



THANK  
YOU,  
MASTER

*Direct Disciples Remember  
Paramhansa Yogananda*

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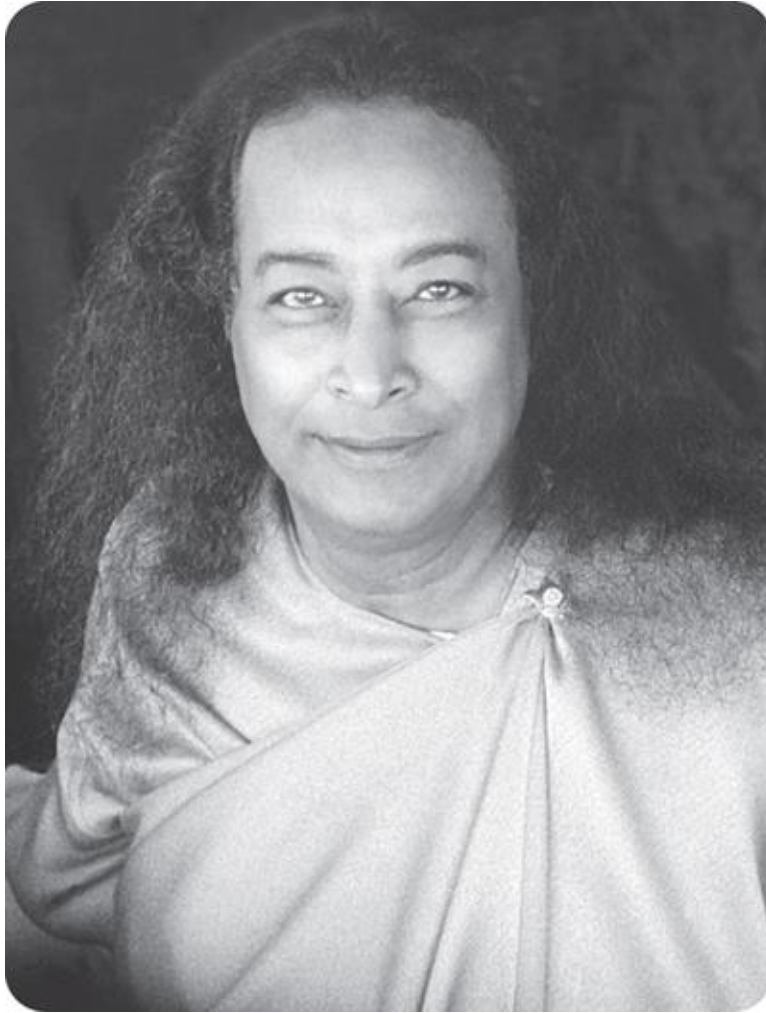
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*Paramhansa Yogananda, "Master".*

Thank You, Master

**Direct Disciples Remember  
Paramhansa Yogananda**

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*4 Garpar Road in Kolkata, India, Yogananda's boyhood home.*

With My Guru, Paramhansa Yogananda



Hare Krishna Ghosh



*Hare Krishna Ghosh and Nayaswami Durga at 4 Garpar Road.*



## Foreword

Hare Krishna Ghosh, son of Paramhansa Yogananda's younger brother, Sananda Lal Ghosh, was born in Kolkata at 4 Garpar Road in 1920. There Yogananda had lived from the time he was eleven until he met his guru, Swami Sri Yukteswar, and was accepted by him for training in his ashram.

In 1920, after ten years of training in his guru's hermitage, Yogananda left India for America to begin his life's mission: to demonstrate to truth seekers around the world the essential oneness of the religions of East and West. Hare Krishna was born two months later, on October 10.

Yogananda returned to India in 1935 to be reunited for a time with his guru, his beloved father, and other family members, friends, and disciples. It was during this visit that Hare Krishna, age fifteen, met him for the first time. That meeting, and the subsequent months he spent with the Master, changed Hare Krishna's life forever.

In Kolkata in 1986 we met Hare Krishna and his wife, Anjali, on our first pilgrimage to India. There, in Yogananda's family home, they graciously hosted us. It was our pleasure then also to meet their son, Somnath, and their daughter, Papiya, both of whom are married and have children of their own.

On first entering the house where our guru had lived, and where he stated, "I found God," we could feel his vibrations everywhere: as a small boy running up and down the stairs, laughing and playing pranks on his sisters and brothers; as a young man diving deeper and deeper into God-communion; as the avatar for this age.

For any who find themselves longing to go to India to experience Yogananda's presence there, we highly recommend that you go to the Ghosh family home at 4 Garpar Road, Kolkata. Their doors are always open: for meditating in Yogananda's attic room, talking with the family, or just quietly soaking in the spiritual vibrations that are felt throughout the house. Be sure to make arrangements with them ahead. The caretakers of Yogananda's family home are now Somnath Ghosh (Yogananda's grandnephew) and his family. Hare Krishna passed away in 2005.

In the following pages Hare Krishna very beautifully describes many of his experiences with Yogananda in Yogananda's unique relationship to him as his uncle and his guru. We hope that you will find the same inspiration and joy we have felt in reading these glimpses into Yogananda's life and into the deep effect he had on all those around him.

I dedicate this book to my beloved wife and divine friend, Anjali Ghosh, who left her body September 12, 1995, just as it was going to print. She is with Guruji now as he has always been in her heart.

— Hare Krishna Ghosh

## OM GURU

It is a great honor for me to write the experiences of Paramhansa Yogananda.

I was born into a family where my grandfather, Bhagabati Charan Ghosh, and my grandmother, Gyanprabha Ghosh, both became disciples of the great guru Lahiri Mahasaya of Varanasi. That was the turning point of this family. Paramhansa Yogananda, our beloved Guruji, was born and was blessed by Lahiri Mahasaya, and gradually he grew up to become a great figure in the spiritual world.

I am the happiest man not only because I am Guruji's nephew, but because I was born in Guruji's home at 4 Garpar Road, Calcutta, and I have been living here for seventy-four years. Just imagine what a blessing it is to be born in Guruji's family and to live in the same house where Guruji lived and was enlightened.

I am also happy as I was born with the blessings of Guruji. It so happened I had an elder brother who died when he was only eleven months old. When my mother was carrying me, Guruji was leaving for America in 1920. My mother asked for his blessings so that this time the child would live. Guruji blessed my mother and said, "Don't worry. You will have another male child and this time he will live." He also gave my mother a small bangle (armlet) for me which was made of gold, silver, and copper and asked my mother to have me wear the bangle after my birth. I was born only two months after Guruji left for America. When he came back to India fifteen years later in 1935, he inquired about me. "Where is Hare Krishna?" My parents showed me to him. Guruji caught hold of me and asked me, "Where is that bangle I gave to your mother for you?" I showed him the bangle, which I was wearing on my right arm. Guruji himself removed the bangle from my arm and gave it back to my mother and said, "This boy does not require this anymore. He is quite safe." So you see how I was born with his blessings.

I grew up in the spiritual environment of our house as many yogis and saints like Sri Yukteswarji, Sri Kevalanandaji (Guruji's Sanskrit teacher), Sri Bhupendra Nath Sanyal (Sanyal Mahasaya), and many others used to come to meet with my grandfather from time to time. As I was a calm and quiet boy, my life was transformed to be religious minded. I remember when I was five or six years old, I heard about Guruji for the first time from my grandfather and my mother. They used to tell me many stories about Guruji and I was at once attracted to him.

My mother, Parul Lata Ghosh, was religious minded. She was a thin lady but very active, and looked after the household work efficiently all through her life. Her love for children and all the relatives was unique. I always respected her sweet nature and behavior. She was very popular amongst all the relatives of our family, young or old.

## My Grandfather

I lived with my grandfather (Guruji's father) for twenty-two years. Among all his grandchildren, I was one of his favorites. He was a great yogi and a man of discipline. When I was a teenager I slept in the same room with my grandfather for several years, so I knew him very well. He used to meditate late at night and also early in the morning. He was satisfied with candle lamps placed in one corner of the room, because after evening he did not write or read anything. He never went to any cinema house; he never read news specials. He used to say, "Don't read newspapers. Don't let the bad ideas come inside your brain." So he never accepted any invitations from relatives on any occasion. He used to remain at home. He just meditated. I have seen him meditating every evening for hours together sitting on his bed. He was a very simple man — calm and quiet — and used to take care of all his needs himself, without anybody's help. He was of sweet nature and I never saw him angry for a single day. He did not talk much and had strong spiritual power.



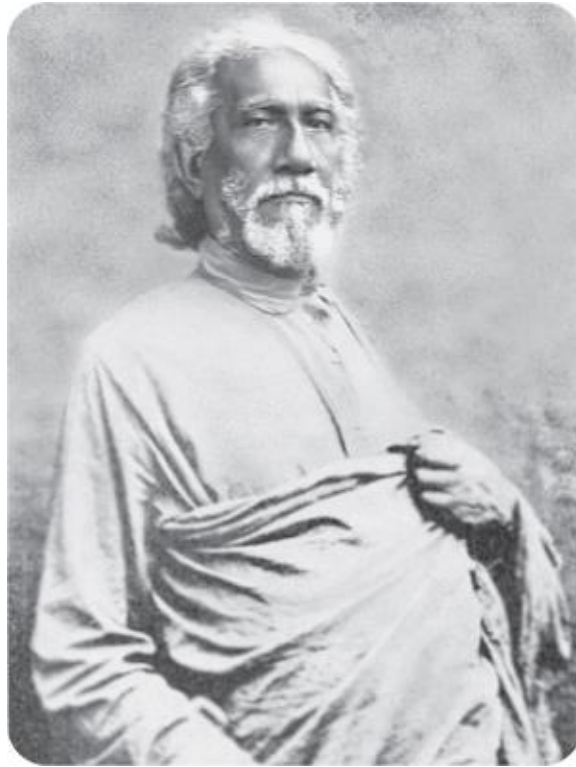
*Yogananda's father, Bhagabati Charan Ghosh.*

At the age of eighty-two the strangulation of a hernia suddenly troubled him. The best surgeon of Calcutta was called and said an immediate operation should be done, but chloroform (there was no other anesthesia at that time) couldn't be applied on him as he was too weak and aged and would die from it. My grandfather said, "Arrange for the operation. I will do my *pranayam* and I won't feel any pain." Everything was arranged. My uncle Bishnu Ghosh, who was a famous bodybuilder, even engaged some of his strong students to stay inside the room to hold the patient during the operation. Just before the operation, my grandfather asked, "Who are these young boys? Ask them to leave the room. I will feel no pain." But my uncle asked the boys to wait outside in case anything went wrong. It was a major operation: it took one hour and everything went smoothly. The surgeon said, "I cannot believe how I could operate without chloroform." He never felt any pain during the operation.

People have asked me if my grandfather ever recognized Guruji for who he was. My grandfather sometimes would oppose Guruji, contradict him in some way. But finally, as he was a very wise man, he agreed with Guruji on many things. When Guruji didn't agree to marry, I heard that my grandfather agreed to that. He said, "Okay, the next brother will marry!"

## Sri Yukteswarji

I met Sri Yukteswar when I was very young. From my very childhood I met him many, many times because he used to come to our house. I felt that he was a great soul. You could tell largely from his very appearance and his personality. When he would come to our house, we, everybody, were quite alert! He was so tall and very well built. The first thing we saw whenever he arrived at our house was the door filled with his large frame.



*Yogananda's guru, Swami Sri Yukteswar.*

Many people would gather at our house to see and hear him. He was a God-like person. He could draw people in in no time. He was also a great friend and a brother disciple of my grandfather. At least once or twice every month he used to come to Guruji's home to meet my grandfather, and he would remain at our house for the whole day long. I have seen him taking his midday meals along with my grandfather sitting side by side together, and my mother used to cook their food and serve them. He was a very kind and loving man to the common people and friends. He was strict only to his disciples. He loved all the children and used to bring lozenges and chocolates for us. And he would talk with us as an ordinary man.

He was fond of feeding friends and devotees or whoever would visit him in his Serampore house and also in his Puri ashram. I heard his speeches on many occasions, when he would advise his devotees to meditate, meditate, and meditate, more and more with utmost devotion to God; he used to say, "In this way you will minimize the cycle of life and death." He would explain, "A man takes birth, then he dies. Again he is born; again he dies. This cycle he can minimize if he practices meditation deeply."

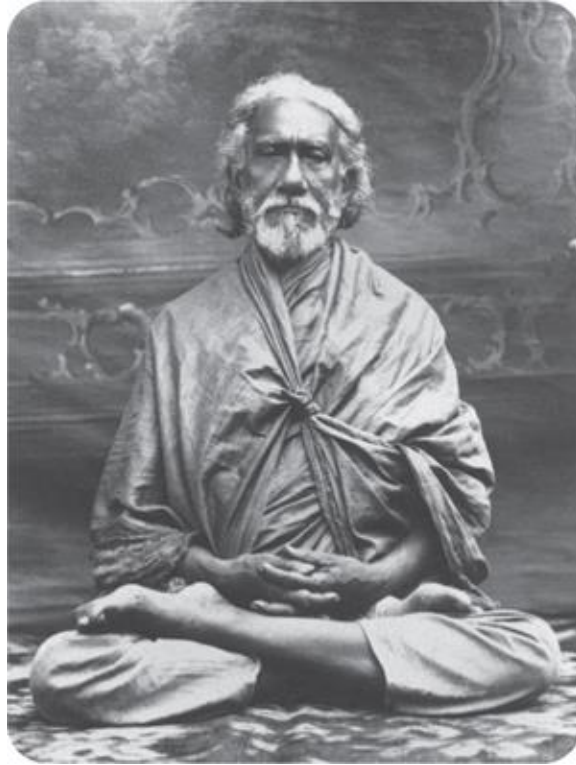
After Guruji's return to India in 1935, the first time he went to Serampore to see Sri Yukteswarji we accompanied him in the same car, along with Richard Wright (his secretary and brother to Daya Mata). There Guruji pronounced to Sri Yukteswarji, took the dust from his feet,

and they embraced each other for some minutes. There were tears in their eyes. That was a scene to be seen. Sri Yukteswarji entertained the whole group very nicely, especially Richard Wright: he kept him by his side. And I saw Mr. Wright every morning when he would touch Yoganandaji's feet first thing. That opened my eyes, because before that I had never seen a Western man touching the feet of an Indian. He would do the same for Sri Yukteswarji and be the first to touch his feet.

Sri Yukteswarji was very serious about his meditation. How he loved God! And he used to meditate and meditate. One time when I went to Serampore, to his house, along with Guruji, Guruji said, "Sri Yukteswar, Guruji, your house is not in good condition; I would like to get it nicely repaired and painted." Yukteswarji told him, "If you wish you can repair my house. You can get it painted, but in that case I will not be able to meditate as before because my mind will be on the repaired house and the new paint." Still, Guruji got it repaired and painted.

Once a rich disciple of Sri Yukteswar (a maharaja) invited Sri Yukteswar and my father<sup>1</sup> and some other devotees to his house. Sri Yukteswar was to go there in the afternoon, but he got caught in a traffic jam or something and so didn't arrive until late in the evening. Well, by that time that disciple had gone to bed because he thought that Sri Yukteswarji wasn't coming. When Sri Yukteswarji arrived there and the servant of that house told him, "My master is sleeping so he cannot get up now," Sri Yukteswarji was very angry. He said, "I have come here to my disciple's home, and if I am not received by him, then I won't come in. I will stand outside here the whole night unless he comes and receives me." The servant was very much startled and went to the master and told him that Sri Yukteswarji has come and he is standing at the doorway and he's not coming in. After hearing this, that disciple jumped up from his bed, came running downstairs, and fell at the feet of Sri Yukteswar. Then only did Sri Yukteswar come into the house. He was so strict!

We first heard about Sri Yukteswarji passing away in Puri when the telephone rang in our house and Guruji talked with someone from the ashram there. I was standing right by Guruji's side at that moment. Guruji was very much anxious and in sorrow to hear the news that Sri Yukteswarji was ill, so he said at once, "Go book the railway tickets." The same evening he left with my father and uncle to go to Puri to see Sri Yukteswar. I heard from my father afterward that when they were going to Puri, after forty to fifty miles, in the dead of night, Sri Yukteswarji passed away. Guruji said, "My Guru is a great man." His body was placed in lotus posture under the temple that was in the Puri ashram. The construction of the temple that is there now was supervised by my father according to Guruji's wish in 1952. He spent several months there to oversee the construction. The lotus on the top of the temple was designed by my father as well.



*Sri Yukteswar in 1930.*

Two pictures of Sri Yukteswar — one in lotus posture sitting on the floor and the other in standing posture with a little side view — were taken by my father on the roof of 4 Garpar Road in 1930, when I was ten years old. I remember I held the screen behind him on one side when my father took the photos. Guruji was in the U.S.A. at that time, and he was very much pleased with these photographs.

## Paramhansa Yogananda

I was present at Howrah Railway Station to receive Guruji along with my father and uncle Bishnu. Many devotees came to receive Guruji, including the Maharaja of Kashimbazar, who owned the land of Ranchi Ashram. A photograph was taken of Guruji, my father, and my uncle, and I am also in the photograph. I am between the Maharaja and Guruji. When the train arrived, Guruji leaned his face out from inside the door. It was a wonderful sight because, though Guruji was not very fair complexioned, I felt a strange divine light around his face. That was a wonder. And he was received very wonderfully by all after fifteen years. Guruji came down from the



train and embraced my father and uncle and many senior devotees. I was thrilled to see him for the first time and I found him much more than what I'd expected.



*Master's arrival in Calcutta, 1935. Front row: Maharaja of Kashimbazar, Yogananda, Tulsi Bose, Bishnu Ghosh.*

He was taken home in a beautiful aluminum Rolls Royce car which was especially sent by the Raja of Santosh. I was so thrilled that I jumped into the car and sat by Guruji's side. It was a grand reception at home, and we saw the wonderful sight when Guruji and my grandfather embraced each other after such a long time. My grandfather always used to stay on the first floor, but when Guruji arrived and was received in our house on the ground floor, my grandfather came downstairs to receive him. And Guruji took the dust of his feet and then they embraced. There were blissful tears in their eyes as well as in everyone else's.

Everybody present there — his brothers, sisters, and devotees — pronamed, touching his feet to pay their respects. Here I was introduced to Guruji by my parents and he took the bangle from my arm. I was surprised to see Romaji, who was Guruji's much elder sister, pronam, touching Guruji's feet. In India an elderly person cannot touch the feet of a younger one. Guruji was surprised and asked Romaji, "Didi,<sup>2</sup> you too are touching my feet?" At this Romaji said, "I must touch your feet as you are a great guru." Here I must mention that Romaji, whom I have seen for many years, was a very pious lady and highly spiritual soul. She was a great worshipper of the Mother Divine. On many occasions I heard her saying, "Mother Divine just left this place after

talking with me,” while sitting with many ladies, including my mother and my youngest aunt, Purnamoyee. Romaji had loving eyes, just like Guruji’s.

I felt Yogananda was my guru long before he came to Calcutta in 1935. From my early childhood I heard about all the Masters from my grandfather and my mother, so from then on I don’t know what attracted me, but whenever I came back from school in the evening, leaving aside my class books, I used to turn the pages of the magazine sent by Guruji to our house. That was *East-West*. It was a great big magazine, 14" long and 9" wide. I could not read or write much English, but I used to turn the pages. That was a very big attraction for me. Every evening.

Guruji was a highly spiritual soul. He was great in his very appearance, his personality, his way of talking, his love for mankind, love for children, his smiles, his songs, his delivering lectures, his humorous stories, and what not! He was great in all respects. To my mind he was a modern yogi, with a modern and broad-minded outlook — much ahead of his time. He was not satisfied meditating only for his own benefit in a remote corner of the Himalayas or any lonely place. He came on this earth for the benefit of mankind, teaching Kriya Yoga throughout the world. This universal love was a special quality in him.

During his stay in Calcutta I was always with him, and whenever he would stay in my house, my seat was always right by his side. We had a permanent stage constructed by the side of our house, where Guruji used to give lectures every day to the many devotees, especially in Bengali, but in English, too. When I left for school in the mornings, I would see him surrounded by devotees, answering so many questions. And when I came back from school at 4:00 in the afternoon, I would see the same thing. Always, Guruji sitting in the middle and surrounded by devotees. I was proud of him at once and always felt that I was not afraid of anything in this world as long as I sat by his side.

Here I should mention that of all his nephews and nieces, I and Srimati Amiya Bose (daughter of Ananta, Guruji’s eldest brother) were among his favorites. He was very fond of both of us. We accompanied Guruji to many of his lectures and pilgrimages. He had respect for all religions. I learned to love people from him.

Many times I heard him singing a few devotional songs, playing the harmonium himself. He sang Bengali songs and American divine songs also. You can just imagine what a wonderful voice I heard when he was only forty-three years old. To tell you the truth, I heard many great singers of India but nothing like Guruji. I thought that this voice was not a human voice. I thought to myself it must be God’s voice. There was a special and divine touch in his voice. Anyone could be charmed to hear him sing. Guruji and Sri Yukteswarji used to chant together also. When Guruji was not there, Sri Yukteswar would sing in our home, and his voice was almost the same as Guruji’s.

Before Guruji came to India, already everybody in our home had a mind to be a devotee and disciple of Guruji. So when one day my father told Guruji that my father and mother wanted to take initiation from him, Guruji said, “I will initiate the whole family together.” That was how I was initiated by Guruji himself along with my father, mother, uncle, aunt, and some of our near

relatives. It was a special family initiation. And he taught everything of Kriya Yoga to my father, and from my father everybody followed the same teachings.

The Holi festival (Dol Poornima) fell on the full moon day in March 1936, and we had a wonderful time with Guruji on that occasion, enjoying the exchange of colored powders. All of us, including many of his devotees, put the colors on Guruji's face and body. And Guruji in turn applied colored powders on all of us present there. The whole body of Guruji was filled with different colors, and Guruji fed all of us with different Bengali sweets. After the festival we all accompanied Guruji to take a bath in the holy Ganges to clean ourselves.

You may be interested to know how tall Guruji was. So far as I remember, he was 5' 8" in height, which is more than the average height of the people of India. Because he was very well built, he looked shorter in pictures. Much more can be said about him, but it would take a long time and a lot of paper! My life was changed after I met him. Many years have passed since then, but still today I can feel his presence and see him any moment I like — he is just before my eyes, smiling and blessing.

Now I will mention some more of my experiences with him:

When I sat by his side, he would rest his arm on my shoulder while answering the many devotees. I and my brother, Shyamsunder, used to massage his arms, shoulders, legs, and back muscles every day. He was very pleased with us, and one day asked us what we would like to have from him as a gift. As we were young, we insisted on a bicycle. At once he ordered my father and said, "Gora (my father's nickname), take money from me and buy a nice bicycle for Hare Krishna and Shyamsunder." It was a grand "Hercules" bicycle made in England, and we used it for many many years. In those days bicycles were not manufactured in India.

One day as I was sitting by his side with many devotees all around, we suddenly found Guruji keeping quiet, not answering any of us and sitting very still. After some time, some devotees asked, "Guruji, why are you silent, not answering to us?" At this Guruji smiled and said, "I was talking with God." I was so thrilled to hear this that I at once came very close to Guruji, touching his body with mine. I looked at Guruji's face but he was absolutely normal. I was astonished and thought to myself, "Can a man talk with God so easily, so effortlessly?" I also thought to myself that God just came here and talked with our Guruji but we could not feel anything. So this was an experience for me.

One evening Guruji sat surrounded by many devotees including a few ladies. My mother and my youngest aunt (Guruji's youngest sister, Purnamoyee or "Thamu") were also there. They were of the same age. They had been requesting Guruji for some days to show them something so that they may know God. At first Guruji did not agree, but with repeated requests he said, "O.k., I will show you something." Guruji asked all the devotees to leave the room and then, as I was also leaving, asked me, "Hare Krishna, you stay here. Close the door and switch off the light." It was evening time and a faint light was coming inside the room from the street light. I sat just by Guruji's side. Afterwards Guruji asked my mother and aunt to sit side by side facing him. Guruji asked them to close their eyes and to concentrate on God just at the middle of their eyebrows. Then in a low voice Guruji uttered a few *slokas* which I could not understand. I sat

there and watched and suddenly I was amazed to find a sort of strange divine light fall on my mother and aunt's faces, and they were slightly smiling. After some time Guruji asked me to switch on the light and open the door. When everything was over, I asked my mother, "Mother, what did you see?" My mother said, "Son, I cannot describe in what divine bliss we were." Later Guruji said to me, "I have shown your mother and aunt *Bhagavan Jyoti* — the 'Light of God.'"

One evening I accompanied Guruji to Albert Hall on College Street, Calcutta, where he was to deliver a speech. My father, uncle, and some of our relatives were also present there. The hall was packed with many eminent people of the city. While Guruji spoke, some people requested him to show any miracle or anything about God's power. After repeated requests Guruji asked everyone to clasp his hands, gripping his fingers tightly together, and said, "I will count from one to ten and as I count, you grip your fingers tightly, thinking more and more only of God between your two eyebrows." Guruji started counting in a loud voice and when he finished counting to ten, everybody's hands were locked. No one could separate his hands. After some time, Guruji said, "Om shanti, shanti, shanti." Everybody's hands came out. Guruji said, "This is no credit to myself. I have only shown you so that people have faith in God — only for that purpose."

I saw this miracle on another occasion, when Guruji was invited to deliver a speech by Shri Jugal Kishor Birla, who was the eldest of the Birla brothers and one of the top industrialists of India. He was a great admirer of Guruji and arranged the lecture on the grounds of his Calcutta residence. Many eminent citizens were also invited by Shri Birla. Guruji's speech was much appreciated by the audience with pin-drop silence. There also Guruji showed the same miracle. Shri Birla then entertained Guruji and his whole party with the best possible food, with great devotion.

Guruji, of course, knew everything. Whenever we would drive with Guruji in Calcutta, we found as soon as the car started that Guruji would be asleep within one half a minute. He could fall sleep that fast. One day as we were driving along, my father and my uncle were discussing something about how they would do this and that concerning *satsangs* or something. Suddenly Guruji woke up and said, "No, don't do that." But he had been sleeping! We were surprised how Guruji could hear all that conversation. From that day, we knew that Guruji could sleep within a minute and could wake up within a minute. We were surprised that he could hear everything while sleeping.

I accompanied Guruji one evening to the YMCA Hall on Chowringhee Road, Calcutta, where, during his lecture, he called a doctor up from the audience to feel his pulse and heartbeat. The doctor examined him and after a minute still could not feel his pulse. Nor could he hear his heartbeat with his stethoscope. Then Guruji came back again to his normal speech. The doctor was amazed and declared, "This is a miracle. I cannot imagine a man doing this type of miracle!"

On 14th January, 1936, Guruji went on a pilgrimage to the holy Ganga Sagar festival. Hundreds of pilgrims from all over India attend once a year at just this time. Ganga Sagar is situated eighty miles south of Calcutta, where the river Ganges meets the sea, the Bay of Bengal. I was very fortunate to accompany Guruji to that pilgrimage. My parents opposed my going, as the place is too cold at that time of the year, but as Guruji loved me so much, he said to my

parents, “Hare Krishna must come with me.” In that group my cousin sister Amiya, her mother Subarnalata, my aunt Ashalata, Guruji’s friend Tulsi Bose and his wife (lovingly called “Martan Ma” by those who knew her), and a few other distant relatives also accompanied Guruji.

Early in the morning we boarded a big steamship, along with hundreds of pilgrims from all over India. After sailing forty miles along the river Ganges where the river was very wide and the two sides of the shore could be seen faintly in the distance, we suddenly found the ship was going down, down, down little by little into the waters, and the waters were coming up on the decks of the ship. At this, all the pilgrims were frightened and running all over the decks out of fear. Even the captain of the ship was afraid. Many pilgrims, seeing our Guruji clad in a saffron-colored robe, came running to him and requested him to save their lives. Guruji said, “Be calm, don’t worry and don’t run out of fear. Everything will be all right. Sit down where you are and pray to God for your lives.” So the pilgrims became calm and began to pray to God. After some five or ten minutes we found the waters of the river had gone down from the decks and the ship had come out of the water to its normal level.

Then again the pilgrims came to Guruji and said, “Guruji, you have saved our lives!” But Guruji said, “No, I have not saved your lives. You prayed to God and so God has saved all our lives.” This was again a miracle for me. Everyone was relieved at having been saved from drowning. After this incident we safely arrived at Ganga Sagar.

Then the captain also came to Guruji and said, “Guruji, for a long time now my voice has been choked. I consulted many doctors but no one could cure me. I cannot shout and command my sailors.” Saying this he was trying to come near and touch Guruji’s feet for his blessings. But Guruji said, “You need not come near me. I bless you. You will be cured.” The next day, when we were returning back home by the same boat, we found the captain shouting at the top of his voice, commanding his sailors. With a smile Guruji said to me, “Hare Krishna, see: The captain’s voice is all right now.”

One early morning, in the month of September, Sri Yukteswarji came to our house at 4 Garpar Road. At his advice we arranged for a *Nagar Sankirtan* that morning. *Nagar Sankirtan* means marching on different roads by many devotees singing devotional songs and playing musical instruments. On that day, this musical procession was led by Sri Yukteswarji and Guruji. Many devotees, including myself, my uncle, and my father and other relatives, were following them singing devotional songs.

We made many rounds of different streets, and after some time we came to a certain locality which was inhabited by people of another religion. As we were passing through that area we found a furious man brandishing a stick over his head and shouting, “Stop the music! Stop the songs!” We stopped in fear and stopped singing. Still the man was furious. At this point Sri Yukteswarji told Guruji, “Yogananda, you go to that man and see what is wrong with him.” We grew more afraid and thought, “What will happen to our Guruji if he goes to that angry man?” But without any hesitation Guruji stepped forward and stood before that man and said, “What is the matter with you? Why are you so angry? We believe in all religions and are not disturbing anyone; we are only singing our devotional songs.” As soon as Guruji uttered these words, we

found that angry man totally changed then and there. He apologized to Guruji and said, "I am sorry. You may proceed and carry on with your devotional songs." We started our songs and marched past him.

One day as I was sitting by Guruji's side, with many devotees all around, a man came and stood at the door with tears in his eyes. He was trying to come in and touch Guruji's feet and say something to him. Guruji looked at him and said, "No, don't come in." I was surprised to see Guruji refusing to let that man come in. But the man continued to stand there. After some time Guruji said to him, "When you repent for what you did, you are pardoned." The man came in and touched Guruji's feet and said, "Guruji, I am very sorry for what I said before you left for U.S.A. I am very sorry for those words." Then Guruji blessed him. When all was over, I was very curious and asked some of the senior devotees as to the cause of all this. I asked them, "Who was that man and what happened to him?" Because I saw that the man's face was disfigured and he could not talk properly.

The devotees told me, "Hare Krishna, this man, out of some jealousy or some other reason spoke some bad words against Lahiri Mahasaya in front of Guruji." This happened just before Guruji was going to America in 1920. So naturally Guruji was very upset with him and asked him to withdraw those words, but the man did not. Then Guruji said to that man, "If you do not withdraw your remarks, you will be punished by God, and the mouth by which you speak those words will be disfigured." And so it happened. After Guruji left for America, that man gradually showed signs of what Guruji had declared. He could not speak properly and could not eat properly for fifteen years. But in 1935 I saw that man become quite normal within fifteen days after Guruji blessed and pardoned him. So I have seen Guruji apparently angry at times but he was always merciful, too. I also felt that this was the all-powerfulness of Lahiri Mahasaya.

## Guruji's Humors

Though Guruji was a great soul and busy all the time, he was like a common man and very humorous. He loved children and mixed with everyone alike. He was an early riser. When every morning he would see us, the children, at home sleeping late, he would roll small pieces of paper and put them in our ears and noses to make us rise early. He used to say, "Get up! Get up children! You are sleeping so late in the morning. See the sun is above the sky, so get up quick!" Guruji used to enjoy doing all these things.

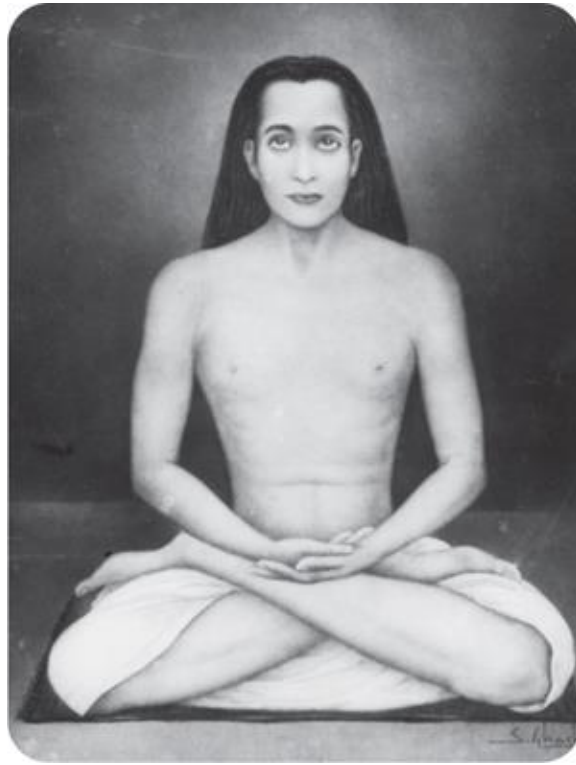
One day Guruji was invited by one of his devotees to take lunch in his house. Some of his relatives and devotees were also invited. The lunch was served and I was sitting right by Guruji's side. Out of the several items of food on my plate, I kept one particular item which I thought of eating last, as it was especially delicious and a favorite of mine. Guruji was sitting on my left; I was eating and talking with a few devotees on my right. Suddenly I found that particular item was missing from my plate. I was surprised and wondered where it had gone. I looked at Guruji

but he was quite normal and eating his food. Then again, after I was talking with devotees on my right, suddenly I found that item of food again on my plate like magic. I thought to myself and could not guess who might have taken it. After some time Guruji smiled and said, “Hare Krishna, you are talking too much with others. Why not talk with me?” Then I understood that Guruji had played this trick!

Another day as I was sitting by Guruji’s side with many devotees around, suddenly he asked me, “Hare Krishna, you clasp your hands and grip your fingers and I will count from one to ten.” I was afraid! I wondered why Guruji was asking me alone to grip my fingers. What will he do to me? Anyway, with some courage, I gripped my fingers and Guruji counted from one to ten. Then Guruji said, “Now Hare Krishna, open your fingers and separate your hands.” To my surprise I at once separated my hands. All the devotees present there were surprised and looking at each other. They asked, “Guruji, why were Hare Krishna’s hands not locked? How is it?” Guruji smiled and said, “Hare Krishna is my brother’s son. How can I lock his hands?”

## Experiences of Guruji and My Father

The picture of Mahavatar Babaji which we see now is not a photograph but a reproduction from a drawing by my father, Sananda Lal Ghosh. One day in 1935, Guruji asked my father to draw a picture of Babaji. My father at once started working on the sketch. I was present on the spot. I was sitting on one side of my father watching the drawing, and on the other side, sitting on a chair, Guruji described Mahavatar Babaji to my father as he had had the vision of him. So my father did this drawing hearing the description from Guruji, and when it was completed, Guruji was very pleased with my father. He said, “Gora, you have done a great job for me. This drawing is just like Mahavatar Babaji.”



*Mahavatar Babaji.*

My uncle Bishnu was a great bodybuilder. I heard from my father that he too had been an athlete in his school days. He could run very fast, and later he was a bodybuilder also, like Bishnu, his brother. He had a good physique, my father — he and Bishnu both — but I heard from him that both of them had learned yoga and physical culture exercises from Guruji when they were very young. Guruji taught them everything in physical culture, and in later years, Bishnu became the bodybuilder, my father became an artist and a painter, and of course, Guruji was an avatar.

In 1935, when Guruji was forty-three years old, he asked that a running competition be arranged on the road in front of our house. Among others, my father and uncle participated in this race. I was astonished to see Guruji run so fast that he was in front of many runners who were much younger than he was. They couldn't run as fast as Guruji and he was forty-three years old!

In that time when Guruji was with us, my father used to paint many portraits in the downstairs room during the day. A friend of his used to come to our home every day just to learn painting from him. But after being there for, say, fifteen to twenty minutes, he would sleep on the floor, in the middle of the day, right by my father's side while my father painted. So one day, when Guruji came home, that friend of my father's was lying down and sleeping. After some



time, Guruji asked my father, “Didn’t you ask your friend not to sleep in the daytime? How is it he’s sleeping?” My father replied, “I told him many times, but he didn’t listen to me. He’s been following my painting for some time, but every day he sleeps here.” The next day when Guruji returned, he again found that friend sleeping. So Guruji quietly came into the room, took some paints from my father, and put them on those ears, cheeks, and everywhere on the face of my father’s friend. Then in the afternoon when that man went home, Guruji was chanting outside on the upstairs balcony, so he enjoyed what happened next. As soon as the friend was out on the street, everyone in the neighborhood started laughing. When he finally realized something was wrong with him, he at once came inside and stood before a mirror and saw his face. Then my father told him that his brother had done all of this. I wonder if he ever fell asleep again!

Once I heard from my father that when they were teenagers Guruji was very keen to see many high saints. Whenever they came to Calcutta, Guruji would visit them. And he would always take my father along with him. In those days Guruji had no money, so they used to walk mile after mile to visit the saints. One day as Guruji and my father were leaving 4 Garpar Road, Guruji pretended that he’d left something behind. He wanted to teach my father a lesson. You see, he knew my father was a little bit restless, and because he had so many friends, he would sometimes forget Guruji and go off with his friends, leaving Guruji alone.

So Guruji said, “Okay, Gora, I forgot something in the house and I’ll be back in just a minute. You stay here,” and he asked my father to place his palm on the cement wall of the 4 Garpar Road house. So my father touched the wall and Guruji went inside the house. Then my father found that his hand was stuck to the wall! He could not remove the hand, and so he could not wander off.

Just then, a friend arrived and said, “Gora, why are you standing there? Come with me.” And my father said, “My hand is stuck. I cannot come.” He pulled the hand, but he couldn’t pull it from the wall. He tried his utmost, but couldn’t. Then Guruji came back and said, “Om, peace, peace. Om, peace, shanti,” and the hand came off.

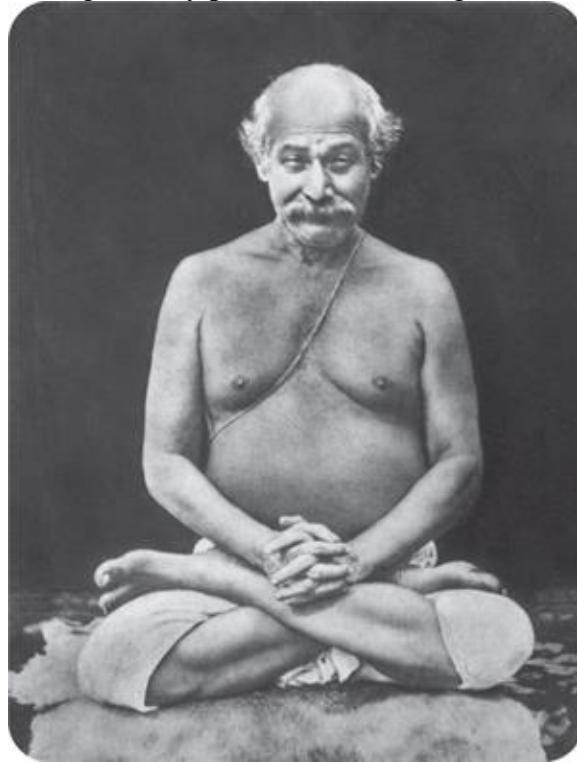
Another time when he did that, my grandfather came home and found my father’s hand stuck there on the wall. He was surprised. He thought immediately that this was a trick of Yogananda’s. “Mukunda!”<sup>3</sup> He came inside and said to Guruji, “Mukunda, you are doing a very bad thing. Why have you applied the power of God to your brother and with many others?” He never did that trick again.

## Personal Help from Lahiri Mahasaya

From my very childhood I heard about the greatness of Lahiri Mahasaya from my grandfather and also from my parents. They told me often that Lahiri was the savior of mankind. He was my idol as a great Guru and greatly influenced my life. In 1935, when Guruji returned to

India, he too spoke of Lahiri Mahasaya as one of the great saints of India. On many occasions he advised his disciples, during any difficulty, to remember Lahiri Mahasaya and to take his name.

Later in my life I experienced this as true. In 1946, during the Hindu-Muslim riots in India, some of us in my family were standing on the roof of our house when my younger brother, Shyamsunder, was shot dead and my father received a bullet injury in his chest. Though I was also there I escaped miraculously with the grace of God and Guruji. That was a terrible mishap in our family and all of us were in grief. My parents decided to go to Varanasi for a change.



*Lahiri Mahasaya, guru of Sri Yukteswar and Yogananda's parents.*

So in the month of January, 1947, we went to Varanasi for one month. My father rented a house very near to Lahiri Mahasaya's house, and every morning all of us would go to Lahiri Mahasaya's house and sit in meditation in his room, and immediately we had peace of mind. We also found an old man sitting every morning at the doorway of the house. This man saw us every day and somehow he came to know that we were in grief. One day as we were leaving the house, the old man asked my father, pointing to me, "Is he your older son?" My father said, "Now he is my only son." The man said, "I would like to examine your son's palm." So he examined my palm for some time and said to my father, "Your son will live long and he will be married within a year. The bride will be beautiful and good in all respects, and she will be most appropriate to your family."

My father heard everything but did not pay much attention to his words. But strangely enough the same evening, when my parents went out shopping along with my sister Shefali and my mother's sister in Biswanath Lane, which leads to the holy Biswanath Temple and where there are many sari shops, there my mother first saw a beautiful young girl who had also come there with her family for shopping. My mother liked her very much and thought to take her as a bride of this family. Then my mother asked her name and address. She said she was from Calcutta and we came to know that her house was near to Guruji's house.

My mother was also very much delighted to know the girl's name was Anjali Bose, because the Ghosh and Bose families are most appropriate for marriage. Now here it is very interesting to note that Yogananda's mother belonged to Bose family before her wedding; his three sisters were married into Bose families. Ananta's daughter, Amiya; Bishnu's daughter, Ava; and my daughter, Papia, all married into Bose families. My son Somnath also married Sarita Bose. So my mother was delighted that Anjali was from Bose family.

After the two families came back to Calcutta from Varanasi, negotiations about the marriage ceremony started between the guardians of the two families, and Anjali and I were married on 7th February, 1948. I, along with my parents and Anjali, strongly feel and believe that as it originated from Lahiri Mahasaya's house, this marriage took place with his great blessings. And just as that old man foresaw, Anjali is worthy and appropriate in this family, doing everything to keep the house clean, maintaining Guruji's attic meditation room as a holy shrine with flowers, and welcoming each and every devotee, serving *prasad* to them. Besides this, she looks after the needy relatives and distributes new clothes to needy neighbors. All these are possible with Lahiri Mahasaya's blessings.

## Anjali's Visions

I heard from Anjali's uncle and parents after our wedding that Anjali was pious and religious from childhood. She has also been greatly influenced by Guruji's life and his blessings, although she never met him in person.

One day she had a vision: While passing through a field, she noticed a saintly person with saffron-colored dress sitting under a tree, and saw many people standing in a queue to go to him. Anjali stood at the back of the line, but she was very impatient to go to him quickly and was looking at him, leaning out from the line. Guruji called to Anjali and said, "Hello, young lady, come here. Do you know me?" Anjali at once went to him and prostrated, touching his feet, and trying to introduce herself said, "You are my beloved uncle-in-law and Guru." Guruji raised his hand and said, "I know everything: Be a good wife to your family."

Anjali meditates every day in Guruji's attic room, and while meditating always feels that he is also there. After the meditation she sings a few devotional songs or *bhajans*. One evening while meditating and singing she had a clear vision of him in lotus posture, sitting on the right

side space in that room. The vision lasted for a few seconds only but it was very real and has stayed with her always.

## The Present

This 4 Garpar Road home was all along well maintained by my father till he died in 1979. Guruji wrote him on many occasions to maintain the house properly. He wrote, “4 Garpar — My Place of Salvation where I found God.” Now it is my duty to look after this house and maintain it properly, and I am doing it to the best of my ability with the grace of God and Guru. I am also happy that all the devotees of Guruji love me, and that gives me the strength to receive the devotees who visit this home.

My son, Somnath, also is very keen to keep the house clean and suitable for all the devotees who come here. He is the one who took the dictation of the book *Mejda* from my father, and he wrote the manuscript of the book. He learned many things from my father and many facts about the history of this family. I always depend upon him with the repairing, maintenance, and painting of Guruji’s home, as he has good knowledge of how to take care of an old house. This is a great blessing of Guruji. I feel very honored that he and my daughter-in-law, Sarita; granddaughters Sudarshana and Sulagna; my daughter, Papia Bose; son-in-law, Somen Bose; my granddaughter Sukanya Bose; and my sister, Shefali, are all religious minded.



<sup>1</sup> Sananda Lal Ghosh, Yogananda’s younger brother.

<sup>2</sup> Elder sister.

<sup>3</sup> Yogananda’s boyhood name.

# My Reminiscences of Paramhansa Yogananda



Srimati Meera Ghosh



*Meera Ghosh with her grandson, Ishan Ghosh, and Nayaswami Vidura.*

## Foreword

Meera Ghosh was one of the last living relatives of Paramhansa Yogananda who had had personal contact with him.

When Yogananda returned to India in 1935–36, one of the responsibilities that he assumed was to find a suitable wife for his nephew, Ramakrishna Ghosh, the only son of his deceased elder brother, Ananta. Meera was the one he chose to be the bride. Born November 5, 1919, she was only 16 when she met Master.

We first met Meera in 1990, when Hare Krishna and Anjali Ghosh (Yogananda's nephew and his wife), along with Devi and Hassi Mukherjee, took us to visit her. (Hassi was the daughter of Yogananda's best boyhood friend, Tulsi Bose, mentioned in *Autobiography of a Yogi*.)

We visited her each year on our pilgrimage to India, until her death in 2002. These visits were among the highlights of our experiences in India. It was deeply inspiring for us to spend time with one through whom so much of Yogananda's spirit and blessings flowed.

These recollections of Meera Ghosh's experiences with Yogananda have been translated into English to share more widely the inspiration she felt as a lifelong devotee of the great master. We offer them to you in that spirit.

Nayaswami Durga and Nayaswami Vidura  
Ananda Village, Nevada City, California

## Gurupronam

It is my pleasure  
and privilege to write down  
the memories of my  
association with my most  
respected guru,  
Paramhansa Yoganandaji.<sup>1</sup>

A

s I glance through the windows of my memories such phenomenal and memorable events appear with so much color. In these moments of Joy, I venture to write my experiences so that all of you may know them now and also share the bliss of knowing the holy Swamiji.

## First Meeting

My native village is in Panpur, Howrah District. My maternal aunt was a tenant on the first floor of the house of Dr. Panchanan Bose of Raja Dinendra Street of Calcutta. Dr. Panchanan Bose was the brother-in-law of Paramhansa Yoganandaji (sister Nalini's husband).

One day, in the year 1936, I went to my maternal aunt's house for a casual visit. Fortunately, on that very day Gurudev also visited Nalini Pisima's house. While I stood on the front balcony Gurudev was kind enough to talk to me. He asked, "What is your name? To whom have you come? Do come to our house." At first glance, I was spellbound and could not even answer him — how divine, tranquil and dignified his appearance was. Still today that divine melodious voice rings in my heart. Most impressive were his large, bright, expressive divine eyes with plumbless wisdom.

A short time after this event, I came to know that Paramhansaji had selected me as the bride of Shri Ramakrishna Ghosh, the only son of his elder brother Anantalal Ghosh.

## Gurudev's Care of Our Family



The late Anantalal Ghosh was my father-in-law. He left this world at a premature age, dying of typhoid. At that time, my husband, as I have been told, was only a child of four years and my only sister-in-law, Amiya Bose, was just ten months old. As they lost their father's lap at a very early stage of life, Gurudev loved them specially, and looked after them so that they had no suffering and sorrows. Later, when he was in the faraway land of America, he always used to send them news by letter, every line of which expressed his anxiety and affection for all of us. So long as he was alive, he always took fatherly care of us, which we still remember gratefully.

## My Wedding

My wedding was celebrated on the 10th *Shravana*,<sup>2</sup> 1936. This was definitely a gala day for me. When the marriage proposal came to my father, Hari Charan Biswas, by Gurudev and some other relatives, my father was not ready to accept it because in the Hindu marriage system then, a dowry was a must. Paramhansaji convinced my father by saying, "Please don't think much over it. We have no demands. Moreover, I shall bear all the expense of the wedding." He added smilingly, "Only bless your daughter so that she may be happy in life. I have chosen your daughter as a lady of our family." Naturally, my father agreed to this proposal. Gurudev joyfully supervised every pro and con of my wedding preparations and participated in the elaborate and pompous wedding ceremony in both the houses.



*Yogananda with his nephew Ramakrishna Ghosh, and Meera Ghosh.*

On the marriage day, Gurudev accompanied me, the bride, and his elder brother's son, Shri Ramakrishna Ghosh, to my father's house. A good number of his disciples were also with him, among whom Mr. Wright can be mentioned. According to Hindu marriage codes, the bride and bridegroom accept one another in the presence of a holy fire and a holy stone called Saalgram Sila. Amidst a whole range of rituals, while the elaborate marriage was going on, Gurudev was present the entire time with his disciples. Some of them were from Europe. They were finding it difficult to understand the Sanskrit chants and mantras. Gurudev translated the sacred hymns into English for their convenience.

Gurudev said, "For a long period I have not taken food on a banana leaf plate sitting on the ground." Accordingly, arrangements were made, and he joined the dinner with his disciples in a pure Bengali custom. It was certainly a memorable event in my humble life.

Next day, as is the custom, I went to my in-laws' house along with my husband. Then quite a lot of group photos of Gurudev were taken along with us. My mother-in-law, Subarnalata Ghosh, asked Guruji, "Please say how will be the bride?" "Very good girl," he replied promptly. "She is pious, generous, kindhearted and will be well matched to our family."

Gurudev, as I saw him, liked to be playful with family members and friends. After my marriage, my sister-in-law, Mrs. Amiya Bose,<sup>3</sup> and some other relatives expressed their opinion

that my husband was fairer than me. Listening to this, Gurudev placed my hand on his lap and my husband's hand on the opposite side to compare the complexion and came to the conclusion, "Bauma's<sup>4</sup> complexion is much fairer, of this I am sure. I challenge anyone." To celebrate Bauma's victory, he presented saris to all of us.

On the wedding feast day, many guests assembled in my in-laws' house on Raja Ram Mohan Roy Road, Calcutta. The house was tastefully illuminated according to the wish of Gurudev. Nearly two thousand guests were invited to join the celebration. In front of me, Gurudev sat on a chair and talked jovially with the guests. At one point he threw a paper ball onto my lap. I threw it back until on the third throw I understood that by throwing the ball he wanted to draw my attention to it. I picked it up and looked at it. It was a check for five thousand rupees! Thereafter, a necklace was purchased for me with that money. In such ways Gurudev liked to play with his family members.

Then, I was a mere teenaged girl, but the sweet memories of the days spent with him are still engraved in my mind. His everlasting affection can't be expressed by pen alone. His message to me then was: "Today you are only a bride, but later you will grow into a mother with lots of duties. Let love and service to all be the candlelight of your future life."

## Pilgrimage to Tarakeswar

India, our homeland, is a country of great yogis, hermits, and holy places. Tarakeswar is one such place of pilgrimage, situated in the Hooghly District of West Bengal. It is the holy seat of Lord Shiva, the Lord of the Universe. It is an ancient place with the famous temple named after Taraknath, another name of Lord Shiva, the residing deity. A large number of pilgrims all over the country endlessly come here barefoot to sprinkle holy water of the Ganges on the Lingam representing the deity. It is believed that quite a good number of invalids and ailing people have been cured by the miraculous divine power of Lord Taraknath, the living God.

According to Hindu custom, newlywed couples are taken to holy places by their close relatives to offer *puja*, prayer, and homage to the residing deity. A fortnight after my wedding, Swamiji advised my mother-in-law to take us to Tarakeswar along with him. It is believed that if one visits Tarakeswar during the month of Shravana (July–August) and offers prayers there, Lord Taraknath will be pleased and bestow his blessings on the devotee. Accordingly, my husband Ramakrishna and I, my sister-in-law, Amiya, and her two-year-old son, Shyamal, all went to Tarakeswar in a vast Buick car. The most fortunate thing was that Swamiji accompanied us.



*Statue of Shiva on Kailash Circle, Ananda Village, California.*

Upon reaching there, we rented a clay hut for the entire day. Gurudev purchased clay utensils and other useful items. Amidst a lot of difficulties, Gurudev's enthusiasm was still there in cooking *khichiri* in the open air. At that time, I was of a very tender age. The Master asked me to hold a bedcover as a curtain to prevent air from flaming in the fire-oven. The cooking was being done by the process of burning logs and twigs. I held the bedcover lightly with the little grip of my hand, but it fell a number of times due to the strong winds. After great difficulties, the cooking was completed, and we all sat in a row to taste the half-cooked rice and pulse which we ate with unforgettable delight. While eating, Gurudev told us, "In this holy place all the food is holy so eat it with pleasure."

We spent the day with joy and fun. Gurudev guided us to all the important sites and blessed spots. We offered *puja* to Lord Taraknath. At dusk, we came back to our Garpar house in Calcutta.

## My Visit to New Market with Gurudev

After the marriage, according to custom, I entered a new phase of life in my husband's home. During that time, Gurudev used to be absorbed in meditation and worship. Sometimes we also joined with him in meditation. Other times, he would be in a jovial mood. One such day, Gurudev called me and said, "Soon I have to go back to America, so let us go to New Market to buy some gifts for everybody." Really, it was his kind pleasure to present gifts now and then. Anyhow, I dressed myself up and went out for marketing along with Amiya and Gurudev. I was looking here and there through the glass window of a shop when suddenly an elderly European approached me, caught hold of my hand, and asked me to get into his car. Gurudev appeared at that spot right then, and inquired why the old man was with me. The man meekly replied that his daughter had also come to the market along with him, and he mistook me for his daughter. He also begged to be pardoned for his mistake.

For this folly Gurudev did not rebuke me but asked why I went with the man. He laughed a divine laugh after listening to my reply: "Gurudev, I thought he might be one of your friends or familiar to you."

On that day he purchased a beautiful deep-green fur coat for me and a heap of gifts for all the other family members.

## Good Teaching

After my wedding I had the fortune to observe Guruji closely, as he was the uncle of my husband. Throughout this period he counseled moral teachings and talked of many things about God, the Omnipotent. At that time cosmic rays surrounded his eternal body and a divine aura would come out of him. He was kind enough to teach me: "Treat everybody alike. Serve humanity as best you can because true happiness lies in selfless love. Do not cheat others for yourself. God is within all human beings. Thus, to serve men is to serve the Almighty." His face used to be lit with a divine glow. He went on to say, "All evil comes from confusion, which is born out of ignorance. So destroy it from within. Only devotion can bring you closer to God; absence of devotion draws us far away from Him. Think always of our Heavenly Father, who can save you from all calamities of the world."

## Samadhi

Swamiji stayed with us sometimes at our home at Raja Ram Mohan Roy Road in the Garpar district of Calcutta. He used to be immersed most of the time in worship and meditation. Once I made my way into Swamiji's room to tell him something, only to find him in meditative posture — being rock-steady with eyes closed. I called him twice but received no answer. Being worried, I rushed to my mother-in-law and informed her of my phenomenal experience. She listened and

immediately went to that room with me. Both of us bowed down to the sacred feet of the Master. She told me, “Do not get panicked, my daughter. Now Swamiji is in the state of samadhi, a cosmic experience. Please do not disturb him. Body and soul have no physical bondage now and are united with the Omnipotent. In this state the body retains no sign of earthly life. Both body and mind become united with the cosmic power.” After a couple of hours, his body bobbed a bit and Gurudev opened his lotus eyes.

Whenever I recall that unique experience, I shiver with wonder and joy. I can now visualize him in that posture, as a cosmic figure with a dim luminous circle haloed around him. This thought still renders me speechless for a couple of moments.

We cannot understand God merely by studying scriptures or by academic knowledge. The omnipotence and existence of God can only be realized by absolute faith, loyalty, and sincere devotion, which will culminate in wholehearted surrender to God’s will.

## My Initiation

Soon thereafter, Paramhansaji initiated me into Kriya Yoga. I cannot express the feelings of ecstasy of that auspicious moment. He placed his soft divine palm on my head and blessed me with the strength which still protects me from sorrows and sufferings.

The only path to God is patience and devotion. The teaching which he bestowed on me still guides my way of life and I try my best to follow his teachings accurately.

He forecast that I would have two children, a son and a daughter. His blessings came true. I have my daughter, Krishna, and my son, Durlov.

## Gurudev and Ramakrishna

Gurudev was a melodious and gifted singer. He taught my husband, Ramakrishna, the secrets of good singing and presented a harmonium to him. My husband was also a good singer. Throughout his life he used to sing the songs written by Gurudev. He regarded Gurudev as the living manifestation of God and lived on the path of life as directed by Guruji. No earthly complications or sufferings could ever touch or pain him, by the grace of Guruji.

## My Headache

In that year, I used to suffer from a bad headache every evening. It was so severe that I had to confine myself to bed. Many renowned physicians, like Dr. Panchanan Bose and Dr. Prakash

Ghosh, treated me. I also took various medicines prescribed by them, but nothing could relieve the pain. Seeing no other way, my mother-in-law informed Swamiji of my sufferings. Next morning Guruji called on me and blessed me with a flower and said, “When you get the pain, touch the flower to your head.” I did accordingly, which relieved me of my headaches forever. I have kept the treasure with me with utmost care as a shield against all difficulties even today.

## My Potato Curry Cooking

It was a funny occasion when a wholly inefficient cook, a teenaged girl, cooked potato curry for her uncle-in-law, our divine Guruji. I was quite a novice in cooking then, but Gurudev asked, “I like potato curry very much. Would you cook it for me?” At first I took the posture of an efficient cook, but when Guruji expressed his desire I was frightened. With palpitation of heart, I tried to cook potato curry as best as I could, and Gurudev appreciated my cuisine very much.

Gurudev was a real guide who inspired everyone so that he might develop the qualities which are within himself. I never saw him become vexed with anybody despite his errors. He presented an ornamented box to me as a compliment. That box is still with me as a memory of his divine love, affection, and guidance.

## Worshipping the Holy Feet of Gurudev

Gurudev once went to Serampore to visit his master, Shri Yukteswarji. He spent the whole day there chanting holy hymns and also walking around the streets and lanes singing prayers to God. In the evening, when he returned to our house, he was extremely tired. My mother-in-law requested him to take rest on the bed and asked me to comfort his tired legs. Gurudev instantly disagreed saying, “No, no, she is still very tender and a little girl. I do not want to trouble her.” Despite his disinclination, I obeyed my mother-in-law’s instructions and Gurudev did not stop me any further. Such was how I first got the opportunity of worshipping the holy feet of our Gurudev.

## Paramhansaji Plays a Prank on Me

Paramhansaji loved to play pranks on his family and friends. After I was married a short time, Guruji asked me to rub his legs almost every day, which I did. One day he asked Ramakrishna, “Does Bauma rub your legs also?” When my husband said, “No,” Gurudev decided to play a trick on me.

One night Gurudev told Ramakrishna to lie down on his bed. Then he covered him with his own red ochre cloth. The light in the room was very dim, so when I came in to rub Gurudev's legs, I thought he was there asleep. But I rubbed his legs for some time in the usual manner. After a while though, the figure on the bed called out to Paramhansaji, "Mejokaka!<sup>6</sup> Please come here at once, otherwise your loving Bauma will break my legs!" (Ramakrishna was not used to having his legs rubbed and was in pain!) Gurudev with all the other family members immediately came into the room.

I was astonished, wondering whose legs I had been rubbing all this time! Gurudev laughed and said, "That's funny, Ramakrishna, Bauma is not rubbing my legs, she's rubbing your legs!"

## Sight of Cosmic Ray

Just a few days before his return voyage to America, Gurudev called my mother-in-law, my husband Ramakrishna, and me to participate in meditation with him. We all were absorbed in meditation. The room was dark. He assured us that he would show us the divine light in the course of meditation. When I sank into the depth of meditation and concentrated my vision and mind just at the centre of my two eyebrows, I experienced an unforgettable glow of divine light which is still evergreen in the depth of my heart.

I realize very much that by the good deeds of my bygone lives I got the opportunity to come to such a family which is the holiest of holy places to me. I also believe that I am so fortunate to have had a sight of the divine man, Swami Yogananda, and to have him as one of my relatives. By the grace of Guruji, I experienced the existence of God, and I bathed in the fountain of his kind love and affection.

## Kali

As a parting gift, Gurudev gave an idol of Kali, the Divine Mother, to my husband. From his childhood Gurudev used to worship this idol. So he advised my husband to worship Kali. From that day onward my husband worshipped the image, till his last breath. That image is placed on our family altar at Serampore. We worship the divine goddess every day as my husband used to do.

## Shri Yukteswarji



The great Guru of my Guru was Yukteswarji. I am very fortunate to have had a glimpse of him. Outwardly, he was a man of cosmic beauty with strong personality, but inwardly he had a soft motherly mind, the touch of which can heal any agony. In his residence at Serampore, a holy mass used to be celebrated every year on 9th *Paush*,<sup>7</sup> including daylong chanting of the Holy One by his many disciples with devotion and reverence. On the completion of the ceremony, a large number of people were given holy food — *prasadam*. The divine Guru loved everyone alike and volunteered to teach many poor students of the locality. He looked after his neighbors with fatherly guidance. He was a graduate of Calcutta University.

After the demise of his first wife, Shri Yukteswarji married for a second time. He had only one daughter, whose husband was Makhanlal Ghosh. She had ten sons, among them Jawharlal, Pannalal, Chunilal, Hiralal, Maniklal, and Muktalal.

I think myself very fortunate to have come into the contact of great revered masters like Shri Yukteswar and my Guru Paramhansa Yoganandaji.



*Shri Yukteswar and Yogananda in India, 1935.*

Parents of Gurudev

Shri Bhagabati Charan Ghosh, my grandfather-in-law, was the father of my Guru Swami Yoganandaji. He lived only six to seven years after my marriage. I had the privilege of spending these years in his association. I respected him as my great honored teacher and tried to serve him as best as I could.

He was a greatly affectionate man of ascetic temperament and strong personality. We lived happily for a couple of years under the roof of that great fountain of love and blessing. He gave me many sermons as a guideline for family life which had a beneficial influence over my life. He was a disciplined man of self-restriction because he was a self-made man and had had to pass through hardship. He loved me profoundly. I used to attend to him at lunch and dinnertime and helped him take his food comfortably. He lovingly called me “Baudi.” When I came to this family as a new bride, almost all my relatives were alive except my father-in-law Anantalal Ghosh and aunt-in-law Umashashi (Gurudev’s elder brother and elder sister).

Once in that time my grandfather-in-law, Bhagabati Charan Ghosh, needed a hernia operation. The doctor intended to anesthetize him before the operation. He said, “There is no necessity for anesthesia. I can remain senseless for an hour by means of *pranayam*.” The attending doctors agreed to his request. The patient remained senseless by means of yoga, which is unknown even today to modern medical science. The miraculous operation was a grand success.



*Yogananda’s mother, Gyanprabha Ghosh.*

Gurudev's mother, Gyanprabha Devi, was my grandmother-in-law. I never met her, but have learned a lot about her from my mother-in-law and grandfather-in-law. I reproduce these stories here so far as I can remember. She was an affectionate lady with a kind heart of inner qualities. She chose her elder daughter-in-law (my mother-in-law, Subarnalata Ghosh) and longed heartily to receive her as the bride of her elder son, Anantalal Ghosh. Shortly before the marriage was to take place, cruel death snatched her away from her children and husband. Guruji was very much shocked at the premature departure of his mother.

Gyanprabha Devi had a very strong sense of art and culture. Her clay modeling and needlework were the culmination of her inner artistic ability. She loved her children very deeply and was really a symbol of eternal Bengali motherhood — willing to sacrifice even her life for the sake of family and children. She had an open and kind hand toward the needy and sick. Gyanprabha Devi had six sisters and seven brothers. The gifts which she presented my mother-in-law as a token of love and blessing were inherited by me from my mother-in-law as gifts. I have kept these things as memories of blessing and affection from two great ladies of this family.

In this connection I recall a special event I heard about from my grandfather-in-law, Bhagabati Charan Ghosh. One day just one month after the birth of Paramhansaji, his mother (Gyanprabha Devi) went out of the room for some household work, leaving the sleeping baby alone in the room. After a while she came back to witness a miraculous scene. Though the only light in the room was from a dim earthen lamp, the entire room was glittering with the cosmic rays of a heavenly light, and a heavenly halo surrounded the head of the sleeping baby. At first glance she became spellbound, then she called her husband to witness the heavenly sight.

Ananda Moyi Ma



*Ananda Moyi Ma.*

Sometime after 1936, I, along with my husband, went to Jamshedpur, according to Guruji's advice, to visit Ananda Moyi Ma and her husband, Bholanath (both Hindu yogis). At that time Swami Bholanath was observing silence, so he replied to our questions by writing. We had a long conversation with Ma Ananda Moyi. She told us, "We shall meet again." That came true when, after long years, we again met at Serampore, and the blessed Mother gave me a package of sweets after giving some sermons. She told me, "Do not think of anything as your own. Never say 'my son,' 'my house,' etc. Be not selfish." Then a short period of joy and bliss passed by with the great Indian yogis, Ananda Moyi Ma and Swami Bholanath.

## Last Meeting

I associated closely with Gurudev for a very short period of one month only, because then he set out for America for the last time. We could not even dream that he was leaving us forever. He had reincarnated on this earth to perform the great divine task of the salvation and welfare of the great nation of America. Before departure, Gurudev preached sermons and cured many of diseases. He taught me the application of some medicine from household things which I use with excellent results even now.

At this ripe age, I now realize that in the year 1936, I witnessed the living manifestation of God in my Guru Swami Yoganandaji. The mantra which he gave me is the most powerful blessing of my life. I wish to breathe my last by chanting this great mantra.



<sup>1</sup> Publisher's note: Meera refers to Yogananda variously as Master, Guruji, Gurudev, Swamiji, and Paramhansaji.

<sup>2</sup> About July 25.

<sup>3</sup> Ananta's daughter.

<sup>4</sup> "Daughter-in-law": Yogananda's affectionate nickname for Meera.

<sup>6</sup> A nickname by which we called our Guru.

<sup>7</sup> December.

# Thank You, Master



Margaret Bowen Deitz



*Margaret "Peggy" Deitz with Nayaswami Devi and Nayaswami Jyotish.*

## Foreword

Peggy Deitz (1914–1996) was a direct disciple of Paramhansa Yogananda. She lived in his ashram at Mount Washington in Los Angeles, California in the late 1940s.

When she first met Master, he asked her to come to Mount Washington to work in the offices there. He said, “I can show you how to leave your body consciously.”

Her reply: “Well, I do that all the time; what I’m trying to do is to stay in it!!!”

Peggy was a remarkable woman whose only thought from a very tender age was to “find God” and make others happy.

Rarely do we meet such an unusual and fine example of how discipleship to a great master can be a beacon of light in this world. In the words of a close friend of hers, “She always had a twinkle in her eye, was always positive even when faced with tremendous obstacles.”

She became one of Yogananda’s chauffeurs, but more than that, she was a liaison between his new religious organization (Self-Realization Fellowship) and the outside world. She was perfect for that role, as she was extremely alert, wise, and had a wonderful sense of humor. She was completely dedicated to Master and his work. Peggy was different enough that people would listen to her and appreciate the magnetism and warmth that she exuded from her very core.

It was obvious that her love and her relationship to Paramhansa Yogananda was deep. It was also essential for her spiritual development. As one person who knew Peggy related to me, “Peggy often said that Master would give different advice to different people, depending on what would best help that person, because each individual is unique.” Peggy emphasized this. Master would tune in to each individual’s unique needs and path. She said Master recommended that she paint. Peggy was artistic. She painted and wrote poetry — some devotional and some humorous. She also published a book of poetry. Peggy had a little place to paint in her room at Mount Washington when she stayed there. She said others sometimes resented the time she spent painting instead of working in the office, but Master encouraged her and often told her, “Remember, God is creativity.”

Creativity was one of her qualities that struck us most: her creative way of being exactly who she was — funny yet profound, inventive in her speech and in her mannerisms. Peggy was always simply “herself.”



Herein lies a short but engaging story of her life with the great master. Reading this, you will begin to understand why Paramhansa Yogananda was so pleased to have her among the sincere and dedicated devotees of Self-Realization Fellowship.

Nayaswami Durga

“A

wake and ready, sir!” That was the answer our guru (spiritual teacher), Paramhansa Yogananda, of the Self-Realization Fellowship<sup>1</sup> expected to hear when he asked, “How are you?” I trust I am “awake and ready” right now as I write these words in answer to the endless times I have been asked, “What led you to yoga?” and “What was it like to know Yoganandaji in person?” (The suffix “ji” in Hindi denotes respect.)

## Early Awakenings

I was born February 1, 1914, in Pasadena, California, to C. Winthrop and Helen M. (formerly Gilman) Bowen. As a child, I well remember being aware of how pleased I was to be “loaned” to these very special parents, whose deep love I felt immediately. Much later, in the 1950s, I would learn from scientists, some connected with the Menninger Institute, that they not uncommonly receive letters from people throughout the world about such childhood memories. These memories date back to before birth, and involve metaphysical experiences that are similar to mine. This naturally baffles the average scientist, who searches for the truth from without, while the metaphysician searches from within.

Among others of my memories was the belief that one does not get hurt unless he or she breaks a spiritual law. However, in my immaturity I failed to grasp why I would stumble and fall when learning to walk. Had I trespassed spiritual law? All in all, with the exception of my father’s tragic and fatal accident in 1929, I was blessed to have a very good childhood with my sister, Frances,<sup>2</sup> who arrived several years after my birth.

I entered the first grade of a small parochial school, where I first heard about sin. Although Yoganandaji would later extol both my parents for their spirituality, our family rarely attended church. So why was I sent to this parochial school? It was because of its proximity to our home. I was immediately shocked by the teacher, who informed us it was sinful for a woman to wear sleeves short enough to expose her elbows, to use cosmetics, to wear high heels, or to do her hair in puffs (a cylindrical roll of hair popular at the time). It was a sin for anyone to indulge in alcohol, to utter a swear word or to attend the theatre. No wonder Lincoln was shot, I thought!

Consequently I had a lot of anxiety, knowing that the parents I adored might go to hell. I prayed constantly for their salvation, unknown to them. By nature my faith in God, whom I thought of as all-pervading Spirit, was unlimited. Then one memorable afternoon my mother

arrived shortly before the end of the school day. She was wearing a sleeveless dress, high heels, rouge and puffs in her hair. She happily said to the teacher, "Please excuse me, I came early to get Peg because we are going out to dinner and to the theatre." The teacher was speechless, having gone into shock. However she did manage a suggestion of a nod as mother and I walked out.

After the theatre, my father asked, "Would you enjoy a root beer?" I replied, "No, thank you, Daddy." I was worried about the root beer being alcohol. He asked if I felt ill. I told him I was fine. Never did I mention about sinning, because I did not want to hurt my parents' feelings. Fortunately we soon moved from this area to our property in Orange County to develop our orchards of oranges and avocados. I entered the Placentia Union Grammar School and never again had to hear of sin from a school teacher.

While still in the primary grades I often would find a place to hide, sit in the lotus posture (a traditional meditation pose) or cross-legged and search within for what I called the *real* Peggy. I thought that if I could remain absolutely still, God would reveal Himself and His wisdom. Then there need be no more unanswered questions. At the very least, I surely would receive guidance. However, after a few minutes of absence, my mother would start calling me, to which I dutifully responded.

At school I sensed that a few of the children, one way or another, had some problems about which I could do nothing. This worried me considerably, but I soon learned that I could acquire peace of mind by turning my attention to God. At night, by nature I would concentrate on my heart center,<sup>3</sup> the area located in the spine within the region of the heart, until I slipped into conscious sleep. I concentrated so intensely that I remained inwardly awake while my tired body drifted into sleep. Consequently I witnessed the process of energies returning from the skin area to near the spine where they were grabbed by the spine's magnetic power. Next I was aware of an all-powerful pull, like a gargantuan magnet, just above my head, that drew upward in catapult fashion all the subtle energies, including the kundalini (in Hindu metaphysics, the coiled serpent power located in the first chakra at the base of the spine). The movement of the energies up the spine was accompanied by a roar of AUM,<sup>4</sup> the cosmic vibratory power behind all atomic energies.



As a youngster I used to make a game of seeing how close I could come to the spine without its grabbing my energies. I could retreat at a certain point if I cared to, but once in the spine I could not because the strongest energy was the pull from the magnet, as I termed it, above my head.

This energy, kundalini, lit my spine so that it looked to my inner gaze like a tree of colored lightning running up the trunk and into its branches. I particularly remember the rose-colored light that emanated from the heart center. However, it was rare that I saw color in the spine. Nearly always the energy appeared colorless, the color of lightning.

I observed a silver chord of light from where I concentrated (the heart center) dart through the top of my head (the sahasrara chakra or thousand-petaled lotus). It rarely passed through the spiritual eye (the ajna chakra, or Christ center, located at the point between the eyebrows).<sup>5</sup> At this time I experienced darkness for a very few seconds or less, which did not bother me one iota. Then I saw my subtle body of light, no longer hindered by my physical form. I had been launched into the astral world, the subtle sphere of the Lord's creation, a universe of light and color.<sup>6</sup> I immediately liked it and felt very much at home, enjoying its peace and ethereal beauty, and especially its divine love. I certainly liked being so much more quick, alert and aware than in

the physical body. It is easier to concentrate the mind when in the astral body than when in the physical body. My light (astral) body was free to travel instantly to whatever my thought projected toward — or just to wander and observe.

At first I frequently visited places in this earthly sphere. For instance, once I encountered a friendly satyr in our stand of eucalyptus near the orange grove. In spite of his twinkling eyes, I left in a hurry and never again ran across him. On another occasion I was shown a tunnel leading down into the earth. I felt I was to enter, that there was something for me to learn. As I reached the end of the tunnel and turned for my upward climb (which I did not relish, although I felt secure), I took but a few steps then realized I could not progress. It seemed I was on a small plateau unable to reach the next level. Fortunately I did not panic. Instead, after viewing my dilemma, I caught on that I would be stranded there until I quit thinking of the jam I was in, and turned my mind from the problem to concentrating on God. By following through with this concentration, I was released to walk a few more steps to the next plateau, only to find the same predicament. I experienced numerous situations like this as I climbed toward the light, until I finally grasped the lesson: Don't energize the problem. "Let go and let God."

After many trips I realized that declaring, "Let this trip be yours, God," was indeed rewarding. For example, I would find myself in the presence of highly developed souls, teachers in the light who were in a position to direct me and did so. In such a situation the devotee is not only blessed, but sent in turn to help others, by sharing what light he or she can.

I feel that every one of us is being called by spiritual guides. All we need to do is be aware of this, and turn our attention to the spiritual path. Continually love the Lord and the Heavens will open. At the same time there must be right action — study, work and sharing.

Experiencing the astral, though I surely welcomed it, was not the *oneness with spirit* which I sought, because there remained duality. As an example, when one hears the AUM, fine; but there is still duality: the listener and the AUM. When the AUM becomes tremendously loud and powerful, to the point of appearing to break the sound barrier, it then quietly absorbs one. Then he or she is not conscious of hearing it, but only of being it. Thus, oneness. The same is true with the light: It is more than splendid to see it, but even greater to merge with it.

A salient point I learned from the astral plane, one that I could see for myself through these experiences, was that there is no such thing as death — only the changing of the garb. With the dismissal of the physical body, the light (astral) body lives on.

Nay, but as when one layeth  
His worn-out robes away,  
And, taking new ones, sayeth,  
"These will I wear to-day!"  
So putteth by the spirit  
Lightly its garb of flesh,  
And passeth to inherit  
A residence afresh.

— Sir Edwin Arnold<sup>7</sup>

Later I would hear Yoganandaji say he did not recommend that one seek phenomena, but that if such experiences come to one naturally, there is a purpose. For instance, when the 1960s rolled around and I was middle-aged, many young people with whom I was acquainted turned to yoga in an attempt to kick the drug habit. Quite a few of them, as well as scientists carrying out experiments with hallucinogenic drugs in Mexico (where this was not illegal), met with me. I could not have contributed as effectively to the conversations that ensued had I not been in a position to draw upon my out-of-body experiences.

The inner life was natural and real to me, and exceedingly stepped up in comparison to life on this plane. When one is asleep and in the subconscious mind experiencing a nightmare, it is real at the time. Likewise, when one's consciousness experiences a much higher realm, earth consciousness appears to be a dream. Master said, "If you hit your head against a brick wall in a dream, your head hurts until you awake from the dream."

What bothered me about living on two planes of reality was that I felt nobody would understand it. I thought I had better keep still about it and I did, assuring myself that as long as I got along okay on the earth plane, I was not too abnormal. However, I felt the constant desire and pressure to comprehend truth. "Knowing Truth, thy heart no more will ache with error, for the Truth shall show all things subdued to thee, as thou to Me."<sup>8</sup> Thus, the continual inward search where I was most aware, where thought manifests immediately. After returning once from a vivid, very much alive astral trip, I purposely stuck myself with a pin to see if I was actually here (I was!).

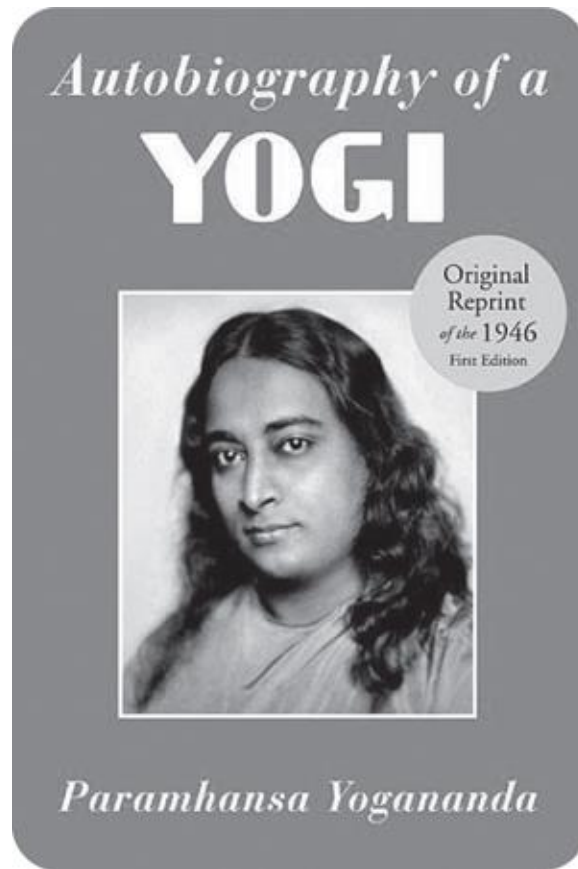
I shall not dwell more on the astral world, because I prefer to write about blessed Yoganandaji. Besides, astral projection is not important. Yogananda asked that I remain centered in the body when the consciousness expands beyond its confines, saying, "What makes you think you always can return after an astral trip?"

I said, "Well, I always have returned. What difference would it really make?"

He answered, "A considerable difference, because the longer one can extend his or her life of service here, the more growth he or she can attain. Also, should you not return it would be detrimental to the reputation of SRF." I kidded him about this last remark, which afforded us a good laugh.

Seriously I told Paramhansaji I would make every effort to remain centered in my body. He said he definitely would help me to do so. The following two nights, although I earnestly tried to remain within my body, the magnetic pull above my head was stronger than I could manage. However, with Paramhansa lending the support of his great power, I was able to get myself under control. No longer did the problem confront me.

That which is essential is loving God with all one's heart, mind and soul. Am I a good example of how one should live? Not particularly, but I certainly am trying, because God is my love, my all, my everything.



*Cover of Autobiography of a Yogi, a reprint of the 1946 original version.*

## I Meet My Guru

When I was but a young adult, I was desperate for an understanding of the metaphysical experiences I had undergone. I realized I was in dire need of direction, but I had declared for years that I wanted no person to come between God and me. So, of course, nobody did, until one great day when I was meandering alone among the hills about our home. I was pleading for divine guidance when my intuition responded, “You have been dictating to the Lord.” What a shock of awakening!

Immediately I bowed my head, apologized and spoke into the ether, “I gladly will accept as a teacher whom You send to me.” I rejoiced, gave thanks and scampered home.

Wandering into my bedroom I nonchalantly picked up a small scrap of paper from the floor, wadded it and tossed it into a wastebasket. Then the light dawned. I practically dove for that

scrap of paper, unfolded it and read, “*Autobiography of a Yogi*, by Paramhansa Yogananda.” How did it get there? Who knows? I knew intuitively that answers were at hand.

I bought the book and delved into it, only to be interrupted by a phone call from a close friend. She invited me to visit her in San Diego that weekend. She had heard someone (she could not recall his name) lecture there, and she felt I must meet him. With Yogananda’s book foremost on my mind, I thanked her but said I could not possibly accept her invitation for that particular weekend. She was extremely sorry — then remembered, “Oh, the speaker’s name is something like Param ... Paramhansa Yogananda.”



*Peggy with Nayaswami Arjuna.*

“Ye gods!” I shouted. “I’ll be down right away.” Off I sped to what would become the turning point in my life.

The subsequent day we attended the Self-Realization Church of All Religions to hear Yogananda speak. It was my privilege to witness his aura of light, his intelligence and bottomless depth of understanding. He revealed his devotion to God, blessed Jesus Christ and the great gurus — including Sri Yukteswarji, his beloved spiritual teacher. I was aware of a divine power and love permeating all.

As we filed out of church, he asked if I would remain a few minutes, which I happily did. It was during this time that he invited me to live at Self-Realization Fellowship Headquarters and to share in the work, saying that he could teach me things performed by the yogis of India, such



as consciously leaving and returning to the body. I said, “Thank you, but I am acquainted already with that practice. I’m attempting to remain *in* the body.” He then rolled his eyes upward to the Christ center, after which he said, “Every word you tell me is the truth.” (Imagine anyone ever attempting to fool him!) We conversed for a while, then he said, “You already are experiencing yoga, such as meditating and hearing the AUM (sound of cosmic creative vibration), but you require direction.”

I answered, “You are 100% correct.” I thanked him for our visit and inquired, “May I have time to think over your generous invitation?”

He said I could, but that delaying might be tantamount to forfeiting the opportunity. Not understanding at that time the true nature of a guru-disciple relationship (a relationship of unconditional love), I simply said, “If I am to go, God will hold open the invitation.”

Yogananda set a time for me to visit him in Los Angeles at his headquarters. The night before the appointment I became ill, apparently with the flu. My mother said she would cancel the appointment the first thing in the morning. However, right before falling asleep I saw Yogananda in the astral form. He stood a few feet from my bed and a little above the floor. Aloud he blessed me. I was spiritually elated, awed and grateful for the caring attention. In the morning I dressed, ate breakfast and kept my appointment.

It would be a week before my mother would exclaim, “Peg, remember the night before you visited Paramhansa Yogananda? You were very ill.”

“Yes, now that you remind me!” I responded. Obviously, the illness had vanished. Even its memory had temporarily escaped us.

The memorable first visit to Self-Realization Fellowship left me astounded — in an excellent way. Yogananda’s dynamic presence permeated the atmosphere everywhere there. I had arrived with many questions about the path of Self-realization; but my inquiries naturally gave way to the Master<sup>9</sup> of the ashram, who busily showed me photographs of his family. Did I not think his brother looked like Cary Grant? “If I look hard enough, I guess I can see a resemblance,” I answered. Later I would comprehend the enormity of merely being in the presence of so great a soul.

When I retired that night at Self-Realization Fellowship, I pleaded for guidance. “Please send me a sign. Get the message through my skull as to whether or not I’m to move in here.” Fortunately my answer came, as light went on a rampage, permeating me and the entire room. It appeared like lightning to my open eyes. I felt assured I was on the right path. Then I was thrust out of my body astrally and landed in Yoganandaji’s apartment; but upon realizing I had entered without having been invited, I returned immediately to my own room. The following day I apologized to Yoganandaji. He said, “There was absolutely nothing improper about your dropping in.” I thanked him and also said that I was happy and grateful to accept his invitation to live and work at Mt. Washington.

## Mt. Washington

Living at Self-Realization Fellowship, on the beautiful grounds of Mt. Washington, afforded us devotees the privilege of many private as well as group sessions with Master.<sup>10</sup> What a joy to be summoned by him! Naturally, his guidance to us varied depending on the manner in which we each could best serve God. He said that whatever one can do best is the manner in which he or she can serve most successfully. The line of work is not important as long as it provides a channel for God's expression. Although we are created alike, being made in God's image, every soul has been blessed with a spark of individuality that should be developed. Like gold nuggets, we require refining and polishing before our light can shine through.



*Mt Washington, SRF headquarters.*

He emphasized that meditation is essential. “Be still, and know that I am God.”<sup>11</sup> The mind, when stilled by concentration at the Christ center, reflects clearly the divine light, just as a calm lake can reveal a perfect reflection of the moon. Choppy water distorts.

Though Master did not hesitate to express himself freely, he usually did so with warmth, understanding and humor. I remember how shocked I was once when I heard him sound off to a devotee. Master read my mind and informed me, “I never lose my temper. It’s just that I have a fiery personality.” Master explained to me later that he communicated in whatever manner would most impress that particular devotee.

Attending church to hear Master was, of course, always a highlight. My mother said he was the first person who ever made any sense to her on the subject of religion. On her initial visit to hear him lecture, she received his blessing not only in words but in results. A charge of energy entered her hands and permeated her entire being, thus strengthening her. She said that spiritually, mentally and physically she felt boosted.

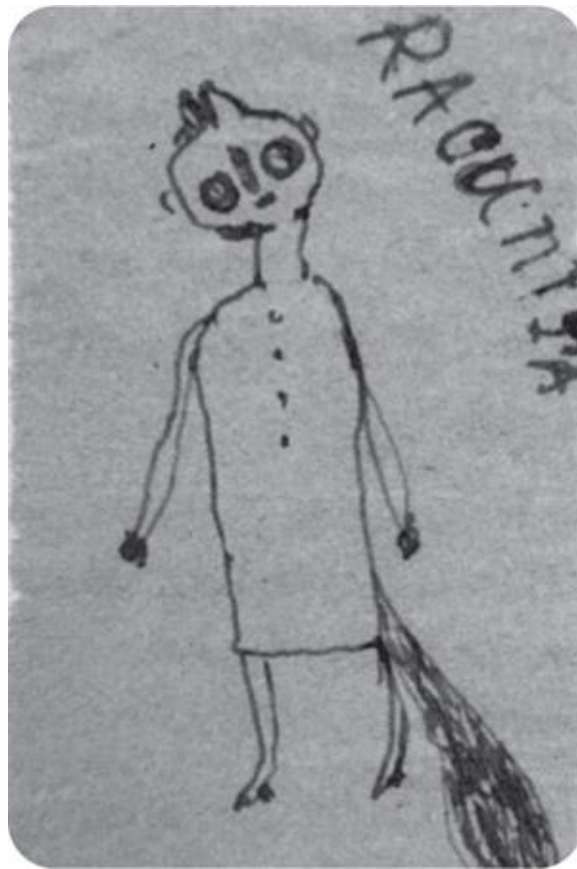
Most people responded positively to Master's blessings. However, there were a few whose egos came to the fore. One woman who emphasized her greatness said, "Master, I am really pure. I haven't had one bite of meat in decades." (Yogananda advised devotees to follow a vegetarian diet; vegetarian food was always served at Self-Realization Fellowship.)

He allowed her to ramble a bit, then turned to me and said, "I wish you would slip her a ham sandwich. It might do her some good." Master did not want people to make a fetish over what they ate. Once, a man at church was bragging about how much carrot juice he drank daily. Master said to him, "All that will accomplish is to keep you here on this plane a little longer."

My assignments at the ashram included some secretarial work and meeting many of Yoganandaji's guests as they arrived in Los Angeles to be escorted to Mt. Washington. In addition, I drove Master to and from the Lake Shrine in Pacific Palisades during its development. This was indeed a privilege, though a little disconcerting, because he wanted me to drive ahead of all the other cars. I went as fast as I dared — and through the grace of God we encountered no problems. Why he liked fast driving I don't know, unless he felt that as long as we did not run into trouble, why loiter in uninteresting traffic?

How blessed I am to have spent as much time as I did with him. After all, I did not meet him until 1949, three years before he entered mahasamadhi (a yogi's final conscious exit from the body).

Yogananda was a prominent figure, very active and much sought after. I remember that whenever the press arrived, they would ask me about his outstanding qualities. Often, before I could reply, the reporters would exclaim about his great love, which they actually felt, and about his high humor. He had the ability to reach all types of people in God's "menagerie," as he sometimes called this world. Often he chuckled over various of his devotees looking like members of the animal kingdom. He claimed that my eyes look like those of a raccoon. Consequently, he now and then addressed me as "Raccoonita."



*“Racunita” (Master’s spelling), drawn by Master and sent to me ten days before his passing.*

His joy spread to occasional pranks. Once he called my attention to a spot on the ceiling above the table where he and Rajarsi (James J. Lynn, second president of SRF) had recently had lunch. Then Master started laughing so hard that I could scarcely understand his words. The story finally came out: After they sat down at the table, Master asked Rajarsi to look out the window at a bird. Master had previously concealed a toy water gun on his person, and while Rajarsi was looking out the window, he shot the water gun at the spot on the ceiling, from where the water dropped onto Rajarsi’s bald head. Rajarsi was puzzled, but said nothing. Master played innocent. The second time the stunt was pulled, Rajarsi caught on that Master was at play.



*Yogananda with Rajarsi Janakananda, his most advanced disciple, who succeeded him as head of SRF.*

Master also appreciated stories from others. For instance, during World War II I worked at Vultee Aircraft. Once, I mentioned to Master that after I'd made my first solo flight, I told my boss, "Oh, I'll be able to take you flying."

My boss responded, "What do you have against me?" This answer so amused Master that he included it among the numerous tales he occasionally had me retell as a respite from his intense workload.

Increasingly Master put me to work contacting people. My purpose was not necessarily to bring them in as members, he said, but to expose them to yoga should they be interested — especially artists and scientists, of whom I would encounter many. He very much appreciated the creativity of artists, and he wholeheartedly admired the uncovering of truth to which scientists are dedicated. Master said it is only a matter of time before science and yoga will meet. Having both realized the truth from their different approaches, science and yoga will be in agreement.

Master informed me I would be traveling a lot and that doors would open for me. He requested that I paint and/or write, as a means of meeting the public, saying, "I don't ask you to start meditation centers or colonies; others will accomplish those matters. I do ask you to meditate and mix with the public." I explained that I am not particularly interested in socializing, to which he responded, "Well, can't you do it to please God and Guru?"

I answered, “When you put it that way, indeed yes.”

He told me to feel free to give Kriya (an advanced meditation practice) or any other part of his teachings to whomever I thought I should. Truth is free.

I exploded, “Master, I can’t do that. Your office would have a fit!”

He said, “You divine nincompoop, whom are you following, the office or me?”

“I might make a mistake,” I added.

“No, you won’t. I’ll work through you — and always keep in touch with Faye (Sri Daya Mata). By the way, I’ve told her that whenever she requires a break from her heavy workload she should call on you. The two of you might take in a movie.” This pleased me because of my very high regard for her.

“The main thing is to meditate and follow the divine wave. No matter where you are I’ll always be your guru. I’ve tested you well. You won’t be leaving this path.” (I wonder what the test was.)

“How strict do you want me to be when socializing? For instance, with meat and drink?” I inquired.

“Apply discretion, of course. Handle all situations with grace. Whatever you do, please do not ever embarrass your host or hostess.”

One of the neighbors at Mt. Washington graciously invited us at SRF to her neighborhood Christmas party one year. Daya said that Master would like several of us to attend. Daya, with her many responsibilities, could not go, but she sent a small group, including my mother, who was visiting, to the event. We were greeted warmly and offered alcoholic drinks, which we turned down flat (understandably so). There followed a dead silence. The host, obviously embarrassed, felt he had made the faux pas of the year. From the rear of the group I said, “We deeply appreciate your hospitality and hope you will excuse our being on the waterwagon.” He relaxed, smiled and said, “Oh, of course.”

Next we were served delicate sandwiches which we accepted, only to discover they were of meat. What to do? Some were slipped to my mother, who ate them to be polite. I nibbled on one. The rest were surreptitiously put in a nearby wastebasket. I made it a point to be merry and mingle with the guests. Then we departed.

## Healing

During one of my visits with Master, I mentioned that I never ceased to be thrilled over healings. I was deeply touched that Daya Mata had been healed from an illness the first time she attended one of his lectures.

He said, “It was before a large audience that I told her she would heal right away. So it was either that or leave town!”

Yogananda often reminded us that God is the doer, in healings as in all things. We are but the channels through which God acts in this world. “‘Naught of myself I do!’ Thus will he think — who holds the truth of truths.”<sup>12</sup>

I remember Master once telling me of a young man, a drug addict, who had just spent several hours with him. Master purposely kept him past the time at which he would require his next dose (I do not know of which drug). Finally the man exclaimed, “Sir, please excuse me, but I must leave immediately in order to get my drug!”

Master said, “I understand, but I promise you it will not be necessary, because I have the drug on hand.”

The young man was astounded. When he started to shake, Master produced the tablet and the man gratefully swallowed it. Shortly he settled down, saying he felt fine. Master later said the man did not realize the “drug” had been concocted from a piece of dough and a few drops of ink. After the fake tablets had been allowed to dry, they passed for the real thing. I can hear Master’s laughter now; he was utterly delighted. The young man soon recovered from his drug addiction.

Yogananda’s capacity seemed to have no confines. He could answer all metaphysical questions, as well as those pertaining to most other subjects. Seeing people’s previous lives enabled him to better guide devotees, and to place them in that work where they could best serve. He told me that I had studied his teachings in the past. I had been born into ruling families — not as a ruler, but as a communicator among the ruling families. (God only knows what I was at other times!)

He unconditionally loved everyone. Whether or not he agreed with them was beside the point. He never lost sight of his own words, “Awaken God’s love in the hearts of others.” Master emphasized the joy of divine love, and how essential it is. Spiritually love others through thick and thin. Impart so much of this divine love that the hearts of others respond. We can do it. God’s love — pure, spiritual, divine — is in all of us, as we are made in His image. However, it is our responsibility to tune in and to share. Thus we help awaken others, whose hearts will then be aglow to take the spiritual path to Him, to serve and to rejoice.

## Master’s All-Embracing Consciousness

Master thought highly of my parents. Although my father had long passed on (May 30, 1929) before I met Master, he knew him through meditation. Master informed me that he invariably meditated on devotees to pick up their backgrounds, and thus know them better. He could answer all metaphysical questions, as well as those pertaining to other subjects, such as education. Master’s good friend, Luther Burbank, prominent American horticulturist, freely questioned him regarding various methods of teaching. This was a subject dear to both of their hearts. They were in favor of children experiencing nature and not being stifled out of their individuality. It is no

wonder that Burbank was highly interested in Master's school in Ranchi, India (Yogoda Satsanga).



*Yogananda with the horticulturist Luther Burbank.*

Often I was one of the devotees attending Master after church when he met with small groups of people from many walks of life. He was knowledgeable and at ease with the various subjects that presented themselves in these discussions — religion, architecture, travel, literature, economics, politics, etc.

I remember his riding out with me to our orange and avocado groves. How he enjoyed the fruit my mother shared with him! Especially he liked the Queens, a super-large variety of avocado, and he wanted to purchase a tree. However, my mother said that would not be necessary; he could have all the fruit he could use.

In driving with Master we would sometimes stop along the way, descend from the car and do yoga exercises. At first I felt self-conscious about performing before gawkers, but as to many things in life, I adapted. Occasionally, we would stop to lunch at a drive-in. While being served, Master sometimes would inquire of the waitress, “May I ask what church you attend?” Whatever church it was, he invariably said, “Fine, stick with it.”

He felt one should attend the church of his or her own choosing. He taught from the Bible and the Bhagavad Gita, saying that all spiritual paths lead to the same one God. Unity can be found in diversity. Do that which inspires, expands, raises the consciousness — be it attending



church, a walk in the woods, performing a good deed, whatever. Everyone is on the spiritual path whether or not he or she is aware of it. Even an alcoholic or a drug addict, who temporarily is on a problematic detour, is seeking peace of mind, heart's desires — all to be found in God, one's higher Self, the soul. "The kingdom of God is within you."<sup>13</sup> "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."<sup>14</sup> "Seekers of union with the Lord find Him dwelling in their own hearts..."<sup>15</sup>

## Master's Teachings

We know that Paramhansa Yogananda respects all religions. What is it that is unique about his teachings? What did he introduce to the West that captivated thousands of people when he spoke at the International Congress of Religious Liberals in Boston in 1920, representing India? And later, when large crowds came to hear him at Carnegie Hall and the Los Angeles Philharmonic Auditorium? The answer is the magnetic power of his dynamic joy, and the promise he held out to everyone that he, too, could experience these things in his own life. It was his mission to bring to the West the science of Kriya Yoga. This meditation technique, when practiced regularly, actually quiets the mind so that one can "be still, and know that I am God."<sup>16</sup> As a result of these practices, one hears the AUM, sees the spiritual eye, and realizes the higher realms of consciousness.

The teachings of Yogananda are studied worldwide. At his Centennial Celebration in 1993 hosted by SRF in Los Angeles, 6,000 devotees met to honor him. Lectures were presented in five languages. Ananda World Brotherhood Village, in Nevada City, California, hosted many hundreds of devotees from around the world during Yogananda's centennial year. Programs there, too, were presented in several languages. Celebrations were held at various meditation centers throughout the world.

Master said, "Don't take my word for anything. Apply the techniques and find out for yourselves. Don't get hung up on words. There will be as many interpretations of my lectures as there are listeners. And please remember that although I am touched by your love, God is the real guru. Worship Him."



*SRF monks practicing energization exercises on the tennis courts of Mt. Washington.*

One of Yogananda's major contributions to the science of yoga, and a cornerstone of his teachings, was his "energization exercises." With practice, one learns how consciously to control and direct the body's life force (prana), and even to draw and direct energy from the cosmic source beyond one's body. These marvelous exercises bring vital energy to all body parts, help focus energy and develop concentration.

Yogananda also taught the asanas (yoga postures), but he didn't emphasize them. He explained that they were of lesser importance, and in fact not necessary, for those whose goal was union with God. Nevertheless, he said they offered wonderful benefits. I witnessed these when I taught yoga at an orphanage (Salvation Army Home for Children) and at the Mexican-American Cultural Institute, both in Guadalajara, Mexico. The children from the orphanage, lively as Mexican jumping beans, readily took to the asanas — even put on an exhibition at the Guadalajara Hilton Hotel. They had a great time showing off to an enthralled audience. They gained substantially from their practice of the asanas, strengthening themselves both physically and mentally.

## Sin and Spiritual Progress

People ask about sin. I once asked Master, “What is your definition of sin?” He answered, “Sin is ignorance. [*Not*, “Ignorance is sin.”] If you fall down, pick yourself up and go on.” In the Bible, Jesus says, “Go, and sin no more.”<sup>17</sup>

Is sin not the hurting of others, which in turn harms the self, the very temple that should be kept clean to serve as a channel for God’s expression on earth? What is hell but separation from God? Although the spiritual path has obstacles to surmount, it is the overcoming of them that helps to expand the consciousness so that one can behold the truth: “Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”<sup>18</sup> Yogananda expressed the importance of expansion for spiritual growth, saying, “The best cup in the world cannot hold a quart of anything.”

Although karma (action; cause and effect) plays its role, Master said not to dwell on our unfavorable karma, the result of past mistakes, but to set our sights high. Right action now will create good karma. In fact, Master said, “When you realize yourself as a child of God, what karma have you? God has no karma. And you have none, when you *know* you are His child.”<sup>19</sup> He often said to me, “Remember that nothing is too lofty in God.”

A frequent topic presented to Yogananda was that of progressing spiritually. He made it clear that one should develop in a balanced, threefold manner: spiritually, mentally and physically. He taught us to balance activity with meditation. “He who beholds inaction in action, and action in inaction, is wise among men.”<sup>20</sup> He advised devotees to keep good company and share good vibrations, “for where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I...”<sup>21</sup> One should reach toward those who require help. Service to God through His children is surely a holy act, not to be confused with attaining the fruits of action for personal gain. For where there is personal motive, that which one does or even thinks, positive or negative, sooner or later returns to meet him head on; if not in this lifetime, then in a future incarnation. Consequently, so long as our actions are touched by personal motive (which, for most of us, is most of the time!), it is wise to concentrate on what one wants to manifest, rather than focus energy on what one does not want.

Master emphasized that one must let go of the personal ego, and identify with what one actually is: the soul. Thus will one be in touch with the divine, with God, who cannot be limited. He is spirit, love, joy, compassion. He can be and do whatever He chooses: reveal Himself as Jesus Christ, Divine Mother, companion, whatever. The devotee draws God to himself expressed in the most beloved, or often prayed to form.

## Personal Reflections

Now and then I am asked what about Master means the most to me. How can I answer this? His endless facets equal a divine oneness: The depth and effectiveness of his teachings, including Kriya and other meditation techniques; the love and compassion he emanates; his stress on

balanced living and service; his limitless devotion to God, Jesus Christ, the great gurus, saints and sages of all religions. To give a short answer to this question: "His presence."

Ever since I first came to Yogananda, whenever I pray directly to him I receive an answer in one form or another, usually intuitively, but occasionally verbally. Often the answer comes through an unexpected channel, such as "feeling" I have been blessed ... followed by things working out. Yes, the Lord works in strange ways. I, personally (and many others too), get the best results by loving. When we are divinely loving, and emanating that divine love, we are taken care of.

Often I am confronted with this question: Does one miss out by not having a guru in the physical form on this plane? No, one need not miss out at all. Through right action, meditation, prayer and the power of spiritual love, the devotee will draw the guru's response, from wherever he is. In this manner will the devotee experience the guru's presence, realize peace of mind, and merge with Christ consciousness ... and the glory of God.

## Letters from Master

January 12, 1952

Dear Mrs. Bowen and Peggy,

Thank you so much for the choice avocados you so kindly sent me for Christmas. Also I want to thank you for the lovely St. Francis statue. You know him to be one of my favorites don't you? I appreciate both gifts very deeply and the good thoughts which prompted the giving.

My greatest wish for you is that God's loving presence may permeate your consciousness now and during the days to come in this new year 1952, bringing with it the feelings of joy and bliss.

Very sincerely yours,

*[signature]*

Paramhansa Yogananda

Dear Mother + Daughter,

You two are most wonderful among my richest gifts of all-time friends and followers of SRF. I never can forget you, Mrs. Bowen, your self-sacrifice at allowing your very good daughter to be with us and plodding along carrying on your big responsibility. I feel more

(over)

Founded in 1920 by  
PARAMHANSI YOGANANDA  
CABLE: "SELFREAL"

PUBLISHERS  
SELF-REALIZATION MAGAZINE  
PHONE: CAPITOL 0212

# SELF-REALIZATION FELLOWSHIP



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MOUNT WASHINGTON ESTATES

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Very sincerely yours,

*Paramhansa Yogananda*

Paramhansa Yogananda

Mrs. Helen and Peggy Bowen  
Placentia,  
California

*Dear Helen & daughter,  
you two are most wonderful because  
my richest gifts of all-time friends and  
followers of SR? I never can forget you Mrs  
Bowen your self sacrifice at allowing  
your very good daughter to be with us  
a flooding along carrying on your  
big responsibility. I feel much  
(over)*

happy that Peggy is with you and helping you in your trials though we all deeply miss her.

That you both ever remember me by your very kind gifts you two seem to be always near my spirit.

Anything I can do for you both please don't hesitate to ask.

I deeply appreciated the soulful notes from you both more than I can write.

True souls like you two — like divine wine become better as time goes on.

I miss you both — but very happy though you both are far away yet are very near my spirit.

With very best wishes that New Year fulfill your needed hopes — I remain

Very sincerely yours,

P. Yogananda

P.S. I am finishing revising Genesis. So glad Peggy is such a good soul-minister of Self-Realization.

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with very best wishes that  
New Year fulfill your needed  
hopes - I remain  
very sincerely yours  
P. J. Fogarty

Dear friends  
I hope  
Peggy is  
being  
remembered  
in such  
a capital  
manner!



February 25, 1952

Dear Peggy,

Was so happy to receive your letter of January 21st and I was touched by your words.

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

I am so glad that you are being faithful to your meditations. Practice Kriya regularly and sit long afterward, giving God your deeper and deeper devotion each day.

Please give your mother my very deepest blessings. I was deeply touched by her kind letter to me and also your letter of that time. I thought I had written on my last letter to you that I had received them. Again, thank you both for your kindness to me and for the delicious avocados you have sent me. I have enjoyed their flavor very much.

Though I am drowned in work here, yet I often send my blessings to you and your mother. Please keep in contact with Faye at headquarters, and come to see us there whenever you can.

<sup>22</sup>Your letter was nicest bearing your and your good mother's soulful messages. I have missed seeing your ever joyous God-bliss-filled countenances. My blessings are ever though letters I write once in a while. Let me always hear from you and about your mother. How is your sister?

With boundless blessings as ever

Very sincerely,

P. Yogananda

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and your good mother's soulful message.  
I have missed seeing your ever joyous  
God-bliss-filled countenances  
My blessings are ever there though letters I  
write once in a while. Let me always  
hear from you & about your mother.  
It is your sister  
with abundant blessings as ever  
my sister  
P. Yogananda*

## Poems

### Looking at My Garden

Looking at my garden I contemplate ...  
How blossoms it into glory?  
Its beauty surpasses my intelligence.

I study the various patterns of seeds,  
for I'm after truth as much as a scientist.  
But the seeds appear lifeless  
until wooed and cared for.  
After a relationship develops  
and when finally garden colors, designs  
and fragrances emerge to sing to our Creator,  
my heart feels as though it would burst with joy.  
A scientist, no doubt, feels as rewarded  
when he realizes his goal.  
Is it because both of our minds,  
though on different paths,  
arrive at the same one truth?

### Monk and Monkey

A monk removed his sandals,  
lit some candles,  
and was nurtured from his soul...

A monkey ate the sandal soles ...  
so on the whole,  
neither needed begging bowls.

## A Worm

“I’m all bogged down from stem to stern,  
including my interior,  
because I hear that I am low.  
Ye gods! Am I inferior?”

“Oh, little worm,” a wise man cried,  
“You’ve power to move old Mother Earth.  
Within you hides a universe.  
Think again about your worth.”

“H’mmm,” considered the worm,  
with a wriggle and a squirm.

## Beyond the Mask

You call me Death.  
I am very much alive,  
eternally so....  
You behold me hideous.  
Yet I bring you peace  
when you go with me.  
I understand your feeling.  
Were I you I would despise  
the cruel vacuum left behind.  
But could you see  
beyond the mask *you* ’ve placed on me,  
you’d know the truth ...  
the truth that sets one free.  
Shed your illusions.  
You must come with me.

## Dance of the Atoms

Finally escaping the storm waves of mind,  
in pure nudity — stripped of thought activity,  
ego and desire —

can we serenely dive to the depth of being  
where, in the fountain of life, we are honored  
to witness the miracle dance of the atoms.

Infinitesimal atoms ... myriads ...  
their swirling energies ever alert.  
Each atom — a *thinking* and *feeling* entity —  
though placed in pattern, is free in its individuality.  
At the slightest signal from another,  
they harmonize with the whole —  
like improvising musicians.

Dancing in light, joy and majesty ...  
they emanate ecstasy.

## Beautiful Bubble

A beautiful bubble was blown very high.  
It burst just as soon as it hit the big sky.  
It sang:  
    "Bless my soul!  
    I'm alive,  
    I survive.  
    I'm a part of the whole.  
My inner self's free from its confines, you see,  
like a raindrop that falls into the sea."

## Oh, to Be Like the Sun!

Oh, to be like the sun!  
It doesn't discriminate,  
nor does it hate,  
but shines on everyone....

## Mixed Blessings

Not a rupee have untouchables.  
Nor health ... nor food.  
Only bloated stomachs  
protruding from their skeletons.  
This I witnessed on my journey  
to the wondrous Taj Mahal.

The Taj Mahal, marble mausoleum,  
a manifestation of wealth  
and breath-taking splendor,  
in memory of but one....  
Its moonlit dome  
is sister to the Moon.

With daylight, jeweled peacocks  
in shimmering iridescence  
parade the grounds.  
Krishna blessed them.  
A rupee they have not, yet  
they abound with health and food,  
and splendor.

### A Passer-by

On a crowded street far from home  
beneath the scorching sun,  
I heard cries of terror,  
*"Leproso! Leproso!"*  
The mob stampeded to escape....

In the clearance I saw the leper,  
his decaying body, his tortured eyes.  
Absorbed in my inadequacy  
to assist one so afflicted,  
I was not aware of fear,  
but walked to him and said  
The Lord's Prayer.  
I, a helpless passer-by.  
How much kinder ...

had I been Death.

## How Easy to Forgive

By nature we're chock full of love.  
Our Creator made us so.  
Sometimes it's hard to fathom this  
Because we are absorbed in wrongs.

Let's ignite this love we have,  
Let it explode and burn the wrongs.  
Once the bonfire purifies,  
How easy to forgive!

## Ethereal Dress

Peacefully I lay there  
without a thought at all,  
only an awareness ...  
Could I have heard a call?

Slipping from my earthly garb  
I rose above myself.  
Though I was a little child,  
I felt more like an elf.

Then I saw that I was I,  
but in ethereal dress,  
and — closer to my spirit now —  
all I could do was effervesce.

Again,  
Thank You, Master.

- <sup>1</sup> In 1920 Yogananda founded Self-Realization Fellowship, 3880 San Rafael Ave., Los Angeles, CA 90065. SRF is also called the Mother Center, or SRF Headquarters.
- <sup>2</sup> Mrs. Thomas B. Root of Albuquerque, New Mexico.
- <sup>3</sup> Kriyananda (J. Donald Walters), *14 Steps to Higher Awareness* (Nevada City, CA: Crystal Clarity, Publishers, 1989), p. 495: diagram of chakras.
- <sup>4</sup> Paramhansa Yogananda, *Autobiography of a Yogi* (Los Angeles: Self-Realization Fellowship, 1946), p. 13.
- <sup>5</sup> “If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.” (Matthew 6:22)
- <sup>6</sup> Paramhansa Yogananda, *The Divine Romance* (Los Angeles: Self-Realization Fellowship, 1986), p. 451.
- <sup>7</sup> Sir Edwin Arnold, trans., *The Song Celestial (Bhagavad-Gita)* (Philadelphia: David McKay Company, 1949), chap. II, p. 10.
- <sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, chap. IV, p. 27.
- <sup>9</sup> “Master” is the title of honor given to those who are masters of yoga. I told Yogananda at first that I did not know if I could call him Master. He assured me that the title signified, not our slavery, but that he was master of himself. Soon I learned he had well earned the title.
- <sup>10</sup> Publisher’s note: In the first (1995) edition, Peggy included a footnote referring readers interested in Yogananda’s teachings to these direct disciples of his (all now deceased): Sri Daya Mata, President/Spiritual Director, Self-Realization Fellowship Roy Eugene Davis, Spiritual Director, Center for Spiritual Awareness J. Robert Raymer, President/Spiritual Director, Golden Lotus, Inc., Song of the Morning Ranch
- <sup>11</sup> Psalms 46:10.
- <sup>12</sup> Sir Edwin Arnold, *The Song Celestial*, chap. V, p. 30.
- <sup>13</sup> Luke 17:21.
- <sup>14</sup> Matthew 6:33.
- <sup>15</sup> Bhagavad Gita, 15:11.
- <sup>16</sup> Psalms 46:10.
- <sup>17</sup> John 8:11.
- <sup>18</sup> John 8:32.
- <sup>19</sup> Paramhansa Yogananda, *Where There Is Light* (Los Angeles: Self-Realization Fellowship, 1988), p. 15.
- <sup>20</sup> Bhagavad Gita, IV:18.
- <sup>21</sup> Matthew 18:20.
- <sup>22</sup> This paragraph was handwritten by Master.





*“As a bright light shining in the midst of darkness, so was Yogananda’s presence in this world.  
Such a great soul comes on earth only rarely, when there is a real need among men.”*

*— His Holiness the Shankaracharya of Kanchipuram*

## About Paramhansa Yogananda

Born in 1893, Yogananda was the first yoga master of India to take up permanent residence in the West. Yogananda arrived in America in 1920, and proceeded to travel throughout the country on what he called his “spiritual campaigns.” Hundreds of thousands filled the largest halls in major cities to see the yoga master from India. Yogananda continued to lecture and write up to his passing in 1952.

Yogananda’s initial impact on Western culture was truly impressive. But his lasting spiritual legacy has been even greater. His *Autobiography of a Yogi*, first published in 1946, helped launch a spiritual revolution in the West. Translated into more than a dozen languages, it remains a best-selling spiritual classic to this day.

Before embarking on his mission, Yogananda received this admonition from his teacher, Swami Sri Yukteswar: The West is high in material attainments, but lacking in spiritual understanding. It is God's will that you play a role in teaching mankind the value of balancing the material with an inner, spiritual life.

In addition to *Autobiography of a Yogi*, his spiritual legacy includes music, poetry, and extensive commentaries on the Bhagavad Gita, the *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam*, and the Christian Bible, showing the principles of Self-realization as the unifying truth underlying all true religions.

Widely considered one of the 20th century's most influential spiritual teachers, his life and work helped launch and inspire a spiritual revolution. By the turn of the century, thousands of seekers around the world considered themselves his disciples.