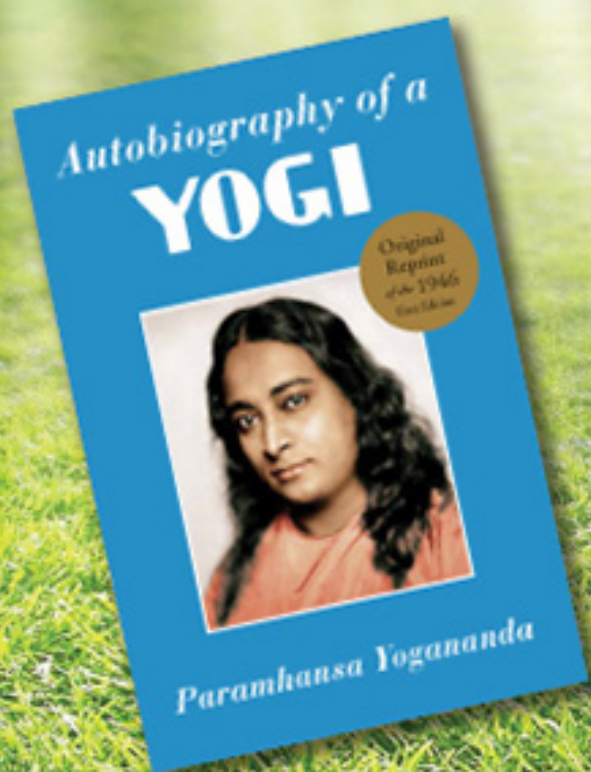


Living the Teachings of Paramhansa Yogananda



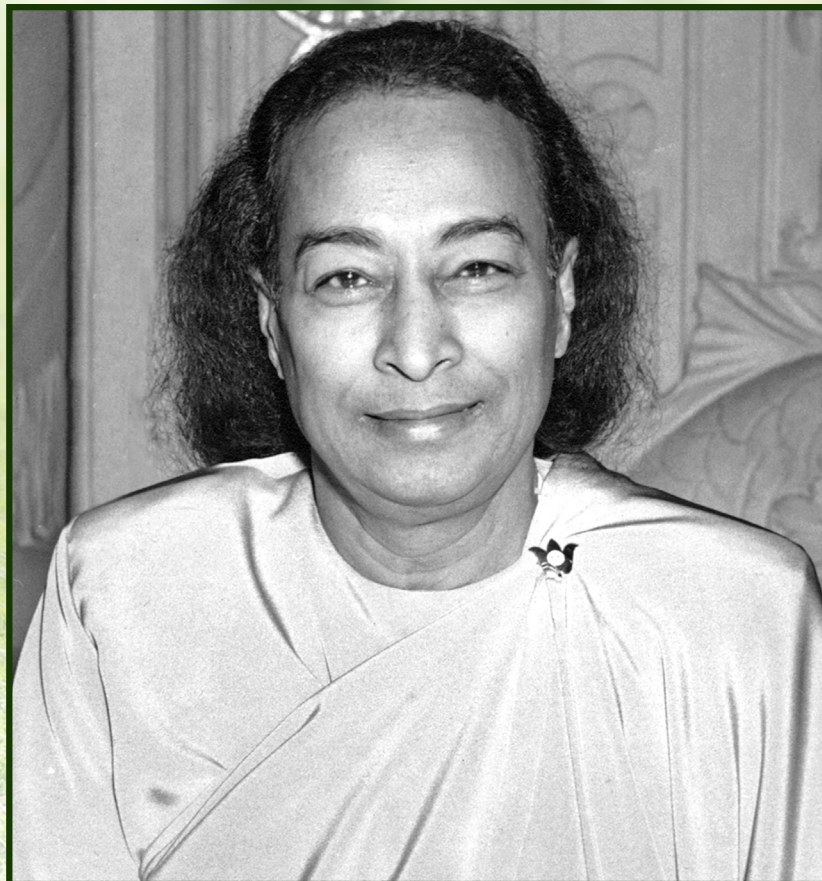
The Path of Kriya Yoga



A Touch of Light
Presented by Ananda Sangha Worldwide



“Even a little practice of this inward religion will free one from dire fears and colossal suffering.”



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Living the Teachings of Paramhansa Yoga: The Path of Kriya Yoga

INTRODUCTION

Paramhansa Yogananda came to the West from India in 1920, bringing a new vision of how to live. He lectured across the United States drawing thousands, and filling the largest auditoriums in the country. During the three decades he lived in America, he met many of the well-known figures of the time: President Calvin Coolidge, industrialist Henry Ford, and agricultural inventor Luther Burbank, to name just a few.

Even after Yogananda's passing in 1952, his *Autobiography of a Yogi* continues to inspire influential people such as George Harrison, Gene Roddenberry (creator of the Star Trek series), and Steve Jobs. He is widely known as the "Father of Yoga" in the West.

What are some of the revolutionary teachings that Yogananda brought to the American mindscape?

The Practice of Meditation Is Vitaly Important

He taught that meditation is not an archaic ritual relegated to remote monasteries or caves, but that its practice can greatly improve our daily life. When he came to the United States virtually no one there meditated. Now millions do so regularly.



The Transformative Ability of Our Brain

Decades before scientists began to prove it as a fact, Yogananda stated that meditation actually changes and rejuvenates the cells of our brain for greater mental clarity and power.

The Use of Will Power to Draw Success

He taught practical techniques to control and strengthen willpower and to draw energy from universal sources. This heightened energy magnetically attracts success, improved health, and solutions to problems in our daily life.

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God Can Be Brought into All Aspects of Our Life

Perhaps most important of all, Yogananda taught that making God central to daily life can enhance and uplift everything we do. Paramhansa Yogananda's message might be summed up as "A Practical Guide to Finding True Happiness in Life."

But it's only in the living of these teachings that their real power is revealed. Swami Kriyananda, a close, direct disciple of Yogananda, furthered his guru's mission by creating eight "world brotherhood colonies" throughout the world. In these communities, Yogananda's "How to Live" principles have been practiced on a daily basis for the past nearly fifty years, and their value has been proven.



We (Nayaswamis Jyotish and Devi) are fortunate to have had the personal friendship, training, and guidance of Swami Kriyananda from the late 1960s until his passing in 2013.

We have also been founding members of many of these communities, including the first one, Ananda World Brotherhood Village, in California. We know from experience that these teachings can improve all aspects of life—health, business, success, creativity, marriage, family, education, and spiritual development.

In 2013, after years of teaching these principles throughout the world, we started writing a short weekly blog called *A Touch of Light*. Our goal was to help people understand the practicality of Yogananda's insights and to apply his wisdom to the challenges of daily life. The response from readers has been overwhelming. We receive emails and meet people all around the world telling us how much they enjoy and are helped by these bite-sized essays.

Increasingly, people have asked us, "Can you publish your letters in a book so that we can reread them and refer to them later?" So, here is our response: *Touch of Light: Living the Teachings of Paramhansa Yogananda*.

Like the facets of a beautiful diamond, each weekly topic is a small reflection of the brilliance of one of the great spiritual figures of our time, Paramhansa Yogananda. His teachings, which reflect the light of all religions, can guide our life towards true inner happiness.

Nayaswamis Jyotish and Devi

-Ananda World Brotherhood Village January 2015

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BAKED POTATO OR TOAST

In the early years of Ananda, especially during the cold winters, an essential item for survival was a good down sleeping bag. This was because very few of our dwellings had adequate heating. Whether we were toughing it out in a canvas teepee, or luxuriating in an old bread truck, by the middle of the night our homes were freezing. It was then that our sleeping bags became our best friends.

I remember facing many a cold, dark morning as I woke up to the buzzing of my alarm clock telling me it was time for meditation. The challenge of emerging from the warm cocoon of my down bag into the frigid air of my small trailer was a daily struggle.

One friend came up with a great image to describe the experience: “Some people are like toast. When the alarm clock goes off, they immediately pop out of bed. Others are like baked potatoes—they like to hunker down in the warmth and remain there.”

People who fell more into the “baked potato” category developed different techniques to roust themselves out of bed. Someone told me that when his alarm clock went off, he would turn on his flashlight and roll it across the room. This would force him to get up to retrieve it before the batteries ran down. Others would have a “wake-up buddy” pound on their door and remain outside till the “baked potato” said they were getting up.

Those cold mornings had their challenges, but they also provided wonderful training in self-discipline and had a great sense of adventure about them. Master said that the reason most people don’t make progress on the path is that they lack a “sense of spiritual adventuresomeness.”

To pop up and say yes to the adventure of life, to push past the warmth of the comfortable, and to face challenges cheerfully—all these are survival tools much more enduring and valuable than even our cherished down sleeping bags.

If you are in the “toast” category, you are probably doing fine already. But if you are a “baked potato,” don’t be afraid to face the challenges before you. They are God’s gift to roust you out of your current state of spiritual slumber and help you awaken fully in Him.

With love in God,
Nayaswami Devi

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OUR SPIRITUAL DNA

Many people are interested in their ancestry and the qualities they have inherited. There is a popular movement to have one's DNA analyzed, in order to see what diseases and other traits run in one's family. Those of us who are drawn to Ananda are spiritual brothers and sisters, and have DNA of another sort that is common to all of us: common qualities that run through the whole Ananda family. What traits have we inherited from Paramhansa Yogananda and Swami Kriyananda? Here are a few that come quickly to mind:

1) A sincere desire to achieve Self-realization and to know God. This may take different forms. Some may define it as a desire to know truth. Others as a deep devotional love and desire to be close to Yogananda. Still others long for peace or bliss.

Some of us tend to feel guilty, as if we didn't get much of this particular gene. Yogananda had an answer for this type of despondency. "Remember," he told a despairing disciple, "it takes very, very, VERY good karma even to want to know God!"

2) A commitment to practicing those techniques and attitudes that help us achieve Self-realization. This includes the self-discipline required to meditate daily and practice the other techniques of this path. Yes, the degree of self-discipline may vary from person to person, but even the least of us at least has gotten the gene that wants to want to do our sadhana. Even the sleepyheads are trying to wake up and get out of bed.

3) A willingness to actively serve. As a general rule, we are a very high-energy clan. Starting communities takes a lot of work, and we seem to enjoy challenges. Serving also takes the form of a willingness to give money. As a group, we are incredibly generous.

4) A desire to share these wonderful teachings with others. After reading *Autobiography of a Yogi*, Swami Kriyananda took the next bus across the country. He had two burning thoughts: to know God, and to share Him with everyone. He passed this tendency on to us and, in many ways, it defines life at Ananda.

5) A certain social instinct. Most of us enjoy being part of a family and sharing the path with others. I haven't met many true hermits in the long history of Ananda and, quite honestly, the few that I have met didn't seem all that balanced or integrated. I think Master knew that he had to attract people who like people if he was going to launch a communities movement. While we are social, we also tend to be strong-minded individualists. We are a little like a table loaded with good crème brûlées—a bit crunchy on the outside but soft and sweet on the inside.

6) Intelligence, creativity, and the ability to enjoy a good joke. We like to laugh. At life. At problems. Even at ourselves.

All in all we have inherited wonderful DNA: It is a great family and a splendid life!

In joy,
Nayaswami Jyotish

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7 REVOLUTIONARY TEACHINGS OF PARAMHANSA YOGANANDA

Paramhansa Yogananda's mission was to help usher the whole world, with greater understanding and spiritual insight, into Dwapara Yuga, the new Age of Energy in which we live. "Someday," Swami Kriyananda wrote, "I believe he will be seen as the avatar of Dwapara Yuga."



It was a world-changing mission, and therefore his teachings needed to be revolutionary. In some cases what he taught was well known in India but created a revolution in the West. Others of his teachings were completely new to this age. Let's look at some of both.

1) Only God exists. God is both beyond and within all manifestation. He dreams this world into existence, and every atom and star is created from His consciousness. The goal of life is to awaken from the dream and realize our unity with Him. Why revolutionary? This ancient Vedic teaching is new to the West, which views creation as wholly separate from the Creator.

2) Daily meditation, stilling the mind, is the way to see behind the dream. Meditation consists of withdrawing outwardly directed prana (subtle energy or life-force) and focusing it at the spiritual eye, concentrating on God or on one of His qualities: light, sound, joy, peace, calmness, love, wisdom, or power. Why revolutionary? When Yogananda came to America in 1920 almost no one meditated. Now millions do so daily.

3) Prana keeps us alive, keeps us healthy, makes us magnetic, and allows us to succeed. All aspects of life are improved when we learn to control it, for to control energy is to gain control also over all things material. Yogananda taught the techniques of Kriya Yoga and the Energization Exercises to help us gain this control. He often said that the true altar is not in any church, but in our central nervous system. Why revolutionary? The importance of life-force is only now entering the fringes of science and the healing arts.

4) Karma and reincarnation. Every thought, feeling, and action creates a wave of energy that is destined to return to us: As we give, so shall we receive. The results of our own past actions create the circumstances and events of life. The way to free ourselves from this karmic cycle is to accept life, control our reactive processes, be even-minded and cheerful, and dissolve the ego. Why revolutionary? Appreciation of the importance of karma is beginning to sweep the world and change behavior.

5) We don't need to leave the world. Yogananda's mission was, in part, to help us see God in every person and activity. Why revolutionary? In the past, sincere seekers avoided worldly activity and withdrew to caves or monasteries.

6) The desire to be happy and to avoid pain is the universal motivation behind every action. Over lifetimes our definition of what makes us happy evolves. At first happiness is sought in laziness and sensuality, then in ego-centered accumulation of possessions or power. Gradually this evolves into an altruistic desire to help others and, finally, the yearning for Self-realization, which alone brings the joy we have always sought. Why revolutionary? People everywhere seek things, imagining that happiness lies outside themselves.

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7) Spiritual communities provide the optimal environment for the pursuit of happiness and God.

Why revolutionary? The spiritual community movement is only now starting with the Ananda communities as forerunners.

Paramhansa Yogananda's revolutionary teachings need to be applied both culturally and personally. While these seven points only scratch the surface of what he taught, each is worth a meditation or two to see how they might apply to your life.

In the light,
Nayaswami Jyotish

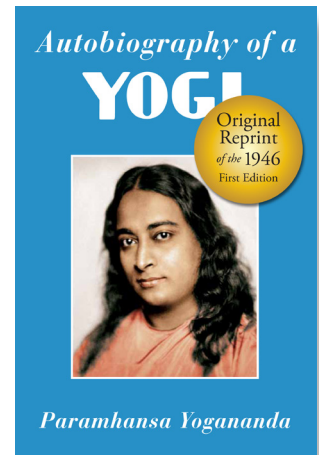
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A BOOK AND ITS COVER

"A friend gave me a book to read, but something about the photo on the cover just put me off. I set the book aside and forgot all about it," he said. A young man was telling us the story of how he found *Autobiography of a Yogi*.

"Later that year," he continued, "as I was getting ready to move out of the house I was renting, I went up to the attic to get some things I'd stored. In the corner I noticed a box of books that must have been left by a former tenant. On the top of the pile, there was a book that looked intriguing, though its cover was torn off.

"As I began reading it, I absolutely loved the book, and couldn't put it down. It wasn't until I was about halfway through that I realized it was the same one—*Autobiography of a Yogi*—that I'd set aside earlier because I didn't like its cover."



We've asked people all over the world how they found Master's classic, and the stories are always inspiring, sometimes semi-miraculous, and all filled with a creative ingenuity that God must need to draw us slightly oblivious devotees to the spiritual path. ("You don't like the cover? Here's a copy without the cover.")

Perhaps you, too, would like to share your story about how you found *Autobiography*? We've created a page on Ananda's new website ParamhansaYogananda.com where you can add yours. It will be wonderful to share these little miracles.

For me these stories illustrate how the Divine works with each one of us in a unique way that is designed specifically for our spiritual needs. I don't mean just getting the *Autobiography* into our hands, but the personalized help the guru offers us to overcome the ego. And all of this is rooted in a love unconditional and unfathomable.

In one of his talks about the power of Yogananda's love, Swami Kriyananda said, "You could feel that Master had enough love to be able to stand up and attack our personal delusions head on, and to tell us what we needed to hear."

Never doubt that God loves you. He's designed every detail of our life to awaken us from this dream of delusion.

With joy in God and Guru,
Nayaswami Devi

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TRUSTING FIRST IMPRESSIONS

It was quiet and cool in the interior of the dimly lit church—a dramatic contrast to the ceaseless activity on the college campus during this hot day in late spring of 1969. A friend had given me *Autobiography of a Yogi* to read, and it had awakened in me a keen desire to learn to meditate.

My friend had been studying meditation through the mail for three months and considered himself somewhat of an expert on the subject (a little prematurely, I'm afraid.) We decided to find a quiet place to meditate, and the little stone church across from the student library seemed an ideal place.

Without any idea of what to do, I simply found a seat on a wooden pew, closed my eyes, and relaxed into the silence around me. What happened next was an experience that remains vivid after all these years, and that determined the course my life would take.

First I felt a heightened sense of awareness, an expanded sense of personal identity, and a deep peace. As these intensified, I began to experience a great joy welling up within me that seemed to come from the core of my being.

After some time, I couldn't contain myself any longer, and I enthusiastically burst out, "It's all inside us—a tremendous sense of joy!"

My friend dismissed my words with a shrug, and replied, "Oh, no—it's much more difficult than that. You have to study meditation for years and learn different techniques before you can experience anything."

A little crestfallen, I thought I must have done something wrong. It took me some time to realize that my first impressions had been quite right. The fruit of meditation, whether for a mere beginner or one who has practiced for years, is the experience of the joy of our own being. Don't lose sight of this and mistake the means (the techniques of meditation) for the end (God's bliss).

Paramhansa Yogananda gave us these words of encouragement: "If you have made up your mind to find joy within yourself, sooner or later you shall find it. Seek it now, daily, by steady, deeper and deeper meditation within." This was the gift God gave to a beginning meditator many years ago in a quiet little church, an experience she has cherished and tried to build on ever since.

With deep gratitude,
Nayaswami Devi

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ACCEPTING HELP

We heard a story about a seeker who as a young man in Europe had read *Autobiography of a Yogi*. He was so impressed by the book that he resolved to move to America and join Yogananda's work. Then the news reached him that Yogananda had just left the body, and he dropped his plans. Some time later the great Indian yogi, Swami Ramdas, was lecturing throughout Europe. After taking a week of his classes, the young man asked Ramdas if he would accept him as a disciple.

The saint responded, "I am not your guru; Yogananda is your guru." The devotee, taken aback, said, "But Yogananda is dead." Ramdas gave a classic reply: "No, Yogananda is alive. It is you who are dead." The great ones are not limited by time and space the way we are.

But how can we connect with them after they've entered the "gulf after death"? This question is in the hearts and minds of many of us at Ananda, since it is just a year since Swami Kriyananda's passing. Many have told me that Swamiji has come to them spontaneously, without conscious effort on their part, sometimes in a dream or by a strong feeling of his presence. I, personally, feel him most strongly during meditation, or when I simply remember to ask him for his blessing or guidance.

The insight came recently that I have a subtle veil in my consciousness that hinders a deeper connection to the Divine. It is the habit-born tendency to say, "I can do this by myself." Sometimes this is due to a bit of pride, but more often it is simply forgetfulness. In the battle din of activity, I fail to remember that God alone is the Doer.

One needs, however, to avoid the pitfalls of passivity on one hand and arrogance on the other, both of which cause trouble. I found two especially helpful tools:

The first is Yoganandaji's prayer,

**"I will reason, I will will, I will act. But, guide Thou
my reason, will, and activity to the right path in everything."**

This establishes the perfect balance between self-effort and reliance on God.

The second is simply to open my heart to Master so he can enter and take charge of my life. When I turn to Divine Mother, as a child turns to his mother, I find that She is there with open arms.

Anandamayi Ma gave a touching and reassuring answer to a question put to her: "You ask me whether you are within my ken when I am in my all-comprehensive Self. My answer is, not only you, but even those who have never seen me or heard of me swim into my vision the moment they need me. Then I do the needful for them. Yes, when you think of me, your form flashes across my vision just as objects become visible when the torchlight is focused on them."

This perfectly reflects Master's statement, "For those who think me near, I will be near."

We would all do well to open our hearts to the great ones, keep them near, and accept their ever-willing help.

In love and joy,
Nayaswami Jyotish

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DIVINE INTERVENTION

// need to tell someone here my story.”

The woman had come to Ananda’s guest retreat late one night and had spoken to the only person she could find, a cook in the kitchen prepping food for the next day. She shared this amazing experience:

“I visited here a few months ago just out of curiosity. I don’t follow any path or even know what you folks do. But as I was shopping in your bookstore, I saw a little photo of an Indian man with long hair that looked interesting, so I bought it.

“My life has been hard. I was engaged to a wonderful man, but he died of cancer a few years ago. It took me a long time to recover, but finally I met another man and we were planning to be married. He recently died in a car accident and the grief was more than I could bear. Finally I decided to get into my car and drive off a bridge.

“As I was leaving my house, that man in the little pocket-sized photo became life-sized and stood blocking the door. I had forgotten I’d even put that picture on the shelf, but seeing him there I knew he wanted me to keep living. I’m not sure, but I think he is the man you all follow here. Anyway, I wanted to let someone know what had happened.”

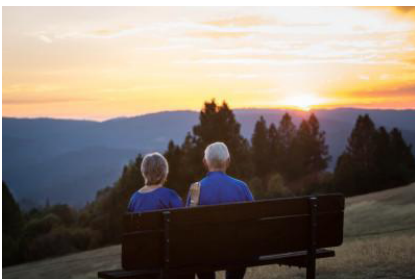
Then she left, and as far as I know, we’ve never seen her again.

If Paramhansa Yogananda can use a mere photo as his instrument, how much more can he do through willing human channels? God made each of us in His own likeness, and, if we choose, we can be a living murti (divine image) of Him.

Swami Kriyananda once told me, “I used to offer every thought to Master. But then I realized that that wasn’t enough. Now I offer everything—every thought, feeling, and activity—to him.” Toward the end of his life he would say, “I no longer know where Kriyananda ends and Master begins. It is all one to me.”

This is the result of a life given to God, of thoughts and feelings turned ever toward Him. This fruit is available to each of us. Give mind and heart to Him and He will shape you into a perfect image of His love, light, compassion, and protection. Then one day He will use you to help someone in their hour of need.

In His light,
Nayaswami Jyotish



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WHO IS DIVINE MOTHER?

Though universal in his consciousness, Paramhansa Yogananda especially worshipped the feminine aspect of God, or Divine Mother, as he called Her. Newcomers to Yogananda's teachings often ask us, "Who is this Divine Mother?" To answer this question, I'd like to share with you some experiences from my own journey that have clarified my understanding.

The first incident occurred when I was quite young, perhaps three or four years old. I awoke late one summer morning to find that I was alone in a quiet house. My older brother, with whom I shared a room, must have gone out to play, my father probably had gone to work, and my mother was nowhere to be seen. Wondering where everyone was, I wandered out into our backyard.

And there was my mother hanging out laundry on a clothesline—clean white sheets brilliant in the sunshine and billowing in the breeze. As I stood quietly watching her, I experienced a moment of seeing past the forms of my mother, the sheets, the backyard, and felt a sense of goodness, simplicity, and peace that seemed to permeate everything. I knew that the universe was made of these qualities, and I never forgot it.

Some twenty years later I found Ananda and became Master's disciple. During my first summer I met a wonderful woman, Haripriya, who was a follower of the great woman saint, Anandamayi Ma. When Haripriya gave me a book about her, and I looked at her photos, I felt the same qualities I had experienced in my backyard as a little girl: the goodness, simplicity, and serenity. The concept of Divine Mother began to coalesce for me. These qualities could be both formless and embodied in a human form.

At about that time Haripriya was leaving to visit Anandamayi Ma in India, and a desire arose in my heart to give a gift to Ma. "But what," I wondered, "can I give that is fitting for such a great saint?" I had no money for lavish gifts, so I asked Haripriya what would be appropriate.

She paused for a while, and then replied, "A bottle of good cooking oil. This is hard to get in India." Her answer touched my heart so deeply: to think of the simple aspects of life like cooking combined with the consciousness of one revered by thousands as a manifestation of Divine Mother.

I sent that cooking oil to Ma, and over the years have felt a flow of Divine Mother's blessings present in the little acts of daily service that we all perform.

So, who is Divine Mother? For me, She is the goodness, simplicity, and peace that permeate all aspects of life and everything that exists. She accepts us our imperfections notwithstanding, and forgives us when we err. Though at times the world seems to be held in the grip of darkness, Divine Mother always keeps Her lamp lit in the window of our soul, showing us the way back to our eternal home in Her.

With joy,
Nayaswami Devi



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DISCIPLESHIP

September 12 marks the anniversary of the day when, in 1948, Swami Kriyananda met Paramhansa Yogananda and became his disciple. From then on, in spite of his amazing accomplishments, Swami Kriyananda's self-definition was simply, "I want to be known as a good disciple."

The essence of discipleship is the effort to align our individual will with God's will as it is expressed through the guru. When we do, miracles begin to unfold. God guides and uses us as His instruments. He will work through each of us to the extent that we are willing to be His channel.



We need a guru because our knowledge is limited. A somewhat arrogant athlete once asked a great coach why he should bother listening to him. The answer was both amusing and deep: "Because you don't know what you don't know." What is valid in an unimportant area such as athletics is even truer for the most difficult of all tasks—becoming free from delusion. We can only escape the maze of ego through the guidance of someone who is already free.

Although Swami was a volcano of creativity, he was very orthodox when it concerned Master's teachings. Once I came up with a new way to teach a basic meditation technique. When I described it to Swami his only comment was, "That wasn't the way Master taught it." I knew his real message was that I should get myself out of the way, attune my mind and heart to the guru, and let him flow through me.

Throughout the years of his discipleship, and especially at the beginning before he had developed his attunement and discrimination, Swamiji would always ask, "Did Master say this?" For instance, there was a discussion about whether UFOs were real, and if life existed on other planets. The issue was settled for Swamiji when he heard that Master said, "Yes, UFOs are real, and in fact there is life everywhere throughout the universe, even in the center of stars."

The fruit of true discipleship is freedom from ego. Two statements made by Swami Kriyananda toward the end of his life impressed me very deeply. He said, "I can no longer tell where Swami Kriyananda ends and Master begins." And also, "Sometimes I am so full of bliss, I can hardly contain it."

This is the fruit of a life of discipleship. For truth-seekers, it is the only fruit worth harvesting.

In joy,
Nayaswami Jyotish

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THIS SOD

For many years Paramhansa Yogananda's *Autobiography of a Yogi* has been a source of inspiration and guidance for me. Not only because of the wisdom, love, and joy that radiate from every page, but also because it has repeatedly served as a living channel to answer specific questions in my life.



When I'm at a loss for the proper course of action or the right understanding in a particular situation, I hold this book, pray to Master to speak to me, open it randomly three times, and see which passage stands out on each of the pages. Although this practice hasn't worked in all my attempts, the number of times that I've received very specific answers to problems is amazing.

Last week we arrived in India for a three-month stay, and have once again been enjoying the depth of devotion and spiritual vibrancy that permeate this great country. After a satsang in Delhi, a devotee came up to Jyotish and me and handed each of us a copy of the *Autobiography*. He explained, "I bought these two copies today to give to friends, but then I felt strongly that I should give them to you with specific pages that each of you was to read."

Given my practice of drawing guidance from the book, how could I not accept this as coming from Master? The following passage spoke to me from the page he suggested: "Can anything small or circumscribed ever satisfy the mind of India? By a continuous living tradition, and a vital power of rejuvenescence, this land has readjusted itself through unnumbered transformations."

I felt that my Guru was helping me tune in more deeply with his beloved country. When Yoganandaji left his body on March 7, 1952, it was during a public event at which he was reciting his beautiful poem, "My India." The last words he spoke in this lifetime were its concluding lines:

***Where Ganges, woods, Himalayan caves, and men breathe God
I am hallowed; my body touched that sod!***

Is this sacredness confined only to the soil of India? I believe that the deep spirituality here is a part of the soul nature of each one of us. Whenever we strive to allow our consciousness to soar in freedom, and stand reverentially with head bowed and heart open to God, we, too, touch that holy sod.

With love in God and Guru,
Nayaswami Devi

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THE SPIRAL STAIRWAY

We recently held a Kriya Yoga Initiation in the boyhood home of Paramhansa Yogananda at 4 Gurpar Road in Kolkata. This site is made holy, not only by the many years that Master lived here, but also because of uniquely sacred events that took place at this spot. It was here that Babaji appeared and blessed Yoganandaji before his mission to America. Some years earlier Divine Mother had appeared in his little attic meditation room, tenderly telling him, "Always have I loved thee, ever shall I love thee."

It was in this room that Devi and I prepared ourselves for the Initiation. During my meditation the question came spontaneously to my mind, "Master, was I with you in a previous life?" Immediately came a resounding, "Yes," but with no details of time or place.

It takes many lifetimes to acquire the good karma to be a sincere devotee of a great guru. Last November in Bangalore, India, we had a Nadhi reading, which is similar to the Brighu reading that Swami Kriyananda has written about. We were mesmerized as the pundit translated Sanskrit words written on ancient papyrus leaves. His soft voice gave intricate details about our health, family, and mental tendencies and events of this life. Their accuracy gave credence to the many unverifiable statements about our past and future.

Without any foreknowledge of who we were, the pundit told us that we had been together in many lifetimes as disciples of three great souls: Babaji, Paramhansa Yogananda, and Swami Kriyananda. I think many of us in our Ananda family have lived with each other before. Self-realization, or even the quest for it, is not the product of a few paltry lifetimes. As our soul nature slowly deepens, we are drawn again and again to those friends who share our search, our lives entwining in intricate patterns.

Yogananda begins his beautiful poem *God! God! God!* with these words:

***From the depths of slumber,
As I ascend the spiral stairway of wakefulness, I whisper:
God! God! God!***

This verse speaks of both the waking from our nightly sleep and, more importantly, the slow emerging from the slumber of lifetimes. The dreams of maya are filled with countless ego-driven dramas. But freedom comes as we slowly climb the spiral (and spinal) stairway that leads to our eternal home. We are near, very near, when our heart constantly whispers, "*God! God! God!*"

In Master's light,
Nayaswami Jyotish

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THE CUP AND THE OCEAN

Once when Swami Kriyananda was a young monk, he was sitting quietly at the feet of his guru, Paramhansa Yoganandaji. Filled with devotion for his master, Swamiji silently prayed, “Teach me to love you as you love me.”

Later, as Yoganandaji stood up to leave the room, he looked deeply at Swamiji and said in response to his unspoken prayer, “How can the little cup hold the whole ocean?”

His meaning was clear: The ocean of God’s love is infinite, but until we’ve expanded our heart, we’re only able to give and receive a tiny portion of that love.

Recently we had the blessing of visiting Yoganandaji’s boyhood home in Kolkata. In a little attic room there, Master used to spend hours in deep meditation and communion with God. In fact, on a photo of this room that was taken later, he wrote, **“My attic room where I found God.”**

As we were meditating there, I felt Master’s presence very strongly calling to me to open my heart more fully to receive his blessings. Aching to do this, yet realizing that I didn’t know how, I began praying, “Show me how to increase the size of my heart’s cup that you may fill it with your love.”

These are some thoughts that have come to me in response to my prayer. First, invite God to share with you every experience in your life—the pleasant and the painful. Think of Him as being very near throughout the day, and let Him know that you are grateful for everything that happens, because it comes from Him, whom you love and trust.

Next, feel God’s love flowing through you to everyone you meet. Swami Kriyananda was such a remarkable example of this. To him, all he met were divine friends, and no one was a stranger.

Currently Jyotish, Dhyana and I are spending a few days at a beautiful hotel in Delhi, the Leela Palace, as the gift of some friends. Swami Kriyananda also stayed here for a few days in 2011 and 2012. During our stay, members of the staff have been coming up to us asking about Swamiji, remembering the table where he sat, and how kind he was. Though he was here only briefly two and three years ago, Swamiji left a deep impression on the staff because of his ability to channel God’s love to everyone.

Finally, and most important, to expand your heart’s capacity to love, call on the guru for his help. Recently I came upon this passage in *Autobiography of a Yogi*, in which Master is speaking of his guru, Swami Sri Yukteswar: “We looked into each other’s eyes, where tears were shining. A blissful wave engulfed me; I was conscious that the Lord, in the form of my guru, was expanding the small ardors of my heart into the incompressible reaches of cosmic love.”

This is the ultimate gift of God and Guru—to open our heart to hold the whole ocean of Divine Love.

With blessings in God and Guru,
Nayaswami Devi



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IMITATING WHAT WE HEAR

The high-pitched whine of the chain saw startled me, breaking the stillness of tall moss-covered cedars and lush green ferns. We'd been visiting the Ananda communities in Oregon and Washington, and now were enjoying a day on Camano Island off the coast of Seattle.

I'd been walking along absorbed in the forest's peace and quiet, which was accented only by an occasional bird song. Then as I came to a place where the trees were less dense, I first heard and then saw work crews high up on hoists limbing up trees to protect power lines.

The juxtaposition of the sounds of chainsaws and birds' songs reminded me of a fascinating story. Biologists in the Amazon rainforest were studying what impact the destruction of the natural environment was having on animals there.

One day out in the field the biologists heard what sounded like a chainsaw: the revving up of the motor as the saw was turned on, and the different pitches of whines as it cut through the trees. It turned out to be not a chain saw but a bird: the superb lyrebird, which has a tremendous gift of mimicry.

Perhaps to show that he was a versatile performer, the lyrebird also did a remarkable imitation of the click of a camera button and the soft whirring of its motor drive.

These were the sounds that it was hearing in its disappearing natural environment, and it was duplicating them with astonishing accuracy.

All life imitates what it hears—whether it's beautiful and uplifting or destructive and dissonant. When people express attitudes of hatred, racism, or religious bigotry, someone hears them.

Perhaps it is a child who hears and imitates them as mindlessly as the bird mimicking the chain saw. Gradually, hatred and intolerance become hardwired into the child's mind, and, as in the rainforest, the natural environment of his soul qualities is destroyed.

As followers of the teachings of Paramhansa Yogananda, we need to sing his song of universal love and brotherhood so loudly that all can hear. Perhaps others, too, will join us in expressing his divine harmony, until people everywhere awaken from their dark dreams of hatred.

Here is one of my favorites prayers of Yoganandaji:

Prayer for a United World:

Let us pray in our hearts to establish a League of Souls and a United World. Though we may seem divided by race, creed, color, class, and political prejudices, still, as children of one God, we are able in our souls to feel brotherhood and world unity. . . . In our hearts we can all learn to be free from hate and selfishness. Let us pray for harmony among the nations, that they march hand in hand through the gate of a fair new civilization.

With a song of divine friendship,
Nayaswami Devi

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ABOUT ANANDA SANGHA WORLDWIDE

Joy Is Within You

One of the sweetest aspects of coming to Ananda is the opportunity it gives for sharing with others the joy of a meaningful existence.

—Member of Ananda Sangha



Ananda, a Sanskrit word, means, “Divine Bliss.” Ananda Sangha Worldwide (sangha means fellowship) is dedicated to sharing the heart of Paramhansa Yogananda. The organization was founded by a direct disciple of Yogananda, Swami Kriyananda, over 40 years ago. Nayaswami Jyotish Novak is the spiritual successor today, leading Ananda Sangha Worldwide with his wife, Nayaswami Devi, as spiritual directors.

Ananda has grown to include meditation centers in cities across America, Europe, Latin America, and India; nine spiritual communities, and online resources that serve over 200 countries.

Yet, Ananda is more than a physical location. It is a state of mind: the consciousness of inner joy. It is an awareness of the presence of God in every moment of one’s life.



The meaning of the Ananda logo, or Ananda Symbol of Joy:

The bottom portion of the symbol is that of a mountain peak aspiring up to meet God, recognizing the soul’s desire for upliftment. The lines are soft and demonstrate a joyous ascension. The direction the lines follow end with an outline of “A Bird of Paradise”. The lines are also representative of how the soul can move up and out and finally back and in. This movement suggests that the joy we are seeking comes from within.

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RESOURCES FOR NEXT STEPS

Learn Online:

Visit Ananda Sangha Worldwide online at www.Ananda.org/HeartofYogananda

Online spiritual community, classes and webinars: www.OnlineWithAnanda.org

Learn In-Person:

At Ananda's Spiritual Retreat for Yoga, Meditation, and Wellness: The Expanding Light Retreat in northern California: www.ExpandingLight.org

At Ananda Assisi in Perugia, Italy. Assisi, the "City of Peace" is the home of Saint Francis and Saint Clare. The International Spiritual Retreat of Yoga, Meditation, and Self-Discovery:

<http://www.ananda.it/en>

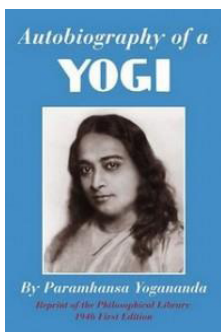
Find an Ananda Near You:

Locate a local meditation group or center with classes in meditation, energization, or hatha yoga:

<http://www.ananda.org/find-ananda>

RESOURCES

The following books are available online at www.CrystalClarity.com:

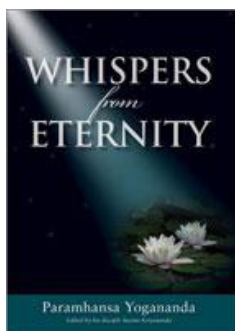


Autobiography of a Yogi

Paramhansa Yogananda

One of the best-selling eastern philosophy titles of all-time, with millions of copies sold, named one of the best and most influential books on the 20th century.

Only rarely does a sage of Paramhansa Yogananda's stature write a firsthand account of his life experience. His initial impact was truly impressive. But his lasting influence is greater still. This book, first published in 1946, helped launch, and continues, to inspire, a spiritual revolution in the West.



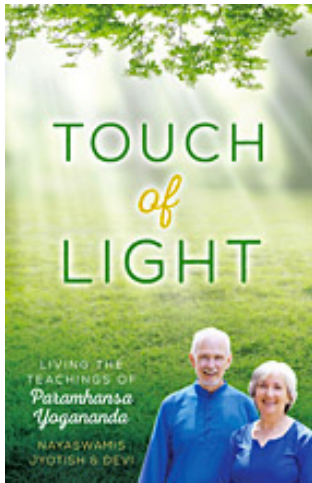
Whispers from Eternity

Paramhansa Yogananda, edited by his disciple, Swami Kriyananda

Many poetic works can inspire, but few like this one, have the power to change your life. Yogananda was not only a spiritual master, but a master poet, whose not only a spiritual master, but a master poet, whose poems revealed the hidden divine presence behind everyday things.

This book has the power to rapidly accelerate your spiritual growth, and encourages each of us to begin our own heartfelt conversation with God.

Living the Teachings of Paramhansa Yoga: The Path of Kriya Yoga



Touch of Light

Living the Teachings of Paramhansa Yogananda

Jyotish Novak & Devi Novak

In *Touch of Light*, Nayaswamis Jyotish and Devi reveal some of the many ways Yogananda's teachings can benefit us. Each chapter contains a jewel of wisdom that can speed you forward on your spiritual path.

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“As long as you are making the effort, God will never let you down!”

