

# Yogananda for the World

Swami Kriyananda

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## Preface

### **Where There Is Adherence to *Dharma* (Righteous Action) There Is Victory**

by Nayaswami Naidhruva

This book is about the misguided (because too narrow) actions of the leaders of a spiritual organization, Self Realization Fellowship (SRF), and the serious consequences of their actions to the legacy of Paramhansa Yogananda, a spiritual master and SRF's guiding guru. It discusses the attitudes, actions, and organizational culture that caused SRF to substitute a completely different spiritual legacy for the one left by Yogananda, and the importance of restoring Yogananda's true legacy.

My direct experience of the facts presented in this book came primarily through the twelve years of litigation between SRF and Ananda, the spiritual organization founded by Swami Kriyananda, also devoted to the teachings of Paramhansa Yogananda. Though trained as a lawyer, I left the practice of law when I moved to Ananda Village in Nevada City, California in 1980. After SRF filed its lawsuit against Ananda in 1990, I became involved in law once again, working with Jon Parsons, Ananda's attorney, on the SRF case and subsequently on the related Bertolucci lawsuit. I also worked closely with Swami Kriyananda during this time and was in regular, often daily, contact with him.

Many of the attitudes and actions of SRF's leaders discussed in this book were the subject of depositions, court testimony, and documents filed with the court. Most of these documents are a matter

of public record and they confirm the picture of SRF presented by Kriyananda in this book.

The SRF lawsuit, as the United States federal court judge correctly perceived, was an attempt by SRF to "put Ananda out of business" through SRF's claim of exclusive rights to Yogananda's teachings. The lawsuit sought not only to eliminate Ananda as a viable Yogananda organization but also to undermine Kriyananda's reputation and credibility as a spiritual teacher and spokesman for Yogananda. Later, with the filing of the Bertolucci lawsuit, the attempt to tarnish Kriyananda's reputation gained added momentum.

Indeed, from that point on, Kriyananda was under attack in every aspect of his life. Everything he'd ever worked for was in jeopardy—even the copyrights to the many books he had written and the music he had composed.

Kriyananda was not the aggressor in these lawsuits, but when forced to defend Ananda and himself he did so with courage, determination, and creativity. Principles were at stake and he fought hard, at the same time seeking ways to promote harmony between SRF and Ananda whenever possible. Kriyananda was very concerned that this legal fight between two "first-generation" Yogananda organizations would negatively affect the future of Yogananda's work, and he was willing to make appropriate concessions to settle the lawsuit. Despite

his best efforts, no compromise or settlement proved possible.

In situations of the type Kriyananda now faced, a person's character is revealed. What I observed was that Kriyananda never flinched before hard truths, and wasted no energy wishing that things were other than they were. Scrupulously honest in the presentation of his defense, he based his positions strictly on the truth of the matters at issue. First and foremost to him was having a clear conscience before God; the courts of man were of secondary importance. He would do his best, but the results were in God's hands.

Though in tremendous personal jeopardy, Kriyananda was always compassionate, never harsh. Even with so much at stake, he never neglected his spiritual responsibility to the Ananda members involved in the defense of the lawsuits ("the legal team"). An example: There came a time in the second lawsuit when, with the trial date approaching, Ananda's legal team decided to hire a trial attorney when Kriyananda was out of the country.

Upon returning, Kriyananda saw at once that the attorney was the wrong choice for Ananda. But when the legal team failed to see what was crystal clear to him, he acquiesced in its choice. He adhered to one of Ananda's guiding principles, that "people are more important than things"—that people be allowed to make mistakes and learn at their own pace. He writes in this book that it was contrary to his way of leading Ananda to assert his will against

others if they were not receptive to his guidance. As things turned out, the choice of trial attorney proved disastrous, as Kriyananda knew it would.

In the same spirit of non-attachment and surrender to God's will, Kriyananda never abandoned his spiritual responsibility to those who formerly looked to him for spiritual guidance. After the lawsuits ended, he wrote a friendly caring letter to a key witness against him and Ananda, a former Ananda member, suggesting that in future she think more deeply about the consequences of her attitudes and actions. Kriyananda apparently still believed that this woman could fulfill the spiritual potential he had once seen in her.

Ultimately the message of this book is one of hope. Kriyananda makes clear that a healthy spiritual organization is based on discernible principles, not happenstance. The final chapters include a detailed listing of the principles he has followed in leading Ananda. Leaders trained by Kriyananda and now leading Ananda according to these principles have shown them to be realistic and attainable—ten years after the end of the lawsuits, Ananda continues to thrive and grow. Seen from this vantage point, *Yogananda for the World* is both a handbook on leadership pitfalls to avoid and a set of guidelines for creative, spiritual leadership in the New Age.

Nayaswami Naidhruva  
Editor, *Clarity Magazine*  
Ananda Village 2011

## Introduction

The purpose of this book is to try to correct certain serious errors that have appeared in the presentation of Paramhansa Yogananda's life and legacy. It is, in a sense, an open plea—not to individuals, but against certain actions by representatives of Self-Realization Fellowship (hereafter referred to by the initials, SRF), actions which have shown disregard for the true greatness of our Guru to the extraordinary extent of being willing to change the very legacy he left to the world, with a view to making his mission reflect what they think it *ought* to have been.

This book will cover a number of such changes, many of them blatant. Among them are the following:

a) Paramhansa Yogananda wrote throughout his life, and often spoke in public, of his vision for “world-brotherhood colonies” (as he called them). He was last heard doing so only four months before his earthly passing. Self-Realization Fellowship has declared, “At the end of his life, he changed his mind on this point.” They have actually gone so far as to eliminate this intention from his basic “aims and ideals,” which describe his mission to the world.

I know for a fact that he was fervent in support of this point. I was there on some of the occasions when he spoke about it. I heard him with my own ears, and saw him with my own eyes. On one occasion, the power with which he spoke was enough to shake the heavens! I will explain these matters in detail through the following pages.

b) Yogananda wrote his name: Paramhansa. SRF, believing that the Master didn't even know how to spell his own title, rewrote it, *Paramahansa*, putting an *a* in the middle and making five *a*'s in all. This addition came as a result of a scholarly correction from India. SRF advances some sort of argument for why they added that *a*, but their reasoning is specious.

It is important for the Westerner to understand that, in Sanskrit, there are two letters which correspond, each in its way, to the English, *a*. The short *a* is pronounced like in our word, *account*; the long *a* is pronounced as we do in the word,

*barter*. Often, in Sanskrit, the short *a* isn't pronounced at all, though scholars like to insert it even when it is *never* spoken that way. In India, no one *pronounces* the title, *Paramhansa*, with a middle *a*.

Yogananda himself once complained to me about the way scholars have tried to transliterate Sanskrit. He told me, “They write *jnana*, for example, and *yajna*, when the words are *pronounced* ‘gyana’ and ‘yagya,’ both with a slightly nasal sound that doesn't exist in English, but ‘j-nana’ and ‘yaj-na’ are simply wrong.”

The change, here, reveals SRF's readiness to correct the Master on almost any issue, and a willingness to reject just about anything he ever said or didn't say, if it doesn't correspond to their own notions of what they think he *ought* to have said.

In countries outside India, that middle *a* usually becomes so exaggerated that people pause at that point, like hawks before making their final swoop.

SRF actually went to the length of forging Master's written signature. To add that fifth letter in the middle, they copied it from another part of the name. The change is obvious to anyone who takes the trouble to study the signature as it appears in their editions of his books (which, to conceal their own further, and innumerable, changes, they call *reprints*). Two of the *a*'s are quite obviously identical.

c) They have also, as you will see, made many changes in his already-printed words, changes that alter his meanings and his intentions, and that attempt to redirect the very course of his legacy.

SRF's editor-in-chief actually forged a message, purported to be by Yogananda, creating an introductory letter of thanks to the editor of her new, and very-much-altered, edition of his book, *Whispers from Eternity*, “thanking” her for the work she'd done on it. The changes she made in that book were grammatically impeccable, but poetically brusque, sterile, and peremptory. She forged that letter simply to get anticipated critics off her back. As the

following pages of the present book show, *Yogananda never even saw* the work she'd done on his book. Had he read it, I am perfectly certain he would have been horrified.

Yogananda said he had been sent to the West in response to the wish, expressed to Babaji, of Jesus Christ. In recognition of this reality, Yogananda often wore a little cross pendant. This cross was carefully brushed out of photographs later published by SRF, concerned lest Hindus in India object. It appears as it was originally on the cover of this book.

He also established the way he wanted his altars to look. SRF changed what he'd established, as I'll explain in these pages.

Some people have objected, "The wrongs done are in the past. Nothing that can be done about them now." True, what's done is now done, and belongs in the long, dark vaults of past karma. Much of what was done, however, can still be undone. The acts of unkindness that I present here can no longer be corrected, but any present *tendency* toward unkindness can be removed. Wrong directions can be set right. Past lies can be erased by, from now on, telling the truth. Narrowness can be exploded into expansion.

This book is intended not as a lament for the past, but as a clarion call for future change.

The greatest error of all committed by Self-Realization Fellowship, however, is that it has tried to confine Yogananda, his teachings, and his mission within the high and narrow walls of an organization. He himself said repeatedly, "We are not a sect." What he brought to the world was a teaching, a principle, a new way of living for God. *Self-Realization*, to him, was an ideal that every individual on earth can and

must embrace for his own highest fulfillment. *Fellowship*, to him, was (again) an ideal for all mankind: that we all live together on this earth as brothers and sisters—children together, equally, of one Father/Mother God.

The leaders of the organization he founded have disagreed with him as to that purpose. Laurie Pratt (Tara Mata), his chief editor, said to me once, "I know Master [the name by which we all called Yogananda] said we aren't a sect. Well, we *are* a sect!"

During SRF's lawsuit against Ananda I said to Daya Mata (the president of SRF), "Master said 'Self-realization' would someday become the religion of the entire world. He can't possibly have meant, 'Self-realization, Inc.!'"

"That," Daya replied, "is your opinion." Obviously, she believed that Self-Realization Fellowship would evolve in time to become a sort of super Roman Catholic Church, with a massive hierarchy and all the trappings of what Master called "Churchianity."

This, to my mind, has constituted SRF's greatest betrayal of his true legacy, which was intended to change the way people approached life itself: changing the schools, the families, businesses, politics—the entire social structure!

For more evidence of the changes to Yogananda's signature after his passing, follow [this link](#).

# 1. My Position in Yogananda's Work and Legacy

This book deals with facts. It may, however, seem necessary for the reader to know some of my own credentials for writing it. He can then decide for himself what right I have to make the charges leveled in these pages, and the corrections in the way Yogananda has been perceived by his disciples.

I came to Paramhansa Yogananda on 12 September, 1948, and was accepted by him as a disciple at that very meeting. I lived near him for the last three and a half years of his life, and spent many hours alone in his company, especially at his desert retreat in Twentynine Palms. He placed me in charge of the other monks; made me a minister; had me give Kriya Yoga initiation eight months after my acceptance as a disciple; planned to take me with him to India (a plan that was canceled by his physical death in 1952); and spoke to me often and at length about his deeper teachings and his vision for the future of his work.

Many times he said to me, "You have a great work to do." That these words were directed to me, personally, and were not a general statement about the work itself, was something he made very clear to me by adding things like, "*Therefore you must (or must not) do* [such and such]."

One day the two of us were standing out of doors by the garage at his Twentynine Palms retreat. After a silence of few moments, he said to me with great earnestness, "Apart from St. Lynn, every man has disappointed me—and **YOU MUSN'T DISAPPOINT ME!!!**" This was the only time I heard him speak to me privately with such intensity.

I knew he couldn't have meant that all his other male disciples had disappointed him *spiritually*, for many of them were deeply devoted

to God. Obviously, then, his disappointment must have been due to the fact that, if his world mission was to be spread far and wide, masculine energy was necessary, and all the men who had come to him so far had shown themselves interested primarily in their own spiritual progress. Only one of them, St. Lynn (Rajarshi Janakananda), had understood and demonstrated deep and practical interest in the mission itself.

An interesting fact of nature is that men's energy is directed more naturally outward, just as the male organ is placed outward in body. Feminine nature, by contrast, directs its energy more naturally inward, even as the female sexual organ is placed inside.

For the Master's work to be launched with appropriate vigor, male energy was not only desirable, but essential.

In my own case, even as I crossed the country to meet him in 1948, my constant thought was, "This message is so *wonderful*, I'd like to share it with everybody in the world!"

He once said to me, "Your duties in this life will be editing, lecturing, and writing."

Need I say more to make it clear that I have a right—indeed, a Guru-ordained duty—to present you with the facts in this book?

I may add also that I am one of only four or five direct disciples of Paramhansa Yogananda still living. Moreover, I am the only remaining disciple whom the Master commissioned personally to present his teachings to the public, to edit his words, and to write books about those teachings.

## 2. After Yogananda's passing

In 1955, Daya Mata, whose birth name was Faye Wright, was elected president of Self-Realization Fellowship. For several years before that, I had worked with her closely. In all that time she never realized, and certainly never accepted, that Master could have given me any personal commission for what I was to do in serving his work. She believed that whatever *she* wanted his work to be was what he wanted, also.

To her, Paramhansa Yogananda's mission on earth was simply, and more or less entirely, to create a monastery.

a) In 1958 I asked her, "When will we begin to implement Master's concept of worldwide cooperative communities?" Her answer stunned me: "Frankly," she stated dismissively, "I'm not interested."

b) Master said something to me several times: "After I am gone, the monks and nuns *must* live in separate communities. Proximity between the sexes is what caused Buddhism to fail in India."

After Master's passing, I tried several times to share with the women directors Master's insistence on this subject. None of them ever believed me; he'd never addressed those words to *them*.

It became clear to me over the years why it was that he'd told me so frequently, "You have a great work to do." He had to have had some definite purpose for making such a statement to me. What I have come to realize is that he depended on me, more deeply than he ever let on, to save his work from later misinterpretations, dilutions, and even worse: possible dissolution.

I was deeply shocked when Daya once told me something Master had said to her. Evidently she had not realized the degree to which this statement had been directed at her, personally; had she done so, she would surely have kept it locked in her heart. I repeat Master's words here exactly as she reported them to me:

"How you all will change the work after I am gone. I just wonder, were I to return in another hundred years, if I would even recognize it."

### 3. How Were the Changes Possible?

Daya Mata, at the end of my active involvement in SRF, reminded me many times, “*You weren’t with Master for twenty-one years, as I was.*” True, I was with him only three and a half years. Physically, too, she was much closer to him than I. She was his private secretary, and spent many years under his direct guidance. All of these factors should be taken into account in any estimate of her authority on matters pertaining to his will in many—and perhaps even in most—matters.

Nevertheless, I noticed a serious difference between the respect given the Guru by his early disciples, and that which developed in us who came to him closer to the end of his life. During his early years, he had done his best to make people understand that whatever he had accomplished, they too could accomplish. He played down his own spiritual greatness in order to help them accept *their own* high potential. In his last years he spoke more frankly, as Jesus Christ often did, of his own state of oneness with God. His early disciples saw him as a great man, but for all that still a man, and fallible. We—those of us, anyway, who tuned in deeply to what he was saying—saw him as a window onto Infinity.

Daya’s closeness to him appeared to me to be centered above all in organizational matters, and in personal exchanges with him. I think, where his actual teachings were concerned, that she was lacking in perception. In their more abstract aspects, certainly, she seemed astonishingly deficient. Let me offer an important example of what I mean.

a) Once, when I had been with Master hardly a year, I asked her to explain to me the meaning of Christ consciousness. The true answer, as I was to learn in time, is that Christ consciousness is that aspect of the calm, motionless Spirit beyond Creation which is reflected in every atom of space—Creation itself being the Holy Ghost: the mighty sound of AUM, vibrating through all of manifested Creation. From these cosmic distinctions we have the triune aspects of God—in Christianity: God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost (God the Father being the motionless Spirit beyond Creation; God the Son, the unmoving reflection of Spirit in every pinpoint of

Cosmic Creation; and God the Holy Ghost as the Cosmic Vibration, AUM, also known as the Divine Mother). In Hinduism, this Triune reality (three in one, and one in three) is given in reverse order: AUM (Conscious vibratory Creation); Tat, the Kutastha Chaitanya, or Christ consciousness, the reflection of Spirit in every atom of Creation; and Sat, the Supreme Truth, Underlying Reality of all existence.

Such is the true answer. Daya Mata’s explanation to me, strange to say, showed an astonishing ignorance of the cosmic significance of our Guru’s most fundamental teaching. What she told me was, “Christ consciousness is when you see everyone in the world as your own brother and sister.”

b) Master, quoting the words of Jesus, often said to us, “The last shall be the first.” The number of years Daya was with him must be balanced against what she herself was capable, with her human understanding, of absorbing. Physical proximity is not enough. A turtle, after all, could have lived with him his whole life without learning anything from him at all.

c) During our years of almost daily association, I frequently observed that Daya’s mind seemed to focus more on people’s personalities than on their soul’s long and intricate journey to God. Master himself showed us clearly that he thought always in terms of that timeless journey. Each incarnation, to him, was but a step toward the soul’s ultimate destiny.

d) I once asked Master, “Sir, have I been your disciple for thousands of years?”

“It has been a long time,” he replied. “That’s all I will say.”

He appointed us to positions in this lifetime that accorded with qualities we’d developed in past lives. He said, for example, “I appoint only those as teachers who achieved a capacity for that role in former lives.”

e) Master often referred quite casually to a former incarnation of his own: as William the Conqueror. For me, this news was difficult to absorb.

My early education had been in the English system, which had conditioned me to view William I as one of history's great villains! Master's revelation made me study the Conqueror's life in depth.

Many years later, I gave to Catherine Kairavi, a member of Ananda, the job of researching William's life, as well as that of his fourth son, Henry I, whom history depicts as William's spiritual heir. Catherine's book, published in 2010 under the title, *Two Souls: Four Lives*, makes a very strong case for my having actually been Henry; the similarities are compelling enough to convince virtually anyone.

Catherine's book also shows William to have been a deeply spiritual man, blessed with a difficult but distinctly spiritual mission. Among many other things, she points out that William's body was found incorrupt—as happens only with great saints—430 years after his death.

I realize now that the reason Master shared with us the memory of that incarnation was to help us understand that his role in the present lifetime, too, is destined to have a great impact on the world. Indeed, I believe it will help to change the course of civilization itself—as in fact did William's life. Such is, indeed, the final message of Catherine Kairavi's excellent book.

f) Daya told me, in substantially the following words: "I was William's daughter Agatha.\* William sent me to Spain, to be the wife of the heir to the king of that country. I, however, had a deep desire to dedicate my life to God, and prayed to be spared the destiny my father wanted for me. When the ship arrived in port, I was found kneeling in prayer by my bed, dead."

\*Agatha is not listed in many English-language histories of William's life, perhaps because she died at a young age. There are records, however, especially in Spain, that Agatha was one of William's daughters, affianced, as she told me, to the heir to the throne.

Daya related this story to me as evidence of her own deep devotion to God (a quality she certainly did possess). To me, however, it has always seemed that Agatha's posture in death may also have been less praiseworthy, indicating as it did a rejection of her own guru's will for her. Had she become queen of Spain, she might have gained an understanding of leadership qualities which, in this life, have been lacking. Maybe her Guru was aware, even then, of today's realities. Had she become a queen in that life, that experience might have made her a better SRF president in this one.

Yogananda himself once, in a letter to Rajarshi Janakananda (the Master's most advanced disciple) lamented "Faye's" deficiency in leadership qualities.

g) Daya, when recounting that story to me, also said, "In this lifetime, I have always had trouble with my knees." She attributed this fact to her having died then in an attitude of prayer. It seems to be well-established, however, that any faculty that one offers to God becomes especially blessed in future lives. Indeed, Daya's knees, according to recognized spiritual law, should have been stronger in this lifetime, giving her (if anything) less trouble than other parts of her body.

h) In her present lifetime also, Daya has repeatedly equated Yogananda's will with her own wishes. A case in point is her declaration that his primary reason for coming to the West was to start a monastery.

## 4. Was Yogananda the Last of the Gurus?

In this chapter I will present a few examples of fundamental changes that SRF has imposed over the years on Master's message and mission.

a) Yogananda often spoke of "Churchianity," which he opposed to Christianity. Obviously, he didn't want his message to become twisted by organizationalism. With me, even though he spoke frequently about the future of his work, he almost never spoke of it in organizational terms. Obviously, what mattered to him most was the mission itself, not the mechanics of its diffusion. I think also that he saw my real work as being outside the organization.

SRF has done its utmost to institutionalize both Master and his teachings. It has done so, indeed, in the very spirit that Master excoriated in contrasting Christianity to "Churchianity." SRF has become, since then, almost "more papal than the pope." Practices that the Catholic Church eschewed centuries ago hold full—indeed, vigorous—sway among Yogananda's own disciples.

b) SRF, now that Yogananda is no longer in the body, has declared that his written lessons have become the guru.\* It is a fact that Yogananda said he himself was the last in our line of gurus. That statement, however, must be understood in context with other statements he himself made. For example—

1. He told me personally, "No scripture can be the guru. If one challenges a scripture, the scripture can't answer. But if a true man of God is challenged, he will be able to reply according to the questioner's needs." Not the Master's teachings alone, then, but the vibrations of his *consciousness* are what constitute his gift to the world, and above all to his

\*SRF's Board of Directors has also enunciated as its basic policy its belief that, now that they no longer have Yogananda's direct guidance, they should always be guided by the single consideration, "What is best for the organization?"

disciples. To say, however, that his *lessons* are the guru, when in fact he, personally, didn't even write them: Well, what could possibly be more absurd?

2. In John 1:12, the Holy Bible states: "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God." The power Jesus brought to earth was the infusion of higher consciousness into those disciples who tuned in to his spirit.

3. It is not enough, then, to receive the guru's teachings intellectually only, even if one is blessed with intellectual understanding. The guru's bliss and wisdom must be absorbed *into one's very being*. Only by this absorption can that higher awareness change ego-limitation to soul-expansiveness. Indeed, only by banishing the all-but-universal ego-hypnosis can anyone truly rise, spiritually. This freedom comes when a higher consciousness is *received* from divine levels of awareness.

4. It is for this reason, above all, that the truth seeker is counseled to seek an enlightened guru. Otherwise, even the highest knowledge will be tainted with ego. It is, moreover, the awareness of one's own impotence to uplift oneself that rescues one from the delusion of ego-guidance and, by bringing a true guru into one's life, takes one from discouragement to enlightenment.

In my case, the realization of how difficult it was to bring even one virtue to perfection was what drove me, in desperation, to the conclusion, "I need help!" Yogananda, by God's will, then entered my life. He convinced me completely that in him I had found someone who could give me the help I so badly needed.

5. Many people resent the idea of needing a guru. When such persons say to me, "Must I really have a Guru?" I often answer them, "Not at all! Just keep on being your own guru." In *The Jewel in the Lotus*, a stage play I once wrote, Romesh, a wealthy but comically materialistic merchant, shares a piece of "wisdom" (as he defines the term): "God is in money, too. Therefore, the more you have of money, the more you have of God. Simple!" I wrote his role to demonstrate the inadequacy of reasoning if it lacks intuitive understanding. To those who sincerely seek

enlightenment, however, my reply to the above question is very different.

“Can you lift yourself by your own bootstraps?” I ask. “Wisdom,” I continue, “comes with higher states of consciousness. A true guru will be able to *lift* you to those states. In the end, it is God’s grace alone that saves. A true guru channels that grace. God never acts except through instruments, whether they be angels, lower deities, or—in this case—enlightened human beings.” These truths, however, are to be shared only with people who want to listen, not with those who love argument.

c) When Daya Mata went to India in 1958—a voyage on which I joined her and her companions in Indonesia—she learned that followers of the Sikh religion accept their scripture, the Guru Granth Sahib, as their guru. Daya seized eagerly on this fact to justify her claim that Master, too, had declared that the lessons, after his passing, would be the guru. The statement Master made on this point to me personally, however, contradicted that claim, and made it obvious that he could never have told Daya anything even remotely similar. As for the Sikhs, though I don’t know much about their religion, I do know many Sikhs who have their own personal gurus also. From this fact I assume that sincere—as distinct from merely orthodox—spiritual seekers in Sikhdom understand and accept it as true that they need a Self-realized guru. Indeed, living in India as they do, it seems to me unlikely that they would not be familiar with this true teaching.

As for Master’s own lessons, it may help the reader to know that Master told me personally that he had not written the SRF lessons, himself. They were compiled, he said, and not always very well compiled—for example, they contained quite a number of word-for-word repetitions—from articles he had written, and from lectures and classes he had given.

d) Master made another important statement to me. This one, again, was to me personally. For all I know, I may be the only one to whom he ever made it. Nevertheless, I swear before God, my Guru, and every great master who ever lived that Yogananda did indeed make it. The statement was, “There must

be at least one physical contact with the guru in the disciple’s present lifetime.”

This statement self-evidently meant that the guru has to be in his physical body for there to be that minimal contact. Master’s statement to me flies in the face of the belief, widely held in SRF, and founded on something Master actually did say, that he was the last of the gurus. What could his meaning have been in making this statement? I will try to explain.

e) He once told me that, for a person to become fully liberated, one must first free at least six others. (By “free,” Master was obviously referring to a state of consciousness lower than final liberation—otherwise, how could anyone ever attain that supreme state?)

f) Now that Master is no longer living in the body, I find a plethora of actual or potential contradictions in SRF’s explanation of Master’s continued position in the work. What, one may ask—for those who have come to Master’s work since he left his body—are the chances that they will find God? They won’t have met him, physically. How, then, if a physical meeting with the guru is essential, are these hapless seekers going to attain the goal through the Master’s organization? How, in fact, can any latecomer even claim Master as his guru?

Please understand that I am not saying these claims are unrealistic. What I’m saying, now that Master is no longer in the body, is that his way of reaching people has to be through human instruments. Everything God does on earth is accomplished through earthly instruments—even if it be only bees pollinating the flowers. Even direct visions of a great master can only inspire: they cannot actually save.

1. There is a story I was told in 1960 by a great saint, Sri Rama Yogi, whom Master had met in India during his 1935–36 visit. This man was the only fully liberated soul my Guru ever met apart from his own line of gurus and (perhaps) two of his own disciples, and apart from two disciples of Lahiri Mahasaya: Swami Pranabananda (the saint with two bodies, as he is described in *Autobiography of a Yogi*), and Ram Gopal Muzumdar (the sleepless saint). I asked Master about many of the other saints

in *Autobiography of a Yogi*. In every case, his answer was the same: “They have reached the stage of *jivan mukta*, but are not yet fully liberated.” The only other fully liberated saint he’d encountered (though he hadn’t mentioned him in his autobiography) was Sri Rama Yogi.

The story Sri Rama Yogi told me was about a saint called Namdev, who used to see Krishna every day in vision. To make a long (though delightful) story very short, I will say only that this saint once asked Krishna to liberate him from delusion. Krishna replied, “For liberation, you need a human guru.” Namdev answered, “But I see you daily, Lord, in vision. Can’t you, yourself, free me?” Krishna answered, “I can inspire you, Namdev, but for salvation it is My law that you must receive it through a human instrument.”

2. Yogananda came on earth to bring people salvation. His mission was much more than to inspire, although even that would have been much. The salvation he brought, and even much of the inspiration his followers will need for the attainment of salvation, can be conveyed only through ongoing generations of sincere disciples whose discipleship to Master is cemented by an unbroken line of living instruments.

3. The Bible, in John 4:2, states, “Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples.”

4. And in *Autobiography of a Yogi*, Master’s sister Nalini is quoted as saying, “Your master has blessed our home, our entire family. . . . The presence of such a man is a sanctification on the whole of India. Dear brother, please tell Sri Yukteswarji that, through you, I humbly count myself as one of his Kriya Yoga disciples.”

In Nalini’s case, Master himself describes her as not being aware of how great he was, himself. But Yogananda also makes it clear that it was not wrong for her to accept him as a channel for his own guru, Swami Sri Yukteswar.

5. In this way also, lines of disciples will continue down through the ages, carrying the baton (so to speak) from generation to generation.

6. Why, then, did Master say he was the last of the Gurus? He did so, quite simply, because he

was the last in the line of *avatars*, or descended masters, whose God-given task it had been to found this particular mission. Our line of gurus comprise the divine messengers sent to us and to the whole world in these times.

Therefore we keep their images on our altars. Normally, we don’t place any other photograph there. If, however, an individual feels inspired to put someone else’s image on his own personal altar, Master himself said he may do so, placing the picture off to one side.

There was a certain disciple who kept a photograph of Dr. Lewis on her private altar. When someone accused her of wrongdoing, she questioned the Master on this point. He reassured her, “It is fine for you to do so. Just keep it at the side.”

7. Some people claim that it is sufficient for them to go straight to Yogananda, seeking no intermediary to him. In my sixty-three years of discipleship (so far), I have never known this belief to produce a single convincing result. To me it is obvious that what Master meant was not, “I am the last *of* the gurus,” but rather, “I am the last *in our line of founding* gurus,” of which there are five in all. Master’s statement that he was the last of the gurus cannot possibly have been meant to deny the possibility of any future guru *within* his work. Surely it is obvious that he can only have meant that he was the last of the gurus *of* this work, and not the last one his mission would ever produce.

8. Yogananda, as the last of our founding gurus, was, like his predecessors, an *avatar*. What, then, is an *avatar*? He—or she, presumably, though I’ve never actually heard of a female avatar—is a completely liberated soul who, out of a compassion beyond human understanding, comes back to earth to save others. He thereby delays his own complete absorption in God. An avatar is also something more: He comes with full divine power to liberate as many devotees as attune themselves with his consciousness.

Paramhansa Yogananda was sent to earth, as were also Jesus, Buddha, and many other avatars throughout history, with the full blessing of God to save as many souls as came to him in purity, and to

bring divine grace also, more broadly, to the whole world. The avatars are the founders of the great religions. Yogananda stated in his poem “God’s Boatman”:

Oh, I will come back—  
If need be a trillion times—  
As long as one stray brother is  
left,  
weeping by the roadside.

For mortal minds, such compassion is simply inconceivable.

Lesser saints are—at least usually—followers of an avatar; they also draw on his power. An avatar is greater, in a human sense, than even a completely liberated master, for he returns to human life with the complete, undiluted power of the Lord Himself, whereas even a newly liberated saint has the power to free only a few others.

9. When people speak of Christ’s suffering on the cross, they don’t realize how far above suffering an avatar really is. Yes, Jesus did suffer on the cross, but only in the sense that he grieved for human ignorance, and for people’s perennial indifference to their own highest good: their souls’ reabsorption in absolute, divine bliss. “Father,” Jesus said, “forgive them, for they know not what they do.”

g) When Sister Gyanamata died, Master remarked to a small group of us monks, “I saw her sink back into that watchful state”—into final liberation in God, in other words. This complete oneness with the Infinite comes only when one has attained final release from all past karmas.

1. Master had already told me that to achieve perfect freedom, oneself, one must free at least six others. At this point, therefore, in the above conversation about Sister Gyanamata, I wondered, “But how could she have achieved liberation, since she had no disciples?”

2. Master caught my thought; his reply was important to my present argument. What he said was, “She *had* disciples.”

Obviously, his meaning was that Sister had been acting as his channel for the salvation of certain

others. One can only assume that if Sister did so, Rajarshi, and perhaps others also, must have done so too, acting as his channels.

h) Peggy Deitz was a devoted disciple of Master’s who lived for some years at Mt. Washington. Master told her, at a certain point in her life, to live outside the monastery and serve a larger public. This evidently was what she herself needed, for her own spiritual development.

One day he requested her to start giving Kriya initiation to others. Because she was no longer living at Mt. Washington, she asked him in astonishment, “What will the organization say?”

The Guru replied, “Are you following the organization? Or are you following me?”

i) SRF claims that loyalty to the organization itself is essential for the devotees of this path. Obviously, Master was demanding loyalty, in the above case, not to SRF, but to himself—to himself as the Guru.

What SRF has done is change Master’s very definition of loyalty. Yogananda didn’t necessarily include, along with loyalty to him, loyalty to his organization. Neither, on the other hand, did he equate loyalty to him with loyalty to SRF. He often said, “Loyalty is the first law of God,” but the loyalty of which he spoke was a feeling of heartfelt dedication, above all, to God alone. Such loyalty has little if anything to do with signing membership pledges.

j) It must also be true, therefore, that when SRF demands loyalty of its members, it should also offer its own loyalty to the member in return. Instead, SRF demands loyalty of others, but gives back none in return. I make this statement both from observation and from my own experience. For I myself was thrown out without even a hearing, though I had been serving the organization loyally for fourteen years. My own case, moreover, is far from unique. Many others have been treated as callously.

k) It may interest the reader to know a peculiar philosophy of Tara Mata’s, which she once expressed to me after I myself had been elected to the Board of Directors. What she told me was, “In an

organization, no one except the members of the Board of Directors has a right *even to think!*"

1) A guru is—let me reiterate—an absolute necessity for finding God. The ego cannot lift itself out of the mire of delusion any more than could Baron Münchhausen, in the satiric account in the German fable of his outrageous lies, have really lifted himself and his horse out of the mud by pulling upward on his own hair. This is why Shankaracharya, a great Master who lived many centuries ago in India, said that the greatest blessing in all the three worlds—the causal, astral, and physical universes—is the guidance of a true guru.

1. Jesus Christ, on the Mount of Olives, gazing down upon the city of Jerusalem, cried out in agony: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." The Jewish people need to recognize the need for an enlightened, and living, teacher.

2. Man needs the company of other human beings for his own spiritual advancement. *Satsanga*, good company, is essential for advancement. The caste system of India was created in recognition of this reality. Members of the Shudra, or lowest, caste can rise more certainly by keeping company with people who belong by right to a higher caste. Normally, a Shudra gains most if he serves in the home of a more refined human being—usually, a Vaishya. People at the lowest level of advancement feel little, if any, incentive toward spiritual progress. Without higher influences, they receive virtually no incentive at all.

Vaishyas—the next caste up—may feel some such incentive, but will be spurred more rapidly upward if they can have some contact with Kshatriyas, the next step above them.

Thus, in every case, the company of those of higher consciousness than one's own is extremely helpful. Yogananda condensed this thought into the

simple dictum: "Environment is stronger than will power."

3. Yogananda also said that God first sends the seeker uplifting books; then uplifting teachers and other inspiring human instruments; then finally He leads one to a true guru.

The guru's role, ordained by God, is to bring people to God. This is no personal choice. As Master said to me the day I first met him, "I am seeing you only because Divine Mother told me to, not because you have come such a distance [I'd just come all the way, non-stop, from New York to Los Angeles]." In India there is a saying, "When the disciple is ready, the guru appears." One doesn't have to shop the length of the counter. If he calls deeply to God, the Lord will direct him how to take his next step.

4. In my own case, it was God Himself, through *Autobiography of a Yogi*, who led me to Yogananda. I had never before even heard of the high teachings of yoga. Had my parents been near at hand, I might well not have had the courage to make such a sudden and complete change in my life.

5. During my years as a minister in SRF (after Master's passing), I was told by Daya to bring people to Master, and then turn them over to SRF and to him. She said I would then have no further responsibility in the matter.

In time, however, I came to realize that people needed help that was ongoing. It wasn't enough simply to turn them over to the organization, or even to Master. It was important that I, or someone else interested in their spiritual well-being, maintain contact with them, and continue to lead them on the path to Master and God.

6. One of SRF's greatest mistakes has been to disclaim any spiritual responsibility for its members. Daya Mata used to tell people, "I do not presume to bless." She would then stand before people, her palms folded in reverence, praying to Master to bless them. She overlooked the fact that by that very act she was herself blessing them—acting, in other words, as the Master's living channel of blessing.

7. It is every true disciple's duty to channel his guru's power, understanding, and blessings to others to the best of his own ability. Before every

lecture one gives, before any counsel he offers, before any work he does, he should pray, "Master, please guide me, help me, and bless me." This point Daya Mata never understood or accepted. She viewed it as the bounden duty of every fellow disciple to represent only the organization, and only her will for

it. Discipleship, in her eyes, was an outward thing. Utterly foreign to her understanding were the words in the Gospel of St. John: "As many as *received* him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God."

## 5. SRF's Misinterpretations of Master's Behavior

Master is presented all-too-commonly in SRF as a harsh—even intolerant—disciplinarian. In fact, he was the sweetest, most loving, most unconditionally forgiving human being I have ever known. The only desire I ever beheld in him was a longing to help others toward victory in their own struggles to reach perfection.

To my dismay, I have found my fellow disciples representing him—ever-increasingly so—as intolerant of error.

a) Many years ago, a friend of mine worked for six months in the guest quarters at Encinitas. One day, she rearranged a few spices on a kitchen shelf. The cook scolded her heatedly, crying, “*Master* would never have allowed such liberties!” (As if it really mattered where the spices were placed.) I suspect the cook herself had not even known Master personally, and was using his name only to reinforce her own authority.

b) I never saw in Master even a hint of intolerance. I can, indeed, offer another story from my personal recollections: He once entered the monks’ dining room unexpectedly, and found everything there in disarray. The table and a few of the chairs needed wiping. (At least the dishes had been washed!) We were all, of course, painfully embarrassed. But Master calmly seated himself on one of the cleaner chairs, glanced about him briefly, then remarked with a rueful smile, “Well, things might be worse!”

c) On the other hand, he could also be very decisive in his training. A scolding from him could be far from mild. Naturally, if a disciple was steeped in ego-consciousness, those scoldings could seem harsh. The disciple’s perception, however, merely reflected his own ego.

1. I cannot but think that certain disciples have emphasized the harshness of his discipline only to underscore the steadfastness of their own discipleship.

2. A fellow monk, Bernard Cole, once said to me in confidence, “If you ask me, Old William [William the Conqueror; I’ve already written that Master himself told us he had been that ruler in a former life] isn’t dead yet.” Bernard himself,

however, had a very strong ego, and (incredibly) made it a point to “correct” his Guru again and again.

Ten years after Bernard came as a disciple, Master said to him one day, “For years I’ve listened in silence while you upbraided me. Now I have only this to say to you: ‘I am *not* impressed!’”

3. Some four years later, Bernard left the path. I met him again in the late 1970s, shortly before his death. I hope I succeeded in helping him to open his heart to Master once again. Certainly I did my best to bring about this happy ending to his present incarnation. I was reassured by the fact that, in parting, he hugged me and gave me a warm smile.

4. Such twists and turns are normal on the soul’s long, winding journey toward its ultimate goal of union with God. When the seeker has finally achieved the supreme blessing of attracting a true guru, and has received from him the gift of the guru’s unconditional love, the guru then assumes full responsibility for the disciple’s continued upward evolution. This is a divine duty, and one which the guru takes very seriously, for he is “in it for the long haul.” Naturally, the disciple makes mistakes along the way. The guru waits patiently for him to return to the path of wisdom, and never forces his will on anyone. For free will is a divine birthright.

5. A disciple of Yogananda’s once lamented, “I don’t think I have very good karma, Master.”

Vigorously (to dispel any doubt) the Master responded, “Remember this: It takes very, *very*, VERY good karma even to *want* to know God!”

Look sensitively at the crowds in any public place on earth. I think you will see that statement amply confirmed: peaceless faces; confused faces; puzzled faces; angry or covetous faces; grimly egoically directed faces, all with their eyes fixed on goals that will eventually bring them only disillusionment.

d) Yogananda once said to Señor J. M. Cuaron, SRF’s center leader in Mexico City, “I lost sight of you for a few incarnations, but now I will never lose touch with you again.” Thereafter, Señor Cuaron sometimes reminded him, “Remember your promise!”

“I remember,” Master would reply. “I will never lose touch with you again.”

How many stories could be told in the same vein!

e) My own experience on the path has taught me something very interesting: The deeper a person’s inner bliss, the more decisive he becomes in whatever he does and says to others. Usually, he becomes more considerate of other people’s feelings, but he may also sometimes—toward those who depend on him for guidance—be very firm. I don’t mean he is rigidly fixed in his ideas: all I mean is that his interest is in the truth, not in mere opinions—not even in his own opinions. Thus, his decisiveness comes not from self-affirmation, but from the mental clarity found in inner bliss.

f) On the subject of this higher decisiveness, which comes from living in and for God, I remember my delight in reading a story about Therese Neumann of Konnersreuth, Germany, the Catholic stigmatist. When she was a young maiden, swains from the nearby village would sometimes come “a-courtin’.” Therese rejected them all firmly; sometimes she actually drove them off the property with a pitchfork! The average Christian might ask, “Was this an example of Christian humility?” No, it was an example of Christian bliss!

g) It is intensely painful for me to hear Master described as having been harsh in his treatment of others. His only real concern was to help people toward spiritual enlightenment. He never related to anyone from ego-consciousness. Indeed, he had no ego from which to relate! On the infrequent occasions when he scolded me, I always observed in his eyes not only regret that he’d needed to speak to me in that way, but also the bliss he wanted to share with me, and the spiritual determination he hoped to instill in me to keep on striding resolutely toward my own salvation. In no way did he ever try to suppress me. Only persons with inwardly directed egos could have been offended by anything he said to them.

h) What would Master really have allowed in others? Almost anything! His desire was to help all, and never to order anyone around or to control anyone’s movements. His only interest was to see us achieve inner freedom.

i) In this new age of Dwapara, it will become more and more natural for people to think in terms of energy. Try this experiment: Look at some perfect stranger and think, “Where is that person’s energy centered? From what point in his body does the energy seem to radiate?” Almost always—and if you are sensitive, you will see it as such—it is centered in the medulla oblongata, at the base of the brain. Here lies the seat of ego in the body. Notice how egotists tend to hold their heads backward—perhaps even as if looking down their noses at the world.

Notice also whether a person seems to be withdrawing into that medullar center, or expanding outward from it, or moving forward to the point between the eyebrows. And notice whether the energy in his body seems to be moving upward or downward in the body. All these foci and directions of energy are indications of a person’s state of consciousness.

There are two good directions for a person’s energy to move: forward, from the negative pole of ego at the back of the head toward a point midway between the eyebrows; and upward, from the base of the spine toward the brain. The point between the eyebrows (or, to be more exact, the point just *behind* there, in the frontal lobe of the brain) is the positive pole of self-consciousness.

Notice whether people’s energy seems to be going up and forward to that frontal point, or backing away from that point. With a little sensitive awareness, one can easily sense these things.

I could tell that my Guru’s energy was centered entirely in superconsciousness at the point between the eyebrows. I could almost see his energy there. The entire influence that emanated from his presence was an upward and forward flow. Everything he did emanated from a sense of complete freedom from ego.

j) I wish everyone could understand, in the name of truth itself, how deeply grateful the very world should be for Paramhansa Yogananda’s inspiring life of wisdom, compassion, universal love, and perfect bliss: a life ever immersed in, and emanating, God.

## 6. SRF's Treatment of Others

An astonishing feature of SRF's official treatment of others, especially as it has developed over recent decades, is its lack of either kindness or sympathy. This indifference to the feelings of others is perhaps a deliberate effort on their part, intended to show non-attachment to outer realities. Were the organization a bank, or a court of law, one might understand such an attitude even if one didn't approve of it. But Yogananda, before his passing, declared, "Only love can take my place." Does SRF think he meant, Only love for *him*? or, Only love for God? God is in everyone, however! The Bible says we should love our neighbor as we love ourselves. When Yogananda made that statement he cannot possibly have meant, "Love only God, and ignore other people's feelings." It is one thing to be non-attached, but quite another, surely, to be callous.

a) Meera Ghosh was the daughter-in-law of Yogananda's older brother, Ananta. Yogananda himself, during the year he spent in India from 1935 to '36, selected Meera as the bride for his nephew, Ananta's son. Years later, when Meera became widowed, Master wrote to her from America and gave her the home in which she and her husband had been living (formerly, Ananta's home). The Master promised her an allowance of sixty rupees a month, which in those days was quite adequate for her maintenance.

Gradually over time, however, owing to monetary inflation, the value of the rupee fell. Ultimately, the allowance he'd promised her sank in value to the equivalent of about U.S. \$2.00 a month.

When Meera grew old and dependent on medical assistance, she wrote to Daya Mata requesting that her monthly stipend be increased. Daya herself (not SRF, but Daya Mata) wrote back to say that the organization was honoring Master's pledge and would continue to send her sixty rupees a month as she'd been receiving.

Not long thereafter, Daya wrote Meera that the building in which this old lady lived was the property of YSS (SRF's Indian branch), and was now needed for use as an ashram. She asked Meera to move into the "carriage house"—a fancy name for the garage. The new quarters consisted of a single room, windowless, with an open drain in the floor.

Meera had been settled here with her grown family for some time when YSS changed its mind about the ashram. The building would now become a rental property. Meera was not asked to move back into it.

Several years later, a group of Ananda representatives, touring India, paid Meera a visit. Appalled by her living conditions, they decided it was simply out of the question for a close relative of our own Guru's to live in such a state of privation. We were in a position as a community to ease her burden, and decided to contribute \$100 a month toward her maintenance. For the rest of her life she lived comfortably, and was able also to get the medical attention she required. We spent an additional U.S. \$13,000 in buying her and her family a large flat.

Could even the most hardened cynic sneer that we'd performed this simple act of charity for selfish gain? It would have been almost an insult to our Guru for us to do less.

During the 1990s I visited Calcutta, and there had an opportunity to meet Meera personally. I was horrified to see with my own eyes this sweet, humble relative of my Guru's and to contemplate how she had been treated by the organization he'd founded.

b) Yogananda's younger brother, Sananda Lal Ghosh, wrote to Daya Mata in his old age, informing her that he had been diagnosed with cancer. The disease seemed terminal, but he said his doctors had informed him that in America, with its advanced technology, his life might at least be prolonged. Would Daya Mata (Sananda asked) pay his way to America and assist with his medical needs?

Months passed. At last he received a reply—not from Daya Mata, but from SRF's lawyers, stating that SRF would accede to his request on the condition that he deed his home (which had also been Yogananda's boyhood home) to YSS. Sananda, heartbroken, died a few weeks later.

I know there is a story with Sananda and his own treatment of Master after their father's death (Master himself told it to me), but people can change. Sananda had changed. Master, who never held grudges, would certainly have forgiven him. As a

further point worthy of consideration: Sananda had written a book, *Mejda*, about his own recollections of Yogananda's boyhood. SRF had published it, and had already (presumably) absorbed the income from its sales.

c) The home of Tulsi Bose, a close spiritual friend of our Guru's during their boyhood years, was inherited by Tulsi's daughter, Hassi, who lives there still. Hassi's husband, Devi, died recently. While he was still alive, SRF/YSS offered to buy their home. This was a natural offer to make, considering Paramhansa Yogananda's sentimental associations with that house. What was very *unnatural*, however, was YSS's reaction to the couple's decision not to sell. Devi and Hassi were cut off from further communication with YSS, and their free subscription to *Yogoda* magazine was canceled; their names were removed from the YSS mailing list.

d) Kamala Silva had been a close disciple of Master's since the mid-1920s, when she was a child. At the time I knew her, she headed the SRF meditation center in Oakland, California. I was then the head of the SRF center department, and was responsible for guiding SRF's centers and meditation groups throughout the world. Oakland is situated relatively near to Los Angeles, and I often visited and lectured there, particularly after Kamala's health became fragile. In my opinion, this center was the best SRF center in the world. It owed its excellence entirely to Kamala's spirit of humility, devotion, and attunement with Master.

Kamala had lived at Mt. Washington for some years as a nun. She had left to get married. Master told me himself that it had been his will for her to marry. He also told me, "I selected her husband personally." On another occasion, Master, speaking of Kamala's husband, said to a group of us monks, "He is a true sannyasi [renunciate]."

Kamala became impoverished in her old age. She also, I am sad to say, became a little senile (the actual word, for women, is *anile*). In consequence of both conditions, she was no longer able to take care of herself. Friends of hers appealed to SRF for the assistance she needed. Daya Mata refused to accept responsibility in the matter.

Ananda, on learning of Kamala's predicament, took her in and cared for her. This was my own personal decision. I was happy to overlook the fact that she had actually spoken against me, years earlier, to Daya Mata in what appeared to me a pathetic attempt to win Daya's acceptance. From what I was able to learn, Daya was displeased with Kamala for writing a book about her life with Master. Evidently, Daya felt that only she herself had a right to represent our Guru! But why this callous rejection of Kamala's book? It is heartfelt, genuine, and (for devotees, at least) deeply inspiring.

I gladly assigned to Kamala the permanent use of my own guesthouse. I also gave her several hundred dollars a month out of the money I received occasionally from Ananda members and friends (who have supported me over the years; I accept no salary). Several Ananda members also contributed directly toward Kamala's upkeep, while others went to her house daily to cook, clean, and attend to her personal needs.

At this time, I apprised Daya Mata of the situation, and asked if she would care to help out. Another board member responded to say that they, as renunciates, were unable to give money to any individual. Also, the letter stated that, since SRF was a nonprofit religious corporation, it could not extend help to individuals, personally. The letter added, however, that after consulting with their lawyers they'd decided that SRF might send Kamala a contribution of \$250 a month—a pittance, compared to her real needs—provided the money was never sent directly to me, Kriyananda.

In the end, unfortunately, Kamala's condition worsened, and at last required more specialized care than we were able to provide. Relatives of hers came and took her to an elder care facility in Castro Valley, California, where she died a few years later.

e) Ananda has received numerous complaints from people in prison to the effect that Self-Realization Fellowship has refused to help them by sending any lessons or teachings, or by giving any spiritual guidance. The excuse given has always been that no one was available for the "special assistance" that prisoners require. Our correspondents have also written that the reason given for refusing to send

them the lessons was that these might end up being shared with other prisoners.

Such explanations seem makeshift, uncharitable, and in fact inexcusable. Ananda, when appealed to for help, has always done its best to help wherever it possibly could, regardless of anyone's personal situation. We have corresponded with prisoners, and have even visited them. In some cases, Ananda ministers have actually gone to a prison in person to initiate worthy inmates into Kriya Yoga. To our way of thinking, those persons are human beings in desperate need of improving their lives, beings who can benefit from our help. Whatever help we've extended to them has been free of charge, in a spirit of kindness and charity.

f) In my opinion, SRF is not representing Master in the noble role he lived. Many of its members have told us that they have felt put off not only by the chill they feel from SRF ministers and other representatives, but by the picture those representatives paint of Master as a harsh disciplinarian, lacking in warmth, humor, and genuine human feeling.

I have no wish to hurt anybody, but I do intensely want to see my Guru well served, and it hurts me to see him presented, and *re*presented, and *mis*represented, as harsh, callous, and domineering.

## 7. “Kindness” Among the Disciples

Master urged us to be kind. This quality seems in SRF, in the name of “non-attachment,” to have been virtually ignored. Indeed, I’ve put the word, “kindness,” in the title of this chapter, in quotation marks.

a) Dan Hart, a younger disciple than I, and one who came after Master had left his body, was a friend of mine, though he sometimes opposed me on minor issues.

After I was elected to the Board of Directors, there was an occasion when Dan said something that sounded to me like a challenge (I’ve forgotten what it was). I mentioned the matter briefly to Daya Mata during a conversation with her.

“Well,” she said brusquely, “*he’ll* have to go!”

I was horrified. To me, there was no justification at all for even disciplining the poor fellow. What made her reply even worse in my eyes was that I knew she’d made it only to please me. How could she possibly have thought I’d be pleased by her offer? I wanted to *help* Dan, not to destroy him! I’m sure she wouldn’t have actually dismissed him for so flimsy a reason, but even to make such an offer— just to flatter *me*! All I can say is, some compliment!

b) Daya once related to me this story about herself and two other Directors: Tara and Dr. Lewis.

Tara tended to be somewhat absentminded. Once the three of them (probably with Daya’s sister, Ananda Mata, who usually did the driving), traveled by car. They came to a red traffic light, and stopped. Tara saw a bookstore nearby, got out, and blithely entered the store to glance over a few books. When they’d resumed moving again, Dr. Lewis twitted her in a friendly manner. Tara, however, instead of reacting at all (a friendly chuckle would have been sufficient), gazed stonily straight ahead of her, as if Doctor had not spoken a word.

As Daya related the story to me, “I said to Tara a few days later, ‘I was amazed at how calmly you took his words to you.’”

Tara then rejoined contemptuously, “As if it mattered to me what anyone so *insignificant* as Dr.

Lewis said!” Concluding the account, Daya laughed delightedly. Why? Was it so funny, that a senior disciple should think an even-more senior disciple “insignificant?”

c) There was another close disciple whom Daya didn’t like. This was Durga Mata (Florina Darling). Durga was senior to Daya, and, from what I could gather, had been left in charge at Mt. Washington during the year Master spent in India from 1935–36. I rather think Daya had resented Durga’s treatment of her then. Whatever the facts of the matter, Daya once told me with a smug smile, “Tara [who practiced astrology against her own Guru’s expressed wishes] says Durga’s horoscope is at present too powerful; nothing can be done about her. But in another five years her planetary positions will change. She’ll then get such a shock, she’ll never recover from it!”

Daya related this story—the “resolution of the problem with Durga”—with considerable satisfaction.

Years after my dismissal from SRF, I spoke on the telephone with Durga Mata, who told me, “Tara came charging up the stairs one day to my apartment, determined to force a confrontation with me. I knew intuitively the reason for her visit, and as she entered the room I glared at her so fiercely, inspired by Master’s power, that she began to shake all over. She turned abruptly, then fled back downstairs again. Since that day, she has never dared to speak to me again!”

d) Durga Mata left her papers to a close friend and supporter of hers, Joan Wight. After Durga’s death, SRF (presumably under Daya Mata’s instructions) made a concerted effort to obtain those papers. Daya’s motive may have been simply to ensure that only her own wishes be generally known as Master’s wishes. Quite possibly too, however, she was concerned lest a book on Durga’s life with Master appear in print. She wanted only her own version of him to be known—“as he really was.” And Daya herself never wrote such a book. (At least, none has been published.)

As I mentioned earlier, Daya had not wanted Kamala's book, *The Flawless Mirror*, to be published. It takes very little stretch of the imagination to presume that what Daya wanted most in getting hold of Durga's papers was to suppress her book also. The book did finally appear, under Durga's name. It is titled, *A Paramhansa Yogananda Trilogy of Divine Love*. Joan Wight turned to Ananda for help in protecting her against SRF. It took considerable effort on our part to get SRF to back off from its threatened lawsuit. This beautiful book, filled with stories of Master and Rajarshi Janakananda, is now available to the world.

e) Let us ask ourselves: How can deeply spiritual people, among whom one must certainly count Daya and Tara, possess what appear to be such glaring defects? A possible explanation comes to mind: A stained-glass window, before sunrise, looks uniformly grey. After the sunrise, and once its rays pour fully through the windows, each pane assumes radiantly its own colors. If a pane is smudged or muddy, or if it contains any less-than-luminescent colors, those defects become clearly visible.

Similarly, most people in this world, animated from within as they are by only dim energy, may be described as grey and colorless. Even

murderers have been thought mild by their neighbors. ("But he seemed so *harmless!*") It is only as people develop their own inner potential that their traits—faults as well as virtues—become evident, in some cases painfully so. Seeing a defect in oneself makes it easier, certainly, to correct it.

Spiritual energy also, however—in this case, less fortunately—can make one indifferent to the feelings of others, shouldering dimmer colors out of the way like a sun-illuminated but *conscious* stained-glass window!

The Law of Karma is not cheated, of course. It forces one, sooner or later, to deal with his own misdeeds. Daya and Tara will certainly have to pay for their mistakes, as do we all, for our own. Their very clear spiritual sincerity will surely aid them greatly, in the end, to win through to victory.

In fact, apart from the above explanation (the kindest I can suggest) there is also the truth that, when rules are given primary importance in an organization, charity is the first to suffer. And when the organization itself is given importance over its potential as an instrument of service to others, any ideals it upholds become compromised and, in all too many cases, betrayed.

## 8. My Frustrations, as a Man Working in SRF

My experience in working at SRF was largely involved in interactions with the women in charge. They were in charge for the simple fact that, in those years, it took men in America longer to come onto the spiritual path.

“In the beginning,” Master used to say, “the men who came as monks couldn’t see why they shouldn’t go dancing on Saturday nights!”

The women in charge were not against me, personally. But they *were* against change. They were against expansion. They were against anything that focused Master’s work outwardly into the world. And I came gradually to represent in their minds that force within SRF which bucked this established, inward-shrinking tendency. To them, I represented change, expansion. And to them also, my eagerness to spread the work beyond the narrow boundaries of their imagination looked like treachery.

Even projects that had been initiated by Master himself were abandoned with the excuse of “the growing pressures of the work” (which in reality was not expanding at all).

His restaurants in Encinitas and in Hollywood were closed; his hotel in Encinitas was closed. Gradually an attitude seeped into the organization that no one, except for those who worked at headquarters, had any right or competence to serve Master’s work at all, except passively. If Daya Mata didn’t initiate this attitude, she fully endorsed it.

One time, after I myself had been placed on the Board of Directors and made the first vice president, she said to me, “We must centralize everything.”

I replied, “Isn’t there much to be learned, also, from people in the field? Centralization alone, surely, isn’t truly workable. Shouldn’t we balance centralization with a little judicious delegation of power?”

Daya’s answer was brusque: “The Board feels differently. Don’t you think you ought to go along with the Board?”

I myself, of course, was on the Board at this time. But then I was a man—the only male member.

a) I was also the only male member of a committee of fifteen who were responsible for guiding the work in its day-to-day aspects. To my mind, the discussions at these meetings seemed endless and mostly non-productive.

One year we met several times to organize the approaching annual summer convocation. The discussions dragged on interminably. When it came time to organize the final event—an open house at the SRF Lake Shrine—I thought, “Here, at least, I can take direct action.”

“We have a little group of helpers at our Hollywood church,” I announced. “Will you let me give them this job?”

With sighs of relief, they accepted my proposal.

The following Sunday at church I announced, “Would anyone here like to help organize the upcoming event at our Lake Shrine? Those who would, please remain behind after the service.” About twenty people were still there after the rest of the congregation had departed. I then asked those willing to help prepare a buffet luncheon to raise their hands. We discussed what dishes to serve. Then I asked for volunteers to set up the necessary tables. Next, I asked that someone see to it that chairs be rented for the occasion. Finally, I requested a show of hands for men willing to move chairs about, as the situation required.

Halfway through the week I telephoned everybody to make sure that things were progressing nicely.

The big day arrived. Tables were set up, on which steaming food was placed. Smiling ladies stood behind them, ready to serve the guests. The rental company had been phoned; the needed chairs arrived and were placed in convenient spots for people to sit on comfortably. When the time for lectures arrived, I asked the men volunteers to transfer chairs to the lecture area; they carried out

this task promptly. The whole event went like clockwork.

Sister Shraddha, a member of the committee and also a Board member, complimented me afterwards on how smoothly everything had gone.

“And do you know,” I replied, “it required almost no work!” (I intended this statement as a slight dig at the endless discussions of our committee meetings.)

“No work for *you*, maybe, but *plenty* of work for those who organized it!”

I replied, “In fact, I organized the entire event, myself.”

She scorned my answer. To her, it demonstrated merely ridiculous egotism on my part.

b) Most of my efforts to serve Master were vetoed by the women. It may seem almost comical, today, to see so much that I knew to be a good work scorned, set aside, then cast (figuratively) into a dustbin. I prefer, now, to see the humor of the situation, but I cannot help wondering whether things in future will ever improve.

## 9. India—and My Dismissal from SRF

When I went to India in 1958 with Daya Mata and two other nuns, my frustration continued in that land also. For there, too, “ingrownitis” ruled supreme. (And this time, I have to admit, it was ancient tradition rather than femininity that did the damage.) Yogananda’s work was seen by the directors there as merely the work of another saint, among the many thousands of saints in India’s long history. We “pilgrims” from America were appalled to see how little understanding the devotees there had of the importance of Master’s mission to the world.

The members in Calcutta (one of the largest cities in the world) met together, about twelve of them, on Sunday mornings, performed traditional *puja* (worship) ceremonies, gave hopelessly banal discourses, listlessly sang one or two chants in Sanskrit or Bengali, then dispersed. They didn’t seem to have even a clue to the freshness, depth, and universality of Master’s teachings. Nor was any serious effort being made to promote his teachings.

Daya Mata returned to America after a year in India. She left me behind with instructions to travel around the country, giving lectures. I lectured and taught in Simla, Patiala, Chandigarh, and New Delhi. Everywhere I went, the response was overwhelmingly enthusiastic. Thousands attended. I became known across northern India as the “American Yogi.”

In a book of mine, *A Place Called Ananda*, I have told the story of what happened then. It was dramatic, but I’ll only encapsulate it here. The drama revolved around the fact that I strove strenuously for many months to make Paramhansa Yogananda’s name and mission known in India. I finally got Prime Minister Nehru, personally, to endorse my plan for a center in New Delhi.

When I announced this truly miraculous outcome to the Board of Directors in America (1,700 other societies had tried to get land in the area I wanted, and every such request had been turned down), they were outraged.

In July 1962, I was summoned to New York.

“New York!” I thought. “Why, of all places, *New York?*” Three thousand miles from our Los Angeles headquarters! Something, obviously, was in the air—something ominous!

I landed in that city on Saturday, July 28<sup>th</sup> of that year. The day is forever branded on my memory. Tara and Daya met me at the airport. Little was said in the taxi on the way to our hotel—the Penta. Tara looked out the back window of the taxi, and commented (with a certain satisfaction, so it seemed to me) on the relative positions of Saturn and Jupiter. Evidently the placement of those two planets in the heavens held a special significance for her. Evidently also, she considered whatever was “in the air” to be very important.

a) The next morning, I found that a letter from her had been shoved under my door. The letter was a document of some thirty single-spaced pages, filled with accusations. Its message, finally, contained the announcement that I was no longer a member of Self-Realization Fellowship, and would no longer be welcome on any SRF property.

b) I met Daya and Tara in person later that morning. At this meeting, Tara (who did most of the speaking) repeated much of what I’d already read in her letter. She accused me again, as her letter had done, of unbelievable presumption, deceitfulness, lying, treachery, and egotism; of being a megalomaniac; of trying to set myself up as the new guru of SRF/YSS; of aspiring to take over the leadership from Daya Mata; and of behaving in a manner so utterly outrageous that I was no longer fit to represent SRF, or Master, in any capacity whatsoever. My dismissal was absolute. There was no hope of appeal.

c) At this meeting, Tara underscored the message of her letter by the denunciatory tone of her voice. So fixed was she in her opinions, and so forceful in their expression, that there was simply nothing I could say in reply. Tara and Daya were the two persons in the world whom I had held in the highest love and esteem. For most of her one-and-a-half-hour tirade, I knelt on the floor before them, my arms crossed over my chest in an attitude of

unbearable anguish. Surely, I thought, this meeting could not be happening!

But it *was*.

d) One time, years later—I think it was in 1970—Daya Mata said to me, “I recently called all the monks and nuns together, and said to them, ‘I know some of you have heard that Kriyananda was dismissed. He was NOT dismissed, he RESIGNED!’”

She demanded that I endorse this statement. I replied in amazement, “I can’t say that. It isn’t true, and you *know* it isn’t true!”

She paused a moment in frustration, then stated with deep feeling, “Well, you *SHOULD* have resigned!”

e) Her demand that I change my story to her version made one thing very clear to me: the true purpose for the tone of that meeting in New York had been to *force* my resignation: to make me storm out of the room shouting in anger, “You can’t dismiss me: *I resign!*” How little they knew me! I had given Master my *unconditional* love and loyalty. Nothing could make me resign—not even *possibly*.

Since I hadn’t behaved as they’d expected, they were determined anyway to say I’d resigned. They couldn’t let people know their heartlessness in *dismissing* me, after so many years of loyal service! So they lied.

f) For myself, I simply could not *believe* that these (to me) dear sisters could be heaping me with such abuse. Tara was Master’s editor-in-chief, and the senior-most member of the Board. Daya was SRF’s president and treasurer. Tara’s personality was forceful and caustic to an unnatural degree, but I’d never realized she could be ruthless. Daya was much younger than she, and habitually deferred to her. Indeed, although Daya was the president, it may be said that Tara was the real “power behind the throne.” Both, however, were disciples of a great saint of *love!*

g) Tara warned me never again to contact any SRF member. She added, “If you do, we’ll expose you for your countless lies and treacheries!”

“From now on,” she concluded, “we want to forget that you ever lived!”

I was thirty-six at the time. The only people in the world whom I could regard as friends were members of SRF. Now I was never again to contact any of them! This fact did not seem even to weigh on their minds, whether lightly or heavily. They told me to keep the money I had in my wallet (about a thousand dollars, which I’d kept for travel expenses). “After that,” Tara told me, “just take any job that comes along.” She also proclaimed, “You are never again to tell anyone that Master is your guru. We don’t want anyone knowing that he had such a despicable disciple!”

The deliberate purpose of her tirade was to reduce me forever, from that day on, to the status of a “non-person”—in my own eyes, and also where SRF was concerned.

h) One memorable statement Tara made to me at that meeting was, “Before I die, I’ll make sure that no one will ever admit you back into Master’s organization.”

i) What were some of the other things she told me at that meeting? It is not pleasant to recall them, certainly. Here, however, are a few:

1) “Never again will we have to deal with all the suggestions hatched in that fertile brain of yours!” As she made this statement, she heaved an exaggerated sigh of relief.

2) “You are deceitful, dishonest, an utter liar, a hypocrite!”

In fact, there was hardly a fault possible to human nature of which she did not find me as guilty as if I’d been caught holding the bloody weapon in my hand.

I have never recognized any of these shortcomings in myself. When I told my mother some of what Tara had said, she exclaimed indignantly, “Why, you’ve never told a lie in your life!” I knew she was right.

3) At a certain point in the proceedings, Tara looked at me with an expression of triumph, then demanded, “Can you tell me why *every single thing you’ve ever tried to accomplish has ended in DISASTER?*”

Nonplussed, I inquired, “Can you give me an example?” I could remember a number of outstanding victories, but not a single real failure—unless, indeed, their own continued rejection of my ideas constituted such.

To this demand, Tara appeared stumped for a moment. Then she grabbed the upper hand again by retorting, “That’s your style, see? Asking questions to get the other person confused!”

Is there anything that anyone, anywhere, might possibly have said to her in reply? I might have shouted emotionally, but it is simply not my way to shout, and in any case when it came to lung power she was an athlete!

j) At one point in the proceedings I exclaimed in bewilderment, “But none of the things you’ve said are true!”

Tara declared contemptuously, “I don’t want your *opinions!*” Was my own certain knowledge of events, then, only an “opinion”?

k) At the end of the meeting, she gave me a letter to sign. It stated that I resigned from the Board of Directors and from the vice presidency. I signed the document willingly. What had those positions mattered to me? Nothing! I resigned from nothing else.

And there lay Daya’s only possible justification for telling people I’d resigned.

l) The next morning, the telephone rang in my hotel room. Tara was at the other end, having returned to Los Angeles immediately after our little “get-together.” Brightly she inquired, “Were you able to get the check cashed yet?”

“What check?” I asked.

“Daya and I agreed after our meeting that we should give you another five hundred dollars for being cooperative.”

I told her I’d received nothing so far. I decided, however, that when I did get the check I would never cash it. Later that morning I revisited Daya briefly in her room. She gave me the check. When I told her that I had already paid my room bill, she replied, “You shouldn’t have done that.” But she didn’t offer to reimburse me.

m) By seeming coincidence (but surely by divine providence), my parents, who had been vacationing in Europe, returned that very day to America, landing in New York. I was able to contact them in Scarsdale—a suburb of the city, located in Westchester County—where they were staying, and where we’d lived together years earlier.

I mentioned this fact to Tara during her telephone call to me.

“Isn’t it wonderful,” she exclaimed exuberantly, “how Master has worked this whole thing out!”

“How can I possibly answer that?” I replied.

Tara: “Why won’t you answer? Don’t you think it’s wonderful?”

Kriyananda: “I’d rather not say anything.”

Uncomprehending, she returned to the attack. “That’s your trouble, see? You’re secretive!”

“I thought you told me yesterday I was unguarded in my speech!”

Tara could not be rebuffed. She returned blandly, “You’re secretive when you shouldn’t be, and unguarded when you shouldn’t be.” There was simply nothing to be said to her in reply. As I’ve said already, I am not one for shouting matches. Nor am I one for sarcastic retorts. I realized that she would say anything to win her point, so I remained silent.

After meeting my parents, we drove together across the country to their home in Atherton, south of San Francisco. Several days later, Daya and I spoke by telephone. When she learned where I was now living, she exploded in anger. “You’ve actually had the temerity to land right in our *backyard!*” Her intention, as much so as Tara’s, had been to leave me stranded, three thousand miles away from SRF’s headquarters, and “safely” out of their hair.

At about this time I also asked Daya, “Where can I go? What can I do? My life is completely dedicated to serving my Guru.”

“I seem to recall,” she replied, “that you had a good response in the Fiji islands.”

Anything, just to get me forever off the scene!

n) Is there any point in my recounting the entire tale? Tara did say a few more things, however, that might deserve mention here, if only to show the hopelessness of my position.

1. At one point in our “discussion” I said to them, “Put it in writing, if you like, that I will never do anything more for Master’s work than wash dishes. I came to him to find God. It was he who gave me whatever positions I’ve held. Those positions, in themselves, have never meant anything to me. I’ll be willing to sign any document you give me, stating that I will do nothing for the rest of my life but wash dishes. All I ask is to be allowed to stay and serve my Guru.”

With grim determination Tara replied, “Never! The slightest toehold you get and you’ll only worm your way to the top again.”

For a time, I wondered seriously whether Master himself had not abandoned me. But I said to him in prayer, “Even if you reject me, I will never abandon you!”

o) I was denied a re-entry visa into India on the grounds that I was believed to be a CIA agent, and a Christian missionary in disguise. When I was finally able to clear myself of those ridiculous charges, an Indian friend of mine, who worked as a lawyer at the high court, discovered that the report about my supposedly covert activities had come from someone in YSS, SRF’s affiliate in that country.

p) For several months after my dismissal, I sent SRF donations in an effort to express my continued devotion to Master, as well as my support for his work. My checks were never cashed. On one occasion I sent my donation in cash. This time, Daya returned the money to me in person. She explained, “People might ask questions.” From then on, I withheld my monetary support.

q) In 1968, when I started Ananda, I made it a point to require that all Ananda members become members of SRF also; take the SRF lessons; and attend their services when possible. I knew that anyone who went to SRF, and made his affiliation with me known, would receive a stern caution (as in fact did happen) to avoid all further contact with me. Nevertheless, I determined to be as *dharmic*

(devoted to right action) as possible. When anyone asked an SRF representative why I was no longer with the organization, he was told with an eyes-heavenward expression, “Oh, if you only *knew* what he did!” No further explanation was ever forthcoming. I doubt that those who gave this answer had any notion, themselves, of the facts.

r) Two or three times over the years I personally offered to give Ananda to Daya and SRF. In my heart, I felt that everything I had done was for Master. On one such occasion I actually said to her, “I would be willing even to leave Ananda, after giving it to you, if that were your will.” Daya’s only response was, “We wouldn’t want to inherit your debts.” (As if my only possible motive for this generous offer could have been that we were in imminent danger of bankruptcy. As a matter of fact, we were thriving!) In this case, as in most others, my quotations are exact.

Daya’s incapacity to imagine that there might be an unselfish motive behind my offer, and also the wording of her reply, left me with no other alternative than to respond, “And I would not give you Ananda, if I thought you would only run it into the ground.”

That was the last time I made any offer. Always, however, I have done my best to promote harmony between our two organizations. And always their response has been condescending, even contemptuous.

s) Is Daya Mata a Self-realized being, as is widely claimed? Let me repeat here a story that may have a bearing on this question. One evening, Master, in speaking to us monks, listed his most advanced disciples in the order of their spiritual development. “First in Self-realization,” he said, “comes Saint Lynn; second, Mr. Black; and third, Sister Gyanamata.”

Faye Wright (Daya Mata) was at that time in charge of the office at Mt. Washington. Naturally, the question arose in our minds: “What about Faye?” Master answered our thought by saying, “And Faye? Well, Faye still has her life to live.”

t) I should repeat that Daya was never appointed to or proposed for the presidency of SRF by our Guru himself. She was simply elected to that

position by the Board of Directors, after Rajarshi Janakananda's passing. In fact, the appointment came after two other candidates had rejected that post (though, indeed, I considered her the person most fit for it).

u) Tara once announced at a Christmas banquet, "Master predicted that no future president would ever fall from his ideals." This was at a function for the nuns; the monks were having their own banquet in Encinitas. I had been obliged to attend the nuns' because I'd just given the service that morning at our Hollywood church, and wouldn't have been able to reach Encinitas in time for the monks' banquet.

v) I had grave doubts at the time about the veracity of Tara's statement, both because it seemed an awfully large claim to make for me, a complete insider, never to have heard before, and also because I'd learned by then that Tara was not above occasionally stating the "convenient untruth."

w) Years later, however, I learned that the rumor mill had exaggerated Tara's statement to become a claim that Master had predicted that every future president would be Self-realized. I am absolutely certain he never made any such prediction. Indeed, could a mere organizational appointment accomplish such a miracle? It ranks up there, among institutional conveniences, with the dogma of the infallibility of the pope. Ridiculous! Moreover, organizational prominence is something the sincere truth-seeker usually avoids like the plague. And the future covers a great span of time, and human nature is notoriously fallible.

x) When I met Sri Rama Yogi, the fully liberated saint whom I mentioned earlier, he asked me, "What are Daya Mata's responsibilities?" He said she had written him once or twice. I described her responsibilities to him, in part.

"Oof! What a burden!" he exclaimed sympathetically.

"Is it only that?" I asked in reply. "If so, one would have to attribute her high position to bad karma!"

"Of course I didn't mean that!" the great yogi answered with a smile. "It is her good karma which

has placed her in a position where she can work out that karma more quickly. But this doesn't mean that everyone would be helped karmically by holding that position. For others, it might be an unfortunate burden, indeed."

Finally, as I've said, how could anyone be raised to a state of Self-realization by the mere process of human election? The claim is preposterous!

y) What is my own attitude towards everything that happened to me? Am I bitter? Is there in my heart any desire for vengeance? Astonishingly, perhaps, I bear those people only good will. Their work is my work; their aims, my aims. The truth is, I am happier loving them than I would be if I permitted hatred a place in my heart. With God's grace, I have never in my life experienced that darker emotion. I can't say that I even really understand it.

I think the only possible way to regard everything that happened to me is to view it as the result of my own karma. There must have been something in me that attracted so much opposition, and such fierce retribution. Assuming this to be true, I must, and fortunately do, feel deep gratitude. At least I can say, "Well, that's one more debt paid!"

1. A reading I received in India, early in 2010—it was purported to have been written 5,000 years ago (during descending Treta Yuga), and then copied 400 years ago into "modern" Tamil—gave many facts that cause me to believe it true. It stated that, owing to my doubts in past lives, I have faced countless obstacles in my efforts to serve my Guru. (Master himself told me, "You were eaten up with doubts.") The reading also said that this bad karma has now been expiated, and that everything I attempt in future will flourish. The worst period of that bad karma was, obviously, during the years I was with SRF after Master's passing, and immediately after I left. Since then, I have indeed encountered unusual success in my life. If still more is to attend my efforts, well, it will enable me to serve my Guru all the better!

2. The best way to look upon our past karma is not to grieve over its blows, but simply to smile, to keep a sense of humor, to absorb those blows willingly into oneself, and then to offer them up to

God, knowing that He will help us finally to reach the highest bliss in Him.

My case, however—although tragic to me at the time—was by no means unique. If it had been, it might be explained away entirely in terms of my own bad karma. The sad truth is, however, that others have been dismissed similarly since then, without compunction, though perhaps less harshly. (Some of them may have been less stubborn in their loyalty than I.) Always, SRF's reasoning has been taken from Tara: "Ask yourselves in every situation: What is best for the work?" And, to her, "the work" meant not Yogananda's legacy of truth, but his SRF organization.

Were anyone to challenge an SRF member on this point, I think he might answer, wide-eyed, "Why, what's the difference?"

A good leader is more concerned with the spirit in which people do things than with *what* they do.

I thank God that my experience has ended up giving me our two basic guiding principles at Ananda: "People are more important than things"; and, "Where there is right action, there lie success, true fulfillment, happiness, and victory."

Even so, one cannot help asking, How has it been possible for spiritual people to treat others so

unkindly? I have felt the incentive in my own life, certainly, to ponder this question many times.

In 1972 I flew south in India to meet Sathya Sai Baba, a well-known saint of that country. When he emerged from his quarters to meet the gathered crowd, he came right over to me and greeted me. A few minutes later, he invited me indoors for a private discussion. At one point during our conversation, his expression suddenly became indignant. "Very, very bad!" he exclaimed. "So many people have tried to hurt you. But don't care for them. It's just selfishness and jealousy!" He said more, in support of my years of service to my Guru. I have told this story in my book, *A Visit to Saints of India*.

Well, it seems to be what happens when religious faith becomes embedded in rules, and self-interest, forgetting love. This is a dark-age (*Kali-Yuga*) way of thinking, during which time form is considered more real than its infusing energy.

Look at how St. John of the Cross's fellow monks treated him, imprisoning and abusing him. The history of religion is littered with such bleak examples.

When the Italian distributor of my books confided to me once at a meeting, "I'm not a particularly religious man," I answered (much to his amusement), "Neither am I."

Spiritual? Yes! Religious? No.

## 10. SRF's Lawsuit Against Ananda

SRF not only wants its own way in everything: it wants a *monopoly* on that way. I founded the first of the Ananda communities in 1968-1969 in obedience to my Guru's wishes. SRF members tried for years to undermine the loyalty of Ananda members to me, and to my understanding of his teachings. They failed in that effort. In 1990, therefore, they decided to enforce their will on me through the law courts.

a) In January of that year, Ananda formally changed its name to Ananda Church of Self-Realization. Because "Self-realization" is, in fact, Master's own definition of his mission, I felt that, out of loyalty to him, we needed to include that concept in our name.

The following month, I wrote a book compiling some of Master's words, of which I'd kept a careful record on his repeated urging to me. I named this book, *The Essence of Self-Realization*. Two weeks passed. Then I received the first salvo of what was to become a twelve-year legal ordeal.

b) I will not go into all the complex details of that case here. I may state, however, that SRF's first complaint—on the issue of our name—marked only the beginning of a serious attempt on their part to destroy us—me first, and then Ananda. It wasn't long before they were claiming a monopoly also on Yogananda's name, voice, image, and likeness. (Would even the Roman Catholic Church dare to make similar claims today, regarding Jesus Christ?)

c) The law firm they hired to represent them was Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher—at that time, at least, the third-largest law firm in the world. Ananda, by contrast, hired a sole practitioner, Jon Parsons, who hadn't even a secretary. The reason we chose him wasn't only that we lacked the necessary funds to hire a large firm, but also that I knew Jon, personally, to be a man of integrity.

Ananda helped him in many of his lawyerly functions, doing much of the preparatory work—work which SRF paid its lawyers to do. I myself spent month after month delineating the issues at stake in paper after paper, and mapping out suggestions for

our legal strategy. We named our campaign, as I've done this book: "Yogananda for the World."

d) The cost to us in the end, even with all the unpaid work we did ourselves, was twelve million dollars, donated or loaned to us by people whose faith in us was firm.

e) My reasonable estimate of SRF's costs is that they spent not less than \$50 million on their efforts to beat us. It became a David and Goliath struggle, with SRF trying to bash us out of existence, and us struggling merely to stand our ground. Unlike David, we had no wish, and never made any attempt, to kill or even harm the Goliath that was Self-Realization Fellowship.

The story is long. Rather than burden the reader with excessive details, I will state only that SRF did its best to destroy us financially; to strip us of our right to exist as a community; to turn Ananda against me, personally; and to heap me with ignominy. They actually went to the length of trying to deprive me of all the copyrights on my own books and musical compositions.

f) I think one important reason why Daya tried so hard to destroy me was an inner need she felt to justify something Master had once said to her. From the way she told me that story years earlier, I am persuaded that she was telling the truth. What she said was, "Master once said to me, 'God has given you great power in this life, and no one will be able to stand against you.'" This statement must be what inspired her with the fierce determination to devote so vast an amount of time and money to our undoing.

Her problem was that she never understood an essential difference between what she thought I was doing and what my purpose all along really was. I *never* "stood against" her. My stand was what it has always been: *for* the truth. Even in this book, I have never for a moment thought of myself as "standing against" her or against anyone else. I have defended the truth. As to my feelings toward Daya, I sincerely love her, and hope that what I have written in these pages will somehow help her in her own soul evolution, even now, since she has left her body.

g) SRF lost, legally, on issue after issue. To keep their suit going, they appealed every decision to a higher court. Finally they took a part of their case all the way up to the U.S. Supreme Court. Fortunately for us, that court refused even to consider their appeal, mailing the refusal to SRF casually, by postcard.

h) The fact that SRF's assault was directed mostly against me, personally, becomes crystal clear from something Daya once said to me: "It isn't the good people of Ananda I have anything against. It is *Kriyananda*."

i) SRF also tried, by lies, fabrications, and exaggerations to deprive me of all honorable standing in the world. Their effort culminated in 1994 in the filing of another lawsuit, which was ostensibly against an Ananda member, but which zeroed in immediately on me alone. Even though SRF's name was carefully omitted as the plaintiff in this case, we had ample evidence that the organization was intimately involved in it, and was, in fact, behind it.

As the first case wound its way through twelve years to final trial, we demanded of the discovery judge, Nowinsky, the right to take Daya's deposition. (A deposition is an interrogation by the opposition's lawyers, taken under oath, but out of court.) SRF's lawyers fiercely resisted our demand. Finally the judge remarked, "The very fact that you are resisting so intensely makes me think you have something to hide." He ordered Daya to be deposed.

j) Daya then, desperately anxious to avoid deposition, invited us to a meeting in Pasadena. At that meeting she radiated sweetness, kindness, and love, completely disavowing any intention of initiating more lawsuits against us. She began this disavowal by stating that Master himself had appeared to her in a vision, and had commanded her, "*Settle!*" Every Ananda member in that room remembers this statement of hers very clearly. We remember also the way Daya, with a smile of great charm, stated, "No more *lawsuits!!!*" Her expression radiated sincerity. None of us could imagine that she was being untruthful. Her later actions, however, proved her to have been utterly duplicitous.

k) She seemed eager at that Pasadena meeting to make friends with us and to compensate for the way she had treated us in the past. Naively, we granted her request, canceling her deposition.

Such depositions can, and often do, last for hours. They are "no-holds-barred" events. I myself was forced to endure eighty hours of deposition in what I have called their second lawsuit, during which the opposing lawyers tried with sneers, innuendos, and outright insults to "knock me out of the ring." Only a few months earlier I'd had open-heart surgery; the doctor had virtually ordered me to take a whole year off from work. My personal physician attended all the depositions, to protect me. Their lawyers did their best to override his every precaution. They placed a video camera before me. In an attempt to rattle me, they instructed that it be pushed closer and closer to my face until the lens almost touched me. (I simply ignored it.) They asked my doctor mockingly, "Are you a veterinarian?" They tried to prevent me from taking breaks, and followed me to the door each time I took one, demanding urgently, "Just one question." I think it would be no exaggeration to say that they would have been pleased to see me collapse with a heart attack.

l) Several years later, a woman who had been high up in SRF told us that she, personally, had heard Daya state to a small group after the Pasadena meeting, "That's the last time I'll ever see *him* again!" While making this statement, no charm was evident in her manner.

m) SRF's spirit of reconciliation lasted only long enough to obtain our agreement to cancel Daya's deposition. Despite her disclaimer of wanting "no more lawsuits!", the second case continued to be prosecuted with full force, and (once again) with numerous barefaced lies. The first lawsuit lasted another five years; the second one, which had begun in 1994, finally ended the next year.

n) At some point during these developments, the judge in the first lawsuit ordered both parties to meet and try to reach a settlement. The court-appointed lawyer, Mr. Lombardini, came with the reputation of being one of the most effective settlement lawyers in the business. He spoke first with SRF's Board of Directors. After spending an

hour and a half listening to their side, he met with us. Ten minutes into our discussion he looked at me with surprise and asked, “Are you Mr. Walters?”

I said I was.

“Boy!” he exclaimed, “You sure aren’t *anything* like the way you’ve been represented to me!”

After several hours of discussion with both groups, he ended up telling us, with reference to SRF’s leadership, “Well, we must be compassionate!” What an extraordinary thing for a worldly lawyer to say, after failing in his attempt to get two spiritual groups to find some way to peaceful coexistence!

o) As the first case proceeded and as decision after decision went against SRF, Daya and her team remained adamant in their determination to demolish us. Their every appeal was denied, as I said. The absurdity reached a point where one of their lawyers said to our lawyer in confidence: “I would *pay* to get out of this case!”

p) Finally, the case went to court. SRF’s lawyers, in their closing arguments, demanded an award of 33 million dollars—a sum that SRF knew would wipe us off the map. To the very end, they never gave up! What they actually did get out of us, in the end, was \$38,000. And this amount was

something I gave to them simply in order to get them off our backs.

q) This “consolation prize” went to them because I’d seen how determined they were to rescue at least one coal from the fire. I realized that the only way to get them finally to relent would be to surrender on some very minor issue. The concession would put them in a position (of which they took full advantage, later on) to claim, “*We WON!*” Though I gave them this minor victory, I am confident we could have won this point easily. The victory, however, would have cost us more than we cared to pay. The point revolved around the copyrights of Master’s recorded words, a few tapes of which had been given to me years earlier by a friend in Italy. The originals had been privately gifted to that friend by Dr. Lewis.

In point of fact, I had done the world a favor in publishing those six tapes, for SRF had thus far released only one recording of his spoken words. The actual financial damage to SRF was nil. My releasing of these tapes forced them to release other tapes, also. Thus, the world has become aware since then—in many cases, for the first time—of what Yogananda’s voice actually sounded like in all its sweetness and power.

r) Naturally, SRF touted this relatively trivial gain as a major victory!

## 11. SRF's Second Lawsuit

The second suit was a sordid case of alleged sexual harassment. The cast of characters included:

Anne-Marie Bertolucci, a somewhat attractive young woman from New Zealand. Anne-Marie had been for a time a member of Ananda.

Danny Levin, a married Ananda minister whose marriage had produced a backward child.

Eric Estep, a former Ananda member, but now a self-declared enemy of Ananda's.

Daya Mata, acting from behind the scenes.

Daya's lawyer, whom I won't dignify by naming. To us, he seemed a veritable incarnation of evil. To Daya Mata, he was a friend.

A handful of women, assembled by SRF through this lawyer, to channel all possible venom in my direction during the trial.

And, finally: me, bound and blindfolded so to speak, before the firing squad.

What happened was that Anne-Marie got involved in an affair with Danny Levin. She wanted to marry him. I asked Danny how he felt about it, and he replied that he wanted to save his marriage.

I then said to her, "I am going to send you to another Ananda community. I won't have you living here and destroying that marriage—especially since it involves a child so greatly in need of support and affection."

"But I would make a *good* mother to her!" protested Anne-Marie, whose first and only real interest in life was herself.

I remained firm. As she was leaving the room, I saw fires of rage blazing in her eyes, accompanied by the thought, "Am I going to get even with *you!*"

She moved to our community in Palo Alto. While pretending friendship to me, she found out about, and then contacted, Eric Estep.

He, too, was a "case." I had allowed Eric, as a founding member of Ananda, to live with us for twelve years, though for all that time he never paid the dues required of Ananda members to help cover

land taxes and utilities. Through all his years with us, Eric had been a deliberate irritant: sneering at whatever we did, disagreeing with virtually every decision, and trying consistently to embarrass me, personally, at group meetings.

Finally, Ananda's new general manager, Joseph Selbie, called him into his office. "Why do you remain here?" Joseph asked. "All you seem able to do is fault us for everything."

"I think it's good for the community to have a gadfly," was Eric's response.

"Well, I can accept that," replied Joseph. "But what is it doing for *you?*"

Joseph finally proceeded to give Eric an ultimatum: "You've been living here, accepting no community responsibility, for twelve years. It is time you participated in the normal duties of every member. I'm going to ask you to start paying your membership dues."

"What's the alternative?" asked Eric.

"The alternative is that I will ask you to leave."

Eric opted for immediate departure. Before leaving, however, he came over to my house and devoted more than an hour to bringing me up to date on my many faults. "Your life," he stated as if he were offering a simple matter of fact, "is a complete washout. You've done nothing worthwhile, ever. Your books are shallow and foolish. Your music is intolerable. Your. . . ." He continued this calm recital, as I said, for over an hour. During that whole time I made no response, not even by expression or gesture. When he ended, I thanked him calmly. My feeling was, "I don't know whether he's right, but at least I know this much: I've always done my very best. And if he's wrong, it isn't for me to tell him so." The Bhagavad Gita counsels even-mindedness under all circumstances.

Eric left. After the door had closed behind him, I went to the piano, sat down, and composed the melody and lyrics of a new song. Its lyrics follow:

Though green summer fade,

And winter draw near,  
My Lord, in Your presence  
I live without fear.

Through tempest, through snows,  
Through turbulent tide,  
The touch of Your hand  
Is my strength, and my guide.

I ask for no riches  
That death can destroy.  
I crave only Thee:  
Your love, and Your joy.

The dancers will pass;  
The singing must end.  
I welcome the darkness,  
With You for my Friend!

Eric remained for some years on the outskirts of Ananda's community in Palo Alto, prowling about (like Shere Khan, the lame tiger in Kipling's *The Jungle Book*, growling and snarling with rage, and repeating, "The man cub is mine!"; in this case, the "man cub" was me).

Anne-Marie, as I said, discovered Eric, who bore her in triumph to Los Angeles, where he introduced her to Daya Mata. Daya invited Anne-Marie to lunch with her and the Board of Directors. Afterward, she asked her starry-eyed guest to meditate in what had been Master's private quarters.

Anne-Marie first found a lawyer who was not up to the task of defending her as she desired. Daya suggested that she accept another lawyer also, one friendly to SRF. This man's real duty was not to prosecute Anne-Marie's case (which didn't really exist), but to try his best to destroy me.

He found a small group of women, SRF members, who were willing (indeed, anxious) to accuse me of sexual harassment. The lawyer

proceeded to try, by public meetings in Nevada City (near Ananda), to search out others who would be willing to support his cause. At the end, he was left with the same handful of women. Ananda women gave me their wholehearted support, and wrote many long testimonials to my character as they knew it.

Here I must answer three questions truthfully:

1) Did I, a self-declared monk, ever impose my will sexually on any woman?

2) Did I—again, a self-declared monk—ever have sexual relations with any woman, despite my vows?

3) In either case, what—if anything—did I say to justify or excuse my misdeeds?

The answer to the first question is, No, I have never in my life tried to impose my will on anybody—not for any reason at all.

To the second question, the answer must unfortunately be, Yes. I'll discuss this point in a moment.

To the third question, my unequivocal answer is this: I've always done my best in this life to be completely truthful. Never have I tried to justify or excuse, either to others or to myself, any deed I knew to be wrong. Once, to someone who asked me, "Why do you have this desire?" I gave the only answer possible at the time: "Because I'm stupid!"

Yes, I could protest that, having been contemptuously rejected by those people who, in this world, were so near and dear to me, my longing for tenderness and human comfort was very deep. For a true devotee of God, however, no excuse will do. I did desire emotional support and companionship. I was completely dedicated to spreading my Guru's mission. For me, the choice was stark: Should I withdraw to a cave somewhere until this inner conflict was resolved, abandoning the commission my Guru had given me? Or should I continue to serve him in ways that he himself had told me to do, and trust in his repeated promise to me that I would eventually come out of this delusion?

The Bhagavad Gita states: "Of what avail would be mere suppression?" (3:33) What is forced

upon us by our own nature we can at least resist mentally. Such is the path to final freedom. Such was my path.

And I did, finally, achieve the freedom I sought. By “freedom” I mean specifically not only the need for feminine companionship, but for sex, which, to me now, means nothing.

I approached the problem as I had, many years earlier, the habit of smoking. Every time I succumbed, I refused to lament, “I’ve failed!” Instead, I told myself firmly and repeatedly, “I haven’t yet succeeded.” In the end, the habit simply left me—as though it had never been.

SRF’s second case was a blatant attempt to humiliate me utterly—indeed, to ruin forever any chances I had of further serving my Guru. The judge in our case may have been looking for a promotion to the appeals court—at least, he received that promotion very soon afterward. To ensure a clear victory, he denied our attorney the right to cross-examine any of the witnesses ranged against me. We were not allowed even to inform the jury that our normal rights had been denied; they were left with the impression that we simply had no questions to ask.

I have often reflected on another possibility. Yogananda once described God as “the One Unbribable Judge.” I have sometimes wondered, *Could* our judge. . .? Certainly, his attitudes throughout the case seemed open to serious question.

Their lawyer, too, showed a confidence one sees only in people who know in advance that their victory is assured, though this fact may not be significant, as it may be the normal comportment of any aggressive lawyer. The judge, however, was another matter. His manner showed him determined to tilt the scales.

Our own lawyer, on the other hand—a new one we hired for this case—was a defense lawyer. He was accustomed to having clients who were clearly in the wrong. In fact, he had earned his reputation by getting them off with the lightest sentences possible.

To our legal team, once I’d finally met this man, I insisted, “This is not at all the right man for us!”

“But,” they protested, “we’ve already paid him \$50,000 in advance.”

I mentally prayed, “It’s all right, Divine Mother. If it is Your will that I be destroyed, I’ll accept that outcome unflinchingly. Everything I’ve done has been for You. I am Yours alone! Do with me as You will. I know You want only my ultimate good.”

What else could I do? I simply would not allow myself to be affected inwardly. Therefore, through repeated, fierce depositions (prolonged, as I said, for eighty long hours); through accusation after humiliating public accusation in the courtroom, accompanied by unceasing ridicule; and through gleeful trumpet blasts against me in the press (to which our lawyer would not allow us even to respond), I kept repeating mentally: “Divine Mother, whatever be Your will, I accept it willingly.”

Indeed, it is not in my nature to get upset. I can feel deeply about things, but the waves of emotion never really touch me. I determined that whatever happened would be Divine Mother’s will, and would therefore be for my ultimate best.

Believe it or not, I am grateful beyond words for that long ordeal. By demonstrating to me the depths of viciousness to which feminine nature is capable of descending, I finally lost all desire for sex. These past fourteen years, since the end of that trial, the sex-delusion has simply been absent from my mind. Indeed, it actually puzzles me: Along with anger and hatred, I somehow fail to see any reality in sexual desire. How, I ask myself, could I ever have found such a thing attractive? It is so—well, “sweet, but sticky,” as a child (Donny) says in a novel of mine, *The Time Tunnel*.

Sexual attraction, I’ve realized, is *Maya’s* (Delusion’s) supreme way of drawing mankind’s attention outward, through the ego, away from the inner Self.

## 12. Changes in Autobiography of a Yogi

The number of changes SRF has made in Master's autobiography since his passing is astounding. Here are a few outstanding examples:

a) At least twenty-eight significant alterations were made in the actual meaning of the text relating to Yogananda's life and teachings.

b) There have also been at least the same number of significant deletions of text.

c) Insertions have been made of SRF's name, in ways that change the meaning of the text significantly. Sometimes these changes have introduced entirely new discussions, of which the purpose was simply to promote the organization.

d) There are one hundred and nineteen mentions of Self-Realization Fellowship, as an organization, that did not appear in the original edition.

e) Over a thousand new lines have been added, sometimes in footnotes, most of them with the clear intention of promoting SRF as an organization, or (in footnotes) of giving the impression that these, too, were written by Yogananda himself—even when they were in fact written by others, and reflected points of view that were not his at all.

f) *Very few* of the more-than-five-hundred changes since the first edition of the autobiography were made by the Master himself. Most of them—some appearing many years later—were made by SRF, not as editorial refinements, but with the very different purpose of aligning his printed statements with policies the organization formulated since his passing. The following examples should suffice here:

g) In the first edition of *Autobiography of a Yogi*, and also in the final edition to appear before Master left his body, the text states, "To fulfill one's earthly responsibilities *is indeed the higher path* [italics mine], provided the yogi, maintaining a mental uninvolvedness with egotistical desires, plays his part as a willing instrument of God."

In the editions released since his passing, the above-quoted lines were changed to: "Fulfilling one's earthly responsibilities *need not separate man from*

*God* [again, italics mine], provided he maintains mental uninvolvedness. . . ." The point in making this alteration was to place the renunciates, who "ran the show," in a position of higher spiritual authority than that of "worldly" people—indignant center leaders, for example, and other "riff-raff." The change, as I happen to know because I was at the center of things at the time and was in charge of the center department, was made because certain SRF center leaders were challenging the right of SRF's leaders to make certain sweeping changes in the organization, and in its literature.

Difficulties arise, however, whenever spiritual laws are ignored. In this case, the renunciates, being only human, developed the superiority complex of "special" human beings—a race apart from "ordinary householders." This complex can become a loss of all hope, if ever one fails in his or her outward dedication.

Incidentally, these new versions of the book are not called "editions." As I wrote earlier, they are designated as "reprints." The reason for this word choice is obvious: The editors want to suggest that no actual changes have been made.

h) Despite the above emphasis on renunciation as the higher path (in contradiction to what is written in the first edition), almost all the Master's highly advanced disciples were, or had been, married. These individuals included Rajarshi Janakananda, Sister Gyanamata, Dr. Lewis, and Yogacharya Black. Three of these persons were also described by Master as his most highly advanced disciples. Of course, every reader of *Autobiography of a Yogi* knows also that Lahiri Mahasaya was married, and that Sri Yukteswar had been married. Both men produced children. (Interestingly, when Babaji made Sri Yukteswar a swami, the younger man was *still* married.)

i) Fourteen lines of Master's great poem, "Samadhi"—very important to the meaning of the whole poem—were deleted from later editions of the book. Among the excisions was this inspiring statement: "By deeper, longer, thirstier, guru-given meditation comes this celestial *samadhi*."

j) The first edition of *Autobiography of a Yogi* states: “The actual technique [of Kriya Yoga] must be learned from a Kriyaban or Kriya Yogi.” This sentence was rewritten in later so-called “reprints” to read: “The actual technique [of Kriya Yoga] should be learned from an authorized *Kriyaban* (Kriya Yogi) of Self-Realization Fellowship (Yogoda Satsanga Society of India).”

One wonders whether the disciples of other lines of descent from our gurus (Lahiri Mahasaya and Sri Yukteswar spring to mind) were thereby deprived of God’s former blessings on their own initiations!

k) SRF has constrained not only those who give Kriya initiation, but those also who receive it, to be members of Self-Realization Fellowship. Kriya applicants must first sign a pledge renouncing any tie with other spiritual organizations. Master himself never imposed such a condition; nor did Lahiri Mahasaya. On the contrary, both masters gave Kriya initiation freely to sincere seekers of all paths. Master, toward the end of his life, did indeed ask people to become SRF members in order to receive Kriya, but this was only to ensure their sincerity.

Otherwise, I was myself present on one occasion when he gave Kriya initiation to a large group that included the leader of another spiritual organization (Mrs. Clarence Gasque, head of the “Mazdaznans”). At that event, he affirmed publicly that he was doing so because “Kriya is for everybody.” At this initiation he also told a story (recounted in *The Essence of Self-Realization*, to which I referred earlier in this book), concerning one man, a follower of another path, who had been seeking God by that path for twenty years. Master said to him, “It isn’t so important what path you follow, outwardly. Your problem is only that you’ve been trying to get out of the room through the walls. Kriya will show you where to locate the door.” The man received Kriya initiation, and within one week had the experience of God that he’d sought for so many years.

l) Tara so drastically changed Master’s inspiring book of prayer-poems, *Whispers from Eternity*, that she made it a different book altogether, removing from it every bit of its poetic

beauty. She published (as I stated in my introduction) a letter at the beginning of the book that purported to have been written by Paramhansa Yogananda himself. It was, however, composed entirely by her. The letter expressed Master’s “gratitude” to her for this new edition. I objected strongly to this forgery, for I knew that Master had never written that letter at all. Indeed, what had actually happened (as Tara herself told me *after* Master’s passing) was that she had once said to him that she would love to work on editing this book. And all he had said in reply was, “Oh, *would* you?” I even wonder—considering how many lies she told—whether he ever said even that much to her. In any case, her own words prove to me that he’d never approved, for he had never even seen, that later edition.

m) Photos, too, have been “sanitized” to reflect SRF’s ideas of propriety. The Christian crosses (I mentioned this, too, in the Introduction) which both Master and Rajarshi wore (see the present cover) were later airbrushed out of both their photographs.

n) Even more shockingly, the miraculous photo of Lahiri Mahasaya was replaced, in the 1954 “reprint,” by a painting which shows him “decently” clothed, with a white *chuddar* (shawl) to cover his bare chest. The original photo was restored to the book only in 1998. SRF claimed, in the meantime, that Master himself had requested that the master’s bare chest be covered in response to Western sensibilities. I cannot but believe that this claim is only one more lie, and that the change was due entirely to the sensibilities—not of those nameless “Westerners”—but of the overly proper nuns who commissioned the change.

o) Sri Yukteswar was the fourth in our line of gurus; Yogananda, the fifth. On the altar, Yogananda gave Sri Yukteswar the more central position. Those positions have since been reversed.

p) Originally also, Sri Yukteswar was shown looking outward from the center of the altar. In the new version, the same picture shows him facing inward. This change of direction alters not only the photograph itself, but also its vibration, for the left and right sides of a person’s face are different.

Reversing their orientation changes the impression of their very personalities.

q) People sometimes ask Ananda, “Why have you removed Krishna from your altars?” The truth is quite different: SRF, since Master’s passing, has *introduced* Krishna onto their altars! *Of course* Krishna is revered also at Ananda—particularly so because Master stated that Krishna was a former incarnation of Babaji. Master, once he’d made this fact known, used to lead us in prayer to “Babaji-Krishna.” But Krishna was not actually in our direct lineage of Masters, except through Babaji. The reason Master put Jesus Christ on the altar was that it was Jesus himself who had requested that Yogananda be sent to the West as his spiritual representative. The non-inclusion of Krishna is due to the simple fact that Krishna is not in our direct line of gurus. He is our guru *through* Babaji, as (Yogananda told us) his most recent incarnation.

r) In the original *Autobiography*, Master ends with a stirring appeal to the reader to take his

idea for “world brotherhood colonies,” or cooperative communities, seriously. That entire appeal, and all other references to communities, have been removed altogether from *Autobiography of a Yogi*, and from all SRF literature.

s) In many other ways also, Master’s words and work have been changed—both outwardly and in spirit—to reflect a determination on SRF’s part to achieve full control over his legacy; to impose their own opinions on every aspect of his mission; and to narrow the scope of that mission to spreading and promoting—not his teachings—but Self-Realization Fellowship as a specific religious power in the world.

An SRF member in Italy, Contessa Renata Arlini, remonstrated a few years ago to a visiting SRF monk, “SRF is becoming just like the Catholic Church, with Daya Mata the pope.”

“Oh, you’re so *right!*” the monk replied proudly. “That’s exactly what it is.”

### 13. Master's Zeal for Founding Communities

I stated in the Introduction that Yogananda spoke fervently, throughout his public life, of the need for spiritually minded people to join together in cooperative, harmonious, self-sustaining communities.

a) In article after article, and in lecture after lecture, he emphasized his deep feeling of the need for such communities. There were numerous occasions when I, who was with him for only the last four years of his life, heard him express himself with great enthusiasm on this issue. But this was a basic theme of his mission long before my arrival on the scene—indeed, as long ago as the early 1930s.

b) In 1949, a woman named Mrs. Myers gave a garden party in Master's honor in Beverly Hills, a wealthy suburb of Los Angeles. About eight hundred guests attended, among them many famous Hollywood figures. At the end of the party, Mrs. Myers invited this special guest from India to address the gathering.

What would have been the response of most people to such an invitation? Under the circumstances, surely, they'd have offered a few gracious words of thanks and appreciation to their hostess; a few pleasantries to the guests themselves; and perhaps—in Yogananda's case—a few kindly and thoughtful insights on life in general.

What actually happened? It could not have been farther from such a tame expectation! Virtually, what he delivered that day was a verbal explosion!

Speaking in a voice of thunder, his words filled with divine power, the Master shouted: "This day marks the beginning of a new era! My spoken words are registered in the ether, in the Spirit of God, and they SHALL MOVE THE WEST! . . . We must go on—not only those who are here, but thousands of youths must go north, south, east, and west to cover the earth with little colonies, demonstrating that simple living plus high thinking produce the greatest happiness."

Years later, those words were read during a Sunday service at Ananda Village. Gently and devotionally, the speaker whispered, "Thousands of

youths must go north, south," etc. At this point I cried out, "Give me that book!" I thereupon read the words as I had myself heard them delivered that day by the Master. Everyone present was shocked by their power.

c) Virtually all of his monastic disciples were present on that occasion in Beverly Hills. I cannot believe that Daya, his personal secretary, would have been absent. But even if she was, she had certainly heard him address this subject on many other occasions, and only slightly less fervently.

Yet when I asked her, in 1958, "When are we going to start creating Master's world-brotherhood communities?" she replied, to my amazement: "Frankly, I'm not interested."

d) The party line now being offered by SRF is: "Master changed his mind toward the end of his life. He lost interest in the idea of communities." Mrinalini Mata herself, whom I have known to be generally truthful, was the one responsible for making this incredible misstatement to me. Evidently, in her mind, loyalty to the "party line" claims the highest priority.

I state categorically therefore, in absolute contradiction to those words, that Master *never* changed his mind on this, or indeed on any other important issue—but least of all on this one. Let us not forget that he was a spiritual *master*. For such a person to have stated with so much power in Beverly Hills, "My spoken words are registered in the ether, in the Spirit of God . . . and they shall move the West! . . ." and then, later, simply to "change his mind" would have been simply, ridiculously unthinkable.

In fact, Kamala Silva, in her book, *The Flawless Mirror*, wrote that only four months before his death Master had spoken to her with great enthusiasm about the need for communities. (This fact, too, may have been an important reason for Daya's displeasure with Kamala.)

e) In the original "Aims and Ideals of SRF," Master wrote (as I stated earlier) that one of the main purposes of his mission was "To spread a spirit of brotherhood among all peoples; and to aid in

establishing, in many countries, self-sustaining world-brotherhood colonies for plain living and high thinking.”

After his death, SRF changed that basic mission statement to read: “To encourage ‘plain living and high thinking’; and to spread a spirit of brotherhood among all peoples. . . .” The new wording omits all reference to founding communities.

There is, as I said, no reference now in any SRF publication to the need for world brotherhood

communities, and to this as being one of the basic “aims and ideals” of Self-Realization Fellowship.

Ananda, for its twentieth anniversary in 1988, organized a pilgrimage to Encinitas and to the other SRF colonies. In Encinitas, SRF’s Sister Shanti announced to a little group of us (including me), “Oh yes, I know many people have tried to start cooperative communities, but none of them have succeeded.”

Ananda Village, near Nevada City, has just completed in this year, 2011, its forty-third year of thriving existence.

## 14. Further Important Changes

Astonishingly, SRF has attempted in many ways to deprecate the knowledge, and even the wisdom, of its own guru.

a) I have already written about SRF's claims that Master didn't know how to spell his own title, "Paramhansa." The word is now officially written, *Paramahansa*, with an *a* in the middle—making a burdensome five *a*'s in all.

b) SRF, in attempting to protect itself from being caught out in such matters, has done its best to suppress every expression of Yogananda's teachings but its own. Total control of his mission and legacy is the main motivation behind everything they do.

## 15. SRF's Greatest Lie

During their lawsuit against us, SRF made an outrageous and unfactual statement about Master's very writings. Their purpose in doing so was to help them win their case against us.

a) Daya herself signed a declaration, *under oath*, that *Autobiography of a Yogi* had not been written by Yogananda himself, but by a committee!

b) She also wrote (still under oath!) in that same declaration that he had written *Autobiography of a Yogi* as a "work for hire."

The judge himself was not impressed by these outrageous assertions. In open court he asked SRF's legal representatives, "Are you saying that your guru was only an employee of yours, and had to do exactly as you, his own disciples, commanded him?"

Certainly, this paltering with the truth did not help their case, in the end.

## 16. How Much Respect Did Master's Chief Editor Have for His Judgment?

I know that Tara Mata, who had been Master's editor-in-chief,\* had deep faith in him, as well as devotion to his position as her guru. Nevertheless, there were a number of occasions when she could not resist making statements to me personally on the phone that ridiculed him. (We always spoke by phone, for she lived away from Mt. Washington, and was by nature a recluse.)

a) Laughingly she once said to me, "Even when Master was William the Conqueror, he never mastered the English language!"

English, of course, during William's time, didn't even exist as a language! In fact, it was he who helped to create it in its modern form. Master also told us that, in a former lifetime, he had been a (presumably great and famous) poet.

b) Laughingly again—this time to ridicule his lack of practicality—Tara once told me, "Master had a whole team of us stay up night after night, typing up a proposal to Henry Ford [the industrial tycoon] to get him to sponsor the first world brotherhood colony." The obvious motive for her amusement (indeed, she stated it frankly) was to tell me that the entire concept of communities was "totally impractical."

c) Tara—in order to emphasize what she considered his impractical idealism—also stated to me, "I know Master said, 'We are not a sect.' Well, we

\*I would like to add that I myself (since English is my language) have never allowed anyone to touch my own books with an editorial pen, or indeed to touch anything that goes out over my signature (other than an occasional letter). I have listened to suggestions, of course, but after hearing them, it has always been I who made the final decision.

are a sect!" She saw no reason even to justify this disagreement with him.

d) Tara was extremely competent, certainly, as an editor. Nevertheless, the fact deserves to be underlined that it was also she who, for years, blocked the publication of some of his most important writings. Would she ever have allowed any serious book written by *me* to appear in print? Hardly! Who was I, after all? Master had told me to write books, but the only book of mine that she ever published was *Stories of Mukunda*, which I had written as a Christmas present for my fellow monks.

In speaking to me once about complaints she had been receiving about her delays in getting out Master's words, Tara once exclaimed to me, "Why do people want more books?! They already have everything they need, to find God." Her excuse for not completing the work Master himself had given her—projects which included his commentaries on the Bhagavad Gita, on the New Testament, and on the *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam*—was that she had too little time to spare from her other "duties," which involved, in fact, interfering with everybody else's business.

Daya once remarked to me, in fact, "Master once told me in all earnestness, 'Keep Laurie [Tara] away from people.'" He did so out of an awareness of Tara's tendency to meddle in other people's affairs. Indeed, she seemed to feel that, without her input on everything, the consequence would be ruin and chaos.

e) One time, a committee of fifteen persons, of which I was (as I said earlier) a member, reached a certain decision. The decision did not, as nearly as I can remember, relate to anything very important. Tara, however, when told of our decision by phone, disagreed with it peremptorily. (She always spoke in exclamation marks.)

The nun reporting to her said, "But there are fifteen of us who agree on this matter."

"My dear," Tara answered pleasantly, "that makes you just fifteen times as wrong!"

f) In May 1950, Master told me that he expected his Bhagavad Gita commentaries, on which he was then working, to be published by the end of that year. It had been my task to take letters back and forth between him and Laurie (Tara). The day he made that statement to me, I smiled with eager anticipation while repeating those words to her. In reply, she laughed merrily at the absurdity of his very suggestion that the book could come out so soon. (Master's comment when I related her remark to him was, "Delays! Delays! Always delays!") She'd had no intention of bringing the book out that year. In fact, it was forty-five long years later that this book finally saw the light of day.

g) When SRF's version of Master's Gita commentaries finally did come out, I, who had helped with their editing, was deeply disappointed. Their edition lacked clarity; it was not always accurate in its presentation of the truths Master had explained; and it came out so greatly over-edited that

it was actually difficult to read. Master's own version had, by contrast, been a pleasure to read!

Years later, I was informed by an ex-nun that she had been commissioned to research some of the things Master had written. I simply cannot imagine what purpose that commission served. The book needed no supportive statements, and was in fact only weakened by extra commentaries. Of these, however, the book held a plethora.

h) The following change, which indicated a major policy of diluting Master's true meanings, was made in an audio recording of Yogananda's voice. The change was almost certainly introduced under the influence of Tara herself, who tried constantly to diminish any statement of Master's that might offend orthodox Christian sensibilities. Master, in one of his recorded talks, had stated, "My Master [Swami Sri Yukteswar] was no less than Jesus Christ. Remember that." These sentences were deleted.

## 17. Re-creating Master's Image

Astonishingly, Tara seemed to feel it necessary to reduce Master's claim to the high status he had attained by removing any statement that, to her, appeared too strongly self-affirming. Perhaps her policy in this matter strikes me all the more because it was toward the end of his life that I myself came to him. I often heard him, with my own ears, speak freely on the subject of his oneness with God.

a) Daniel Boone, a monk disciple, once asked Master in my presence (this was in May, 1950) about a saint who had appeared to him some years earlier in Encinitas. Our Guru replied, "I don't know to whom you refer."

Boone then added, "It was on the bluff in Encinitas, Sir, overlooking the ocean."

Master responded, "Well, so many saints come to me. How can I remember which one you mean?"

I, in my ignorance, expressed surprise at his answer. Master then asked me, "Why be surprised? Wherever God is, there His saints come."

Master, in other words, was equating himself—even as Jesus used to do—with God. Indeed, Master on another occasion had remarked to me, "When you are one with God, you *are* God."

I submitted this more recent conversation to the editorial department in response to their request for material to add to a book of Master's sayings. The book was later published under the name, *The Master Said*. Tara, however, in editing it, did not like Master's (to her) unacceptable claim. When the book appeared in print, I found Master's statement changed from, "Wherever God is . . ." to read, "Wherever *a devotee of God* is. . ."

Well, I too am a devotee of God, but I cannot claim to have ever been so pestered!

Tara wanted Master to appear humble, but I think she never understood the very important point that humility is not self-deprecating: it is self-forgetful. Tara herself, as I've already indicated, was always strongly self-affirmative. The truth of the matter, however, is that during the Master's last years he often spoke to us quite openly of the state he'd attained: that of oneness with God.

b) Much of Master's greatness shines out in his charming sense of humor. To Tara, and perhaps also to others among the SRF leadership, that delightful aspect of his nature must have appeared as an improper lack of dignity, for they have done their best to remove every sign of it. Here is an example of what I mean:

In the first edition of *Autobiography of a Yogi*, Master wrote: "It was simplicity itself to discover when [Sri Yukteswar] had awakened: abrupt halt of stupendous snores." In a footnote to this sentence he wrote: "Snoring, according to physiologists, is an indication of utter relaxation (*for the oblivious practitioner solely*) [italics mine]." In later editions, that humorous aside, "for the oblivious practitioner solely," does not appear. Evidently it was considered improper for a great master to have made such a lighthearted remark.

c) An ex-SRF nun made the statement to me and a few Ananda members that SRF actually edited out Master's own laughter from recordings of his voice that they've released to the public.

d) I will point out other examples of important changes in the next chapter.

## 18. Their Treatment of Master's Humor

Why has SRF removed so many examples of Master's engaging sense of humor—both from his writings and from his recorded talks? I wonder whether their editors have not deliberately tried to make him seem magnificently dignified, to the point of pomposity! I give you here one example of ways they have tried to “sanitize” him.

a) On Master's last birthday, January 5, 1952, Dr. Lewis said to him, in joking reference to the single candle (symbolizing eternity) on Master's birthday cake, “Do you think you can blow out that candle?”

Master retorted in a similarly humorous vein, “Oh, I think I have a little breath left in me. I just have to be careful I don't blow the cake away!”

When the recording of that verbal interchange was released to the public, the last sentence had been removed. I suppose it was feared that some people might consider it egotistical. For me, such hypersensitivity is hard to believe! If robust humor has no place in saintliness, I think there may exist another heaven from the one I fondly imagine.

b) I still remember the delight with which Master told jokes. Here is a small sampling of them:

1. With glee he repeated to me, personally, a compliment that had “tickled his funny bone”:

“Your teeth are like stars: they come out at night!”

2. Three men were drinking whiskey: an Irishman, an Englishman, and a Scotchman. A fly flew into each of their glasses. The Irishman tossed the fly out of his glass, losing as he did so half the whiskey. The Englishman carefully flicked the fly out of his glass. “But the Scotchman,” Master concluded with a delighted chuckle, “*squeezed* the fly!”

3. Three Scotchmen went to church. When the collection plate approached their row, one of the men fainted, and the other two carried him out!

Those last two jokes had been told to him by Harry Lauder, a Scottish singer and composer whom Master went to visit in Scotland on his way to India in 1935. The very fact that he took the trouble to visit

Harry Lauder says much regarding his own delight in good humor.

c) His own expressions were often charmingly funny. When he described a confrontation he'd had with a few pundits, he said, “I could see they were ready for a theological bullfight.”

d) The only time I was with Master and Tara together—just the three of us—he told us a comical story of how, at his Ranchi school, he had once caught three dogs that had chased the horses and were generally making a nuisance of themselves. I think Master said they were greyhounds—fast runners, in any case. Master, when he was young, was himself a very fast runner. On this occasion, pursuing those dogs, he had caught each one of them in turn, put it into a gunny sack, and later ordered the sacks removed to a safe distance, where their contents were released.

Master, in telling this story, was laughing so hard that I had (I must confess) some difficulty in understanding all that he said. Nevertheless, the exuberance of his recital was so infectious that I, too, laughed in sheer delight.

Tara, by contrast, gazed impersonally into the middle distance throughout this recital. Not once did she laugh, chuckle, or even smile. Indeed, her only reaction was to state with distant politeness, “Well, well! Fancy that!” The humor of the story, and Master's energy in telling it, evidently left her completely untouched.

Indeed, I am not really sure Tara even *had* a sense of humor—at least, of kindly humor. On the occasions when I did hear her laugh, it seems to me in retrospect that it was always at someone else's expense.

e) Tara was in many ways a genius. However, she gave some evidence of the madness to which genius has often been closely related.

One time, I'd been told, she had predicted that Disneyland would be a financial failure. Tara (contrary, as I wrote earlier, to Master's advice) practiced astrology, and was convinced that, because

Disneyland had opened on the dying moon, the whole enterprise would end in disaster.

Some years after Disneyland had already become one of the great financial success stories in history, I asked her whether she had actually made that prediction.

“Oh, *yes!*” she replied, speaking with her usual exclamation marks. “Just *think* of all the money they’ve poured into that place!”

To her, Disneyland was a failure already: she had so decreed it.

f) Tara once said to me, in a tone of wonder at her own goodness: “I have never said an unkind word in my life.”

## 19. A Few Finishing Thoughts

I have felt, in writing this book, rather like Arjuna being counseled by Krishna (as we read in India's scripture, the Bhagavad Gita). Arjuna didn't want to slay his own kith and kin (who, in the Mahabharata, symbolized his own negative qualities), but Krishna urged him to fight in the name of right action. I have nothing, personally, against my brothers and sisters on the path. I want simply to correct what I perceive as wrong actions and directions.

The important thing now, as I near the end of this book, is to consider the question: What practical steps, if any, might be taken to solve, or at least to improve upon, the problems I have presented in these pages? Is it possible, even this late in the game, to rescue Yogananda from the prison in which people's recollections have incarcerated him? Facts are facts, but sometimes even the bleakest of them can be converted to blessings.

Let us consider, then, whether anything might be done to bring the facts presented here to the best possible conclusion. What I offer now are a few suggestions. Many others may present themselves, in time.

a) The first point to consider is this: Do organizations *have to* be uncharitable? Surely the answer is: No. Not at all! If it is possible to be less charitable, it must be equally possible to be more so. Ananda Church of Self-Realization and its World Brotherhood Colonies are outstandingly loving and supportive of others, regardless of anyone's system of beliefs. The first principle at Ananda is: "People are more important than things." The second one, fundamental also, is: "Where there is adherence to truth, there lie victory, happiness, success, and fulfillment of every kind." (The wording in the Sanskrit is: "*Yata dharma, sthata jaya.*")

b) The human ego has two potential directions for development. It can shrink inward upon itself; or it can expand outward by serving God—by loving Him, serving Him, and serving the needs of others. The goal of the spiritual life is transcendence of ego-consciousness, which separates us from God and indefinitely delays our ultimate

destiny of union with Him. The ego cannot be transcended by ignoring the demands it makes on our consciousness. Attempting to acquire humility by self-abasement or self-criticism produces few positive results, if any. Humility cannot even be *acquired*: It is a natural quality of the soul. The best way to overcome ego-consciousness is to expand one's self-awareness by giving outwardly to others; by making oneself a channel for God's expansive love; and by including everything and everyone in one's own expanding bliss.

For example, the secret of remaining humble when lecturing is not self-deprecation, but self-forgetfulness, while one gives outwardly to others, in a spirit of sharing with them. It lies in thinking of the needs of others, rather than concerning oneself with the impression one is making on them. As for me, I have never seen myself as teaching anyone. My feeling has always been that I am only *sharing* with them.

In order to conquer desire, try to give more, outwardly, to others, to share your fulfillments with them.

When receiving praise, respond from your heart, "God is the Doer." Amusingly, once when I said that to a lady who had praised a talk of mine she replied in amazement, "*Really!*"—as if to say, "I knew it was good, but I didn't realize it was *that* good!" Obviously, I give the credit to God only for whatever level of good I myself have achieved. As Yogananda used to pray, "I will reason, I will will, I will act, but guide Thou my reason, will, and activity to the right path in everything."

When, on the other hand, people deprecate or insult you, thank them for trying to help you. And then, thank God also, and ask Him to help you remain humble.

c) God's nature is bliss. For an organization to serve with an expansive spirit, it is important that its members also *work with* bliss. In other words, be happy *in* yourself. Never work with the thought of merely *achieving* happiness someday: work *with* happiness *now*. Be happy *now*!

d) Self-importance is the death of wisdom. It is most easily combated by a light touch of humor. Learn especially to laugh at yourself. Never feel that to reject humor demonstrates proper spiritual dignity. True dignity means to be centered in the inner Self, and to act always from that center. It doesn't mean to be stern. What it means, rather, is to remain inwardly relaxed and natural, centered in the inner Self. Regardless of whether life's circumstances sweep you left or right, up or down, forward or backward, try always to maintain your centerpoise. Self-importance increases inner tension, and thereby reduces one's degree of happiness.

e) I have emphasized the importance of keeping a sense of humor. Remember always, too, that the underlying reality of everything is bliss. Seek bliss at the heart of everything. *Laugh with bliss!*

f) A temptation on the spiritual path is to tell oneself that one's service to God is important. Never forget that life itself is, essentially, a dream. You will enjoy the dream more, once you learn not to take any of it too seriously.

g) Never consider any position of authority to bestow power over others. See even the highest post as an opportunity to serve others, not to be served by them. People will be far more willing to follow you if they know that your desire is to help them, not to be helped by them. In applying Ananda's basic principle, "People are more important than things," it is important to keep referring back always to this thought. At Ananda, we never use anyone, not even for some worthy objective. Our first consideration, always, is a person's own spiritual needs. People will work far more willingly when their well-being is given top consideration. If there is a job that needs doing, then, but no one can be found who might be helped in the doing, we prefer either to delay the project or to abandon it altogether. I might add that I, myself, have always applied this principle very strictly in my own work with others.

h) How is one to decide in advance whether an act is righteous or unrighteous? The answer is: Visualize the results; then, consult your heart. If the act promises greater, more expansive and selfless happiness, the promise itself suggests good karma. If, on the other hand, the very thought of that act

could be a threat to anyone else's true happiness, realize that this very fact suggests bad karma. The saying, "The end justifies the means," is true only if that end is seen as benefiting everyone concerned. If its results threaten the well-being of even one person, eschew that action like the plague!

i) Nothing that anyone does can make him more or less important in God's eyes. It is a person's *attitude* that God watches, not his action.

j) Obedience in a monastery should be given above all to truth itself. Freedom from ego can never come through disregard for this principle. Superiors who, in the name of disciplining others, make unreasonable demands of them, demanding mindless obedience, only increase their own egotism. They get bad karma, moreover, for weakening others' will power. The primary duty of a superior is to develop wisdom (which is to say, right understanding) in those working under him. It is supremely important that he see his high position as a means of helping those lower than himself on the organizational ladder to keep climbing upward in their development.

k) It is natural for organizations to expect loyalty of their members. It is important, however, that people be encouraged to be loyal above all to the truth as they themselves perceive it. The saying, "My country, right or wrong," is dangerous. Organizations—quite as much so as people—are capable of making mistakes. Never follow blindly any organizational request made of you, or any decision reached by others. A dharmic organization will always keep itself open to correction. The dharmic individual will prefer even dismissal—or, if not that, then demotion—to acquiescence, if a directive is adharmic.

All parties, however, should be generous toward one another, and also lenient—as long as the intentions seem good. Remember, it is difficult to change anyone, including oneself, overnight. This fact is as true for organizations as for individuals. Even if there is a great need for some specific correction, the better part of wisdom is to understand that change often takes time. Often, indeed, the greater the need for change, the greater

the length of time required, usually, for it to come about.

l) It is important that leaders never show personal favoritism. True leadership, though always friendly, must at the same time be impartial and impersonal. A leader must discipline himself never to show greater appreciation to those who think well of him than to those who offer worthwhile, but possibly non-supportive, suggestions. Indeed, it sometimes happens that a person's critics turn out to be his greatest friends. In practical terms, what all this means is that one should always consider the merits of an idea over the question, "who offered the suggestion?"

m) Welcome disagreement, if it is intelligent. Never dismiss it with a wave of the hand merely because, to *you*, it is inconvenient. It is usually better to meet an idea with reason than with emotion. And remember again: Never, in any decision, show favoritism.

n) Remember this also: right decisions are seldom reached on a basis of personal likes and dislikes. One should always seek solid, objective support for any decision he makes.

o) At the same time, it is important to realize that clear intuition is more insightful than logic. If, on consulting your heart, you perceive there any sense of nervousness or uncertainty, or if the guidance you feel is more emotional than intuitive (note, for example, whether it comes with a touch of excitement), view it with suspicion. It is usually best simply to be sensible; that is to say, consider every new idea impartially. Yet give supreme importance, always, to that deeper wisdom arising from the soul.

p) In the above context, be very careful to avoid past karmic influences. Those influences can be very subtle, but they can also be very deceiving.

Tara Mata said many times to Daya Mata before they dismissed me, "Who knows what karma lies between Kriyananda and myself?" She should have heeded her deeper feelings on the matter: they were a warning.

Interestingly, many years later, a young man came all the way from New York to California with the sole purpose of telling me about a vision he'd

recently had. In the vision, he said, Tara Mata had appeared to him. She admitted to him that she had allowed herself to be influenced by a memory she'd carried over from a former lifetime.

"Two thousand years ago," she said, "at the time of the *Adi*, or first, Swami Shankaracharya, Kriyananda and I both were disciples of that great master. [I myself have often wondered whether our own guru was not also that great master.]

"I was Kriyananda's younger brother. Kriyananda in that lifetime betrayed our guru and set himself up as a rival teacher, taking students away from the Master, who had placed him in charge of the other monks. I felt deep anger toward Kriyananda. That prejudicial memory was what influenced me to insist on his dismissal in this life."

I believe this vision may actually have been true. We all have had many faults, and, during the countless incarnations it takes to find God, commit countless wrong deeds. All our bad karma must be neutralized before final liberation in God can be attained. Master himself told me that my greatest fault in the past was spiritual doubt. "You were eaten up with them," was the way he expressed himself to me. In this lifetime, fortunately, there remains in my heart only enough of a suggestion of doubt to help me solve *other people's* doubts.

That young man, having traveled all the way from New York to California for the sole purpose of sharing his vision with me, said that Tara regretted the manner in which she had treated me in this life, and asked me to embrace him, on her behalf, to show that I'd forgiven her. Of course, I did so. My visitor then left immediately, not even participating in a satsang being held at that moment, downstairs in my living room. He returned at once to New York.

q) Yogananda told me in 1949, when placing me in charge of the other monks, "Don't make too many rules. It destroys the spirit." The best rule any organization can make is, "The fewer rules, the better." It is a temptation for organizations to produce rules, like confetti! The result, always, is a diminished application of free will to any new undertaking. Rules establish guidelines, but the guidelines, from then on, require no further testing

or consideration. The problem is, they are very often applied to new situations unthinkingly.

r) Never mistake eloquence or cleverness for wisdom.

s) Never mistake self-assurance for Self-, or soul-assurance. Wisdom is often self-effacing, even diffident. Trust people according to their proven wisdom. Don't rely too much on their self-confidence. Self-esteem, though praised by psychiatrists, is a dangerous ideal.

t) Take occasional breaks from serious activity. The search for God is the most serious activity of all, but even so, time should be set aside for fun, laughter, and happy relaxation. Since God is Bliss, one can (and indeed *should*) keep a sense of His presence even while enjoying life.

u) Never make the mistake of thinking that seniority in an organization automatically bestows wisdom. Wisdom is of the soul, and comes from many incarnations of experience and from gradually unfolding insight. "The last shall be the first," Jesus said. True authority depends not on *when* you came to a religious work: It comes from the eternal soul. In its own context, this is true for every kind of work, even the most worldly. True authority comes with experience.

v) Never draw attention to your own superior spirituality, intelligence, or competence. All souls

are, in their inner essence, spiritual, and therefore perfect. All of them, equally, are children of God.

There was a certain cartoon I saw many years ago: two monks, one of whom, looking down his nose at the other, protested, "But I *am* holier than thou!"

w) Never believe that you have overcome a delusion until the very thought of it no longer enters your mind. As long as there remains the slightest fear of that delusion, know that you are not yet free from it. Remember, once a delusion is truly overcome, it will simply cease, for you, to exist. You will then wonder why you were ever enslaved by it, and will ask yourself, marveling, "What was all the excitement about?"

x) A truly spiritual person is childlike, but not childish. Be open and non-judgmental toward everything and everybody.

y) The fruit of right meditation is inner joy. If your spiritual practices make you solemn or dour, know from this fact alone that there is something amiss in your spiritual efforts.

z) The most important quality on the spiritual path is deep, selfless, heartfelt devotion and love for God.

All of the above qualities were things I learned from observing them in my Guru, Paramhansa Yogananda.

## 20. Practical Considerations

At present there are two organizations, in particular, which represent the ray of divine grace that was brought to this world by Paramhansa Yogananda. I would say that, while many organizations may strive to represent Yogananda's teachings, those will represent him best who understand his mission in the broadest possible sense. I would add that those will be truest to his spirit which take themselves the least seriously, which are the least self-affirming, and which do their best to be of service to others. Here are a few further points to consider:

a) My suggestion for what I foresee must otherwise be the demise of SRF as an organization, or at any rate of its usefulness to mankind, is that Ananda and SRF work cooperatively together in any and every way possible. Each organization has no doubt something it can learn from the other. Above all, in any case, the best hope I see for us as disciples in promoting the future of Paramhansa Yogananda's mission is for both these organizations to respect and appreciate each other. It is, however, at the same time vitally important to understand that, although organizations are perhaps the surest way these days of spreading a message, no organization can ever fully *define* that message. The message itself transcends any possible definition of it.

b) Is there hope for the future of Master's work? Absolutely yes! Despite the negative sound of much of what I have written in this book, my expectations for the future are entirely positive. I believe deeply in Paramhansa Yogananda, in his mission, and in the reason God sent him to the world at this time in history. The reason for his coming was to uplift an entire civilization spiritually.

Whether or not this transformation occurs through SRF, or through Ananda, or through many organizations, it *will* happen!

Meanwhile, let us remember that only one thing really matters: God's love. I recently wrote new lyrics to the melody (slightly changed) of a song in the 1949 movie, *Come to the Stable*. That song was inspired, in turn, by a medieval plain chant. Let me quote those lyrics here:

Through a long and lonely night

I've whispered Your name!

Through the pains and joys of life

I'm always the same!

Tempt me no longer:

This world's not for me!

I have known all its charms—

Fold me now in Your arms:

Make me free!

Lifetimes have passed! I've called out to You

Through hope and despair.

Lifetimes I've known the goals that I sought

Awaited nowhere!

Help me remember

There's one goal alone!

All I am is Yours!

All I've done is Yours!

I'm Your own.

## 21. Why?

As I contemplate the above events in my own life, I am overwhelmed by a sense of beauty and perfection. How marvelous—indeed, how bliss-assuring—is karmic law!

I feel no need to declare, as if with jutting jaw: “I believe God’s law is just. I accept whatever pain He sends me as His will for me!” Rather, I laugh with sheer delight, for I *know* I’ve deserved all the suffering I’ve received in this life. To me it has not been an affliction: It has been a *release*!

Every slight, every insult, every seeming injustice, every attempt to destroy me is something I’ve deserved! I *remember* in my soul the injustices I’ve committed in the past. My Guru himself told me as many of them as I could absorb at the time. Ancient prophecies about me, which I discovered in India, told me of my past mistakes. I am only thrilled that in this life I’ve had the strength to stand up before the waves of karma created by my own past actions, which threatened to engulf me in the present life. This is no cause for regret: It is cause for gratitude and rejoicing!

Everyone is, equally, a child of God. We are not sinful, though we may commit sin. We are not evil, though we have performed many even great evils in the past. In our souls we are ever perfect. Our goal is to merge back, eventually, in God’s eternal Bliss.

Those disciples of my Guru who punished me so harshly were acting only as instruments of Cosmic Law. They believed—rightly so—that they were acting on their guru’s behalf. They also believed that they were acting in his defense. I refuse to judge their actions against me, for I know that all of us are motivated by forces greater than ourselves. As Master wrote in *Autobiography of a Yogi*, “Thoughts are universally and not individually rooted.”

Have those disciples themselves created karma by their actions against me? That question is not mine to ask, or to answer. Nor, where I am concerned, is it the real issue. They have made grievous errors in their presentation of Paramhansa

Yogananda’s teachings, mission, and legacy—yes. This I firmly believe. Speaking personally, however, my fellow disciples have helped me immeasurably toward the destiny we all share: freedom in God.

I have felt it important in these pages, however, to point out what I perceive as great errors in the way they have presented our Guru, above all in their determination to confine him within a narrow organization. His message is too vast to be owned by any single group.

I have written many songs in my life. My favorite of them all is one titled, “Love Is a Magician.” Let me finish this book by offering the lyrics here.

Love is all I know:  
Sunrays on the snow  
Of a winter long  
In darkness, without song.

Oh, my heart’s afire,  
Burning all desire:  
Only You remain,  
And life again!

Too long I did stray,  
Flung lifetimes away—  
Imagined You did not care!  
I know, now, Your smile  
Was mine all the while:  
I listened, and Love was there!  
I can’t breathe for love!  
All the stars above  
Call to me: “Come home!  
Life’s waves all end in foam.”

Only love can heal  
All the pain I feel.  
What a fool was I  
To turn away!

THE END

## Back Cover

A certain cynicism has taken root in the public mind about organizations in general, but—perhaps even especially, spiritual organizations. So many of them have proved corrupt. But if organizations can be *bad*, it is equally possible for them to be *good*. Ego—whether institutional or individual—can go one of two directions: toward either self-interest or self-transcendence. Each direction has its consequences. To study the successes and failures of others is one important way of learning how to be better.

Two organizations that claim guidance from the same spiritual master have developed so differently from one another that now they hardly seem to represent the same teaching. Self-Realization Fellowship has followed the well-trodden path of spiritual authority: power in the hands of a few, obedience from all the rest; governance by rules, the first of which is, “In every situation, ask yourself first, ‘What is best for the organization?’”

Ananda has chosen “the road less traveled”: cooperation; decentralization; not taking oneself too seriously; and following two principles of which the first is, “People are more important than things,” and the second, “Where there is adherence to truth, there lie victory, happiness, and success of every kind (*Yata dharma, sthata jaya* in the Sanskrit original).”

This book serves two purposes: one, to restore to people a true and much-needed understanding of the real life and mission of Paramhansa Yogananda; and two, to give hope to people everywhere that they need not compromise even one high ideal to accomplish all their objectives—even the most worldly.

Swami Kriyananda, founder of Ananda, has been a close, direct disciple of Paramhansa Yogananda for more than 60 years. His life has been one of prodigious creativity—author, composer, photographer, screenwriter, dramatist, worldwide lecturer, counselor and teacher, and founder of eight (plus) spiritual communities wherein all together about a thousand people live. These things he has accomplished by the power he received from

Yogananda, received by his complete dedication to his guru’s service.