

Classic Poetry Series

# Paramahansa Yogananda

## - poems -

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# Paramahansa Yogananda(05 January 1893 – 07 March 1952)

Paramahansa Yogananda (Bengali: ?????? ?????????, Sanskrit: ?????? ?????????), one of the greatest spiritual figures of the twentieth century, was an Indian poet and also was one of the first Spiritual Masters to bring the Yoga of the East to the aspiring West.

<b> Youth </b>

Yogananda was born Mukunda Lal Ghosh, in Gorakhpur, Uttar Pradesh, India to a devout Kshatriya family. According to his younger brother, Sananda, from his earliest years young Mukunda's awareness and experience of the spiritual was far beyond the ordinary. In his youth he sought out many of India's Hindu sages and saints, hoping to find an illuminated teacher to guide him in his spiritual quest.

Yogananda's seeking after various saints mostly ended when he met his guru, Swami Sri Yukteswar Giri, in 1910, at the age of 17. He describes his first meeting with Sri Yukteswar as a rekindling of a relationship that had lasted for many lifetimes:

"We entered a oneness of silence; words seemed the rankest superfluities. Eloquence flowed in soundless chant from heart of master to disciple. With an antenna of irrefragable insight I sensed that my guru knew God, and would lead me to Him. The obscuration of this life disappeared in a fragile dawn of prenatal memories. Dramatic time! Past, present, and future are its cycling scenes. This was not the first sun to find me at these holy feet!"

Later on Sri Yukteswar informed Yogananda that he had been sent to him by Mahavatar Babaji for a special purpose.

After passing his Intermediate Examination in Arts from the Scottish Church College, Calcutta, in June 1915, he graduated with a degree similar to a current day "Bachelor of Arts" or B.A. (which at the time was referred to as an A.B.), from the Serampore College, a constituent college of the University of Calcutta. This allowed him to spend time at Sri Yukteswar's ashram in Serampore. In 1915, he took formal vows into the monastic Swami Order and became 'Swami Yogananda Giri'. In 1917, Yogananda founded a school for boys in Dihika, West Bengal that combined modern educational techniques with yoga training and spiritual ideals. A year later, the school relocated to Ranchi. This school would

later become Yogoda Satsanga Society of India, the Indian branch of Yogananda's American organization.

### <b> Move to America </b>

In 1920, Yogananda went to the United States aboard the ship City of Sparta, as India's delegate to an International Congress of Religious Liberals convening in Boston. That same year he founded the Self-Realization Fellowship (SRF) to disseminate worldwide his teachings on India's ancient practices and philosophy of Yoga and its tradition of meditation. For the next several years, he lectured and taught on the East coast and in 1924 embarked on a cross-continental speaking tour. Thousands came to his lectures. During this time he attracted a number of celebrity followers, including soprano Amelita Galli-Curci, tenor Vladimir Rosing and Clara Clemens Gabilowitsch, the daughter of Mark Twain. The following year, he established an international center for Self-Realization Fellowship in Los Angeles, California, which became the spiritual and administrative heart of his growing work. Yogananda was the first Hindu teacher of yoga to spend a major portion of his life in America. He lived there from 1920—1952, interrupted by an extended trip abroad in 1935–1936 which was mainly to visit his guru in India though he undertook visits to other living western saints like Therese Neumann the stigmatist of Konnesreuth and places of spiritual significance enroute.

### <b> Chapter in the book "Hinduism Invades America" </b>

In 1930, Dr. Wendell Thomas, author and former professor at the College of the City of New York published the book "Hinduism Invades America", dealing largely with Swami Vivekananda and Yogananda. He summarizes his findings below. "I came to Paramahansa Yogananda many years ago, not as a seeker, but as a writer with a sympathetic yet analytic and critical approach. I found in him a rare combination. While steadfast in the ancient principles of his profound faith, he had the gift of generous adaptability, so that he became Christian and American without ceasing to be Hindu and Indian. With his quick wit and great spirit, he was well fitted to promote reconciliation and truth among the religious seekers of the world. He brought peace and joy to multitudes."

A whole chapter is dedicated to Yogananda's (then named) Yogoda System and (then named) Yogoda Satsanga organization (incorporated in New Jersey).

### <b> Visit to India, 1935-1936 </b>

In 1935, he returned to India to visit Sri Yukteswar and to help establish his

Yogoda Satsanga work in India. During this visit, as told in his autobiography, he met with Mahatma Gandhi, the Bengali saint Anandamoyi Ma, renowned physicist Chandrasekhara Venkata Raman, and several disciples of Sri Yukteswar's guru Lahiri Mahasaya. While in India, Sri Yukteswar gave Yogananda the monastic title of Paramahansa. (SRF adopted the spelling "Paramahansa" after Yogananda's death. Ananda Sangha continues to use the original spelling.) Paramahansa means "supreme swan" and is a title indicating the highest spiritual attainment. In 1936, while Yogananda was visiting Calcutta, Sri Yukteswar died in the town of Puri.

## <b> Death </b>

After returning to America, he continued to lecture, write, and establish churches in southern California. In the days leading up to his death, he began hinting that it was time for him to leave the world. On March 7, 1952, he attended a dinner for the visiting Indian Ambassador to the U.S., Binay Ranjan Sen, and his wife at the Biltmore Hotel in Los Angeles. At the conclusion of the banquet Yogananda spoke of India and America, their contributions to world peace and human progress, and their future cooperation, expressing his hope for a "United World" that would combine the best qualities of "efficient America" and "spiritual India." According to two eyewitnesses - Daya Mata, a direct disciple of Yogananda, who was head of Self-Realization Fellowship from 1955–2010 and direct disciple Swami Kriyananda- as Yogananda ended his speech, he read from his poem My India, concluding with the words "Where Ganges, woods, Himalayan caves, and men dream God—I am hallowed; my body touched that sod". "As he uttered these words, he lifted his eyes to the Kutasha center, and his body slumped to the floor" Followers say that he practiced mahasamadhi. Yogananda's remains are interred at the Forest Lawn Memorial Park in the Great Mausoleum (normally closed off to visitors but Yogananda's tomb is accessible) in Glendale, California.

# Eternity

Oh, will that day arrive  
When I shall ceaselessly ask – yea, drive  
Eternal questions into Thine ear,  
O Eternity ! and have solution  
How weak weeds grow and stand unbent,  
Unshaken `neath the trampling current.  
How the storm wrecks titanic things;  
Uproots the trees,  
And quick disturbs the mighty seas.  
How the first spark blinked; how the first tree,  
The first goldfish, the first bluebird so free,  
And the first crooning baby,  
Into this wonder-house to visit,  
Made their grand entry.  
They come, I see;  
Their growth alone I watch.

Thy cosmic moulding Hand,  
That secret works on land and sea,  
I wish to seize,  
O Eternity

Paramahansa Yogananda

# God God God

From the depth of slumber,  
As I ascend the spiral stairway of wakefulness,  
I whisper  
God, God, God!

Thou art the food and when I break my fast  
Of nightly separation from Thee  
I taste thee and mentally say  
God, God, God!

No matter where I go, the spotlight of my mind  
Ever keeps turning on Thee;  
And in the battle dim of activity my silent war cry  
Is ever;  
God, God, God!

When boisterous storms of trials shriek  
And worries howl at me,  
I drown their noises, loudly chanting  
God, God, God!

When my mind weaves dreams  
With treads of memories,  
Then on that magic cloth I do emboss;  
God, God, God!

Ever night, in time of deepest sleep,  
My peace dreams and calls; Joy! Joy! Joy!  
And my Joy comes singing evermore;  
God, God, God!

In waking, eating, working, dreaming, sleeping,  
Serving, meditating, chanting, divinely loving,  
My soul constantly hums, unheard by any;  
God, God, God!

Paramahansa Yogananda

# My Cosmic Mother's Face

Fairy dream faces, like fresh flowers,  
May bloom in the vase of my gaze for my soul to see;  
But the Face that vanished behind space  
Cannot be replaced by any of these.

There are faces of transcendent beauty,  
Faces of exquisite charm, faces tender and true;  
There are faces of sweetness and wisdom,  
But there's none like the face of You.

There are faces tainted by fires of lust,  
Faces the wise cannot fathom, faces a child cannot trust.  
There are faces of beauty, steeped in glory through and through;  
But O Cosmic Mother, they are dim beside You.

There's the violet, the lily, the lotus, the rose;  
Fragrant flower-faces blooming under the snows;  
There are faces of stars, and the moon and the sun.  
But for me there's One Face evermore, only one.

After my search through aeons unnumbered,  
The never-ceasing streamlets of my dreams  
Have melted in Thy silver ocean-face,  
Where smiling love forever softly gleams.

Countless silver rays of living beauties  
Have melted into one transcendent grace –  
The beauties of a million, million ages –  
To make, at last, Thine omnipresent face.

Without Thy face, there is no light for me  
In all the unplumbed depths of land or sea  
Thy beauty-rays are rainbowed over all  
Eternity, while planets rise and fall.

On the lips of laughter, on roses in the dawn,  
It is Thy smile forever glowing there –  
An immortelle of glory, heavenly sweet  
With fragrance of unceasing, selfless prayer.

On the calm lake of my breathless bosom,  
Where ripples of desire no more  
Play little games like children,  
The glimmer of Thy face is spreading o'er.

In the cleansed mirror of my memory,  
In the deep crystal pool that is my heart,  
I see Thine omnipresence trapped for me-  
Of my own self forevermore a part.  
As I, awakening, pass through gates of light,  
Thy wisdom-face is all my soul can see.  
Faded, the pale pleasure-stars of dream skies,  
In the omniscient light enfolding Thee.

Auroras, lights squeezed from shimmering hives of atoms,  
Flashing feelings, burning vitalities, worlds of flame,  
Dumb stones and speaking minds – all melted together  
To form Thy one face and to spell Thy one name.

My vision, withdrawn from viewing pulsating centuries,  
Throws its countless eyes within to search eternity;  
And all I seek, O Cosmic Mother, all I crave forever,  
Is the light of one face – the face of Thee!

Paramahansa Yogananda



# My India

Not where the musk of happiness blows,  
Not where darkness and fears never tread;  
Not in the homes of perpetual smiles,  
Nor in the heaven of a land of prosperity  
Would I be born  
If I must put on mortal garb once more.

Dread famine may prowl and tear my flesh,  
Yet would I love to be again  
In my Hindustan.  
A million thieves of disease  
May try to steal the body's fleeting health;  
And clouds of fate  
May shower scalding drops of searing sorrow –  
Yet would I there, in India,  
Love to reappear!

Is this love of mine blind sentiment  
That sees not the pathways of reason?  
Ah, no! I love India,  
For there I learned first to love God  
    and all things beautiful.  
Some teach to seize the fickle dewdrop, life,  
Sliding down the lotus leaf of time;  
Stubborn hopes are built  
Around the gilded, brittle body-bubble.  
But India taught me to love

The soul of deathless beauty in the dewdrop  
    and the bubble –  
Not their fragile frames.  
Her sages taught me to find my Self,  
Buried beneath the ash heaps  
Of incarnations of ignorance.  
Though many a land of power, plenty, and science  
My soul, garbed sometimes as an Oriental,  
Sometimes as an Occidental,  
Travelled far and wide,  
Seeking Itself;

At last, in India, to find Itself.

Though mortal fires raze all her homes  
and golden paddy fields,  
Yet to sleep on her ashes and dream immortality,  
O India, I will be there!  
The guns of science and matter  
Have boomed on her shores  
Yet she is unconquered.  
Her soul is free evermore!  
Her soldier saints are away,  
To rout with realization's ray  
The bandits of hate, prejudice, and patriotic selfishness;  
And to burn the walls of separation dark  
Between children of the One, One Father.  
The Western brothers by matter's might  
have conquered my land;

Blow, blow aloud, her conch shells all!  
India now invades with love,  
To conquer their souls.

Better than Heaven or Arcadia  
I love Thee, O my India!  
And thy love I shall give  
To every brother nation that lives.  
God made the earth;  
Man made confining countries  
And their fancy-frozen boundaries.  
But with newfound boundless love  
I behold the borderland of my India  
Expanding into the world.  
Hail, mother of religions, lotus, scenic beauty,  
And sages!  
Thy wide doors are open,  
Welcoming God's true sons through all ages.  
Where Ganges, woods, Himalayan caves, and men dream God –  
I am hallowed; my body touched that sod.

Paramahansa Yogananda

# My Soul Is Marching On!

The shining stars are sunk in darkness deep,  
The weary sun is dead at night,  
The moon's soft smile doth fade anon;  
But still my soul is marching on!

The grinding wheel of time hath crushed  
Full many a life of moon and star,  
And many a brightly smiling morn;  
But still my soul is marching on!

The flowers bloomed, then hid in gloom,  
The bounty of the trees did cease;  
Colossal men have come and gone,  
But still my soul is marching on!

The aeons one by one are flying,  
My arrows one by one are gone;  
Dimly, slowly, life is fading,  
But still my soul is marching on!

Darkness, death, and failures vied;  
To block my path they fiercely tried.  
My fight with jealous Nature's strong,  
But still my soul is marching on!

[From: Songs of the Soul]

Paramahansa Yogananda

# Nature's Nature

Away, ye muses, all away!  
Away with songs of finch and fay.  
Away the jaundiced sight  
That magnifies the firefly's light  
To bonfire bright;  
That sets ablaze at once  
My musing's dimly burning lamps;  
That ornaments with rhymes  
The penury-stricken looks betimes;  
That over-clothes the logic – lord  
With fancy –swollen words.  
Away, the partial love  
That 'boldens Nature to sit above  
Her Maker!

This day I fasten eyelid doors,  
With absence wax my ears,  
With languorous peace congeal  
My tongue, my touch, my tears \*  
That I within may pore  
Upon the things behind, ahead,  
In the darkness round me spread.  
I lock Dame Nature out  
With all her fickle rout.

Somewhere here,  
In the darkness drear,  
I myself with cheer  
My course will steer  
In the path  
E'er sought by all:  
Its magnet call  
I hear.

Not hear, not here,  
Apollo would his burning chariot steer;  
Nor Diana dare to peep  
Into the sacred silence deep.

Not here, not here,  
Not far or near  
Can mounts or rebel waves  
E'er make me full of fear;  
Nor evermore  
Their dreadful grandeur to adore.

Not here, not here  
The soft capricious wiles of flowers;  
Nor swarming storm clouds' sweeping terror,  
Dishevelling the trees  
And light-haired skies;  
Nor doomsday's thunderous roar,  
Dismantling earth and stars-  
The cosmic beauties all to mar -  
Not Nature's murderous mutiny,  
Nor man's exploding destiny  
Can touch me here.

Not here, not here:  
Through mind's strong iron bars,  
Not gods or goblins, men or nature,  
Without my pass dare enter.

I look behind, ahead -  
On naught but darkness tread.  
In wrath I strike, and set the dark ablaze  
With the immortal spark of thought,  
By friction-process brought  
Of concentration  
And distraction.  
The darkness burns  
With a million tongues;  
And now I spy  
All past, all distant things, as nigh.

I smile serene  
As I expose to gaze.  
In wisdom's brilliant blaze,  
All charms of the Hidden Home Unseen:  
The Home of Nature's birth,  
The planets' moulding hearth,

The factory whence all forms or fairies start,  
The bards, colossal minds, and hearts,  
The gods and all,  
And all, and all!

Away, away  
With all the lightsome lays!  
Oh, now will I portray  
In humble way,  
And try to lisp, if only in half truths,  
Of wordless charms of Thee Unseen,  
To whom Dame Nature owes her nature  
and her sheen.

[From: Songs of the Soul]

Paramahansa Yogananda

# Om

Whence, whence this soundless roar doth come,  
When drowseth matter's dreary drum?  
On shores of bliss, Om, booming, breaks!  
All earth, all heaven, all body shakes!  
Cords bound to flesh are broken all,  
Vibrations burst, meteors fall!  
The hustling heart, the boasting breath,  
No more shall cause the yogi's death;  
All nature lies in darkness soft,  
Dimness of starlight seen aloft;  
Subconscious dreams have gone to bed...  
'Tis then that one doth hear Om's tread;  
The bumble-bee now hums along -  
Hark! Baby Om doth sing His song!  
From Krishna's flute the call is sweet:  
'Tis time the Watery God to meet!  
Now, the God of Fire is singing!  
Om! Om! Om! His harp is ringing.  
God of Prana now is sounding -  
Wondrous, breathing-bells resounding!  
O! Upward climb the living tree;  
Hark to the cosmic symphony.  
From Om, the soundless roar! From Om  
The call for light o'er dark to roam.  
From Om the music of the spheres!  
From Om the mist of nature's tears!  
All things of earth and heaven declare,  
Om! Om! Resounding everywhere!

Paramahansa Yogananda

# One Friend

Many clouds do race to hide Thee –  
Of friends and wealth and fame –  
And yet through mist of tears I see  
Appear Thy Golden Name.

Each time my father, mother, friends  
Do loudly claim they did me tend,  
I wake from sleep to sweetly hear  
That Thou alone didst help me here.

[From: Songs of the Soul]

Paramahansa Yogananda



# Samadhi

Vanished are the veils of light and shade,  
Lifted the vapors of sorrow,  
Sailed away the dawn of fleeting joy,  
Gone the mirage of the senses.  
Love, hate, health, disease, life and death –  
Departed, these false shadows on the screen  
of duality.  
Waves of laughter, scyllas of sarcasm, whirlpools  
of melancholy,  
Melting in the vast sea of bliss.  
Bestilled is the storm of maya  
By the magic wand of intuition deep.  
The universe, a forgotten dream, lurks  
subconsciously,  
Ready to invade my newly wakened memory divine.  
I exist without the cosmic shadow,  
But it could not live bereft of me;  
As the sea exists without the waves,  
But they breathe not without the sea.  
Dreams, wakings, states of deep turiya sleep,  
Present, past, future, no more for me,  
But the ever-present, all-flowing, I, I everywhere.  
Consciously enjoyable,  
Beyond the imagination of all expectancy,  
Is this, my samadhi state.  
Planets, stars, stardust, earth,  
Volcanic bursts of doomsday cataclysms,  
Creation's moulding furnace,  
Glaciers of silent X-rays,  
Burning floods of electrons,  
Thoughts of all men, past, present, future,  
Every blade of grass, myself and all,  
Each particle of creation's dust,  
Anger, greed, good, bad, salvation, lust,  
I swallowed up – transmuted them  
Into one vast ocean of blood of my own one Being!  
Smoldering joy, oft-puffed by unceasing meditation,  
Which blinded my tearful eyes,  
Burst into eternal flames of bliss,

And consumed my tears, my peace, my frame,  
my all.  
Thou art I, I am Thou,  
Knowing, Knower, Known, as One!  
One tranquilled, unbroken thrill of eternal, living, ever-new peace!

Not an unconscious state  
Or mental chloroform without wilful return,  
Samadhi but extends my realm of consciousness  
Beyond the limits of my mortal frame  
To the boundaries of eternity,  
Where I, the Cosmic Sea,  
Watch the little ego floating in Me.  
Not a sparrow, nor a grain of sand, falls  
without my sight  
All space floats like an iceberg in my mental sea.  
I am the Colossal Container of all things made!  
By deeper, longer, continuous, thirsty,  
guru – given meditation,  
This celestial samadhi is attained.  
All the mobile murmurs of atoms are heard;  
The dark earth, mountains, seas are molten liquid!  
This flowing sea changes into vapors of nebulae!  
Aum blows o'er the vapors; they open their veils,  
Revealing a sea of shining electrons,  
Till, at the last sound of the cosmic drum,  
Grosser light vanishes into eternal rays  
Of all-pervading Cosmic Joy.  
From Joy we come,  
For Joy we live,  
In the sacred Joy we melt.  
I, the ocean of mind, drink all creation's waves.  
The four veils of solid, liquid, vapor, light,  
Lift aright.  
Myself, in everything,  
Enters the Great Myself.  
Gone forever,  
The fitful, flickering shadows of a mortal memory.  
Spotless is my mental sky,  
Below, ahead, and high above.  
Eternity and I, one united ray.  
I, a tiny bubble of laughter,

Have become the Sea of Mirth Itself.

[From: Songs of the Soul]

Paramahansa Yogananda

# Undying Beauty

They did their best  
And they are blest-  
The sap, the shoots,  
The little leaves and roots;  
The benign breath,  
The touch of light –  
All worked in amity  
To grow the rose's beauty.  
Watch its splendour,  
Its undying grandeur,  
The Infinite Face  
That peeps through its little case.  
Watch not in grief  
Its falling petals or its brief  
Sojourn here;  
For its career  
Done, its duty ends;  
Toward the Immortal's home it tends.  
The sap dried,  
The summer petals fled,  
Its body pines;  
Yet its death's divine;  
Through the death it spurns  
Its deathless glory's won;  
The rose is dead –  
Its beauty lives instead.

Paramahansa Yogananda

# What Is Love?

Love is the scent with the lotus born.  
It is the silent choirs of petals  
Singing the winter's harmony of uniform beauty.  
Love is the song of the soul, singing to God.  
It is the balanced rhythmic dance of planets -  
    sun and moon lit  
In the skyey hall festooned with fleecy clouds -  
Around the sovereign Silent Will.  
It is the thirst of the rose to drink the sunrays  
And blush red with life.  
'Tis the promptings of the mother earth  
To feed her milk to the tender, thirsty roots,  
And to nurse all life.  
It is the urge of the sun  
To keep all things alive.

Love is the unseen craving of the Mother Divine  
That took the protecting father-form,  
And that feeds helpless mouths  
With milk of mother's tenderness.  
It is the babies' sweetness,  
Coaxing the rain of parental sympathy  
To shower upon them.  
It is the lover's unenslaved surrender to the beloved  
To serve and solace.  
It is the elixir of friendship,  
Reviving broken and bruised souls.  
It is the martyr's zeal to shed his blood  
For the well-beloved fatherland.  
It is the ineffable, silent call of the heart to another  
    heart.  
It is the God-drunk poet's heartaches  
For every creature's groans.

Love is to enjoy the family rose of petal-beings,  
And thence to move to spacious fields -  
Passing by portals of social, national, international  
    sympathy,  
On to the limitless Cosmic Home -

To gaze with looks of wonderment,  
And to serve all that lives, still or moving.  
This is to know what love is.  
He knows who lives it.

Love is evolution's ameliorative call  
To the far-strayed sons  
To return to Perfection's home.  
It is the call of the beauty - robed ones  
To worship the great Beauty.  
It is the call of God  
Through silent intelligences  
And starburst of feelings.

Love is the Heaven  
Toward which the flowers, rivers, nations, atoms,  
creatures - you and I  
Are rushing by the straight path of action right,  
Or winding laboriously on error's path,  
All to reach haven there at last.

[From: Songs of the Soul]

Paramahansa Yogananda

# When I Cast All Dreams Away

I sipped the sap of each sane pleasure;  
I exulted in the crushed beauty of sextillion stars;  
I made a bonfire of all sorrows and basked in the glory blaze;  
I quaffed the questing love of all hearts;  
I mingled paternal, maternal, and fraternal love together,  
And drank the solacing draught;  
I squeezed the scriptures for drops of peace;  
I wrung poems from the winepress of Nature;  
I lifted gems from the mine of thoughts;  
I stole the sweetness from the honeycomb of innocent joys;  
I read, I smiled, I worked, I planned, I throbbed, I aspired;  
    But naught was sufficient.  
Only nightmares of incompleteness,  
Ever receding will-o'-the-wisps of promised happiness,  
    Haunted and hastened my heart.  
    But when I cast all dreams away,  
    I found the deep sanctuary of peace,  
    And my soul sang: "God alone! God alone!"

Paramahansa Yogananda