


*Sri Daya Mata*

The  
Skilled  
Profession  
*of*  
Child-Rearing

  
*Self-Realization Fellowship*

FOUNDED 1920

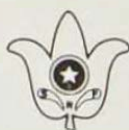
*Paramahansa Yogananda*



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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 audiocassette 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, members of the monastic Self-Realization Order, 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.



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*There is a Power that will light  
your way to health, happiness,  
peace, and success, if you will  
but turn toward that Light.*

—PARAMAHANSA YOGANANDA



# The Skilled Profession of Child-Rearing

BY SRI DAYA MATA

*Compiled from satsangas in which questions  
about child-rearing were asked*

Bringing children into the world is not only a nature-given right, but also carries with it a God-given responsibility. Society demands training if one is to be a lawyer, accountant, or mechanic. But how few are prepared for parenting—the most demanding of occupations!

I believe that ideally no one should graduate from school without having taken classes on how to be a responsible adult and a good parent. Children are taught how to cook, to sew, to keep books, even how to operate computers today. This is all good, but they also need to be taught how to deal with life.

### **Training of Children Begins in the Home**

The proper training of children begins in the home. The schools have “gone to pot,” so to speak. But the deteriorating environment there is not entirely the fault of the schools. We must lay the blame where it belongs—lack of right education in the home.

I admit that raising children is a hard task in this day and age. But no parent has the right to bring a child into the world and then abdicate his or her responsibility to guide that child. Who would plant in their garden a seed or a little tree and leave it to develop by itself, without some kind of care and protection? If you want it to grow healthy and straight, you have to put beside it a strong support, so that it does not bend over or break when the winds come. We have a responsibility to our young ones, and it is a shame when parents neglect that responsibility. If God had not intended that parents guide their children, babies would be hatched from eggs, produced and then abandoned by

the parents—left to hatch and grow by themselves. That is what turtles do!

### **Children Need Loving Discipline**

Children need discipline. I do not mean beating them; please understand that. Violence should never be used on a child! You have to guide children with firmness, but there must also be love. My point of reference is to look back to our years with Master\* [Paramahansa Yogananda]: We young devotees on the path were, in a sense, children. He guided us with reason, and with firmness when necessary, but also with great love. That is the ideal.

I remember thinking years ago what a grave mistake it was that so many parents were following the advice of a well-known doctor who advocated no discipline—just allowing the child to be free to exercise his own will, to “do his own thing.” Common sense told me that this method of child-

\* See *guru* in glossary.

rearing would lead to trouble. These fresh souls in little bodies (we won't call them "young" souls because no doubt they have already gone through many lives)\* cannot express discrimination and understanding, even though these qualities are innate in the soul. Children are like tender plants. To grow properly, to blossom into their full potential, they need nurturing and pruning—the guidance, the love, and the understanding that only parents can give to them. Every child needs to have dialogue with someone who has that understanding which he has not yet gained, but will develop if he is given the right guidance.

The present trend of permissiveness needs to be turned around, and one way is to provide proper training in the formative years. Children should be taught right moral attitudes and right behavior—not only through words, but example as well. Lack of such guidance is a major factor in the tragic

\* See *reincarnation* in glossary.

breakdown of moral standards and behavior in this country, which has done more than anything else to destroy the family unit. And what has that brought forth? Emotionally crippled children. And emotionally crippled children generally become emotionally crippled adults, who have developed a feeling of rejection, which leads to bitterness toward society as a whole. They feel that the world has not given them their just due. If not corrected, this breakdown of morale can result in a deterioration of moral responsibility such as that which led to the decline and fall of past civilizations.

### **Parents Should Share the Responsibility of Child-Rearing**

Mother and father each have different roles in the upbringing of children, and both are very important. The mother is the principal one to nurture the children in their infancy. I do not mean that she is the only one; but she is the logical parent to give most of the early care, and to instill in the



children the training that is so necessary in the primary years. It is she who nourishes the infant from her own body. But the father should not abdicate his share of the responsibility. As the child grows, it needs the companionship, nurturing, and understanding of both parents. It is the common duty of both father and mother to attend to the raising of the children.

I very much believe in the equality of the sexes. Gurudeva Paramahansa Yogananda was one of the first to stress that equality. While everyone else in the West was giving leadership to men only, he went against that tradition, making me one of the first women to be leader of a worldwide spiritual organization.

What does it matter whether one is called Mr., Mrs., Miss, or Ms., when every individual is essentially neither male nor female, but a soul made in the image of God? This is rather like little children quarreling over toys. The real issues are on a larger scale. The soul within is what really matters. Each one

of us has an essential role to play in this world. If that were not so, God would have made us all the same. And in the ultimate sense, no role is more important than any other: The significant point is that we play our part well, whatever it might be.

It is not right that a mother should be tied down to a stove all her life. That is not fair or necessary. Obviously, mothers also need to have other challenges in their lives. But in the child's tender early years, the mother's influence is most important; and I believe her place is at home with her children. (In some cases, of course, a working single parent may have to send the children to a day-care center.)

### **Cultivating a Close Relationship With Your Children**

It really is a skilled profession to bring up children, to understand the needs of the child. Each one is different. In the sight of God, we are all souls, possessing the same qualities as the Divine. But because each one has free will and independent intelli-

gence, we have developed in different ways, with unique patterns of karma.\* Each child must thus be understood as an individual.

I was one of four children in my family. We adored our mother, which I think is what happens when the mother tries always to be understanding. She never had to punish us physically, because we wanted to please her. When we displeased her, we suffered, because we loved her. We could always talk with her; we could always count on her understanding. But she did not treat us all alike. She saw what each one needed, and that she gave to us. This comes instinctively, I think, when a mother spends time with her children. Give your love equally to all your children, but realize that you have to give in a different way to each one. Some children are born with great stubbornness, some are flighty, some are moody, some are always happy and cheerful. It is a matter of getting to know your child and then guiding

\* See glossary.

him, in a way he will understand, when he is going the wrong way.

It is important that parents cultivate the right relationship with their children. Do not try to be like your children. You are their parents, not their brothers and sisters. Teach them to love and respect you as parents. I don't think the "buddy-buddy" relationship is healthy, or helpful to a child. A mother wanting to become a sister to her children is merely trying to nourish her own ego. She doesn't want to grow up. She should be a responsible mother. And the same is true for the father.

### **Keep the Lines of Communication Open**

In order to train your children properly, you must establish effective communication with them. Let them feel they can confide in you. Encourage them to be truthful by allowing them to say whatever is in their minds. If you turn a child away because he has told you something you do not like, that child will become evasive, trying to mask his true feeling and to hide behavior of

which he knows you will disapprove. He will instead seek out someone else as his confidant. It is far better that you be that friend, the one to whom he can always turn. In that healthy relationship with your children, they will not feel a need for drugs or to go elsewhere for understanding.

Take time to talk with your children. Answer their questions and explain your guidance to them in language they can understand. You cannot just say, "Don't do it." You have to reason with the child in a way that will get him to listen. One learns by listening, even if one does not agree with everything that is said. Encourage the child in willingness to listen. Constructive words will remain etched in his consciousness. He may be grateful for them when one day he himself becomes a parent. Good rapport with your children has to begin in the early years. If you wait until a problem arises, it will be far more difficult to open those lines of communication at that time.

One thing I would caution about: Never force your own spiritual views on your children. Don't say to your child, "Because I'm meditating, you're going to meditate." Children are like flowers; allow them to grow up and develop their own personalities. There is nothing wrong with that. Your part is to provide them with the right example and sense of direction—that they learn to love God, to accept and carry responsibilities, to be unselfish, to be kind to others—the aggregate of qualities and virtues that is the measure of a spiritual-minded human being.

In my own childhood, at a very early age we children learned to pray at our mother's knee. It was part of getting ready for bed. We knelt around her, said a short prayer, and then prayed for the different members of the family. It was so sweet. We were never forced to do it. A child who is taught to pray loves it. By the time I was seventeen and came into Self-Realization Fellowship, I was so busy praying for others that my prayer at night

seemed never-ending—there were so many to add to the list. Praying for others teaches one to feel for others. Children should be taught to be caring and unselfish.

### **Introduce Children to a Sense of Responsibility**

It is important also to teach children to accept responsibility. I am always appalled when I see families in which the parents do everything—all the cooking, dishes, cleaning, gardening—and the child sits in front of the TV or goes off to visit his or her friends, and has no chores. This is not right. Why do parents feel they must do everything? Why aren't they giving the child the kind of guidance that will help him to develop skills and responsibility? The child grows up to be a careless and unreliable man or woman who doesn't know how to train his or her own children. These habits are passed on from one generation to the next, so today many young people are the victims of our having failed in our duty to them.

Children should learn at an early age that nothing comes without effort. One has to work; he has to merit what he receives in this world. This principle is important. If a child is given everything he wants, he does not learn the value of anything. Teach the child that he should contribute his part to the family, to his circle of friends, to his community. That prepares him to cope with what others will expect of him as an adult.

Parents are often too indulgent with their children: "I want to give my child everything I didn't have." Nonsense! Give him a chance to unfold, to achieve, to meet the challenges of life with your help and support so that he becomes a strong individual. You cannot protect him from everything, nor can you assure his happiness by catering to his whims. And in the long run, it will not help him if you try to do so.

One thing I do believe in: If you give a child an assignment, see that he fulfills it. If you tell him to pick up his clothes and put



them on a chair at night, insist that he does as you have said. Do not spank the child, but insist. Once good habits have been formed, the child will automatically do what is right.

Young ones will do what is asked of them if they feel they are helping, contributing. Make them feel they are sharing. Give praise and encouragement; make them *want* to do it. Be sure that the responsibility is not greater than the capacity of the child. And when he does his best, give a reward; if he does not, no reward. That is not necessarily the best practice; it is better that the child obey out of instinctive good behavior, but unfortunately, in most cases a reward seems to help a little!

When I was a child, we did not receive rewards, other than the appreciation of our parents for a job well done. We all had our duties, and we knew we were expected to do them properly. If, for example, we had wiped the dinner dishes and the glasses were not spotless, we had to get out of bed and come

down to wash them over. I am grateful for that discipline. I really appreciate it. Had I not received that training as a young girl, I might not have been as able to accept Master's discipline when he placed upon my shoulders increasing responsibilities, culminating in those I carry today.

*Should parents choose their children's careers?*

It is my experience that if someone else tells us what to do with our lives, we may follow that suggestion for a while, but sooner or later, if we are to be happy, our latent inner inclinations must be fulfilled. When anyone asks me, "Shall I marry or remain single?" the first thing I want to know is, "What do you want in your heart?" Because if I suggest that someone become a renunciant, that life will not necessarily wipe out all other desires. The desire to follow a particular course in life must start within, and then that inclination can be strengthened by outer guidance.

For example, there have been many, in East and West, who have followed the mo-

nastic path because their parents expected them to, and raised them to become monks or nuns. But such devotees do not make very good monastics, if this vocation is not the foremost desire in their own hearts. After maybe five, ten, or fifteen years, other desires assert themselves, and they seek another way of life.

Only you can say what you really want. When devotees seeking my advice say, "I want to know what God wants me to do," I come back to the same point: What do *you* want? Start with that first, and then objectively analyze what way your life is karmically destined to go.

Sometimes we are reluctant to assume responsibility for our own lives. We want God to tell us what to do — provided that what God wants for us is in harmony with what *we* really want! I am not against seeking the will of God; in fact, I am all for it. But no amount of saying, "I want to follow God's will," will suffice if while trying to follow this

we are inwardly tormented by desires for something else. We have sown the seeds of desires, have harbored them within, perhaps for many lives. So it is not enough to accept reluctantly what we think God wants of us, or what our parents or friends would choose. We must follow what we feel is right for us, and then strive to move onward from that point.

Each of us has within him intelligence endowed by God with which we are to accept responsibility for ourselves, and to learn how to make the right choices in life. When we do that, while at the same time meditating and trying to keep in tune with the Divine, we fulfill our individual destiny. The duty of parents is to help guide their children along these lines, while giving them the freedom to follow their own natures.

*My boys are fourteen and sixteen. They want to date, but I come from the Indian culture, and I don't approve. As you know, in India marriages are arranged. I know that this is*

*not the custom in America, and that I must have a balanced attitude. But I still feel they are very young, and right now their energies should be invested in studies and sports.*

First of all, let me say that you cannot make a general rule, because everyone is different. Some are more mature than others of the same age. Secondly, I do agree that the dating system in the West is too permissive, but I also think that the custom in India could be improved. I have seen some tragic consequences of arranged marriages in India. So both systems have their flaws.

Guruji very much believed that in the early years the sexes should be educated in separate schools. The attention of the children should be focused on academic and character training, development that will equip them for a better life as they become mature, without the undue stimulation of the awakening senses involved in boy-girl relationships. Unfortunately, moral standards have deteriorated in today's society. In an atmosphere of

permissiveness it is a mistake to have dating at an early age. The growing problem of teenage pregnancies is ample evidence of this.

I counseled one young girl whose father, having been raised in Guruji's ideals, was strict with his children. He did not permit them to date at the early age at which many of their friends were going out. They adhered to that. Even so, when they were permitted to go out on their own, peer pressure caused the young girl to get involved with the wrong type. It was then that the matter was brought to my attention. It took several meetings, talking patiently with her and pointing out that the important thing was that she become a responsible, capable adult who would then be able to make the right choices in life. Fortunately, she listened, and today she is extremely happy, having married a very fine young man; and they have a lovely child.

You are from a different culture, and you have to determine which country's customs

you want to follow. Many Indian parents in this country do continue to choose the life-companions of their children, and I don't quarrel with that if they have carefully studied the characteristics of the young people concerned to be satisfied they are compatible. It can be a good custom when it is done with proper consideration of all character traits, interests, and such questions as: Do they get along? Will they continue to be harmonious as they mature, sharing concordant goals and ideals?

On the other hand, if you choose to follow the customs of the West, then I think the best thing, when you decide they are old enough, is to let them first invite their friends to your home, rather than meet outside, so you can get to know with whom they are mixing. They might not always behave quite as you think they should, but make allowances for their age and interests, as long as you are satisfied that moral principles are being observed.

Let them come on a Friday afternoon after school is out, to stay for a few hours, play records, have little parties, or other types of recreation they enjoy. I think it is important for parents to open their homes in a warm and friendly way to their children's friends, so that the children feel that home is a place where their friends are welcome.

You have a right and a duty to be strict regarding the non-use of alcohol and drugs. If necessary, seek professional counsel and help in enforcing this. I have seen too many minds and bodies tragically destroyed by these substances. I am sure this does not apply to your children, but I am saying this because it does happen in some homes.

About fifteen or sixteen would be the age that is generally acceptable to responsible parents in this country for their children to begin social association with the opposite sex. Eighteen is a little late if you are going by the accepted standards of the West. I am not saying this is right or wrong; I am simply stating that



your children are in an environment where the general trend is to have close friends of the opposite sex at an earlier age. You will be in a position of great disadvantage if you appear to be unreasonably strict.

So many parents do not even know the friends with whom their children are associating. And frankly, the children then think, "My parents don't care." Very often children are glad that the parents care enough to "put their foot down" and establish rules. But you have to begin at an age when the children respect the training. Do not wait until they are teenagers, because by then it may be too late. They will have become accustomed to more independence than you will want them to exercise.

*My neighborhood is really bad. Many of the parents don't seem to care what their children do. Is it all right to let my children play with these youngsters? Should we stay there, or should we move? The area was all right when we bought the house.*

If you live in an area where the children are unruly, I would be inclined to be cautious. I would want to know whom my children were playing with, and what they were doing—but without making them feel that they were not being allowed any freedom.

The strongest influence in the lives of children comes from their companions. Children are imitators and pick up the tendencies of those they mix with. If in your neighborhood the other children are not the kind that you feel will help the development of your youngsters, or who might even lead them into trouble, then I would take some steps.

It is important to understand how much children respond to the environment they are in. Be careful that you are not discriminating according to color, religion, or nationality, but just according to the quality of individuals. There is nothing wrong with living in any kind of neighborhood; but the vital point is, what is the quality of the people there. You cannot spend your life worry-

ing about your children because you live in a rough area; better to move to a district where there is not that kind of problem, and have peace of mind.

In summary, I would leave you with one vital point: The best chance for success in raising children is if the parents themselves set the right standards by their own example. Children need to see that the results of those standards imposed on them are beneficial. When guidance is given by example, and with love and understanding, it will enhance the karmic good already present in the children from their past lives, and provide opportunity for further growth. To thus nurture inherent good tendencies and to plant seeds of new ones in young lives given into their care is the God-given duty of parents — a skilled profession, indeed!





## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sri Daya Mata, one of Paramahansa Yogananda's earliest and closest disciples, is the president of Self-Realization Fellowship/Yogoda Satsanga Society of India.

Born Faye Wright on January 31, 1914, in Salt Lake City, Utah, Daya Mata met Paramahansa Yogananda at the age of seventeen when she attended a lecture series he was giving in her hometown. Upon hearing him speak, she inwardly thought: "This man loves God as I have always longed to love Him. He *knows* God. Him I shall follow." Not long afterward, she entered his ashram in Los Angeles as a nun of the Self-Realization Order. During more than two decades of day-to-day association with Sri Yogananda, Daya Mata served as his confidential secretary; and over the years he entrusted her with

increasing spiritual and administrative responsibilities. From the beginning he singled her out for a special role, and he encouraged other disciples to pattern their lives after her example.

As Paramahansa Yogananda's spiritual successor, Sri Daya Mata has guided his society since 1955, faithfully carrying out his wishes and ideals for the dissemination of his teachings worldwide and for the establishment of Self-Realization Fellowship temples, centers, and retreats. She has made several global speaking tours, including extended visits to India. Under her leadership, the pioneering spiritual work of Paramahansa Yogananda has flourished, both in his native land and around the world. Two anthologies of her lectures and informal talks have been published, *Only Love: Living the Spiritual Life in a Changing World*, and *Finding the Joy Within You: Personal Counsel for God-Centered Living*. Many of her talks are also available on audiocassette.

A true mother of compassion as her name signifies, Sri Daya Mata has inspired truth-seekers of all faiths and from all walks of life. Dr. Binay R. Sen, former Ambassador of India to the United States, wrote in his Foreword to her second anthology: "Nowhere does Paramahansa Yogananda's legacy shine with more radiance than in his saintly disciple Sri Daya Mata, whom he prepared to carry on

in his footsteps after he would be gone. . . . Those who, like myself, were privileged to have met Paramahansaaji find reflected in Daya Mataji that same spirit of divine love and compassion.”

### **Audiocassettes of Talks by Sri Daya Mata**

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*Let Us Be Thankful*

*Strengthening the Power of the Mind*

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*Understanding the Soul's Need for God*

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and Meditation*

*God First*

*Moral Courage: Effecting Positive Change  
Through Our Moral and Spiritual Choices*

*Anchoring Your Life in God*

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*The Way to Peace, Humility, and Love for God*

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## 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 twenty-one 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 Sri Daya Mata, one of his earliest and closest disciples and president of Self-Realization Fellowship/Yogoda Satsanga Society of India since 1955. In addition to publishing his writings, lectures, and informal talks (including a comprehensive series of *Self-Realization Fellowship Lessons* for home study), the society oversees temples, retreats, and centers around the world; the monastic communities of the Self-Realization Order; 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

“complete”) *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.*) be-

tween 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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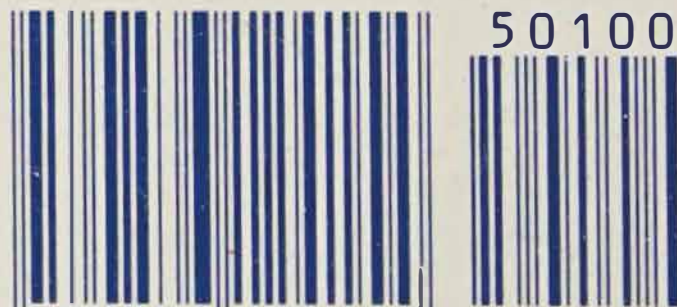
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