of Yoga and a timeless prescription for happiness and success in everyday living.

Bhagavan Krishna (Lord Krishna). An avatar (*q.v.*) who lived in India many centuries before the Christian era. His teachings on Yoga (*q.v.*) are presented in the Bhagavad Gita. One of the meanings given for the word *Krishna* in the Hindu scriptures is "Omniscient Spirit." Thus, *Krishna*, like *Christ*, is a title signifying the spiritual magnitude of the avatar—his oneness with God. (See *Christ Consciousness*.)

Christ center. The center of concentration and will at the point between the eyebrows; seat of Christ Consciousness and of the spiritual eye (*q.v.*).

Christ Consciousness. The projected consciousness of God immanent in all creation. In Christian scripture it is called the "only begotten son," the only pure reflection in creation of God the Father; in Hindu scripture it is called *Kutastha Chaitanya*, the cosmic intelligence of Spirit everywhere present in creation. It is the universal consciousness, oneness with God, manifested by Jesus, Krishna, and other avatars. Great saints and yogis know it as the state of *samadhi* (*q.v.*) meditation wherein their consciousness has become identified with the intelligence in every particle of creation; they feel the entire universe as their own body.

Cosmic Consciousness. The Absolute; Spirit beyond creation. Also the *samadhi*-meditation state of oneness with God both beyond and within vibratory creation.

guru. Spiritual teacher. The *Guru Gita* (verse 17) aptly describes the guru as "dispeller of darkness" (from *gu*, "darkness" and *ru*, "that which dispels"). Though the word *guru* is often misused to refer simply to any teacher or instructor, a true God-illuminated guru is one who, in his attainment of self-mastery, has realized his identity with the omnipresent Spirit. Such a one is uniquely qualified to lead others on their inward spiritual journey.

The nearest English equivalent to *guru* is the word *Master*. As a mark of respect, Paramahansa Yogananda's disciples often use this term in addressing or referring to him.

karma. The effects of past actions, from this or previous lifetimes. The law of karma is that of action and reaction, cause and effect, sowing and reaping. By their thoughts and actions, human beings become the molders of their own destinies. Whatever energies a person has set into motion, wisely or unwisely, must return to that person as their starting point, like a circle inexorably completing itself. An individual's karma follows him or her from incarnation to incarnation until fulfilled or spiritually transcended. (See *reincarnation*.)

Krishna. See *Bhagavan Krishna*.

Kriya Yoga. A sacred spiritual science, originating millenniums ago in India. A form of *Raja* ("royal" or "com-

plete”) *Yoga*, it includes certain advanced techniques of meditation that lead to direct, personal experience of God. *Kriya Yoga* is explained in Chapter 26 of *Autobiography of a Yogi*, and is taught to students of the *Self-Realization Fellowship Lessons* who fulfill certain spiritual requirements.

maya. The delusory power inherent in the structure of creation, by which the One appears as many. *Maya* is the principle of relativity, inversion, contrast, duality, oppositional states; the “Satan” (lit., in Hebrew, “the adversary”) of the Old Testament prophets. Paramahansa Yogananda wrote: “The Sanskrit word *maya* means ‘the measurer’; it is the magical power in creation by which limitations and divisions are apparently present in the Immeasurable and Inseparable....In God’s plan and play (*lila*), the sole function of Satan or *maya* is to attempt to divert man from Spirit to matter, from Reality to unreality....*Maya* is the veil of transitoriness in Nature...the veil that each man must lift in order to see behind it the Creator, the changeless Immutable, eternal Reality.”

paramahansa. A spiritual title signifying one who has attained the highest state of unbroken communion with God. It may be conferred only by a true guru on a qualified disciple. Swami Sri Yukteswar bestowed the title on Paramahansa Yogananda in 1935.

reincarnation. A discussion of reincarnation may be found in Chapter 43 of Paramahansa Yogananda’s *Autobiography of a Yogi*. As explained there, by the law of karma (*q.v.*), the past actions of human beings set into

motion the effects that draw them back to this material plane. Through a succession of births and deaths they return to earth repeatedly to undergo here the experiences that are the fruits of those past actions, and to continue a process of spiritual evolution that leads ultimately to realization of the soul’s inherent perfection and union with God.

samadhi. Spiritual ecstasy; superconscious experience; ultimately, union with God as the all-pervading supreme Reality.

Satan. See *maya*.

Self. Capitalized to denote the *atman*, or soul, the divine essence of man, as distinguished from the ordinary self, which is the human personality or ego. The Self is individualized Spirit, whose essential nature is ever-existing, ever-conscious, ever-new Bliss.

Self-realization. Realization of one’s true identity as the Self, one with the universal consciousness of God. Paramahansa Yogananda wrote: “Self-realization is the knowing—in body, mind, and soul—that we are one with the omnipresence of God; that we do not have to pray that it come to us, that we are not merely near it at all times, but that God’s omnipresence is our omnipresence; that we are just as much a part of Him now as we ever will be. All we have to do is improve our knowing.”

spiritual eye. The single eye of intuition and spiritual perception at the Christ (*Kutastha*) center (*q.v.*) between the eyebrows; the entryway into higher states of consciousness. During deep meditation, the single or

spiritual eye becomes visible as a bright star surrounded by a sphere of blue light that, in turn, is encircled by a brilliant halo of golden light. This omniscient eye is variously referred to in scriptures as the third eye, the star of the East, the inner eye, the dove descending from heaven, the eye of Shiva, and the eye of intuition. "If therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light" (Matthew 6:22).

Yoga. The word *Yoga* (from the Sanskrit *yuj*, "union") means union of the individual soul with Spirit; also, the methods by which this goal is attained. There are various systems of Yoga. That taught by Paramahansa Yogananda is *Raja Yoga*, the "royal" or "complete" yoga, which centers around practice of scientific methods of meditation. The sage Patanjali, foremost ancient exponent of Yoga, has outlined eight definite steps by which the *Raja Yogi* attains *samadhi*, or union with God. These are (1) *yama*, moral conduct; (2) *niyama*, religious observances; (3) *asana*, right posture to still bodily restlessness; (4) *pranayama*, control of *prana*, subtle life currents; (5) *pratyahara*, interiorization; (6) *dharana*, concentration; (7) *dhyana*, meditation; and (8) *samadhi*, superconscious experience.

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