

Paramhansa Yogananda

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"Paramhansa Yogananda" is our subject this morning.

It is rather difficult to say much about such a Great Soul, but commemorating his passing on March 7, 1952, our thoughts turn toward him as the founder of Self-Realization Fellowship.

As I'm sure many of you know, he came to Boston in 1920 to attend the Congress of Religious Liberals, held in that city in the Fall. Paramhansa Yoganandaji's Mission was to bring to the West the realization of the Universality of Religion. That is, underlying the outward form of religion is a universality, which can be known by everyone; irrespective of color, race, or creed. And also, to bring yoga teachings, whereby each and every one who will, can contact that Universality of Religion – can contact God – and, thereby, know the meaning of his, or her life, and to understand the reality of existence.

So, realize, that's the Mission which our Master had, as pointed out by the reading from the Autobiography [of a Yogi]. He had a Great Mission, because I'm sure we all realize, that this is not usually understood – the Universality underlying the outward form of religion. The orthodox forms of religion are taken up with the ways and the means, but underneath that, irrespective of whether you are a Protestant, Catholic, Jew, Methodist, Episcopal, Episcopalian, or whatever you are, if you follow the right yoga teaching and technique, you will see the underlying Universality of Religion; the underlying Light of God at the Christ Center at this point [in forehead between the eyebrows]. And you'll also, if you will turn your attention to the right techniques which the Master has left with us, you will hear the Cosmic Sound – the Great Word of God – the Om vibration, in which is His Great Love, and Guidance, and Understanding.

So you can see that Paramhansa Yogananda's message was very, is very, important, because it does away with great misconception as to what religion is – what true religion is. He was to bring, and did bring, to all of those, who will try, his yoga techniques. He brought to them the realization, or the ways and the means, whereby they could realize the Universality of Religion, and irrespective of race, or creed. We all see the same Light of God; we're all made from that one

Light; and it is His Love that's in the hearts of each and every one of us. That was Paramhansa Yoganandaji's message to the West.

Through his yoga teachings, he enabled all of those who will to attain conscious communion with their Creator. So, you can see what a wonderful thing it is: conscious communion. Not an imaginative thing, but a reality. And to know that you and your Father, are the same – are one – and that there is no separation between you. That's the most wonderful thing that Paramhansa Yogananda has done, and has left with us. We have illustrations of this, as I pointed out.

As we read in Matthew, “If thine eye be single, thy body will be filled with light.¹” What light? The Light of Christ Consciousness – God's Light. And so, if you know, by following proper yoga techniques, how to contact the Christ Center here [the point between the eyebrows], you will see and know, that Light spoken of by Jesus, “If thine eye be single, thy body will be full of light.”

And also in Revelation, 1st Chapter [10th through 20th Verses], we can read, “I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard a voice behind me [a great voice, as of a trumpet], Saying...” this is the way, follow it. The voice of a trumpet – that's the Om sound. That's the Great Word of God. “Behind me,” means in the region of the spine. So, Paramhansa Yoganandaji has left the ways and the means. The definite techniques where you, or I, or anyone who will, as a child of God, can know these aspects of the Presence of God within us: The Universality of Religion; the Light at the Christ Center; and the Great Cosmic Sound, in which is God's Intelligence; and above all, His Love. There, are just two illustrations that show you what a Great work Paramhansaji has done.

Now for the preparation of this arduous task which the Master carried out all by himself, in the beginning; he was with his own Master, Sri Yukteswarji, in an Indian hermitage for ten years, and there, he received the discipline of that Master. And in the Autobiography² you can read about that. But, let me say, that he was exact in his discipline; and because of that exactness – but, of course, it was tempered with love, if you could get underneath the outer shell, so to speak – because of that, he prepared the Master for his arduous undertaking; and, which he carried out; and, which, of course, in the end, as he often said, “My life is a ransom for many.” He gave his life that you, and that we all, might

¹ Matthew 6:22

² “Years in my Master's Hermitage,” Chapter 12, Page 98, Revision 1951

know these ways to contact the Universality of Religion, and know the truth behind outward forms of religion.

In his poem, "When I Am Only a Dream," Paramhansa Yogananda definitely pointed out that when he was gone, his teachings would take his place. I'll read just parts of it. It's most beautiful. It is beautiful because it's reality. And, if you will follow these techniques, and understand, and know the Omniscience of God, which is right within you, and in me, then you will understand why he said: "When I am gone, my teachings will take my place. To those of you who have asked me to guide you to my Beloved's presence..." Isn't that beautiful? That shows he was one with the Omniscience of God. No ordinary teacher could do that. Then he goes on to say, "...I will warn you through my silently talking mind, or speak to you through a gentle significant glance, or whisper to you through my love, or loudly dissuade you when you stray away from Him." Now this, of course, applied when he was with us.

Then he goes on, "But, when I shall become only a memory, a mental image, or inwardly speaking voice; when no earthly call will reveal my whereabouts in unplumbed space; when no shallow entreaty, or stern stentorian command will bring from me an answer," then "I will smile in your mind when you are right, and when you are wrong I will weep through my eyes, dimly peering at you in the dark, and weep through your eyes perchance, and I will whisper to you through your conscience, and I will reason with you through your reason, and I will love through your love."

Could any saint except one, true saint, one with the Omniscience of God, do that? Then going on – and this is the part we must remember – "When you are able no longer to talk to me, read my Whispers of Eternity. Eternally through that, I will talk to you. Unknown, I will walk by your side, and guard you with invisible arms." What can guard us with invisible arms except the Omniscience of God? Nothing!

And then finally, "And as soon as you know my Beloved, and hear His Voice in silence," as soon as you attain that one, oneness with the Omniscience of God, "you will know me again, more tangibly than you knew me on this earth plane. When I am only a dream to you, I will come to remind you that you, too, are naught but a dream of my heavenly Beloved's, and when you know you are a dream, as I now know, we shall be ever awake in Him."

So, there you have the most beautiful expression of the Mission of Paramhansa Yogananda. To point out the Eternal Truth, and to leave the ways and the means whereby we can continue in the contact with the Omniscience of God, which he surely had, and now enjoys.

Another beautiful statement of Paramhansa Yogananda is this. He said, "When I am gone, love alone will take my place." And we, the Board of Directors, who are doing our best to carry on his work, often repeat that, and remind ourselves that the Master said, "When I am gone, love alone will take my place." And like all true servants of God, the Greater they are, the more they realize the insignificance of the personality. Paramhansa Yogananda did not emphasize his personality. And there are many statements that he made, and incidents, which prove that.

One that comes to my mind is this: and when he was leaving Boston, of course, I was somewhat naturally attached to him, and felt the loss of his going. And then he said to me – and I am so happy he did say it, because it stood me well later in life – he said, "Never mind what happens to me. That Light which you see, and that Love which you feel in your heart is far greater than I am. That's God Himself."

And later, when he did pass away, at first, there was a great emptiness – naturally. But then I remembered those words. And with that memory, through his grace, came a sustaining power whereby I was then, and have been ever since, able to realize that he is not away. But the Omniscience of God is with each and every one of us whenever we will. Through right meditation and devotion, and with the Love of the one Father, elevate our consciousness into His Presence.

Paramhansa Yogananda did much in America. I cannot take the time to go into the details. He lectured throughout the land. And one thing – this cross, which I have, pardon me, I haven't it on today, but I do usually wear it – was the one he used when he lectured throughout America. And I value it so much. He lectured throughout many cities. Spoke in different clubs, and above all, spent the time trying to lift, to serve, his brothers, and his sisters that they, too, might enjoy the realization which he enjoyed. He was a tireless worker. And how he did, in a short space of time – establish on a permanent foundation Self-Realization Fellowship – to my mind is really a miracle. Alone, he did it – singlehanded.

He did those things, which took others a great deal longer to do, and organizations to do. Why? Because of, as you heard Mr. Cook read, "he will be a spiritual engine." And that's what the Master was: untiring; slept very little; worked 16 hours a day, usually, sometimes longer. Why? Because he felt his oneness with the Great Power of God, and his accomplishments were for one reason. One motive was behind all his efforts – was to help his fellow man. He told me one time, or he wrote these words; he said, "There was a time when I tried to please others, but finally, now," he says, "I work only to please God, that I may carry out His Will and serve others according to His Will." So that was the motive of Paramhansa Yogananda. To do God's Will, as he was one with His Omniscience, naturally, that was his motive; to help others; to serve others.

I remember one little incident, at the hermitage. We were waiting, and he kept us waiting a long time, which we were used to. Finally he came, and he said, "You know," he says, "he needed me so much. That, that man needed me so much. I couldn't leave him until I fixed him up all right." That was Paramhansa Yogananda's motive. That was his method, and that is a true picture of his life.

Now, "yoga" means Divine Union. "Yoga means divine union," Master wrote, "and is possible through self-effort." These are his words. And he will be remembered, Paramhansa Yogananda will be remembered, because he has established, and left with us, the ways and the means, where each and every one of us who will, can contact God – can attain Divine contact – God contact, and with this realization, can understand and know what we really are, and why we're here. God contact is the greatest thing necessary, and God contact cannot be attained unless one knows the right yoga methods of attaining that contact. But with that realization, that you and your Father are not separated – there is no separation between you – with that realization, comes the assurance that "Thou and I are never apart." "Thou and I, O Father, are never apart."

There is no separation between the loyal devotee and God, who really, in his heart wants to know God, and follows the right technique. There is no separation. You will realize that your very breath; your very heartbeat; your very sensation; your very thought; your very emotions; are none other than those of the One Father. One Father, who, as the Master said, "Loves us more than we can imagine." He has left the ways and the means, for you to know that one Father, who loves you more than you can imagine, and loves us so wonderfully through His devotees. That's what Paramhansaji has left for us, and that's why he is such a Great channel of God.

I was meditating in the desert not too long ago – hunting for him. As he said before he passed away, "We'll be apart a little and then together again," just like that. But, to know those things, and realize those things, is another matter. And so, I was meditating deeply, and I was talking to God, as in my way, telling Him that I waited long enough. And from His Presence, which I felt – Divine Mother's Presence – came these words, "It was I who took, who came to you as your beloved Master."

And so, with that, all the longing for once more meeting, passed away, because there's only one God. There's only one reality, and that's God Himself. He has taken the form of each and every one of us. He has taken the form of every Great saint. He took the form of our beloved Master. We have to know it, that's all. Knowing that, knowing that God is with you in every action, you want nothing else. All answers; all questions are answered. All-fulfillment is there. But greatest of all, you know that that love, which you feel in your heart, is none other than the Great Love of our one common Father.